

USING MASKS FOR TRAUMA RECOVERY:
A SELF-NARRATIVE

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this evocative self-narrative study is to show the lived experience of recovery through the construction and utilization of masks within a therapeutic reenactment of a trauma event. This narrative text is a portrayal of the murder attempt on my life and the resultant lived experience of trauma repair. I designed a reenactment of the event using masks for the participants and witnesses. The context of the narrative is situated within the transcript of that reenactment which is interwoven with different temporal perspectives, academic literature, reflexive interpretations, and photographs.

The qualitative methodology that is used in this study is an adapted ethnographic method called a self-narrative using a layered account. Through reading the narrative, the reader participates in the lived experience of trauma and the resultant process of recovery and change. Within the narrative I am able to hold multiple perspectives and speak with multiple voices. For example, I include my voice as a researcher, the voices of participants in the actual reenactment event, and my reflexive voice as I experience the impact of trauma and the resultant change process. The narrative is based on data that I collected from journal records that were kept throughout the process, dream journals, videotapes of the enactment, art therapy paintings, and conversations and interviews with participants.

Using masks within a therapeutic reenactment process created phenomenal change in all aspects of my life. Areas that were effected include my sense of self, my feelings and beliefs about safety, my relationships with others, my future goals, and my worldview. This extraordinary transformation raises awareness as to the power of utilizing the survivor's self-healing impulses and activities in expressive therapeutic interventions.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
List of Tables.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
Table of Contents.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Preface.....	vii
 CHAPTER I	
Introduction.....	1
 CHAPTER II	
The Mask of Methodology.....	5
Truth and Reality.....	6
Representation and Text.....	8
Reflexivity	10
The Reader as Participant.....	10
 CHAPTER III	
Creating the Mask of Trauma.....	11
Creating the Mask of Healing.....	14
The New Mask.....	90
 CHAPTER IV	
The Reality of Change.....	93
Physical Changes.....	94
Sense of Self.....	94
Feelings and Beliefs.....	95
Relationships.....	95
My World View.....	96
Future Dreams.....	96
Letter to A Client.....	98
Reflections.....	99
 CHAPTER V	
Literature Review	101
Historical Perspectives on the Mask	101
The Psychological Function of Masks.....	102
Mask Use in Counselling.....	103
Practical Implications and Counter-indications.....	106
Summary.....	108
 References.....	109

List of Tables

Table A: Possible Uses for Masks in Therapy.....	105
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List of Figures

Figure 1: Community Support (painting).....	vi
Figure 2: The Trauma Moment (painting).....	14
Figure 3: Mask of Sorrow (sculpture).....	18
Figure 4: Coffin With Body (sculpture).....	20
Figure 5: Mask of Medusa (sculpture).....	21
Figure 6: Shield (Aegis).....	24
Figure 7: Clay Mask – Blown Apart (sculpture).....	25
Figure 8: Neutral Mask.....	27
Figure 9: Mask of My Spirit Self.....	29
Figure 10: The Monster Before Me (painting).....	51
Figure 11: Terror (painting).....	57
Figure 12: Copper Medusa (engraving).....	65
Figure 13: The Experience of Assault (painting).....	76
Figure 14: Birds of Death (painting).....	81
Figure 15: Rebirth (painting).....	97
Figure 16: My Genius (painting).....	99

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Figure 1: Community Support (painting)

Preface

When I was a young child,
I had a re-occurring nightmare.
I was trapped in the cloakroom of my grade one class,
where there were masks on every wall.
I would be looking at the masks and they would start to move.
The more I looked at them,
the more they moved.
I could only stand and watch as they took on lives of their own,
dancing wildly around me – pulsing back and forth.
I would awaken from my own screams and cries.

-Journal entry, November 1997

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

It is always the critical moment. I hold my hands over the hardened plaster bandage that I have carefully sculptured onto my face. I work my facial muscles – working to loosen the grip. It is free – I look. Every time I see a mold from my face I am surprised. Is it my mother? A first nations profile? A man? A crone? Who will I see? Today, it is a woman; she has a definite expression of pain. That's not what I had planned. I know well enough, from experience, that this mask will create itself – despite my best intentions to make it something else. I go with the flow. It is almost like this face is crying. I put my hand onto it – like I would on my own face if I were crying. I carefully layer the warm, moist plaster bandages over my hand. It is part of the expression of this mask – the expression of sorrow. The bandage hardens quickly and I loosen my hand from beneath it – perfect. I look at the mask critically. What message will she bring me? What lesson does she have up her sleeve? I can tell by looking at her that she has to be purple – maybe with gold leaf. I let it dry completely while I assemble my paints, plaster-of-Paris, sandpaper and brushes. I take the mask into my hands and begin the process of smoothing the lines, sculpting with plaster, creating texture, sanding and painting. I am meditating, thinking, breathing my world into this mask. I know my unacknowledged thoughts and feelings will be imprinted onto it as I form it, shape it, and color it. When it is done, I clear the table and set it down on a white cloth. I can see it best that way. The hidden feelings start to well up from my solar plexus, into my throat and the tears that the mask needs to be complete, come into my own eyes. What sorrow is this? It feels deep – held too long under the surface. She helps me free it and express it. It must be a funeral. Who has died, I wonder? It may be me.

Masks have a long history in human culture. The first masks were made of animal skins or heads and were worn to lure animals to the hunter (Hunt & Carlson, 1961). Later spiritual and healing rituals or ceremonies centered around masks and painted faces. As time progressed, the mask was borrowed from the healers and moved onto the stage for entertainment. Highly refined theater arts developed around the use of masks. Reports of the effects and utilization of masks both among aboriginal people and within theater arts, stimulated psychotherapists to examine the possibility of using masks in therapy with the anticipation of influencing psychological change among clients. The use of masks as a psychotherapy intervention was first reported in 1954 (Janzing, 1998). Since that time there

have been numerous reports about various techniques and methods for the creation and use of masks and mask play in therapeutic settings (Fryrear & Stephens, 1988; Janzing, 1998; Landy, 1984, 1985; Larsen & Larsen, 1981; Turner, 1981). Therapists who have utilized masks as a therapeutic intervention have reported changes in client behavior.

Janzing (1998) outlined numerous outcomes that were reported by therapists using masks with their clients. Therapists who used masks with children who stuttered, in sociodrama or psychodrama, witnessed changes in the children's speech patterns. In addition, masks were reported to have allowed clients who struggled with low self-esteem or self-destructive behaviors to experiment with new attitudes and behaviors both psychologically and physically. Further, some therapists noted that the mask acted as a mediator between the client's conscious and unconscious worlds particularly with clients who experience strong regressive behaviors. Finally, masks were successfully employed by Gestalt therapists as a means to generate conversations with estranged family members. Even though all of the therapists used the masks in different ways, they all reported a positive impact of utilizing masks with their clients.

While I was interested to review the literature available on using masks in therapy, I was disappointed in the lack of indications for specific clientele. My particular interest is with female clients who are in the process of trauma recovery and repair. Throughout my review of the literature I was unable to find any authors who had used mask work directly with traumatized clients. In fact, there was little indication of the types of clients that were willing and able to use this kind of intervention. There were no indications of the timing and length of time that masks were used in the whole scheme of the therapy process. In addition, there was a lack of information related to client experience of using masks and the short or long term outcome of the client's change process. After an exhaustive literature search, there appeared to be a definite absence of information in these areas. How could this deficiency best be addressed for myself and other counsellors interested in using this expressive intervention? In searching for possible means to answer this question, I looked for a creative process that could reflect the power and mystery of how masks have been used throughout history. In light of the fact that I have an extensive background in using masks for my own trauma recovery, it seemed logical to use myself as the site of this study. In preparation for this project, I created and used masks in the therapeutic enactment of a traumatic event that happened in my own life. The enactment was a final step towards second-level change and trauma recovery. The purpose of this self-narrative study is to construct my lived experience in a narrative form in order to

examine the process of trauma recovery and change as influenced by mask work. In this research, my lived experience will be defined generally through story, myth, flashbacks, transcribed therapeutic enactment sequences, poems, dreams, and photographs.

The overall question that this study seeks to answer is: What is my lived experience of trauma recovery in the process of mask-making and the use of masks during a reenactment of the traumatic event? The text will address the following questions by *showing* (not explaining) the experience: What stories can be told about the experiences? What are some narrative sequences that could illustrate the meaning of my experience with masks? What makes the mask a catalyst of change for me? What kinds of changes can result from the masking process? What constitutes the moment of change and what kind of narrative could describe it? How do I interpret and make meaning out of my lived experience? What is the effect of tacit knowing on the process of preparation, enactment, and recovery? Through finding the answers to these questions, this study may fill in some of the gaps in the literature related to using and making masks in a therapeutic setting, specifically in trauma repair. Practical guidelines about mask-making and its power, mask application in counselling, as well as, important taboos or dangers that surround masking, will be included in the narrative process.

In my counselling practice, I face clients with a variety of difficult life experiences every day. In my search to understand their inner processes I seek for appropriate interventions to assist them. In my search, it has been helpful to read or hear about the lived experience of others who have experienced similar events. I am particularly interested in knowing about the recovery process so that I can assess the impact of specific interventions for an individual in their life. Unfortunately, most self-narrative accounts that I have read have been of a more descriptive nature, focussing on what happened and its effect rather than on how the individual recovered, or continues to recover, from the experience. In this way, I chose to conduct this study through a self-narrative which includes descriptions of elements of the change process.

For counselling psychologists, understanding emotional experience is absolutely essential in order to comprehend human affliction. Through this self-narrative, an emotionally evocative story is woven. I hope that it will engage you in your own inner experiences as you react and respond to what I have written. I have found that there is no better means of conveying a lived experience of change than through narrative. The process of change is not linear. Therefore, it cannot be written and reported in a linear way. The lived experience was highly creative and the reporting needs to reflect that innovative process. As Nelson Goodman stated (as reported in Saks, 1996, p. 425) "...the arts must be taken no less seriously than the

sciences as modes of discovery, creation and the enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancing human understanding.” This self-narrative is an artistic endeavor that will allow the reader to experience the emotional impact of both trauma and repair. Further, after reading this narrative you may be motivated to take alternative actions on behalf of your clients, within your practice or within your community - actions that you may not previously have considered implementing.

Due to the uniqueness of this method, it is important that you, as the reader, understand my methodological choice. The understanding of the logic of a self-narrative will enable you to appreciate the form that I have used to create the story. Therefore, I will present the rationale for the methodology in the next chapter. I leave the third and fourth chapter for the narrative and a review of the change process. The fifth chapter will include a literature review. The review focuses on outlining historical perspectives on masks, and psychological functions of masks, mask use in counselling, dangers and taboo.

Finally, be aware that the subject of this thesis is unpleasant, if not brutal. Because of this, I have worried about how the story may be received. In the same way that I was ashamed to tell and re-enact the story, I find that I am also feeling ashamed to write it. I have to constantly work to live the lessons that I have learned during my recovery process. For example, when the therapeutic enactment was over I experienced a love and acceptance by the group of people who witnessed it. Although they had seen how I had been “damaged,” I was still accepted as an important member of their community. They recognized me as heroic, courageous, and valuable - rather than filthy, shameful, and broken. Anxiously now, I take a risk to reveal this story again. In writing about the experience, I recognize that it is an extension and completion of my self-healing. Perhaps secondarily, valuable lessons that I have learned may make a difference to others as they read my account. Further, the writing may be a means of extending outwardly from my self to others how a broken world of the self can be transformed through art and creativity. It is my intention that the reader absorb the spirit of this narrative – not just the literal meaning of it.

CHAPTER II

The Mask of Methodology

The mask can be used to frame, or hold the image, that needs attention. It is a boundary-maker between that which is framed and that which is not. The mask-as-frame determines my way of knowing and seeing. It is not so much the mask, or masking behavior, that is the focus of my attention, but instead it is a device to hold the content of the object or activity that is set apart from normal life (Eldredge, 1996). In using a particular type of methodology, I create a mask or frame in which to view the research that is of interest to me. By the wearing of a methodological mask, I am able to unmask the truth, which is framed within it. Therefore, the mask may represent the methodological genre or rules that the study must abide by within the academic community.

My thesis wears a methodological mask that is within the ethnographic tradition called the *narrative of self* or *self-narrative* (Denzin, 1997; Richardson, 1994). Denzin (1997) calls this genre a "messy" text, as it is focused on an epiphanal moment or existential turning point which is difficult to form into a clear, linear narrative. The self-narrative is a form of evocative writing which is highly personalized, using various writing styles that have been interwoven in order to create the story in the most evocative way. The self-narrative may be written in a variety of forms such as an ethnographic drama, poetry, fiction, visual presentations, and more (Richardson, 1994). I have found the form of the layered account (Ronai, 1992, 1995) to be the most useful means for telling my story. The layered account allows for the use of multiple voices or perspectives, layers of experience, poetics, dream sequences, flashbacks, dramatic recall, metaphor, reflexivity, and interpretation. New types of knowledge, different ways of knowing, can be conveyed to the reader through this type of narrative account. It is woven with threads that embody the ideas of ethnography.

Although the principles of the method come from the discipline of ethnography, which is interested in culture from a sociological point of view (Creswell, 1998), the principles of ethnographic research are highly relevant to the field of counselling psychology. The lived experience of change cannot be described in a linear fashion; it is a complex and multifaceted occurrence. Being a counselling psychologist, my key interest focuses on the inner processes which create change. In my search for a methodology that could frame the experiences of change within my trauma recovery process, I needed to be free to create my personal truth about the experiences with as little methodological constraint as possible. Therefore, I have utilized the ethnographic principles that define the self-narrative as indicated within the

methodologies of autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 1996; Ellis, 1997), the layered account (Ronai, 1992, 1995) ethnographic drama (Bochner & Ellis, 1996; Richardson, 1994) and impressionist tales (Van Maanen, 1988). The principles that are relevant to the self-narrative include a definition of the epistemological and ontological foundations of the method, the form of representation and text that is appropriate for that foundation, the significance and necessity of reflexivity, and the role and participation of the reader of an evocative text.

Truth and Reality

My masks show the multiple parts of myself. I know that I can never create two masks that are identical, because at each moment I change. My body is in process and movement. I constantly gain multitudes of knowledge from which I build realities. I have different and unpredictable moments of emotion. I have profound and multifaceted experiences of my essence, life-force or spirit. I have different selves with different people. I am a daughter, a student, a mother, a friend, a counsellor, and so on. Often times I think that I should change my name with each changing role. To call me only by one name ignores the fact that I have worn the masks of "Patty", "Pat", "Mama", "Babe", "Teacher", "Mrs. Keats-Osborn", "Baba", "Ms Keats", "Ma", and "Patrice".

I believe that I exist to create and I create to know (Gonçalves, 1997). I create meaning through the interpretations that I make about the significant experiences in my life (Sexton, 1997). Therefore, knowledge is inwardly created rather than outwardly discovered. I may create multiple meanings through a variety of symbols that generate multiple personal truths. There is no one single truth. I see truth as something that I create within the present context - it lies within a set of truths that relate to a single event. I can change perspectives, see the same event from many sides, and create multiple meanings about events through time (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). In addition, when I construct the truth about my life experiences, it is not how well this knowledge corresponds to objective reality but instead it is its functionality and feasibility (practicality) that measures its value to me. In this way, my "self" can not be pinned down, firmly and finally conceptualized; it is unknowable in its completion, for it is never completed. I am free to constantly create, change and move.

I fluctuate between opposites eluding a constant center, yet I am embedded and influenced by my race, gender, ethnicity and economic status. Consequently, I am not totally self-sufficient in creating my own experience for I am constantly influenced by the Other. Therefore, there is an element of realism within my epistemology, recognizing that there are

environmental constraints on my constructions. These constraints do not determine my constructions, but create limits on their viability (Mahoney, 1991). For example, the witnesses in my enactment were key participants in the creation of the experience. Their presence and their response was a crucial element during this event.

I also have a way of knowing that is tacit (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975). My tacit knowledge is more fundamental than my explicit knowing. I can know more than I can tell and I can tell nothing without relying on things that I may not be able to tell. This tacit knowing involves all areas of my life, body and mind. Much goes on in my mind without my conscious awareness and it governs my conscious processes without appearing in them (Hayek, 1978 as cited in Mahoney, 1991). My tacit knowing seems to operate at a higher level rather than a lower or "unconscious" level. This knowing is highly refined and seems to come well before conscious knowing. It is almost as if my conscious mind can not register tacit knowledge until I am well prepared to receive it. It seems to filter down through many symbolic attempts before I can consciously register its meaning. I would consider intuition, dreams, art and myth to be a part of tacit knowing. For example, at the beginning of the enactment I was very clear that one of the masks played a more significant role than the others. I knew it carried the answer for me yet I was unable to see how that would happen or define it precisely. In the end, it was that mask and the myth behind it that created the turning point in the enactment.

Finally, through the act of writing the narrative in this thesis, a new reality is constructed that is whole and complete unto itself. The facts that I describe are derived from my theory of what is, rather than writing about what is from observable facts about the experience (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). Through writing, I discover myself through transitory moments of insight and understanding - writing myself and my experience into being. Through writing the multiple layers of my thoughts, feelings, and actions I am able to capture my experience within a moment in time. Each time that I edit or review the text, I have different insights, discover new perspectives and develop new meanings. The meanings that I create and the social reality of the experience may change with each consequent reading of it. My writing is a way of knowing, a reflexive practice which will always be partial, local and situational (Richardson, 1994). As with a mask, I frame my lived experience through the writing of this text.

Representation and Text

Concern has been raised about the appropriateness of self focused narratives in the social sciences. However, traditional quantitative research does not appear to be having an impact. Sexton (1997) points out that counselling practitioners do not seem influenced by counselling research because of its seeming irrelevance or inapplicability to the reality of clinical practice. Somehow counselling research is not reaching practitioners. Richardson (1994) notes that qualitative research needs to be read, not scanned. She notes that it is under-read due to a lack of creativity, movement, interest, or appeal in the writing style that researchers use. In addition, she points out that the absence of the researcher's voice in the research subject can render the writing as "boring". Further to this, I see the evocative self-narrative text as highly applicable to the work that we do in the counselling psychology field. It is important to me, as a practitioner, to read research that will increase my understanding of an individual's lived experience. The evocative text offers the reader the opportunity of witnessing the heart of the human being within the text, the social consequences of the individual's experience, the connection between the mind and body, the working of memory and emotion, the consequences and effects of interventions from the individual's point of view, the depth and complexity of the healing process, and the mystery of change. For psychology, these areas are essential to explore in research and practice. I have yet to find research that is as effective for gaining insight to these areas as is the evocative text. For example, I found Ronai's (1995) account of child sexual abuse to be a highly compelling account. It showed the lived experience of this tragedy in her life in an extremely riveting manner. My understanding of this issue increased tenfold through this one self-narrative in comparison to the myriad of other articles and books that I have read on the subject. Some researchers may not consider Ronai's articles to be generalizable across cases because she uses only one case study (her own). However, the blending of research review, interpretations, and narrative accounts into the text finds that her case is focused on generalization "within a case" (Ellis, 1997). In addition, she moved from representation to evocation, which effectively portrayed child sexual abuse as reflective of the population of sexual abuse survivors.

How is it best to represent a lived experience? On the basis of my epistemology, it is clear that personal meaning is always in motion (as is the individual) – only relevant for the present moment (Denzin, 1997). Lived experience can only be represented indirectly through the notes, journal entries, stories, observations and so on (Denzin, 1992). Thus, there can never be a final or accurate representation. The story will be told in different ways at different times.

Therefore, it is clear that the purpose of writing the self-narrative is to portray the process, not the product of the experience (Richardson, 1994). Admittedly, there appears to be no single or right way to stage a text of this kind.

The language of my text reveals and constructs my subjective values and beliefs. It is the means that I use to convey a context for my experiences. No matter how objective I may attempt to be, the text will be transparent – revealing my inner life. The type of reflexive language that I use within the text allows multiple forms of interpretation about the writing - from personal meanings to scientific analysis. Therefore, there is no single interpretation or truth within the language of the text. The reflexive voice offers a way of evoking the readers participation and calls for the reader to fill in the gaps between the lines with personal meaning. The reflexive language does not impose authority of the subject, but instead invites equal participation in the many ways of knowing the subject.

Since the self-narrative text portrays a personal truth from an experience, I have chosen to experiment with different types of texts and styles of writing – multiple centers and multiple forms. Through these styles, the text produces an image of the subject of masks and trauma recovery. The image is subject to my own reality, based on my inner character projected outwardly into the text. In order to convey this image and write as visually as possible, I have written the story using the transcript of the enactment as a backdrop. I have layered the transcript with short story accounts, literature, dreams, flashbacks, metaphors, insights, poetry and photographs to complete the story. My data was gathered from journals kept throughout the process, dream journals, videotapes of the enactment, art therapy paintings, and conversations and interviews with participants in the enactment. As a guideline or map to the text format, please note the four asterisks (****). These four stars indicate that the voice or temporal perspective has changed. The Arial font indicates my researcher voice and includes literature citation, factual reports of actions, and interpretation. The Times Roman Font is my narrative voice, as well as, that of the enactment sequence. The enactment sequence includes the voices of the participants in the actual enactment process. *The italic font is my personal voice of reflexivity. It includes my emotional reactions, my dreams, poems, and reflections.*

Finally, I am conveying a highly emotional experience within the text. According to Denzin (1997), the evoked emotion in the reader is a method for establishing authority in the text. A good narrative will plunge the reader into a believable emotional world where time stands still as the reader works through the experience of the story. Ellis (1997) adds that the

validity of the study will be whether or not it evokes the feeling that the story is authentic, believable or possible. The story's generalizability is judged by the way it speaks to you, the reader, about your own experience.

Reflexivity

The self-narrative is a reflexive text - I react to "myself" throughout the text. Reflexivity allows the process of the experience to be revealed and unmask the complex psychological, social, ideological and political agendas that are hidden within the text (Richardson, 1994). Reflexivity can create moments of self-reflection and social or political criticism, in you as a reader, which opens the possibility of stimulating social or personal action. It allow you to move towards what you are observing, look closer at the process, or understand the psychological resistance that is portrayed. I do not portray myself as an authority so that we may find a mutual engagement in the shared experience that I present. I use reflexive language to position myself within the text as the site of the topic of inquiry and as a resource to uncover the problematic experience and its personal and social repercussions. In this way, there is no division between my personal and scientific self within the narrative (Denzin, 1997). I become both object and subject, both the researcher and the researched simultaneously. I hold multiple positions within the research text and occupying various time frames such as past-self, present-self, future self.

The Reader as Participant

The self-narrative is dependant on the reader (Van Maanen, 1988). You are the one to whom I tell my story. Through my writing and your reading, we discover more of what we know, allowing different meanings to be worked through again and again. Through your subjectivity and emotional reactions, you will decide the truth of my narrative for yourself. You become a witness to my lived experience. Through the role of witness, you will confront a disturbing account of violence. Although it may be more comfortable not to know about the violence, the power dynamic, and the terror - it may be dangerous not to know (Bochner & Ellis, 1996). By staying comfortable, we may miss an opportunity to open up to new insights and choose new ways to be informed about the subject. As counselling psychologists we have a responsibility to talk about trauma experience. Through our discussions we may learn to truly care for the people who are struggling to recover from it. When we can understand a survivor's lived experience, in her own words, it is a starting place. Here is my story.

CHAPTER III

Creating the Mask of Trauma

My back is aching. I am four months pregnant and I am still adjusting to sharing my body with this hidden miracle called “baby.” I have just cleaned up from eating my supper, and it is dark outside now. I am living in solitude, moving through my baby’s growth and all of the daily routines and preparations alone. The “father” fled the country at the joyous news of the baby’s coming. I hope he is having a good time – maybe he is even growing up a little on the Eurorail track. I pull my mind back from emerging imaginations about him and wonder what I can do about this ache in my back. Maybe a short walk might help. I have heard that walking helps to change the baby’s position – it is worth a try. I look out the window. I can see the near full moon on this crisp February evening. I glance at the clock – it is almost nine. I had better get going. I pull my coat down off the hanger. Actually, it is not mine. It was a gift that I had given my mother several years ago. It is a beautiful native parka; I bought it in Yukon Territory. An elderly woman had hand-sewn the coat with care. I can feel a sense of protection as I run my hands over the embroidered-appliqued flowers along the bottom. It is thick emerald green wool with an outer shell of gray. I zip up each layer – it will not be long before I can not zip it up over my thickening belly.

It is dark, but I have no fear. It has always been my belief that I can protect myself. Although I am pregnant, I am strong, fit and healthy. I know this city so well – I have not lived anywhere else in the last twenty-three years. It is a safe place to me. I walk out the door of my apartment and lock it behind me with confidence and determination. I walk down the three flights of stairs to the front door and out onto the street. I notice right away how odd the air feels as I turn the corner to walk uphill along the faintly lit road. I look up to see the still clear moon. I wonder about her clairvoyant tendency as she watches me walking. I think about her near fullness – it is like my own destiny. I think about the prophecy that the full moon creates human lunacy. I falter for a moment – maybe it is not a good night to be on the street. It just does not feel right out here. I decide to walk to the end of the street. I am good at setting goals. I will not go too far.

As I walk, I feel a tension rising inside of me. I am struggling between my feelings and my thoughts. I cannot discount the undeniable feeling of foreboding; I try to ignore it and rationalize to myself that it is just a short distance to walk. To what part of myself should I listen? Now my feelings have become a loud voice inside of me – almost shouting “Go Home!” My mind, a logical analyst, calmly speaks “Just a little further! You have a goal!” As

if that was a signal for safety. I cannot give in to either, so I give in to my will. I walk despite the debate. I notice that my legs are getting heavy. I concentrate on fighting to move each foot forward towards my objective. The pain in my back is still there. I walk. I fight. I walk. I see the last block – my decided goal. I will get there and then walk home – maybe I will even run home. That feels like a good decision!

I see something moving in the bushes where the lane divides the block. Oh, my God, it is a man. He is coming out putting on a pair of plain black gloves. I sense that I am in serious trouble. He looks over at me as I walk; I quickly avert my eyes. This is not like me – what is this new found apprehension? Is it because of the moon? Is this an effect of pregnancy? Where has the woman I know I am - gone when I need her the most? He is walking towards me and against my will I am walking towards him. It is like an automatic response. Although I know I am in danger – does the devil possess me? My heart is beating out of control – I can not breathe. I fight to keep the air flowing into my frantic lungs. He approaches me slowly, watching me. I am losing control of myself – I am losing touch. He smells my fear like an animal – I can tell by the look in his face. His gloves are on. All in the flow of a seemingly normal movement, we meet and, closely, he passes by. I hear his voice – “Hi.” My God! He past me by! What an imagination I have – here I am safe. It was a friendly gesture after all. He was not going to harm me. I feel relieved – I can walk a little easier now. I take a deep breath in – then, a shock! He is beside me, like a magician. I startle and jump onto the street. He matches my movements – now he stands in front of me – too close. I have to look at him now – I can not take my eyes off him. He traps me in his gaze. What world is this? He has my breath, my life. I experience giving over to him all the power that I have ever earned, every cell of energy I ever had. I hand it over willingly in hopes of compassion. My baby draws my attention – what can I do? I hear him speaking – asking directions. I can not think of the answer – I can not think. I fumble, some words come out, something meaningless and confused – just buying time. I suffer from the hate in his eyes. I think I am beginning to hate myself. How could I have been so stupid to put my baby and myself in this danger? I must deserve this punishment for my lack of common sense. Who do I think I am being out on this dark street at night? I find myself wishing that he would have mercy on my foolishness, that he will forgive me and let me go. He has the power to do that for me. Be steady girl – don’t breath too deeply. Don’t move – he may notice your panic. What kind of a desecrated ritual is this? His face is changing. The look in his eye has become a look of disgust. His repulsion pierces into me like a knife. I loathe myself. He is reaching for the collar of my coat. His

gloves are to protect his hand from my hideousness. It would be a shame to touch this putrid woman with bare hands. He has a metal pipe tucked in his belt; he pulls it out, grasps it forcefully and tests it for balance. What is he going to do? All I think about is my baby. In a desperate plea, I tell him that I am pregnant. He falters – hesitates – is he human after all? No! There is no compassion in evil. He pulls me along into the lane. He moves quickly, I am off balance and I can hardly keep up. Nothing on earth is powerful enough to stop the momentum of this act. All I have left is God. God must intervene – I shout out to my spiritual guide for help. Out of my peripheral vision, I see the man reaching up to strike me – the earth smashes me in the face.

Oh! What place is this?
No body. Infinity. No one.
Waiting... waiting... waiting.
Deep peace.
Baby. What about my baby?

I am here again. He sits in front of me. He has his naked hand between my legs. I feel it. I see the greed in his eyes. He reaches his hand towards my breast.

Oh! What place is this?
Deep peace.
A presence -someone is here now. It is her. It is them.
No voices – just thoughts. Love envelops me - boundlessly.
No body. Infinite compassion. Freedom.
Shall we live? I am choosing.
The light of life is barely visible – a pinpoint. How do I get there
It is... anguish... torment... agony...
... it is for her... for me...

Suddenly, it appears before me – a door. I can barely see it. I pound on the screen. Someone is there. “My baby, my baby!” She brings me in. I cannot understand their words. I cannot speak. There is blood – so much blood. I am sitting inside now. Why can’t I see very

well? What are they saying to me? What language do they speak? Hang on. Hold on...the ambulance is coming – it is coming...



Figure 2: The Trauma Moment (painting)

Creating the Mask of Healing

I created my own healing. I think we all do. Some must be more successful at it than others. It took *me* eighteen years. I was surviving. Over all those years, I struggled with a myriad of attempts at recovery. I had lost touch with how to protect myself. I tried various means to build a barrier between the world and me. I was trying to build it outside because inside I had lost the belief or trust in safety. I didn't know what safety was anymore. I guess I thought it was "out there" because I had lost it by something that had happened "out there". I knew that I was letting things that were unhealthy get into me. I was very susceptible to events that were unhealthy and relationships that were dangerous. I was thin-skinned. As a matter of fact, I had no skin. So I sought ways to construct a skin – I was desperate. I found myself feeling nervous, panicky, and frightened most of the time. I was hypervigilant.

What would be the one thing that could help me find the safety that I so desperately wanted? I convinced myself at each turn that THIS was going to be THE thing that would help

me be safe. I learned a lot about magic, myth, mystery, ritual, and spirit through my search. What did I use as attempts to build a skin? I was like most other survivors;

I was a seeker.

I tried flower remedies, homeopathy, Chinese herbalogy.

I wore medicine bags, crystals, and special symbols - talisman

I dressed in baggy clothes – hiding my body – keeping it from harm

I did meditations and rituals related to letting go and forgiveness

I prepared for events and meetings with visualizations and incantations

I tried therapeutic touch, Haushka massage, Gin Shin Do, accupressure,
cranial-sacral massage, chiropractors

I learned about potions for healing that were burned, buried, worn, and ingested

I tried dream analysis, talk therapy, art therapy, dance and movement therapy,
aromatherapy,

color therapy, music therapy, speech therapy

I read tarot cards, the I Ching, fairy tales and myths

I read about women's issues, war, and recovery

I looked for safety in community-

school groups, women's groups, spiritual study groups, artist groups

I made art, art, art all the time.

I was searching for the life that I seemed to see everyone else living. A life with ease and safety. A secure life. I tried to make my life a secure life through all of these outside attempts at making security for myself. I was nervous, always looking around and listening, watching my words, being careful. Don't say the wrong thing, don't be too noticeable, don't be seen, don't be too successful. It is a dangerous life -people will hurt you. Be careful, you'll be noticed. What kind of a life was I really leading? It was no life.

Loon Lake – I can hear the sound of the birds just by saying the name – Loon Lake. I heard the birds this morning – this beautiful May morning. It is a secluded place – little cabins scattered in a group within the trees. The cabins are where we go, as individuals, to sleep and to contemplate the stories that we see. As a group, we meet in the large staff lodge – the largest building “on the hill”. There is a large stone fireplace that keeps us warm and large logs walls that keep us contained. Of course, there are windows. Windows to look out of - if

the inner scenery is too hard to look into. Thank God for the windows. It is the night of my enactment. We are sitting in a tight circle – twenty nine of us. We had prepared a safe place, a community, a kind of love for one another that is hard to define. I look at everyone in the circle. Will I be safe? Can I trust them? There are some announcements – I cannot concentrate on what was being said. I am afraid. I'm not sure why, but it is hard to breathe – even though the doors are open and fresh air is in the room. Tonight, I am wearing the mask of the player – the star – the protagonist. No one can see it, but I can feel it under my skin. I hope I have prepared enough to go back in time. Back to the perpetrator. The Gods of existence will turn the clock back eighteen years for me for this one night. It is the only thing that I hadn't tried yet. I feel like it has come to me – like a gift. I have known that it was coming and I couldn't have avoided it – it was inevitable. All I had to do was prepare, get ready, strengthen – now here I am.

I'd prepared. My preparation involved a myriad of activity. First, I saw someone else go back in time to face his perpetrator again. During his enactment, I watched the victim mask being torn slowly, painfully, and meticulously from his face. It was the most intense experience I have ever witnessed. In the end, his new face – his real face - was filled with light. His body matched it with softness and ease. He was courageous – beyond words. His valor called me to adventure and I could not refuse the call.

Secondly, I created masks. They spoke to me through the images of their faces. They were no longer content to be still and lifeless. They were calling to be more than observed objects with implicit voices. They demanded eyes and movement, so that they could speak to me with words and gesture. They needed an enactment to live to the fullest. Through the process of creating them, I infused the antidote to my healing into their features. They were six in number and I listened to their plea.

Thirdly, I painted. I created image after image. Each one was speaking to me – change was eminent and incontestable. Something had to change – I was on the brink. A theme that ran through the paintings was that of a baby waiting to be born – a new being, a new face. As I painted the images of violence, sorrow, and pain – the image of the baby would appear now and then. A reminder, a hope for the future.

Next, I worked on my body. My body was the weakest link. I struggled living in it. I mutilated it inwardly with my worries and fears. I broke it and tore at it - trying to find a way to fit into it comfortably. Through a "freak" accident I had fallen and damaged my shoulder

and back. In the process of healing, I found out about the right to stand up straight. I didn't know that before. I was able to give up the invisible knife that I carried in my back. I could stand again.

Finally, there was a myth - the Medusa myth. I read everything I could find that was written about her. She became my mentor, my companion, and my savior. I built her mask and formed a face that I could see. I loved her hair of snakes and her hideous look. I painted her and I dreamed about her. I made an aegis of copper from her features. She became a powerful antidote for evil. This mask and myth drew me deeply into myself. I was possessed.

I am called to come into the center of the circle. T is with me – he will play my perpetrator. The greatest gift that anyone could give. My box of masks and paraphernalia is waiting in the middle for me. The circle of people around me is tight, warm, and seemingly safe. A cleansing ritual is performed with sweetgrass and sage. We are purified; we are prepared. T leaves my side and sits in the circle. M is there with me now – he is my guide tonight. I feel attached, dependent and safe with him. I have tested him long and hard – looking for that trust that I knew would keep me safe. I am sure that he can help me over the threshold of my fear. He begins...

M: (He speaks to the group) First Patrice is going to explain what we have here and how we are going to set up. Tonight with this particular enactment we know what we are going to do. Your role is to be the witnesses only. We don't want anyone to come up because it will be very focused and clear. She has asked that you just be witnesses so that this will be carried by all of us. (He speaks to me) You're ready - and its been along time coming hasn't it?

P: (*I am nervous, cautious, and trying to stay present and in control of myself*)... Yes...

M: Would you like to start by telling us how long its been in getting here – or what you want us to do? What would you like to do? It's yours.

P: OK... Actually I was 25 years old at the time...and pregnant...with my first child. So its been a long time. This particular phase...

M: (*He noticed that I was nervous*) Do you want to walk? It's easier that way.

P: OK...(I am not speaking to anyone directly, just into the air around me. I walk by his side within the circle of people.)...so this particular phase started last summer...I do art and I made a mask with four coffins. I was at the end of my rope... I didn't know where to go from there.

M: Right. Which four coffins?

P: (I stop at my box and take the coffins out, one by one.) These are the four coffins and...each one has something in it. (I set them on the floor beside the box.)

M: (He looks at them.) You made coffins. Did you do that first?

P: No...I started with the mask.. (I reach into the box and bring out the mask.)

M: Then you made the coffins.

P: Yes... This is the mask...

M: You made that one?

P: Yes... I made this mask...it is my face.

M: Show the group. (I put it on and turn a full circle so that the group can see.) Did you all see?

P: This is what I pulled off my face. There is a lot of sorrow and grief for what I have lost... because of that first moment of trauma. I didn't really know what to do with this art... Really it scared me...

M: It scared you. It scared the shit out of you?

P: Yes...it scared the shit out of me...because these coffins have to do with every part of my life...I didn't know what to do...

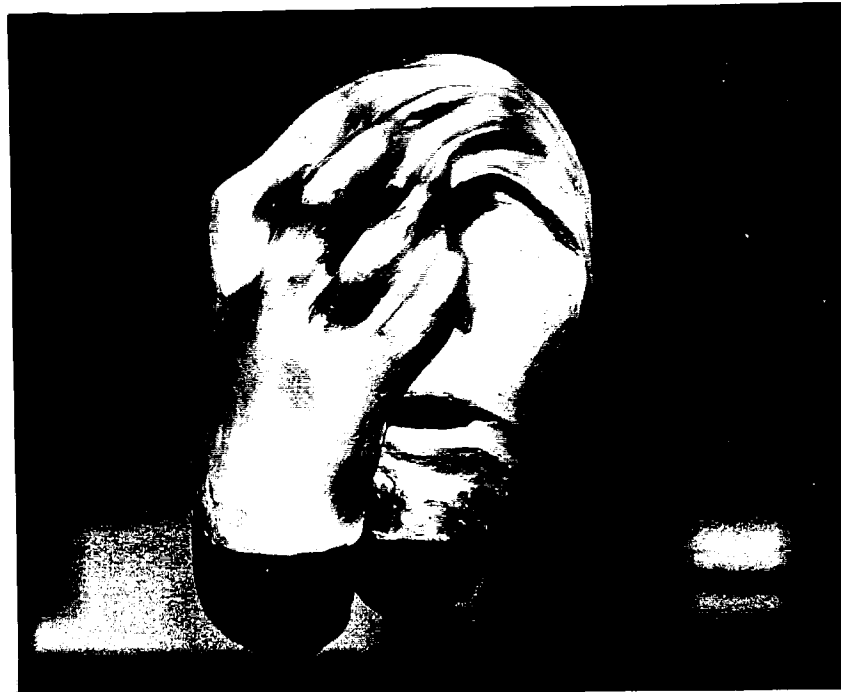


Figure 3: Mask of Sorrow (sculpture)

The mask was made and I looked at it for a long time. I thought the sorrow must have come from something that was lost - had died. I thought what died was me. She - the mask - was crying for me. I decided to make a coffin that would represent something that I felt I had lost. Maybe I would even do a symbolic funeral. I hoped that it would help me to let go - feel safe. I bought the black card paper and anxiously got started at making the coffin - I decided it would hold my fears. I cut the card with a sharp knife, six sides, a base, and lid. I taped the pieces together. Yes, it looked really good. Maybe I needed another one. I cut, taped, cut and taped until the card was gone and there were four coffins. I could think of lots of losses. I started out with symbols of my fears, then - the ideals I lost in my job, next - the losses in my family, and finally - the losses to my body. The forms seemed to flow easily and effortlessly from my hands. The coffins were full. I got a piece of black fabric and put the mask and the coffins together. Yes, she - the mask - liked that; the coffins were the missing piece. I looked at the group of objects and wondered how it would be to burn them. Certainly, I could let go of all of these losses. I contemplated it for days. The more I struggled with burning the coffins, the more anxious I became. Who would I be without them?

M: Would you like to pick one up and tell us about it - the parts of the coffin - or just leave them there and say "These are parts of my life"?

P: ... Let's just put them here... (They were on the floor - the lids in place.) One has to do with my job... I experienced some trauma... at my job.

M: What's that one?

P: That one is me having a hard time getting to sleep... because I always worry about someone coming in the door.

M: Yes, you worry about the door.

P: This one... is related to my family... there has been some trauma in my family related to me.

M: Related to you.

P: And this one... is basically just me and the assaults on my body ... I will uncover this one. (We are here because of the damage that was done to my body. Aren't we?)

M: This one is you.

P: This is the only one... that I will uncover.

M: This is for your family; this one is your job, this one is fear.

P: Fear...

M: That one has the door that you are afraid someone will come in.



Figure 4: Coffin With Body (sculpture)

She looked at the mask and coffins. I wondered if she would think that I was crazy. I felt crazy. I really wanted to go crazy - but I kept myself in check. She wondered if I might like to paint what I feel. I thought that would help my craziness. I painted. We looked at the image. I cried. I understood that I wasn't crazy - just hurting and tired of fighting. I went back and painted again, and again, and again. The images were powerful. I would put them out, look at them, reintegrate them. They spoke to me about things I couldn't say with words. They spoke my fears, my feelings, my dreams and my wishes. They spoke my future. I asked her to come to the enactment. I needed her there – she would be the only one who would know I wasn't crazy. She could tell them if I lost it. She said – Yes.

P: I took the mask and coffins to my therapist... I started the journey knowing that I needed to come back to the first trauma and stop it.

P: ... That got lost.

M: (We stop walking and look out at the group.) Tell the group.

P: Well... she must have come up to the gate... She paged me and it was the telephone number of the phone at the gate... My intuition tells me that she thought it was too late and she wanted me to know that she came.

M: She was near and yet so far. This is the same therapist that helped you.

P: ... The same therapist.

M: We are proceeding without her, but she did try to be here tonight.

P: Yes she did... (We continue walking) OK ... somewhere along the line... I connected with Medusa... When Perseus met Medusa... or when anyone met Medusa... if they looked at her they would freeze into stone... This is what happened to me the night I was assaulted... I froze... Since then, that has been my reaction to everything that scares me... I freeze.

M: From that one night?

P: Yes... *(I stop in front of the mask. It is a wild red gorgon face that I built onto a long, straight branch. The branch was hidden with long strands of raffia that dangled off Medusa's chin.)*



Figure 5: Mask of Medusa (sculpture)

It was an arduous undertaking to make her. I built her from my own face – my mask. She was me. The paper maché kept molding, so I cooked her in the oven. I made her head

overly large - painted red and gold. They symbolized the crone/mother aspect of the Medusa, as well as anger, power, and evil. The snakes around her head were painted green with metallic highlights. The snakes were beautiful. They were her consciousness – they gave her warning. They were in movement - writhing with consciousness - glimmering, shining, and awake. She is beautiful to me.

P: ... This is the Medusa mask.

M: This is Medusa. Tonight she will be shown directly to you – maybe freeze you.

P: That's... *(I hesitate – could that be true?)* I don't know if she will freeze me... I will probably freeze myself! *(I laugh and hold M's arm. I did not know how or what the Medusa would do during the enactment. I just knew she was a key figure and would play a key role.)*

M: *(He laughs too.)* You will probably freeze yourself – but we will thaw you every time you freeze. We will thaw you. That's the whole point of doing this enactment, isn't it?

P: Yes...

M: You may freeze, but that's the purpose of Medusa.

P: She represents to me... that frozen moment in the assault... I want to be able to use that freezing consciously... not unconsciously... That is why I put her image in the center of my shield... because when she was beheaded... Perseus used her head... her eye... her power to freeze or make people turn to stone... to do good.

M: To do good – tonight you want to take that back.

P: Yes... to have the good of it.

M: Her hair is made of snakes. Did you make this?

P: Yes...

M: Snakes and ...

P: Snakes... black dog hair... black feathers... fake black feathers, too...

M: I think Medusa will use those snakes tonight.

P: Yes... I need her... to speak to me....

Medusa was a most beautiful mortal woman. The god Poseidon pursued her and violated her in the temple of Athena. The goddess was so outraged that she turned Medusa into an ugly hag, whose gaze turned men to stone (Larrington, 1992). Although she had a woman's body, her face was hideous with wild boar tusks for teeth and hissing serpents for her hair. She had bronze claws and golden wings stuck to

her shoulders (Mercantante, 1988). Medusa was banished to the westernmost extremities of the earth where she lived with her two immortal sisters Stheno and Euryale (Guirand, 1959).

Perseus was the son of Danae. Danae was being pursued by the King Polydectes. Perseus was a valiant warrior and Polydectes was intimidated by him. Thus, Polydectes pretended that he wanted to marry Hippodameia (instead of Danae) and asked his vassals to bring wedding gifts. Not to be outdone by the others, and anxious to distinguish himself, Perseus promised to bring back the Medusa's head. Polydectes was pleased because he thought he would be rid of him. Knowing about Perseus' quest, the immortals looked well upon him. Hermes gave him a magic wallet and a pair of golden boots with wings. Athena gave him her shield so that he could protect himself from Medusa's gaze (Guirand, 1959).

It was early morning when Perseus came to the place where Medusa dwelt. He saw her sleeping amongst the quietly stirring snakes that surrounded her face. The snakes became aware of Perseus' presence and they began to hiss and move wildly – awakening Medusa from her sleep. She awoke and moved to look Perseus directly in the eye. Perseus was prepared, holding up his shield and fixing his gaze on Medusa's reflection in the polished surface of the shield. He cut off her head with one stroke of his sickle (Guirand, 1959). From her bleeding neck sprang Pegasus, a magic winged horse, and Chrysaor the giant warrior (Larrington, 1992). Perseus put Medusa's head into Hermes' wallet and fled.

On his way home, Perseus used the head of Medusa to turn a writhing sea monster to stone to protect Andromeda, his future bride. When he arrived home and found that his mother was being persecuted by Polydectes, he held up the Medusa head and turned Polydectes and his court to stone. He returned the magic wallet and boots to Hermes and gave Medusa's head to Athena so that she could place it on her shield (aegis) (Guirand, 1959).

M: What happening right now? Take a deep breath – rub your hands! Let's feel your hands – cold! Not frozen, just cool right? Remember when we talked you knew that this is all a part of how it will go.

P: Yes... *(I am anxious and somewhat self-conscious in front of the group. I am struggling to breathe calmly and naturally. I feel a lot of stress.)* The idea of the shield came while I was

painting in therapy... I was surprised that it was a shield. It was a surprise because it's something that I don't have...and even though I made it... and I put components on it of weapons that have been used against me... I still don't feel like I have it...It's there but it hasn't integrated into me yet. *(I made a leather shield with a cut in the middle of it. I embroidered the cut with red thread and placed a copper replica of Medusa's head on the shield – similar to Athena's.)*

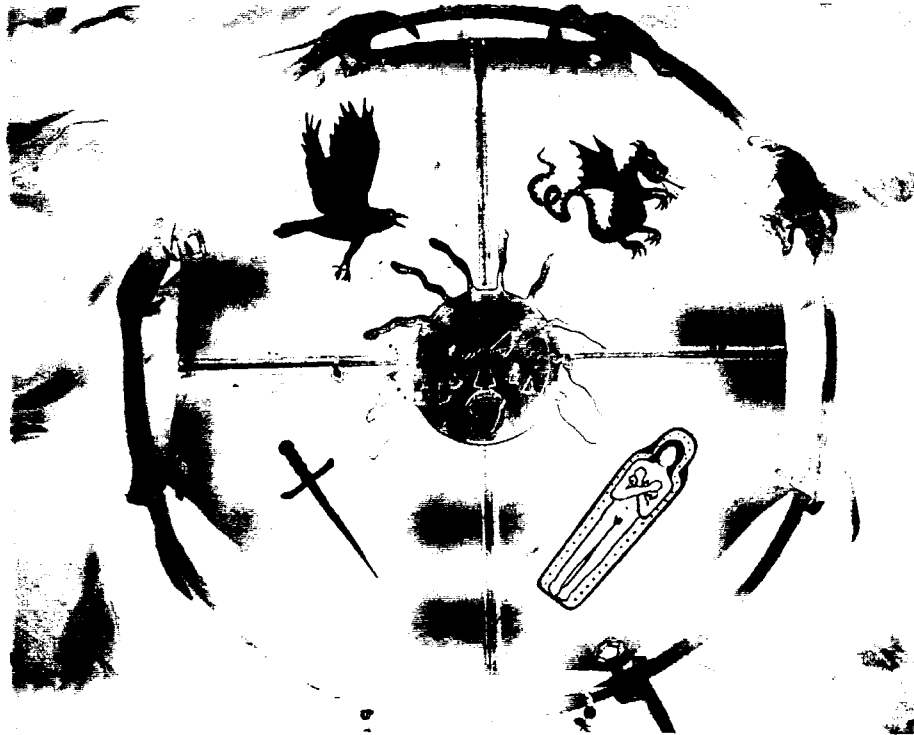


Figure 6: Aegis or Shield (sculpture)

M: You want to integrate that into you so you can use it. Our hope is that after tonight you'll be able to use it.

P: Yes...that is my wound (I point to the red cut in the middle of the shield.) and I need to receive this (I lift up the engraved copper Medusa head that was in the center of the shield.) sometime in the enactment.

M: Can we have someone hold this for us?

P: Yes...D. (I give the copper Medusa to D to hold for me. *We had talked previously – he was to carry the Medusa mask for me.*)

M: This will cover the wound in the end.

P: Yes...This is the next mask I made *(It is made of clay and it looks like a bomb went through it.)*...I feel blown apart... I need to draw myself back together somehow.

M: That may be a place you are coming from right now.(I set it down with the other masks.)



Figure 7: Clay Mask – Blown Apart (sculpture)

P: So ...shall we just get on with it? (*I was anxious and wanted it be over with.*) Can we just do it now?

M: I think we should just do it now. Know that as we go through it we will just stop-start-stop-start and we will just move through the whole thing. You will signal to me when you are ready to move on and I'll stop and check in with you.

The group sits all around me. I can hardly stay in touch with myself. I am dissociating. I reach to touch M often. It helps me stay connected. I want to breathe normally, but it is just not happening. I want to move on. Maybe that will help me calm down. I need to do something. Doing something usually helps me – it distracts me from my feelings. I am feeling a lot. I can not name the feeling - I want to stay above it and not go into it. I want to hold my feelings down. I worry about being crazy with feelings that are out of control. Do something. Do something now.

P: ...I want to give T his things. (I give T a black Zorro-type mask, a black toque, a pair of black gloves, a heavy brown leather jacket, and a heavy metal pipe that is about twenty inches long and two inches in diameter.)

T: (He takes them from me.) Should I put them on?

M: Not yet.

P: (*He is not sure what to do with them. He is nervous, too. I trust that he will know what to do when his turn comes.*) They are your things...and you know what to do with them.

M: They are you're things and you know what to do with them. You will be on standby for us.

P:I will do the witnesses next.

M: OK we will do the witnesses.

P: ... Then the Medusa mask... then my mask...

M: Then yours, right.

P: So these are neutral masks... (The masks are cut out from plain beige card. They each have a set of eye holes and an inset nose - no mouth.) Neutral holds everything...but also holds nothing... It is absolute balance... It is like the spiritual place in you... It is neutral and I guess that is the place I would like to have witness this... The neutral in you...to witness what happened to me.

M: The neutral in you is to witness. (M addresses the group.) So you will put these on and through these eyes, the neutral part of the self will witness what we are going to do. By being neutral and witnessing – we hope what?

P: I just want to be seen...and not judged.

M: And not judged. When they put them on then we won't be able to see what is going on behind.

P: I also want spontaneity...I want to leave room for spontaneity...I don't want you to feel trapped in the mask... I want you to use that neutral part of yourself to decide what you need to do with it.

M: You will tell them when to act on the spontaneous part – right?

P: Yes...If you could just look at it...and get the picture of it in your mind...before you put it on. You will know the image that you are wearing...Find your neutral place...even the way you sit...find your centeredness there.

M: Let's give them those. Would you give each person a mask yourself?

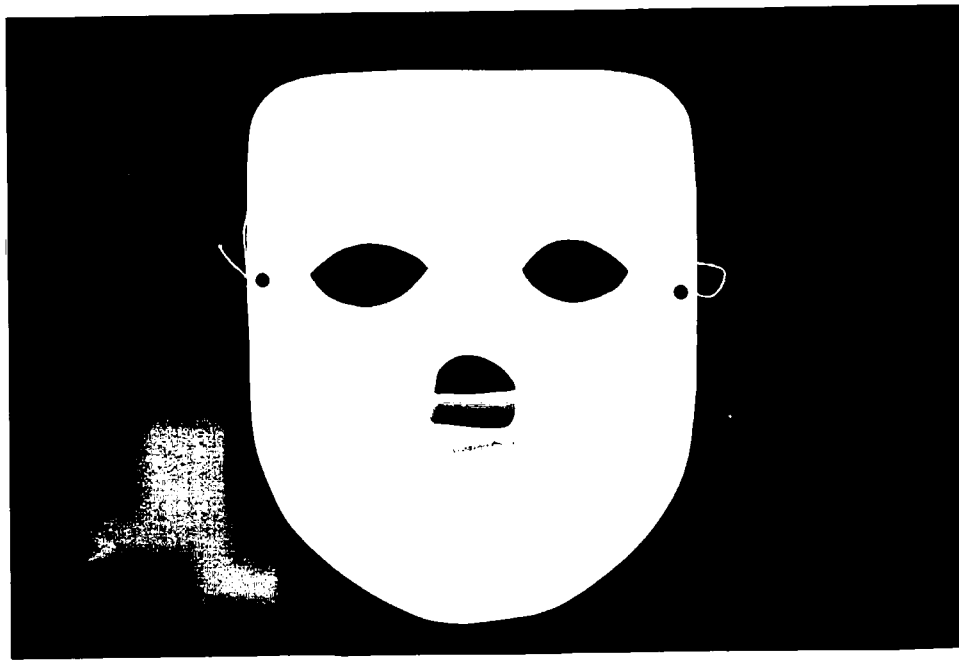


Figure 7: Neural Mask

Neutral has been described as the face that you had before you were born. What is neutral? It is really easier to define what it is not. There is no expression, yet is capable of revealing all expression. There is no mouth so all that is communicated is in silence. It is symmetrical – no human face is symmetrical. There is no gender – it is depersonalized. In a neutral place there is no memory, no personal or collective history. It is innocence, inexperience, and balance. Everything that is not neutral is the beginning of characterization (Eldredge, 1996). In one study that was done with actors, using the neutral mask, it was found that wearing neutral had the ability to change a person's breathing pattern, body gesture, and thoughts about the self (Turner, 1981). Neutral masks are very powerful.

What made the neutral mask so important to include during the enactment? I needed safety above all else – it was the only way I could survive. The faces of the witnesses had to be covered. I had experienced substantial secondary wounding through social shaming around the original trauma incident – any indication of judgement was dangerous for me. I chose the neutral mask because it was expressionless. I would not be able to see their emotions. It represented the middle, the spiritual, the centered place within a person. It is a safe place where there are no judgements or criticisms. There is no mouth so the mask does not speak but

only observes in silence. The voice of reaction is not there. Everyone is equal and identical. I was safe and so were they. Through wearing the neutral mask, we created a community that was free of prejudice.

M: Could you tell H. which mask she will wear? (I am part way around the circle giving the neutral masks to the witnesses.)

P: Yes...yes...(I turn to her and speak.) You will wear the mask of my spiritual self... it was very prominent in this experience.

M: It saved your life.

P: *(I felt shy and humbled.)* It saved my life...*(I wanted to finish giving the neutral masks to the witnesses. I speak to H.)* Could you follow me while I do this?

M: She needs to be here through the whole thing.

P: ...I have a mask for you...too.

H: I knew you would. (She follows behind me as I continue to give out the neutral masks. I look at each person as I give them a mask. *I become more and more overcome with what they will do for me in witnessing. I am feeling very emotional – a deep gratitude.*)

P: This is such a gift that you are giving me... just witnessing.

M: It is a gift that they are giving you. *(I am crying now. I feel overwhelmed with the way that they received the masks. Each person took their mask as if it were the greatest honor to wear it. I felt humbled and appreciative. M comes in front of me. He hugs me.)* We have the first part done – just breathe. You walked around and did it. Speak out about the awareness which is happening inside – that is a part of them knowing.

P: I'm just grateful for someone witnessing what happened because...I was alone.

M: You were alone that night. Having it witnessed by all of these people – what does that do?

P: Maybe...I won't feel so alone...after that.

M: Maybe it won't just be you knowing this. Look around – before they cover their faces. This is going to be apart of you – their knowing. It's important to know. We don't always want to know – but we need to know. It is for you, but what you're doing is for other people, too. Do you know that?

P:... I don't feel like I know...*(How could anyone receive something good out of witnessing an act of violence? I am feeling confused and I struggle to stay centered and present. I have a difficult time breathing comfortably.)*

M: You may be helping other people in the future. That's not primarily why you are doing it, but it is for others, too. What's best for you now? I won't go forward until you have your breath back. *(I try to relax. I take a deep breath and loosen my shoulders.)* Your arms drop. Just tell me when you need to breathe or rest. *(I nod my head 'yes', but I'm not sure I am present enough to be able to tell him I need to stop. I am at a distance to myself.)* You have just experienced the overwhelming feelings that they were going to see this. You appreciate that they were going to see this.

P: ...I value...it's the value of them...to me.

M: *(He moves on.)* So everyone has a mask – now your angel. Is she wearing a mask? What have you made for her?

I made my spirit in my own image – or is my image made from my own spirit? What better way to manifest that voice of comfort, that breath of calm that I depend on for my salvation? She is my tacit knowing, my higher self. She is white – pure white – filled with light. I did not know how to make that mask carry the movement of illumination, the tiny sparks of glimmering light that I see now and then. I did not know how to make the mask stream out love, compassion, and peace. I did not know how to honor the imperishable, the indestructible, the inextinguishable, the quenchless. What form could hold the formless infinite? It could only be the white image of my own face because it is within me.

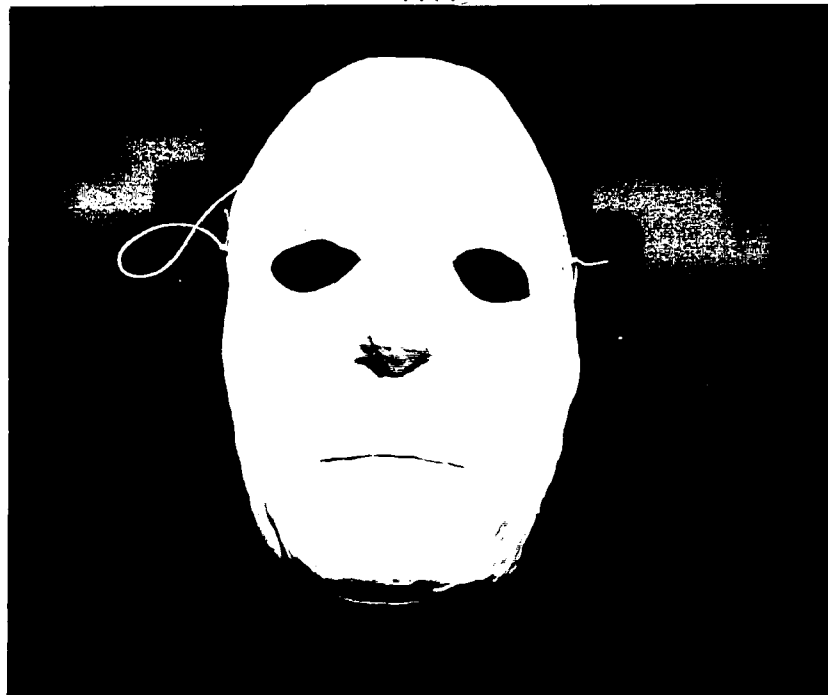


Figure 8: Mask of My Spirit Self

P: (I speak to H.) You will be wearing a mask of my face...

M: Is that actually a copy of your face?

P: Yes...I made it out of fine white silk... I hope it is not too hard for you to wear... I also have this white silk garment, too. (I put the silk cloth over her head and shoulders. M put the mask on her face. *It was as if the mask fused onto her face. I looked at my own image - I was surprised and overcome with emotion.*)

M: This is getting very serious. It is more and more to the core isn't it?

P: Yes...yes...(*I felt shy, hesitant. I was not expecting this.*)...I will just tie it on. (*I look carefully at her again. From deep within me grief finds it's way to the surface. I fall into her arms crying.*) I am so sorry... I'm sorry... I didn't listen to you (*Tears of regret, guilt, sorrow pour out of me. M moves around and holds me, too. We stay there for a few minutes.*)

H: I am always inside you.

P: ...I know...you never punished me for that...It didn't matter... You stayed beside me always...

H: I always do love you. (*I did not know that I had carried so much shame about having ignored my inner voice so often. It was as if I had the opportunity to speak the words to my spirit manifest. It was a very powerful moment for me.*)

M: Keep breathing – in and out – in and out. Coming back to that really – really upset you didn't it?

P: hmm. (*I let her go after a few moments. I feel relieved somehow. She follows behind me now – without touching me. The spirit is there, but not physical anymore – it was only for that moment. I just needed to know she was there. She remained behind me for the duration of the enactment. We continued on.*)...OK...(I speak to M.) The Medusa ...D and I have made a contract. He doesn't have to speak at all...I want what ever is spontaneous to come out...it may be nothing...it may be just a sound. (I speak directly to D.) If I need you to speak or...say something...I am just going to say to you "speak". (M puts the black mask on D's eyes. It is similar to the mask of the perpetrator. He carries the Medusa mask in front of him.)

M: (M speaks to D.) You know what you are going to do. Where are D and the Medusa going to be?

P: ...He is going to be behind (I point to T.) ...the perpetrator.

M: He is going to be behind the perpetrator. He is going to follow. We are finished with this box then? Because we are going to enact this now, we should move these things out of the way (He points to the coffins and other unused masks.) Are you wearing a mask?

P: No...I'm not wearing a mask.

M: You are not wearing a mask at all. It's just you and me then.

P: You...me and P

They were unmasked. I needed to see their true faces. I needed to see their expression so that I could monitor my safety. It was my only grounding. My outer face was not masked because my inner face was. I wore the mask underneath my skin. The only way to get at it was for someone to tear my skin off and take it from me. I was tired of the way it had formed my face. I was ready for the incision.

M: You, me and P. Before the witnesses put their masks on, do you want to give an explanation of what we are doing? Do you want to talk as we go along? Do you want to set a context?

P: *(I needed a moment to breathe in deeply. I am not in contact with myself.)* Maybe we should just be quiet...before they put the masks on.

M: Before they put the masks on. Then you and I and P will tell the story. (M speaks to the group.) OK, so we would like you to be quiet and when you feel ready, then put your mask on. (There is a short pause. It is quiet. All the witnesses now don their masks.) Just take a look around – what are you aware of?

I am amazed. The neutral masks have gone on and it is as if there are no people in the room. The masks are so visible and the people are not. The masks are still, calm, watching. There is no judgement – no expression. I feel free. It is more than I ever could have hoped for. I feel that I can go on without fear of them.

P: They really look neutral....

M: Yes, they look neutral. I didn't realize that it would be like this. It is great actually.

P: Yes...it is...I don't feel like I have anything to worry about with them.

M: No, they are there behind the masks. These masks make this pure, actually. (We look at the group together for a moment. M turns to me and takes my hands.) My covenant to

you is this - we will go through this event as accurately as it really was, so that we come out the other end and you'll be whole again. It will be seen by all of us so that it will no longer be so much inside of you. *(I take a deep breath and try to relax – I know what the story is – why do I worry so?)* Now - we are ready. Do you want to set the tone by walking? Will that be easier?

Why do I struggle to breathe? How can I tell you what I feel right now? Focus on your own breath. Is it at ease within you? Rhythmically moving in and out – calm and worry free? That is how I want my breath to be but it is not. My fear is strangling me. I want to tear open the air passage and let the air in. I want to be present but I am struggling to contain myself. What needs to be contained so? There is something - I can't name it – fear, panic, trepidation? I don't know what will happen tonight. I really don't want to die again. We must begin...

(I feel hesitant and scared to start writing. Am I afraid to be caught in the pain of it again as I write? I feel anxious, nervous – it is hard to remember, hard to articulate. I am finding ways of avoiding it – spell checking, eating, checking on my children. I think this is a microcosm of what I must have felt at the time – anxiety, stress, worry. Alright...don't hesitate...just go.)

P: ... So... the apartment is right here. *(I point to my left.)*

M: The apartment is over there, yes?

P: ... And I am pregnant...

M: How pregnant are you?

P: ... Four and a half months.

M: Four and a half months.

P: The father of my baby... took a trip to Europe.

M: He's away.

P: No *(I am ashamed. It was a humiliating experience.)*... he split.

M: He split. So he took off and left you?

P: Yes... I am living on my own.

M: You are living by yourself.

P: *(I needed to change the subject. The abandonment hurt so much at the time.)*... My back is really sore tonight.

M: My back is really sore tonight.

P: I just want to go for a walk...to see if that might help. I'm going down the stairs and I'm thinking that...I'll just walk a block or two. *(I begin dreaming into the story. M steps in front of me and I stop. He looks at me and I make contact with him. Yes, here I am.)*

M: I'll just go down the stairs and walk a block or two. What's going through your mind?
Let's keep walking.

P: I'm just going to walk a couple of blocks and...get some fresh air...get some movement and I'll feel better.

M: I'll feel better. Your back is sore. You'll just go for a walk.

P: I'm sure I want to do that...but I notice that the moon is almost full...and there's a really funny feeling in the air tonight.

M: Funny feeling?

P: *(I stop. It is like I can feel it again. It is eerie, unearthly.)* A really funny feeling...Like I...*(I feel confused – I am in two worlds. My body is remembering, responding - yet I am here at Loon Lake.)*

M: I want to go for a walk but...

P: It's weird...I never experienced anything like it before.

M: Really?

P: Like there's something weird about...the air. *(It is my first warning. True to the first night we repeat the pattern. I just ignore it. We continue walking.)*

M: Your back is sore...

P: It's sore...and it's just a couple of blocks.

M: I'm just going to override that feeling and just go.

P: I'm noticing it... but I'm just going to go a couple of blocks... This is when the voice starts speaking to me.

M: Behind you?

P: ...In me.

M: What's the voice saying?

P: GO HOME!

M: You shouldn't be here. Is it just saying "go home"?

P: "Go home, don't do it, go home." I say...just a couple of blocks... That's all I want...just a couple of blocks. Just to right there... then I will go home.

M: Just a couple of blocks – to there. Then I'll go home, right? You are bargaining with yourself.

P: ...I'm bargaining...I'll just go a short distance.

M: Just a short distance.

P: As I'm walking...the voice is getting stronger.

M: Oh is it?

P: And it's hard to... move my legs. *(I slow down. My legs actually feel like lead this very moment – my body is leading me now).*

M: The voice is very strong in you.

P: Its strong... it's warning me...*(I am remembering the regret and shame. They are finding their way up through my breath - I am getting upset. My breathing is labored, strained.)*

M: It's warning me that...

P: ...I should...go home...*(I cannot hold back my tears – it hurts. M stops and holds me for a moment.)*

M: **(M speaks softly.)** Something bad might happen. *(His voice is soothing me. I try to gather myself. I am able to walk again...I struggle to get my legs to move).*

P: It's hard to walk...It's hard to lift my legs even...Big warning...big...big warning... *(I cry and through my tears, reach for my breath. M comforts me as we walk. We are walking side by side, now. I hold on to his arm as we walk. I need this grounding.)*

M: Big warning - you keep going.

P: ...I keep going...anyway.

M: Does your angel need to say anything or is she just there?

P: No... she's just here.

M: Just here- she's probably hearing what you are saying right now. She knows.

P: Yes...*(It's hard to breathe!)*...yes...

She speaks in me:

I am what you know that you do not say.

I am yearning, appealing, calling – forewarning

Hear me!

Experience my semblance in your thoughts

Your knowing – silently urgently expressed.

Hear me!

Trust your deep wisdom – spoken without words.

For I am unsaid – listen with your inner “I”.

Hear me!

You know me through your heart, your dreams, your art.

My voice is inescapable.

Hear me!

You trust me in secret – but not completely.

This will be your final moment of doubt.

M: Take a pause - take a deep breath. Just glance around and see the witnesses. They are listening and watching. You were just going for a walk.

P: ...Just a walk...*(I feel like I am pleading. Pleading for it to have been different that night. Pleading to myself to have listened.)* ...that's all I wanted to do.

M: Your back hurt.

P: *(My body remembers – a baby, a beautiful baby.)* I feel like my baby's there... So... we're together.

M: We're together so I'm not entirely alone. I have my baby with me.

P: Sometime I would just talk to my baby... as I went for walks. *(It is a bit of relief talking about this. I felt so beautiful while I was pregnant – so happy... I walk more easily. My face brightens for a moment.)*

M: Oh would you? What would you say?

P: Imagining... well, talking to her about everything, really... Like tonight...

M: Let's take a break, a little diversion *(Does he know that I am finding a distraction, avoidance – some relief?)*. We know what we are going to run into. Now you are talking to this baby. You are going for a walk to -

P:To help me feel more comfortable...

M: So, just bare with me baby and we will go down here – just two blocks. She's kind of like your companion already.

P: Yes...*(I am touched by what he said. I feel really sorry I put my child in harm. I was so irresponsible. I took an incredible risk that night. My heart aches just thinking about it, now. My daughter did not come out unscathed from the experience... and I am so sorry.)*

M: We don't have to talk. Walking is a way to come back to your center.

We were enmeshed. I could not find a separation between us. I tried – psychology said that enmeshment was not healthy. I couldn't voluntarily let her go away from me after that night. I had to hold her as close to me as I could. I had to protect her. She and I had the same skin. Her feelings, her behaviors, her experiences – it was as if they were mine. What else could I have done? I almost lost her during the assault. I almost lost her again during the brain surgery that I had to have when I got to the hospital. They tried to reassure me – warn me – prepare me. They told me that she might not survive the surgery, they would have to lower my blood pressure – and there was the loss of blood, the anaesthesia, the intravenous drugs and so on. I shouldn't worry, though, they said - I was still young and I could always have another baby. I was devastated. I could not have lived without her. What was there to live for? They did not know what we had gone through together. They did not know how we had bonded that night. They did not know the sacrifice we made to live.

She had lent me her "good luck" necklace for the enactment. She knew something big – something difficult - was going to happen. She knew it had to do with the assault. She put the necklace in my pocket without me knowing. I found it when I got to Loon Lake. I was surprised and overjoyed. I am wearing it as I remember being pregnant with her and how proud I felt at the time. As I am walking now, it is as if we are going through it together again.

M: (We have been walking, now we stop for a moment.) You see someone now - coming towards you.

P: I notice somebody.

M: What do you notice?

P: I notice there are some bushes...there is a lane way.(*I am looking into my mind's eye as I remember. It is as if the pictures are stored in my mind and the memories are stored in my body – I am trying to breathe – just breathe.*)

M: There is a lane way there.

P: I notice there's a man...and he's coming out from...behind the bushes...He's puttingon...(It is hard to bear the memory that comes into my mind and into my body.)

M: He's putting on -

P: He's putting on...black gloves...(I have to force out the words with the last of my breath.)...on his hands (I cry uncontrollably...M holds me.) ...I know I'm in trouble.

M: (He voice is calm and reassuring.) We're here – (He continues on.) You know you're in trouble now. I'm in trouble now; it's too late.

P: ...I'm just trying...to catch my breath as I'm walking.

M: Shall we go around one more time? We saw him, didn't we? (We walk as he tries to center me.) Breathe - walk - breathe - walk - breathe.

P: (*As we walk, I feel like I can go on even though I still struggle to breathe. I continue.*)...I say...I'm in trouble...but then I ...kind of say...it's OK. I'm just going to go to the end of the block. (*I am trying to reassure myself - I feel so sad.*)

M: You say, "It's OK; I'm going to the end of the block. At least I've seen him. He's coming towards me. I know I'm in trouble, but I'm going to be OK."

P: (*I am triggered - I cry out*)... I don't know if I'm going to be OK, M!... I don't know...if I'm going to be OK... I don't know...

M: I know, I know. (*He holds me as I cry.*) I convinced myself again, right? Do you want to stop now?

P: (*I know I have to go on to heal this deep, deep wound.*)...Just for a minute...(*My breath is labored.*)

M: We are going to stay here for just as long as you need to stay here.

I had waited a long time to see him again. I had a relationship with this perpetrator - even though he was a stranger to me. I had given myself over to him. Strangely, I did not even know that I had done this until I wasn't doing it anymore. You see, he violently forced himself into my life that night - infiltrating into my thoughts, my feelings, and my cells. Completely. He was every strange man that I saw, every man that was on the street. I saw his face everywhere - the mask of the perpetrator - all men wore it. The fact was that he had not been apprehended - the police let him slip away through their fingers. So, I knew he was out there somewhere. I knew there was a possibility that I might run into him someday. In the beginning, I looked for him all the time. I looked around corners, in parking lots, in crowds - any crowd, in the grocery store, in my car, in the forest, behind every bush. I had to be on the alert, hypervigilant. It became a habit. It became a way of life. It became a way of thinking, feeling, behaving. The police had let him get away - so I had to do the searching. Knowing his whereabouts was the only way I could be safe. I did not want to be surprised again. If he had been caught, maybe I could have stopped watching for him. Yet, there was no escape. Even in my home, I waited for him to come to the door - break it down, rape me and murder me again. But I could never find him - until tonight.

M: We are just stopping, so you know we are still here. The witnesses are still here. We are all still here. You are not alone. That's the difference tonight. The terror is inside of you, but we are here. No rush. Remember we are going to go forward when you want to – every step of the way. That is the control that you are taking back tonight – that you didn't have – that was taken away from you. You felt like you didn't have control. You said – "I'm in trouble here." Here, tonight, I'm not in trouble. I'm terrified but safe. I'm safe. There's a difference. I'm terrified and I'm not in trouble tonight. This is now.

P: *(His words don't go into my mind. I think it is his caring, his love, his voice that goes into me. I am reassured by that.)*...OK...

M: You know what I mean don't you? The controls are present tonight. That's what we are honoring tonight. That's how it goes. The power is so strong it's overwhelming. Remember when we were talking about doing this? It's the only way to release it – isn't it? It's to take control of it. So, we have gotten this far. We're not moving yet – until you're ready. You can even say, "I want to go a little ways further" or you might just want to stand here and say you're not ready to see him there. When you feel a little stronger, you can glance up and look. No walking. We'll stop if you want. Check around who's here?

P: *(I've dissociated. I can't really get my eyes to see outside of myself. I look at the witnesses.)*...OK...

M: Do you want to check who's behind you?

P: *(I'm on automatic. I look behind me at H. She has been behind me all along.)*...OK...

M: So, what do you want to do? Do you want to walk and leave him where he is? Because you're in control.

I was unaware that at the moment when I first began to panic, P came up to join us. She was unmasked – her face clearly visible. She stood at my left and stayed beside me for the rest of the enactment. At times, the experience of her warmth and the gentle firmness of her touch was the only thing that was able to pierce through the panic inside of me. She was part of me - my feminine – quiet, steadfast, resolute, and ever present. It was like a balance had been created by her joining. M was on my right – my masculine self, and H behind me – my spiritual self. We were now four. I was in the middle, surrounded by this healing triad. It gave me the strength to proceed.

P: (*P gently straightens my hair – it had fallen in my eyes. I look at P. I see her now. I decide to go on.*) I think he can come out now...

M: He can come out. We want to do this in slow steps. (*M gives instruction to the perpetrator. Talking to T.*) First, he turns around. (*T turns slowly, but not completely, around.*) He's turned around now.

P: (*I look over at T.*)... He must have... seen me walking.

M: He must have seen you. Sometimes it works better if you tell him what to do. "I'm ready to see you."

P: (*I take a breath. I speak to T.*)... I'm ready to see you now.

M: (*To T*) Turn around. You tell him when to stop - just look at him – (*I look.*)

I examine him with my eyes and with my heart. The mask over his face intensifies his anonymity. It creates a reality for me. It was a frightening moment eighteen years ago and I experience that now. Even though I can see through the mask and my eyes tell me that this is not the perpetrator that I had met on the street so many years ago, my body tells me differently. My inner experience is, without exception, exactly the same. In fact, it is even more intensified. Tonight, as I tell the story, I am more present than I could have been at the first experience. It is a slow arduous process of working through my body's memory, moment for moment, as I take each step along the way. Now, he has come out of the lane. He will put on a pair of black gloves. I try to believe that I have some control, but my inner being is in chaos and I struggle with every moment to remain present.

M: Now, he doesn't have the gloves on. Did you say he had the gloves on?

P: (*I can hardly hear M speak. I am in the story. I am the story.*)... He walks out...

M: Putting the gloves on, right?

P: ...He walks out... putting the gloves on... at the same time. (*I am fighting with myself – stay in touch. Stay in touch.*)

M: So, when you are ready, tell him he can start to walk out and put the gloves on. We need to give him directions as we meet him – when you are ready. (*He checks in with me.*) How much are you aware of your breathing? What are you aware of right now?

P: ... That I am breathing.

M: I am breathing – that is good.

P: ... It's heavy... but it's a bit deeper now.

M: It's deeper now. When we breathe deeper and stand like this we can't be out of touch as much. It means that you are probably feeling in control enough to be able to go through it and face it step-by-step. He won't get you again because we end up with the control.

P: *(I think I can believe that, I just can't feel it.)*...OK...

M: So when you are ready, tell him to walk putting the gloves on.

P: *(I prepare with a deep breath.)* ...OK, you come out of the lane way...and you are putting the gloves on... slowly and...carefully.

M: He's studying you.

P: ...Studying me...and getting ready *(It feel like my skin is tightening around my bones. It is intense, so intense.)*

M: Getting ready – and that's what you meant when you said, "I'm in trouble." It's mean, sadistic, and evil, isn't it? It's almost like he's relishing the trap isn't it?

P: ... Yes ...*(I am struggling with my breath. Hang on, just hang on.)*

M: Don't tell him to start until you are ready – it's your move.

P: OK...*(I cannot stand the tension. I just want to have it over with. I speak to T.)*... Go!

M: *(M is instructing T.)* He will only come as far as the circle *(The perpetrator puts on gloves slowly, very slowly. I am frozen, watching in fear.)* Then he will stop. Then we have to -

P: *(I am breaking apart - I gasp for breath)* – NO!!

M: It's the gloves isn't it?

P: *(I cry out.)* Yes...the...gloves! *(I cry – it is agony to see and experience the fright and dread within me.)*

M: I am aware of the gloves. These are the gloves that hurt me, right?

P: ...hmmm ...*(I lay my head on M's chest. I cry out my grief and pain as he holds me.)*

M: These are the gloves that hurt me, right? You saw the figure before - now you see the gloves. It took you back there, didn't it?

P: ...*(After a moment, I look up. It is a long standing trigger in my life.)* Every time people put gloves on...no matter who they are...I see that.*(I feel the frustration I have experienced, all these years, trying to rid myself of this sight.)*

I remember the first panic attack I ever had. I was getting my kindergarten class ready to go outside to play in the newly fallen snow. I was kneeling down helping a girl with her zipper then, I turned around to see another child slowly and meticulously struggling to pull on

a pair of black gloves. I was shocked because I had never seen a young child wear gloves - they do not have the dexterity to get them on. I did not know what to do - I felt trapped. I went into a panic. I could scarcely breathe, I was shaking, my heart was racing, and I could hardly think. The only thought I had was that I was going to die. I stood up and almost fainted. I managed to get myself out of the cloakroom, away from the children, and into the class. I lay down on the floor and tried to get myself together. No rational thought had any effect - my frightened body was in control.

One of the worst parts of being a trauma survivor is when an event in the present reminds a survivor of the past. The events are called triggers because they trigger emotions associated with the trauma event. Reactions to triggers can be intense, even though the triggers do not impose any danger or threat. During trauma the survivor could not control the situation. Once again the survivor loses control - of herself. There is no inner safety (Matsakis, 1994).

The gloves represented an explicit trigger for me. I did not allow anyone in my family to wear black gloves. My husband was furious because I threw out a pair that he valued. I brought mittens into the kindergarten for children who came with gloves. If black gloves came into my kindergarten I would take them and hide them so that the child would have to use my mittens. I admonished parents who gave gloves to their children. I avoided looking at anyone who wore black gloves - even if they were my friends. Somehow, with those black gloves on they changed in appearance. I hated it - I would feel physically ill at the sight of them. I always had to find ways of getting rid of those gloves - they seemed to be everywhere sometimes. Because the gloves appeared in social places I had to control my panic, as much as possible. I never had the opportunity to live with the feelings that they evoked in me. At last I could expose, grieve, and release this tragic reaction.

M: You know we have to watch this. You know what's happening as you control this. Who's maintaining the control here?

P: *(I believe I had some control for the first time. However, it was not control over the perpetrator, but it was control over myself. I am able to breathe a little better.)...I am...I have it.*

M: Yes, that's right. You could even say "I know you're putting on gloves. I know you're putting on gloves. I see you."

P: ...I know what you're doing (*I sense this different feeling in me – an emerging anger. All those years of trying to get rid of black gloves was welling up in me.*)

M: And what you're doing is...

P: ... What you're doing is... putting those gloves on your hands... I guess you don't want to... mess them up.

M: Yes, and you don't want to get you hands bloodied or dirty, right?

P: ... Yes... he did it...so slowly... He wanted me to see that.

M: That's the attack. It feels like an attack right now. Doesn't it?

P: ... It does... already.

M: It does. It's like we already started. We are already there – it's started. But tonight, when he walks towards you, it's you who's going to move us towards him – when you are ready. As a matter of fact, he is going to pass us the first time.

P: ... Yes he is... He's going to trick me.

M: He's going to -

P: Trick me!... It's a surprise...

M: Oh, that is even more sinister isn't it?

P: ..Yes... it is... (*I can sense the anger rising – I can't let this out, I might kill him - it is strong.*)

M: More evil – isn't he?

P: It is so... damn evil... (*I start to get very upset – I shout out to the witnesses.*)... Can you see what he is doing to me?!

She kept her eyes on the scene - something that she always did when she was in a state of shock about the atrocity. She always watched every move, every gesture, every sound, and every innuendo. It transfixed her. She struggled to understand the inhumane actions of humans towards one another. It was like an obsession – she was obsessed with films or books on the Inquisition, war atrocities, rape, and trauma. She had an insatiable thirst to resolve the story - to get to the reason - the logical reason for these very gruesome actions that people did to one another. What kind of a world was this? She needed an answer – some sense about it. It was as if an answer would be some relief. Evil was a very deeply transfixing and confusing concept. On the night that she was assaulted, she wondered if the evil had penetrated its way into her. On that night she started to feel like a bad person. She was always looking for ways

to sacrifice to others to make up for the deep badness that she felt within her. The badness was evil. She thought that she must be bad and evil in order to have deserved such treatment - assault, humiliation, violation. She felt dirty and deserving of mockery and shame. She saw evil in him, so she must recognize it in herself. She knew that she had it inside her now. Then there was this feeling of rage - a rage that could kill another. She tried to have a good side - she tried control the rage, where he could not. She was clever, actually. She held the rage inside - deep inside. Most of the time she did not even know it was there. She let the rage eat holes in her stomach. She let the rage create incurable diseases that doctors wanted to study. With the rage, she created accidents that broke her bones. She turned the rage inside of herself and began to systematically destroy the body that carried it. She let the rage invite dangerous people into her life - people who abused her further. She deserved it - she was evil. Didn't she deserve to be beaten? Didn't she deserve to walk with her head hanging low with rounded shoulders? Didn't she deserve to speak with a mousy little voice that had no power in it? The world should never know this dirty secret of evil and rage inside of her. It was like an involution of energy pulling her outer body inside of her so that she could witness, transfixed, the beating that she gave herself. She knew the depth of evil that lived in her. The punishment could never be too great - it was just an attempt to perform the penance that might be the redemption of her own soul. Now, she was letting them see - exposing what she hid inside her as her own. The secret was out. She was letting the world see the evil - the first evil. That's where it all started.

M: They can see. They are watching. They see what he is doing to you.

P: *(It is time to speak to the world - to speak to the society in which atrocity happens. I speak to the community.)*...No one should...ever have had this...done to them...

M: No one ever should have had this done to them.

P: ...Nobody should...ever have this...done to them.

M: And the reason that I am showing this to you tonight is to...

P: So...you will do something in your community...

M: So you will do something about it. We have to be responsible.

P: Yes... we have to be responsible for our society...for our children.

M: For our children - for others...

P: ...For our women...and our men...

M: And already - just by what we have done tonight - if we just stopped right now and we were to go home - what do you think might happen if people hear or see something on the street – it might alert them in different ways than it previously would have.

P: Yes....Be aware....be aware.

M: Yes, be aware. They have been a witness. That's what you wanted. *(There is some sense of safety in declaring the community's responsibility.)*

According to Judith Herman (1992) sharing the traumatic event with others is a precondition for the restoration of a sense of meaning in the world. Community response has a powerful impact on the resolution of the trauma experience. The survivor is able to restore the betrayal of the community by the public acknowledgement of the violation and the public's response or action in relation to it. When the survivor has "recognition and restitution", a sense of order and justice can be rebuilt. The moral stance of the community to the trauma experience allows the survivor to understand the community's view of what happened. Depending on the response, the survivor may experience isolation or acceptance from community members. However, acceptance by the community is a key element in reintegration and resolution.

When I began, I did not know why it was so important to have these witnesses, yet tacitly I had to find a way of restoring my connection to the community. Through the witnesses participation in my enactment, I no longer had to carry the violation alone. The tragedy of my experience went beyond a personal level and out into the group of individuals that wore the masks for me this day. In some sense I could become a spokesperson, a social activist, calling for action and responsibility in the community. I felt like I spoke for all those who suffered violent trauma through the hands of a stranger. This event helped me to recognize that my experience was a public matter. The witnesses had to see. It was as if the masks – silenced, with no mouth – carried one response – that of acceptance. It could heal me.

P: ...OK...

M: We are going to walk forward, and he'll walk towards you. Then he will walk by. Which side does he go on?

P: ...My right side.

M: OK, he'll pass us here. We can do that. We'll just keep walking past him. So, maybe we should just do that – does that feel right?

P: Yes...and then...he puts the gloves on completely...by now.

M: Completely now.

P: Then he checks...

M: He checks -

P: ...To make sure the metal pipe...is in his belt...and then he comes.

M: He comes forward. Now how does he do it? Quickly, slowly, or sauntering?

P: ...He's matching my pace (*I am remembering, listening attentively – I want to get it right.*)

M: As soon as we start to walk – then he starts to walk – but he will pass us. Do you want to look back and look at where he went?

P: ...No! (*I am absolutely firm. At the time I thought I was free of him. By not looking back he could disappear from my mind – I could escape into denial.*)

M: OK because you thought that when he went past...

P: I was free...I need to experience...the hope (*I was remembering the relief that I felt when he went by me. I needed that experience right now.*)

M: That hope – so let's go by and experience the hope. You tell me when you are ready to go. Say – I chose to go.

P: (*I am not ready. As I look at the perpetrator waiting for my instructions, it is difficult to go on. Something is holding me back. A familiar feeling – guilt and shame. I feel P. touching me – holding my baby.*) I'm just so worried about my baby...It's really overwhelming...when I see him like that.

M: Cause I worry about my baby.

P: ...It's my responsibility...

M: It's my responsibility. I'm feeling like I should have listened. Because it's not just me but I'm putting my baby in harms ways too, right?

P: ...Oh, yes (*The feelings are getting stronger – I am being drawn into the guilt with every breath I take. I can remember the feeling of my pregnant body.*)

M: Is that what your thinking? It's not just me - there's two of us.

P: I can take I ...but I don't think she can take it (*Even now I sense the incredible vulnerability that existed within me eighteen years earlier. Now I will listen to my inner voice – I want to stop the attack before it starts this time.*)

M: I can take it, but I don't think she can. That's important for us to acknowledge right now.

P: Yes....(*I start to cry. M holds me - I feel P there by my side. I am struggling again with my breath.*)

M: Because when you decide to go past to feel the hope it's because of the baby – now I understand.

P: (*I struggle to breathe. I am hyperventilating – I get light headed.*) I think I'm going to faint.... (*I lean into M trying to get my breath under control.*)

M: That's OK. We will hold you up. (*M and P hold me. I can feel their warmth and strength.*) Notice your breathing now.

P: ...OK...(*I spend a few moments trying to connect back into myself. I feel supported, cared for.*) Thank you....

M: When you feel like you have to faint – notice that it is also what you do to come back.

P: Yes...(*I do not really notice this in the moment – I am struggling too hard to just breath and stay in touch with the situation.*)

M: That's a paradox isn't it. (*M fixes my hair so it's not in my eyes.*) But that is what we'll do – it is a container. That is what we'll do - we will be right here.

P: ...It's a paradox...(*I repeat his words. It is like a dream.*)

M: Now remember the reason why we are doing this is because we want to see it all as it was. Not to be re-injured because that won't happen. It's to re-experience to see it happen and to face it down, so we're not intimidated anymore.

P: Yes...but I want to walk into this with...some power.

M: That's right – so we are going to walk. As he passes you, you feel the fear and terror - then the hope. You can then describe the hope. When you say you are ready, we will do that.

P: ...OK...(*I breathe deeply and prepare to go.*)

M: He'll pass by on this side, right?

P: Yes...Let's go. He walks at my pace...I don't know how he does that...but he walks at my pace. (*We begin to walk at the same time as the perpetrator. He walks towards us slowly and we towards him.*)

M: That's study too, isn't it? It's intentional to intimidate, right?

P: Yes....

M: That's exactly what he's doing now.

P: (*T passes close to us now.*)...And then he says... "Hi"...and passes me by.

M: Now – (*We have passed each other by. T did not speak.*)

P: I'm free! (*The feeling of relief is incredible.*)

M: I'm free!

P: I'm free, I was wrong! *(We start laughing. The tension has been so great. I can no longer see T. He is out of my sight. I experience the same physical relief that I felt that night.)*

M: I was wrong, he went past me.

P: I'm OK.

M: I'm going to be OK – I'm going to be safe after all.

P: I was wrong... I miscalculated!

M: What a relief!

P: Yes....it is a relief.

M: He just went past you.

P: Yes...OK... Now I can just get to the end of the block.

M: You know something, I feel somewhat relieved too. *(We are laughing together.)*

P: I feel really happy.

M: I guess that gave you some power for a moment, didn't it?

P: Yes it did...

Dream: I was in my house, in a room upstairs. I could see from the window that the front of the house was vandalized – rocks laying about – smashed and broken, trees pulled up, junk laying all around. On this pristine street, I noticed that no other house or yard had been touched. I was worried about my car. I could see it on the street between the police cars and the clean-up crew which had just arrived. It appeared to be unscathed. I thought that I should go outside and look at what had happened. As I was preparing to go, I heard some noise in the house. I went downstairs – I had a book about trauma in my hand. I felt anxious and scared. I looked around the corner and I saw two huge men – both heavy and ugly. One of them was picking at a large putrid scab on his finger. In a panic, I threw my book at the nearest man. I knew I would be raped and tortured. I looked at the door and knew that the police were on the other side, but I could not escape – I didn't have a chance.

M: As I understand, he suddenly comes in front of you. He comes up to you and asks for directions.

P: Yes...he came in front of me...really quick...*(I remember that it was such a shock to me. It was as if he just appeared in front of me. I was not expecting him to come back. I was so full of hope that he wouldn't.)*

M: Really quick, then he's right in front of you again and he says -

P: He comes in front of me again...and he says... "Do you know where Riley Park is?"...

That's what he says to me. *(I am beginning to panic again – my breathing is strained.)*

M: Do you know where Riley Park is? He asks you a question. He still has his mask and his gloves – nothing has changed.

P: Nothing's changed...

M: What's his voice like? You heard his voice. Is he manipulative enough to try to sound like – *(I break in.)*

P: Yes... friendly... *(I am conscious of my breath – just breathe.)*

M: Oh, so he's playing a game.

P: ... He's playing a game...

M: A game - so he sounds friendly, right? Playing on your hopes.

P: Yes... yes... he is.

M: A very cruel and evil person, isn't he? *(I am struggling - trying to keep in touch again. It is frightening to remember the horror of it.)*

P:OH, God... *(I take a moment to gather myself. I strain to breath in deeply – I only manage shallow quick breathes. I know I have to go on. Somewhere inside of me I find the strength I need. I take a shallow breath. I speak to the perpetrator.)* OK... you come here now....

M: He's going to come here and ask for directions - then we'll stop. This is where you get to look at him - face on - for the first time.

In the moment when I came face to face with the perpetrator in the enactment there appeared to be an alignment amongst us. It was in the form of a cross – a passion cross. I stood in the center - as the middle, the focus, the human "I". I was fixed there in five places – at my back, on my left, my right, and at two places in front of me. At my back, I was secured to the light of my spirit self. She was made visible through a silken garment and a lucid white mask. I could feel her presence and sense her touch. She was my human spirit, and my guardian. On my right, I was set firmly to the strength of my masculine self. He was strong, unfaltering, assertive, sure, and steady. His voice pierced into me, spoke to me, held me, carried me through the hell. On my left, I was attached to the warmth of my feminine self. She held my body – my unborn babe. She was strong, silent, firm and resilient. She was my determination and my heart. In front of me, I was held fast to the terror of my perpetrator – he

wore the mask of my evil. He was my shadow and my horror. He was the thief of my humanity. He could destroy my life, my goodness, and my beauty. Behind the perpetrator, I was bound by the wings of the Medusa – my mythical self. She was from the universal all – the human mystery. She carried in her all the answers that I needed. She was the eye of God – my angel's guardian. Affixed within this cross, I met my demon.

I was absolutely safe knowing that they were T's eyes behind the mask. He could not harm me. His heart was strong – eternally unscathed. He could handle what he needed to do for me. He knew the smell of evil in himself. He would be able to look at me with the eye of one who knew that place. I was a witness to his struggle – he had clashed with his demons and won. The winning made him unconditionally safe.

P: He comes... quickly... in front of my face. *(I am dissociated – caught in the rush and panic of the moment. I am talking quickly – moving into the scene – being hasty. I know what is going to happen. I want this moment – I am willing to die for healing.)*

M: *(M talks directly to T. He is in a rush, too.)* Come quickly in front of her face.

P: *(My body is moving of its own accord.)*... I jump over here.

M: Over here onto the street.

P: Because... it scares me... onto the street... *(I am looking inwardly – dreaming, following myself.)* He comes quick in front of me... he follows me exactly... exactly what I am doing he follows me. *(It seemed to go too fast.)*

M: Do you want to do that again?

P: Yes...

M: Let's go back.

P: OK... *(T moves with me again – following my directions exactly. I speak quickly – urgently.)* He comes from behind me now and then quickly in front of me... I'm scared so I jump over here... and he comes in front of me... and right close to me ... *(I look up for the first time and I meet his eyes. I am transfixed. The inner evil has me now. I gasp – gasp – gasp – my breath is – gone... I am standing on the edge of the abyss... gone.)*

When the hero stands at the magical threshold between above and below – the moment comes when she is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died. It is a form of self-annihilation – the hero goes inward to be born again. Once

inside she is said to have died to time and returned to the World Womb (Campbell 1949/1973).

P: I... can't... breathe...

M: Breath.

P: *(I am struggling to get the words out.)* ... I ... can't ... breath... now...

M: I can't breathe.

P: I'm... absolutely... terrified... *(My panic is rising – I am almost hysterical.)*

M: OK I'm holding you, I'm right here! *(Fraught with panic – struggling – attempting – grasping for my breath, I close my eyes and ... lean forward into M's arms.)*

P: *(I am screaming hysterically now.)* ... I'M ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED... *(gasp)*

TERRIFIED ... *(gasp)* I'M TERRIFIED... I CAN'T BREATHE... *(gasp)* I'm so scared... I can't breathe... *(gasp)* I can't even take a breath... I have... NO... *(gasp)* LIFE... I have no... life...

M: I have no life.

P: I... have... *(gasp)* no life... I have... no..

M: No -

P: ... Breath...

M: No breath – *(Time stands still. I am dying – strangled with my own terror. I did not know that this was what I was trying to save myself from.)* Your breath is coming - now it's coming -

P: *(Whispering with a small captured breath – surprised - relieved.)* Oh, it feels good to say that.

M: Say it again. I have no -

P: *(Struggling to breath my words are strained, weak.)* ... Life... it is my breath... it has been... stolen

M: It has been stolen. I haven't been alive since that night. *(M holds me for a few moments. I am struggling to get myself under control again.)* What are you doing now?

P: *(I am fighting to get the words out - to speak.)* I'm trying to breath... he asked me a question... *(I am in the trauma. I am in the story. There is little time to rest.)*

M: A question. And when you are ready to hear the question – then you answer it don't you?

P: ...hmm... *(I am frantic.)*

I was shocked to discover the name of the feeling that I experienced as I looked into the perpetrator's eyes. It was an unnamed unknown feeling before that moment. It was the feeling

*that I had heroically tried to hold captive within me for the past eighteen years. It was my secret affliction. In a moment, through an astonishing explosion of contained emotion – it was named at last - **terror**. For the first time, I knew what had moved through every fragment of my life with its silent command.*



Figure 10: The Monster Before Me (painting)

M: What are you aware of?

P: *(I am in the experience – I am not present in this room. My body is pulsing with the memory. My mind has fallen asleep.)* I see... this..h..h..hate for me.

M: I see this hate for me.

P: Like I've never...experienced.... So much...hate it absorbs...my life...*(It was the black hole of the abyss – the netherworld. I feel like I am dismembered, slain, scattered.)*

M: I've never seen so much hate and it takes my breathe – my life. That's why we're here right now to get the life that was taken. You're going to get it back.

P:...hmm...*(I am in absolute physical agony – like my flesh is being torn from my bones.)*

M: Breathe -

P: ...it hurts...my heart...*(Pain – excruciating pain - to take a breath. I am dying. Dying – I feel the pressure of P's hand on my belly. Like a miracle, I remember my baby. I cannot die or my baby will die. She cannot die – I cannot give up.)*

M: In your heart, it hurts, something died -

P: I have ...to have...life...for my...baby. I have...to ...have... oxygen...for my...blood... for my...baby...my little....girl...

M: What you just say is really important. It is important to get life back. It's not just for your own life, but it's doubly important for you and your baby. You need to breathe for your baby so you can look after her. Tell me about your breath now -

P: I'm getting... oxygen to my... baby (*I am working very hard to get control of myself. The emotion is extremely overwhelming.*)

M: It's starting to come.

P: It is... (*I take the time to let myself come back – it is slow.*)

I always thought I knew where the moment of powerlessness was in this attack. I thought that it was in the moment when he first struck me. I never knew that it was in the first second that I looked into his eyes – his eyes possessed by the devil. His eyes were my night-terror and my death. I could read all the horror in his thoughts by looking at his eyes. He could see me – no matter where I went. I was trapped and there was no escape from his psychosis. His eyes told me my destiny – it was affirmed through my terror. It was through his eyes that I acquired the trembling and shaking that accompanies my fear. The trembling helps me hold back the hysteria that is just below the surface. He destroyed my sanity with his eyes.

(As I write this experience, my skin aches. I feel the sensation of pain in my chest and I cannot help but cry. I feel so sad – so emotional. It seems so senseless. I have had to lived with this for too many years. How did does trauma have the power to affect my body like this? Why does it have to ache right now with this memory? It makes me feel tired – exhausted.)

M: You looked at him for a while, didn't you?

P: Yes... I did... he... totally absorbed me....in his stare...

M: Yes, it's like a bird being stared at by a snake.

P:...yes... (*It is like a woman being stared at by a psychopath.*)

M: And you froze.

P: ...yes... I froze...

M: You are thawing again now.

P: ...hmm...

M: Talking this way helps us to recognize that your body is in control. By noticing it, you are able to discover it.

P: ...Yes...(*I am noticing my breath. What makes it so frantic? What controls it? I need it so that I can go on.*)

M: When you're ready. He will ask you directions, sounding like he is friendly. Like he wants to be friendly. He is going to ask you direction to some place and what are you going to say?

P: I'm going to ...point to it...and tell him where it is.

M: Do you feel a bit of hope after you tell him?

P: ...No...(*I feel a sense of resignation.*)

M: No, you were aware -

P: No... when my breath is gone...I know...I'm doomed...I know that...

M: But you have enough breath to give him the answer?

P: Yes...I do...(*I did. I was still hoping he would spare my life. How could I refuse if it could mean escape?*)

Dissociation seems like such an odd word to me. It has a cruel, judgmental, condescending feeling to it. I met this word for the first time in a therapy session. I was painting an experience of a time when I had been severely abused by an intimate - I did not want to see it. The brush started moving in slow motion, trailing unhurriedly along the paper until it stopped and could not go on. I started to disappear into the white background of the paper along with the last bit of color from the brush. It was a door to another world. I could not answer the questions, but I heard her speak them. I was deeply involved with the sounds outside of me - listening. I was those sounds. They absorbed me - I could move with them. Within them I could hear the echo of my breath as it mixed and moved around me. My voice was not working and neither was my mind. I could not feel my body - only this warm feeling of detachment. It felt very safe and comforting. I did not have to speak, I did not have to think, I did not have to be. It was how I survived the pain.

She told me that I was dissociating - she named the feeling for me. I remember being surprised - I did not know that there was a word for this experience. The word brought me to consciousness and helped me to recognize the triggers that caused me to protect myself in this way. I recognized that I had a choice and learned how to control my leaving.

(I am aware of how I am dissociating as I write - I am fighting to stay present.)

M: We are going to pause. You are going to look around the room.

P: (I speak to the witnesses between my labored breaths.)... Can you see?... Can you see... what he's... doing to me? He belongs... to you. He belongs... to us... he belongs... to us...

M: What does that do when you say he belongs to us?

P: ...He's not just... mine...

M: That's what you said. We are now in this together. (M moves in front of me. He looks at me. *His eyes are so different – loving, caring.*)

P: ...yes...

M: All of us together – we don't know what to do.

P:...yes...me neither... (*I feel so lost. How can this tragedy be redeemed?*)

M: Tonight we are going to be here and he's not going to just take you. (*I hear him. I appreciate this so much – the tears well up again.*)

M: I want you to be aware of what you've just done. You've got you're breathing under control. We are moving forward. I think, being with you tonight, that the start of the attack was way back there when he put on the gloves. (I nod in agreement. *It is true – I did not know this before.*) Be aware now what you see. Now I can see my attacker.

P: ...yes...it's hard for me...to see him...

M: Yes, I know it is. When you are ready, you can look at him again. Remember the way to do that is to monitor your breathing - which is now deeper. We are right here.

P: ...I am getting...ready ... (*I am scared and tired, yet determined that this perpetrator not keep my soul for another second.*)...Before I couldn't stop...looking at him... (*I am worried that I will be caught again.*)

M: Yes, we have the time to choose to get ready - it is your time. That also adds to taking back-

P: Control...

M: That's right, and your power. That was taken away, because it was impossible to have it at the time. Tonight it's different. When you decide to look at him say out loud to us what you are aware of. That's another way of taking control - being aware of what you are afraid of. (I take a breath and look up to the attacker.) Now you are looking.

P: (*It is the same – nothing's changed. I am in the snare again.*) I'm aware...that...I'm alone... and ...he hates me...

M: He hates me because -

P: ...because...I'm ...a woman...he hates me...(*My breath is stolen again – I am struggling to catch it back.*)

M: He doesn't hate Patrice. But he hates me because I'm a woman.

P: ...yes... (*I am not hearing. I am getting lost.*)

M: You can say that because it's true.

P: (*I try it – I say it.*) He hates me ...because ...I'm a woman... not because I'm Patrice ...because... he doesn't know me...because...I can see this gray aura...(*gasp*) it's sucking me...(*gasp*) it's sucking me...

M: You can look away when you want and then go back -

P: (*I'm starting to lose control – I am trapped in his eyes.*) I don't know... why... I can't...(*gasp*) look away... (*The hysteria is possessing me. It finds it's way into my voice.*) It's like... I can't... stop... (*gasp*) looking... at your evil...

M: Name it – say it – I can't stop -

P: ...I can't stop...looking...at your... (*gasp*) evil...it's sucking...me in...(*I am frantic – consumed – engulfed in terror.*) ...it's so...powerful...(*I am going to explode – I have loss all control again.*)...I can hardly...I can't take my eyes...(*gasp*) off... (*I scream out.*)...SOMEBODY TAKE MY...EYES OFF...THIS MAN...(M steps in between me and the attacker. *I fall into his arms.*)

M: You did it-

P: (*My body is in anguish – agony. Pain – deep pain – I think I am dying.*) My heart...it hurts so much...my heart...(*The pain in my chest is excruciating! I am cringing with the pain.*)...it's all my love...it's everything... that's good...it's hurt...my heart...

M: My heart hurts. Breath, try to breath!

P: (*I take in a breath as deeply as I can – it is shallow, yet I experience the same relief again.*) It felt...really good...to say it out...(*To scream the feeling out. The scream was the relief.*)

M: It felt really good because you've told us where the evil is. Notice you asked me to take your eyes away and I did.

P:...yes...thank you M...thank you...(*I think I would have died if he hadn't.*)

M: Is this place safe? (*I can feel his presence – he is there. I touch P's hand – she is there.*)

P: ...I'm not...by myself...

M: You shouldn't have had to be by yourself – ever. That's what we all own – everyone here.

P: ...He belongs to...all of us...

M: Yes, he belongs to all of us, that's right.

P: ...I'm so scared...I can't tell you... what that experience... is like... (*I can't even tell you now what terror is – there are no adequate words.*)

M: You are showing us. Your witnesses are all nodding. They are telling us. They have seen. They didn't know this before. They know this now – what it was like.

P: ...thank you...thank you...for being here... (*I sense the acceptance in the witnesses and in M's words.*)

M: You know why I'm here. Tell me why I'm here.

P: ... You're here because... it's valuable to you, too...

M: I take responsibility for this man!

P: ...OK...yes... I feel safer, now... (*I sensed everyone's support. I picked it up in my body. They were becoming my community.*)

Joseph Campbell (1949/1973) talks about tragedy as the purgation of emotion through the experience of pity and terror. He quotes James Joyce, "Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with a secret cause." (p. 26) It is the release of terror that purifies the poisons of the past.

I thought that I was just going to have some simple bodywork that might help me relax. I lay down on the floor on a hard mat that she had fitted with blankets. I had never met her before – she was recommended by a friend. She began her work. She put her fingertips deeply into tension points on my back, rhythmically pressing in circular motions. She moved from place to place slowly and systematically. She did not speak. After a few minutes I began to feel funny, odd, lightheaded. I assumed this was how the massage was working. She moved her hands into a new position. The moment she put her fingertips onto these points I felt a rush of energy. It was like a gigantic ocean wave crashing on the shore, pushing its way forward through the sand yet not retreating back into the sea. As the wave moved up through my body the momentum had built to a tremendous crescendo. I was totally engulfed within this powerful and terrifying energy pulsing inside of me. As it reached my head I started screaming hysterically – it was as if I had been possessed by the devil. I was completely out of control - I could not stop this wild energy as it torn some unknown demon from a place deep inside of me.

After more than an hour of frantic chaos it began to subside leaving me without my mind. It took two days for my thoughts to begin flowing again. I know now that the feeling I experienced when I looked at the perpetrator on the night of the attack, the feeling of this bodywork, and the feeling that I had during the reenactment were exactly the same - terror.



Figure 11: Terror (painting)

M: Do you feel safer? You know you don't have to be heroic and finish the whole thing. You need to be the judge about how far you want to go. It's up to you. It's really important that you have the option – if you've had enough. I'm not suggesting you stop. I'm just saying that at any point you can say – that's as far as I can go. It's not that I have failed by getting this far. If you looked around the room and I asked the question – how many of you could have got this far? (M addresses the witnesses.) Could you have gotten this far? (The witnesses shake their heads – no. *The masks are covering their faces. I only see the silent acceptance. There is no chance of detecting any hesitation through facial expression. I am not alone. I am understood by my community.*) Look – they couldn't have gone this far, yet they are with you. Look at the other half of the group. (M speaks to the witnesses.) Could you have gone this far? (The witnesses shake their heads – no.) Are you with us? (They all nod their heads – yes. *The masks soundlessly confirm the support of the wearers. It is a profound experience.*) It's good to see that, isn't it?

P: ...it's good...

M: They've been with us from the start.

P(*I am sure I can go on. My breath is beginning to normalize somewhat.*) ...I think I can... do it...

M: (M is still standing in front of me.) You said it was a gift to you, but you are also giving something to them. Most of these people assist people like yourself and there are some powerful community members here. It's important for them to see your experience because afterwards they can take the kind of action that is needed to prevent it. This represents something that goes on more often than we can imagine. They are with you and they are adding to this experience. It is not easy for any of us. (M turns and speaks to the witnesses.) Is it? (The witnesses shake their heads – no.) It's important for us to remember this right now. I want you to know that you can say – that's enough for now. I think you are going to finish it, by the way – just knowing you. You know what I mean, don't you? (I nod – yes. *He was referring to all the testing that I had put him through.*) So right now, you've looked him in the face and you could tell us why you couldn't take your eyes away. You know that I will intervene, if you can't. Just think about what was holding your eyes. In some way he had control – what was it?

P: ...He had that hate, that evil...

M: Hate, that's right, and evil that he used to stun you. He looked at you – transfixing you.

P: Yes...

M: You can make a statement that you know he is looking at you like this but, "It's not going to work for you now, because I am seeing you".

P: Alright...

M: If you freeze in front of a perpetrator that's how he gets you. When you can speak and be present – even though you know he is going to hurt you – he won't have that same control. I'll step away when you are ready. (*I take a deep breath.*) Did you see the Medusa behind him?

P: Yes... (*She had been following the perpetrator all along. Occasionally the color of the mask was visible behind him.*)

M: It's adding to this, isn't it? That's the power of that particular mask.

P: ...yes... I didn't know that it was the evil... the hatred...

According to B. Walker (1983), Medusa is the destroyer aspect of the Libyan Triple Goddess Neith, also called Athene, and Medusa. A female face surrounded by

serpent-hair is an ancient and widely recognized symbol of "female wisdom". Since she represented death it was said that no mortal had been able to lift the veil that covered her face because to see her, face to face, was to die. In contrast, she was also veiled because she represented the future – which always wears a veil. The Egyptian myths claim that Athene was born from the Medusa aspect because Medusa was the "...mother of all Gods, whom she bore before childbirth existed (p.629)." The names Neith and Athene have been said to mean, "I come from myself." This would account for the appearance of Medusa's head on Athene's aegis or shield. Medusa was Athene's destroyer aspect.

M: You didn't know that – the evil and hate – and when we see evil and hatred what's the first thing that we do?

P: ...I'm going to name it...

M: Let's try it and see what happens. You can look at him and say it. Then I'll turn you away or you can turn yourself away. Do you want to try that? I think when I watch this time, I won't see him have quite the same control over you.

P: Yes... *(I am feeling a little stronger now – still trying to breath normally – but stronger.)*

M: You know what he is trying to do to you – "I know what you are trying to do to me.". You can say it – calmly.

P: *(I practice.)*...I know what you are trying to do to me...

M: OK, shall we try that? Tell me when you are ready.

P: I'm ready.

M: OK, look down and then I am going to move aside. When you are ready you're going to look up and you're going to say...

P: I know what...you are trying to do to me...

M: I know what you are trying to do to me.

P: Yes...It's your evil and...your hatred... and you're trying to hold me in that...

M: I'm not going to let you hold me this time – with that look.

P: ...I'm not going to let you hold me...with that look

M: With that look – and mean it. Then look away and you'll have named it. OK, this is it.

Tell me when you're ready to look up and tell him that you know what he's trying to do. *(I draw a breath – preparing. M moves out from between the perpetrator and me. I look into his eyes again.)*

P: I know what....you're trying to do...looking at me like that... (*I am not so drawn in. I can speak this time. The panic is there but softened.*)

M: You're trying to –

P: Suck me into your...hate and evil...

M: You can't –

P: Do that now...

M: Because –

P: I won't...let you

M: That's right, because I'm –

P: Going to...look away

M: Right – now – (M moves in front of me again)

P: OK...

M: How was that?

P: I did it...and I named it...

M: Now, as you are feeling the power of that – he looked different – slightly, didn't he to you?

P: ...He wavered...a bit (*It was amazing. I saw something different. My eyes could see more clearly – the experience was not from my memory this time – it was a new experience. I was more present.*)

M: He'd wavered a bit. You named it and called him on that.

P:... I had a voice... (*I found a deep and powerful place inside of me. My voice was my power in that moment.*)

M: And what did that voice sound like? Maybe the witnesses could just give a nod – did it sound stronger? (M speaks to me.) Look around. (M speaks to the witnesses.) Did her voice sound strong? (The witnesses nod – yes.)

P: It comes from...deep in me...

M: It came from your center. Your voice didn't betray you this time when you named it. That's what it is, isn't it?

P: Yes...

Dream: I was in my room at night. I could hear voices of men outside the window. They were talking about some carjackers and thieves. These criminals were in my neighborhood. They had stolen one of the men's cars. They talked about a quick flash of light and an undetectable smoke that they used to hypnotize their victims. I wanted to make sure that my car was safe, so I went to the window. When I opened the window and looked out, I heard

the sound of someone below. I saw the flash of light that the men had been talking about. I thought about the smell. The criminals were here! I froze – like I always do. I had to find my voice – I could hear them coming up to the window. I reach down deep inside of me and tried to pull out a sound. It was just in my head. I struggled to speak and I let out a small strained whisper. I was starting to panic – I could see someone's hands on the windowsill. With incredible force, I let my voice sound out from the depths. A voice resounded around me – shouting for help. It was so loud that it woke me up suddenly - with a beating heart.

M: Do you want to try it again?

P: Yes...I do. *(I am gaining some strength and power. I felt the deep place that my voice had come from. I wanted to access it again.)*

M: I knew it. As a matter of fact – you can even speak louder. There's nothing he can do – he's yours. He's not going to do anything to you. (M steps out of the way so I am facing my assailant again. I look in the perpetrator's eyes.) Name it – I know what you're doing.

P: I know what you are doing...with your evil look...and your evil aura...*(I am struggling to breath – yet have more control of myself.)* You are trying to suck me in...and I have controlI'm not going to allow you to do that to me...

M: And the only reason you hate me is –

P: Because...I am female...

M: I'm not going to let you do that this time.

P: I'm not going to let...you do that this time...

M: It feels different because –

P: ...of my femaleness... what I am as a woman...the instinct to protect my baby...it is what is giving me my strength...right now...*(I am faltering – feeling the vulnerability of being a woman. There is a powerlessness – I cannot fight this man off with my body. I am no match for his strength. What can I do?)*

M: Look away. Just look away. (He stepped in front of me and I lay my head on his chest.) That is a lot for you right now. You said a lot.

P: Yes...because it has been so...unsafe to be a female...I needed to know....I needed to know that...*(What can protect? I need to find something that does not have to do with physical strength.)*

M: This is part of the strength you need, isn't it? No matter what he does to you.

P: The strength to protect my baby... with my life... if I have to... that's what I'm going to do...

M: That's what I did do.

P: ...I did... *(Yes, I did. I feel overwhelmed with the courage that it took – it was a miracle. How did I ever do that? I start to cry again.)*

M: That's exactly what I did. The witnesses all saw that. They heard it.

P: ...It's just been so... scary to be... a woman... *(This attack was the first of a number of experiences that I had with violent men.)*

M: It's not right – it's not right.

P: ...It's how I have to be in this world... it's what I am... *(There is no escape from this female body.)*

Somewhere in childhood I learned that women were second rate. I was made well aware that I could never be strong enough, fast enough or powerful enough in my little girl body. This seemed to be reinforced consistently. Yet, I would not relent to the belief that I was less capable of doing anything that boys could do. People called me a tomboy. I was always pushing the limits of femaleness into the male world. I never said "No" to a risk. I believed – up until the moment that I met this perpetrator – that I could run, punch, kick, scream or think my way to safety. Then I found myself frozen in front of this demon, and the truth of the "second rate" label lay before me. I experienced that I did, in fact, lack power, control, and strength. I felt betrayed by my body and my belief in myself. I lay down beneath a blanket of helplessness and stopped believing that I was a capable and valued human being. No amount of evidence could convince me otherwise. I accepted my allotted destiny. I became a frail maiden looking for a knight in shining armor to protect me, a kindergarten "mother", a push-over, and finally - a battered wife. It became my new identity, my mask, and I lived with it for too many years. It became so much a part of me that I forgot why I was wearing it. On this night, I finally remembered how it got there. Knowing this awakened a dormant seed of strength. I had prepared the soil in my soul and I was ready to plant it, now.

M: When you looked at him this time (M is still holding me in his arms – my head on his chest.) – did you see the mask behind him?

P: ...No...

M: It was there – the mask. Do you want him to step aside and let the mask be there for a second?

P:...yes...I think so...*(A brilliant idea. I needed her to speak to me – something was there in that mask for me. Knowing that she would be visible woke me up.)*

M: When you lift up your eyes the Medusa mask will be there. You created this mask to help you, right? You need to speak to the mask. **(The perpetrator and the Medusa trade places in front of me.)** The mask should be right here where he was. So when you open your eyes you will see her. When you're ready – you can look up. The mask will be there. *(I look up. She is familiar but this time she has eyes and moves in front of me. I am enchanted. It was like I had not seen her before.)* What do you see?

P: *(A different aspect is visible to me.)*...She is female power...

M: Female power and –

P: She's what's going to help me live...*(I am watching carefully – waiting for the message that I need to hear.)*

M: Would you like to hold that mask – touch it for a second? You could put it in your hands – then give it back. Cause this guy is going to reappear again and she could help you.

P:...No...*(This doesn't seem the right thing to do. I am waiting – I know it will come to me. I watch – she's speaking but I cannot hear her.)*

M: You're feeling her power and need her to be what?

P:...In me...*(I hesitate – is that right? In me? What needs to be in me?)*

M: In me – and if I can have her in me then what?

P: *(What do I need to hear Medusa? What do you need to tell me?)* She can give me *(Yes – I know now!)*...her head...

M: She can give you her head because then you would be able to -

P: I would be able to have...that strength...on me...*(Yes – not in me but on me –on my body!)*

M: On you – rather than outside of you. *(M hesitates and then decides to change the alignment back. He speaks to Medusa.)* OK, will you switch back now? **(Medusa does not move. We are engaged – communicating something. Wait...I am watching. – wait! Wait! There's something I am forgetting! M speaks to me.)** You are still looking – closely.

P: *(Yes! I hear her – she speaks clearly! It is her head – her copper head that I need on me! I can hardly force the words out of my mouth.)*...I want...the aegis...I want the aegis now *(Medusa hands me the aegis – her head made of engraved copper)*

M: Oh, you want that.

P:...yes...

Oh! The ecstasy! Medusa is in my hands! I close my eyes and put her to my lips. I feel her as a vehicle of communication, a means to accommodate an understanding that I could not receive in any other way. A symbol that is translucent in my mind – the light of her genius shining through. She moves me through the veil from the Netherworld. I feel it materialize behind me, now closed to my stepping back in – I am reborn. I stand in a new world. I hold her there for a few moments – I have to steady myself – this feeling of separation between me and the world is new and untried. I sense a skin, a shield, an armor! I am safe at last!

At the moment when Medusa was beheaded her blood flowed in two streams – out of one was born the winged horse Pegasus and the other the warrior Chrysaor. I mounted myself between the wings of Pegasus and had Chrysaor by my side. The divine and the human realm were one. I dream that I am a giant – so big that I can stand on the world. I am as big as a continent. I wash the earth with salt and water – cleansing the pain and anguish from the sand and soil.

What is the hero's ultimate and most difficult task? "How render back into light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark? How represent on a two-dimensional surface a three-dimensional meaning? How translate into terms of "yes" and "no" revelations that shatter into meaninglessness every attempt to define the pairs of opposites? How communicate to people who insist on the exclusive evidence of their senses - the message of the all-generating void? (Campbell, 1949/1973, p. 218)" How explain the moment of change?

M: When your assailant looks at you again what is going to happen? (*He trusted me – he recognized that I would know what to do.*)

P: (*I answer as if I had thought it all through - but I had not. I was just listening to some silent voice inside of me – repeating in words what she was saying.*) I will turn the copper aegis...like this (I take the aegis and turn it so that Medusa's face is looking at the perpetrator.)...that's what I am going to do...yes...yes..*(I am filling up with power and freedom. My eyes are closed and I am bathing in the experience of separation and safety.)*

M: Shall we try it?

P: (*I am in a state of rapture! It is divine. I can breath again.*)...yes...yes...

M: So you hold that. (*With my eyes still closed, I put the aegis to my chest. I am crying – it is such a relief.*) This feels pretty good doesn't it?

P: ... feels good.... *(It is hard to leave the feeling to speak.)*

M: You are drinking it in. *(I hold the aegis for a few moments – then open my eyes. The feelings of separation and safety are firmly within me now. It is like a miracle took place – fear is far way.)*



Figure 12: Copper Medusa (engraving)

P: *(I speak firmly.)*...OK...

M: When I step aside, you are going to look at him again. You're going to say whatever you need to say, before we move on. *(M steps aside. I look at my perpetrator again.)* You're looking. *(I take the aegis and turn it around so Medusa's face is looking at him. I notice a reflected light from the ceiling lamp shining on his jacket. I move the aegis until the reflected light shines from her face onto the face of the attacker. It is like the moon reflecting the light of the sun – shining brightly in the dark night. His face is now full of light.)*

P: Now...you can see yourself...in me... *(I felt completely separate from him – totally detached. My voice feels strong and firm. I sense a feeling of forgiveness towards this possessed soul.)*

M: *(M observes the light as it shines in the perpetrators face.)* hmmm – yes – great! How do you feel now? You don't seem to be slipping.

P: I feel good...I feel really good!

M: I know! I feel good because there's light in his eyes - it's blinding him, isn't it? Are you sure you want to do this?

P: Yes, I do! (Everyone laughs. *His eyes are no longer the eyes of a psychopath – the dark evil is gone. I hold the light there and I look at his enlightened eyes for a few moments. I want to fuse this memory into my mind and into my heart.*)

M: Because as long as I can reflect this light –

P: As long as I can do that... I am safe... he is not able to absorb me... into his evil... it is reflected back... I have Medusa with me now... I'm going to put her on me. (*Once again I am following an inner impulse – there is no plan. It just seemed like the right thing to do. I attach the aegis onto my necklace. It sits almost exactly over my heart.*) and with this on... I will remember that it will help me.

M: It will help me with what I have to do now. I will be reflecting back the evil.

P: ... Yes.

M: You can attack me but you won't get – what?

P: You are not going to get into my heart...

I wanted to say to the perpetrator – “Can't you see the ugliness that you are?” but it could not come out because the reflected light made him beautiful. It removed the evil from his eyes and I could only think about how separate and how safe I was. I was more than a battered body, I was more than suffering and pain. I was a hundred good and precious things - untouchable and safe. I was free because I held up the light that melted away the evil from our eyes – his and mine. He no longer had to project evil all the time and I no longer had to look at it all the time. The frozen memory had changed. So Medusa was the destroyer and also the creator. She gave me - at the greatest moment of terror the antidote to my healing right in the eye of evil itself. The antidote was in confronting the evil face on. In the darkest darkness the brightness of the light scattered the shadow into smithereens. This knowledge keeps me safe. There are no illusions – it will all come to the light. I can now move on with the enactment with my gift, my shield, firmly fixed over my heart.

Dream – I am in a triangle with T and the actual perpetrator. I am looking at both of them in the eyes. I can see the light in T's eyes that is reflected by the Medusa. I am nervous, I feel the intensity and want to scream aloud. The feeling builds in me as I look in his eyes but the light gets brighter and brighter. I feel relieved; I can look away now. I turn around and

look behind me. I can see three black snakes – each in a spiral shape with a rattle in the center (their triangle form is a mirror of ours). While I am watching them I have a strong feeling that the perpetrator is dead.

P: So, I am going to tell you where Riley Park is...

M: Tell him where it is.

P: I turn like this... (I face away from him and give him the directions that he asked for.) I said, "You have to go down the street, all the way down to the end of 14th and then you will turn right. There you will find the park." ...But he didn't care... (*I knew that then and I know that now.*)

M: No, he didn't care. In fact, what he did was hit you didn't he?

P: No... (*I feel like I have control now.*)

M: No? Tell me what he did.

P: (*As I am speaking I am looking at the perpetrator. I feel differently now – no triggers.*) He went to reach for me... but he didn't take me... because I said, "Don't hurt me – I'm pregnant."

M: Right - he stops for a moment.

P:... for a split second, he contemplates what I said... but it doesn't matter. Then he takes me...

M: Then he takes you. Let's just stop here for a moment. Do you realize that you just looked at him steadily in the eye – telling him what he was going to do without losing your breath?

P: Yes...

M: You kept looking. I noticed that he wasn't able to transfix you. What is different at this moment? Look at him – it's wearing off. He can hit you and hurt you physically – but you've got something now.

P: Yes... (*I speak to the perpetrator.*) I've got my heart and my love... it is mine... it is not absorbed by your evil... anymore...

M: And even though you can physically damage me-

P: You can't hurt... me... you can't hurt my baby... my spirit self... my power... you can't hurt that...

M: You can't.

P: You can't... you don't even know where to go to get it... you can't touch that...

M: You can't know.

P: You can't.

My Head bears the being of the resting Stars.
 My Breast harbours the life of the wandering Stars.
 My Body lives and moves amid the Elements.
 This am I.

R. Steiner (1979)

Journal entry: I know myself in a new way. I can separate from other people's emotions because I am aware of a revived part of myself – a skin. It is a skin that separates the experience of my inner world from the experience of the outer world. It allows me to know the difference between what belongs to me and what belongs to you. I use to lack boundaries or a barrier between myself and others. I was hypervigilant – always watching. I needed to protect myself from other people and their anger, sadness and pain. Now, I can be there with compassion and accept other's emotions. I am absolutely separate – I am not drawn into the feeling that I have to rescue them or resolve their emotional reactions so I can be safe myself. I feel like I am self-contained within. I have cut away all of the tendrils that flowed out to other people from every part of myself. I am free. I am only me. I am not your pain, anger, sadness – I am only mine. As a result, I can be interested in others, in their process, in their lives because I don't have to be them, rescue them, or defend myself from them. It is the foundation of intimacy.

M: Before we go on, be aware of what you just did. Recall what you feel right now. Describe your body and your breathing.

P: I'm tingling (*I feel really present for the first time. I can really feel my body and respond to his question about it.*)

M: What have you just done?

P: I am putting up the shield... that I need... that I've needed all these years... I put up the shield tonight. (*It is a miracle!*)

M: You've put the shield up in the worst situation. The worst thing that you could possibly imagine is what we are looking at – right now, isn't it? Amazing.

P: Yes... yes... that's so amazing... that is so amazing... (*We are overwhelmed with wonderment. We hold our amazement for a moment – basking in it's radiance. There is magic in the air.*)

M: (M looks over to the perpetrator.) What do you think of the power of his look now?

P: He can hurt me now... (I turn and address him directly.) You can harm me outwardly... but you can't hurt me and my baby now... *(I put my hand firmly over P's hand as she holds me.)*

M: You are not frozen in front of him. You may overpower me –

P: You may overpower my body... but I am here... and I am going to protect my baby... I'm clear... I'm really clear... so you can go ahead and do whatever you want *(My new found power has made me bold and cleared my head. I knew exactly what I need to do.)*

M: I'm safe.

P: I'm safe... my baby is safe. *(I close my eyes, gently touching the copper aegis - I am overcome by this deep, true feeling of safety.)*

M: Yes - Oh God! Patrice – we've come this far.

P: Because I am... I really am safe... *(He is overcome with the miracle of what we have done – tears come into his eyes.)*

M: Say again what has changed – what's changed now?

P: *(I am speaking clearly – there is no more haze around me).* Now I know who I am...

M: Yes and the fear has been changed to what?

P: Now the fear has been changed... to safety... now I am safe.

M: And it's safety because-

P: I wasn't absorbed by your evil... and hatred...

M: As long as I feel the way I do - you can damage me but-

P: You can't harm me... you can't touch my spirit... my soul... nor my baby's soul... You can't get to who I am... who I really am is absolutely safe... completely safe...

M: My body's not safe – it can be broken.

P: It's my body... my temple... but it's not me.

M: It's my temple – my arms, my legs, but it's not me. It's a menacing feeling – but what about his power over you?

P: ... It's gone ... it really is... it's really gone.

Safety is the magic word. It is what all trauma survivors are after. Yet it is very subjective – specific to the individual. Everyone seems to have their own self-defined parameters that need to be present for the experience of safety to be active. For me, it was enmeshed with the mask of my identity. By walking through the enactment my mask was removed and my identity was deconstructed - blown into tiny fragments and absorbed into the

universe. The mask that I went in with no longer exists. I am free of it. I am free to be who I am, to be bare-faced and real.

My mask was a well designed shield - a shield that I thought was safe to wear. I know now that it was a lie – an illusion. Wearing this mask was the way I fooled myself into believing that I was safe. I tried to believe that it would protect me from harm. I put an incredible amount of time and energy into maintaining the mask so that it would stay the same. I worked hard to embellish the parts that I thought were flawed. I had fused it onto my face. I was stuck behind it believing that it protected me from evil. I was hiding - hiding from evil. It seems like a paradox that the very mask I wore to protect myself, was the very object that was my demise. I attracted a lot of evil in my effort to hid from it. I formed the mask so that it appeared to be the bright face of a nurturing, caring, kind, quiet, and innocent woman. No matter how bright I made it the shadow seemed to became darker around me. I looked like someone who was easy to take advantage of. I guess I looked like a target. There was something about the mask that attracted the wrong kind of people to me. The more I worked to make the mask a perfect shield – correcting the flaws that I thought were there, the further I got from the right kind of people and the right kind of life. The kind of life that I wanted. The kind of life that I deserved.

Through some inner miracle, my mask disintegrated before the power of the Medusa. She gave me the strength to let it go. I believed in the myth of her power to such an extent that it only took a split second to break free. She did not become my new mask, instead I stood behind her with a new face, a new skin, a real truth about myself. Safety was no longer something that I needed to create outside of me – it existed within me now. I could stop being someone out there – I was free to be real. No reconstructing, no reintegration of lost parts – God forbid that a new mask be reconstructed or reintegrated from what I let go of! I felt safe just being myself. I am safe to be. I am new at every moment. I am new with everyone I meet. I am new where ever I go. What does a new person wear? I don't know. What does a new person call herself? I don't know. What does a new person do for a living? I don't know. Surely, I will not have to take another identity on. I don't want to do that again. I think that I can be and do many things. I want to stay free. This way I can choose at any moment to be who I am from a free place, a real place, a safe place.

Dream: People were sharing their experiences of longing. The presentations included artistic pieces. I knew that I would have to give a presentation too, yet I was unprepared. It

was my turn. I went into the booth that was used for the presentations. It was like a small shelf with glass sides that stood on the edge of a cliff. There were two chairs and I struggled with them so I would not fall out of the booth and down the into the precipice in front of me. I finally pushed the chairs out and they fell into the depths in front of me. I looked out the glass window on my right and I saw a gang of men beating up another man. One man had a lance and he was stabbing it into the victim. The man with the lance saw me, and I ducked down so he would not see that I had witnessed what he did and come after me. I shouted to the people at the presentation about these men, but no one moved. As I lay waiting, I was thinking of the aegis, trying to disconnect from the feelings of terror to find the feelings of safety. It would just be my body – not "me" that they would harm. The man with the lance came around the corner to me, but he did not harm me – he joined the audience as a witness to my presentation.

M: His power over you is gone. You might also notice he's a little smaller now.

P: He's white. *(He had no more evil to reflect back to me – we were both free now.)*

M: He's not gray anymore. You can see through him.

P: That's right...

For me, redemption means the atonement – converting something bad into something of value. The whole healing process for me has to do with redemption. When I stood before the perpetrator with the aegis in my hand, I was illumined. It was a nuclear moment where I "...found and opened the road to the light beyond the dark walls of my death." (Campbell, 1949/1973, p. 259) I could see the opposite side of the person in front of me. I could see his fear and his weakness – it allowed me to feel forgiveness. This was not a feeling that I could ever create as a separate (and Godly) act perpetuated because of a societal illusion that to forgive is to heal. It was only through following my own tacit knowledge that I was able to find the light that could help him see through the darkness of his demonic mask. Through him seeing the light - I was set free. Through his redemption - I was free.

M: Before we move on just be aware that the mask is still behind him. This is here *(He touches the aegis on my necklace.)* We are going to move into the last part where you get hit. The body is going to be hit, but it is not going to break your soul. We are going to move through it so that you experience how he can't get you. He can't get your baby. *(I feel P. beside*

me – touching me warmly. It reminds me that my baby is there and she is safe. I feel held and supported.)

P: No... no... he doesn't get either of us. *(I feel like I am gathering strength to go into the next part. I have something different to take with me this time.)*

M: That's quite a lot of power.

P: Yes.. it is ..a lot of power.

M: I think you should look around because these people are going to witness this. What would you say to them?

P: **(I turn to the witnesses and speak. I am trying to hold back my tears.)** Just... reflect evil back. *(I feel a little overwhelmed looking at them. I had forgotten that they were there watching what had happened.)*

M: The evil and the hate. Do you want to hear from them?

P: No... not yet. *(I am very clear that they cannot speak until I am finished. I could not take any judgement or interpretation. I needed them to stay in the masks. They could have no voice - only eyes to watch what was to happen next.)*

M: Not yet - they are still taking it all in. They are understanding something now.

P: They just need to watch. *(I reinforce my own decision. I say this more for myself than for anyone else.)*

M: They need to watch. Tell them they need to watch the last part.

P: **(I speak to the witnesses.)** You need to watch... because he's your man... *(I really want them to take responsibility – to own it. I then turn to M. I am ready to go on.)* OK...

M: This is what happens now - you give him the directions, he grabs you and there is a pause -

P: Yes... I say "I'm pregnant, don't hurt me." ... I see this flash... of decision making in his eyes.

M: Let's do this because now you can watch his eye. You see the power of what you say momentarily scare him slightly, rattle him. Let's say it and watch his eyes.

P: **(I look directly at the perpetrator and speak.)** Don't hurt me... I'm pregnant... *(I am caught off guard – he moved his eyes exactly as the perpetrator had done. It sent a shock wave through me.)* ... yes... that's what he did!

M: What does that recognition mean to you?

P: That he is choosing... he's making a choice... that maybe there is some humanity...

M: Slightly - for a second.

P: Slightly... for a second... his humanness is touched because of a tiny child... *(I can feel the tears welling up in me with the thought of this moment – the hope I had.)*

I know at the time, I had thought that he would let me go free. It was an attempt to save myself and my baby - a plea. I felt like I was begging for his mercy. It was humiliating and degrading. I might just as well have gotten down on my knees and begged at his feet. He had all the power. When he hesitated I could see that the information I had given him was ruining his plan and he had to decide to go on or not. For the few seconds that I watched his eyes I experienced that same feeling of hope that I had earlier on. It was such a shock when he just continued on with his plan despite what I had said. It shook my belief in humanity. I could not make sense of it. It was so far away from my experience or belief about how a pregnant woman should be treated – how I should be treated. I was searching frantically inside of me for any kind of foundation or understanding that could help me assimilate what was happening. I was completely confused and jolted. There were no longer any boundaries around, or sanctuaries for, the sacred. This experience shook me to the foundation and sensitized me to the power of this very human moment of decision-making.

M: For a second something that you said made a difference – though only for a short while. This time, tonight, it will be different from the last time. He's still going to hit you, but what will be different?

P: He is choosing... I know he is choosing to hit me... but he can't harm me. *(This new feeling is giving me strength to move on. I try to hold on to it as I stand there knowing what will happen next.)*

M: He can't harm me.

P: He can't harm me and he can't harm my baby... *(I feel P. touch me and I feel the safety.)*

M: This is really the crux of it. I know he broke your body, but I think this is really what has taken your life.

P: Yes... yes... *(Yes – it was the safety within me that I lost that night. I had it back – it did not matter what he would do. I could see it from a different perspective now.)*

M: He's going to harm you – so let's do that part. You seem ready.

P: Yes. *(My breath is under my control although I can feel I am still on the edge of it. I can sense the intensity of the next step trying to knock me off center. I keep it under my grasp.)*

M: He reaches and he grabs you.

P: He takes his hand...and put it around...the back of my collar...*(I cannot seem to detach my body from the memory of my senses. I have the feeling of safety, but my body has not lived in it long enough. Once again, my breath is the focus of my attention.)*

M: Tell me when you are ready.

P: *(I have to go on with it.)* I'm ready for it...

M: Yes, you are. **(M speaks to the attacker)** so take your hand and-

P: **(I interrupt M and give the instructions. I take the perpetrators hand and lead it where it needs to go.)** He reaches around... he comes close to me **(I pull him by the jacket to get him in the correct position.)**...and he grabs my neck **(He puts his gloved hand on my neck.)**...like that...yes...then he pulls me into the alley way...*(We stay in this position for a moment.)*

M: He pulls you. When you are ready – you tell me. This time you control the way he does everything. You have the aegis and I'm coming with you. Your angel-

P: *(I look back and put my hand gently on her face.)* My angel...I know you are there...

M: I know you are there. She becomes very important later, doesn't she? She helps you come back.

P: Yes...

My spirit – my angel – my lifeline. With it - I am never alone. For as long as I can remember, I have felt a connection to the otherness of the spirit world. I investigated different spiritual paths. I loved to talk about spirituality - exploring the possible meanings and experiences behind the ideas. I loved to practice spiritual teachings – challenging myself to live in a better way. I loved the feel of the spirit in my heart and in my breath – it gave me hope. I loved to see it working through my art – through the magic of creation. Mostly, I loved to see the spirit working in people – the human spirit. The magic something that exists in the act of survival. It is the miracle that is beyond my human power to describe. On the night of my assault, my human spirit was present without question.

M: We'll take what happens in parts. One part is where he takes you to the lane - then we'll stop. Did I miss something?

P: Yes...I scream out for my spiritual guide...because that's all I had left...

M: Then you'll scream for your spiritual guide and we'll stop there. **(He turns to my angel figure.)** Will she be your spiritual guide?

P: Not like that... at the time I was following a guru... I remembered a story he told about a god and goddess... The goddess was being assaulted and she called out for him. He made her sari endless... he protected her. My spirituality was all I had of power in that moment...

M: You called out and this is what protects you in that moment. *(He looks at me for a moment – thinking.)* Are you aware of what we have done tonight? The fact that there's that hand on your neck - everything is repeated? When we were back there before – I wasn't sure if you would have been able to make it this far because here is a real person and a real hand, right? You seem to be sensitized - you don't have to hold that fear anymore. So we have to go through this last part. We are doing this last part – for them so they will see how horrific it was. *(M looks out at the witnesses.)* They will need to know about this.

P: Yes...yes... *(I did not want to stop. I wanted to tell the whole story.)*

M: You tell me when you are ready and we will go over there *(M points to the corner area where we will enact the assault.)*. So he takes you into the back alley-

P: *(I want to get it over with.)* Let's go...

M: Let's go – *(We walk towards the corner. I am describing – we are not enacting, yet.)*

P: I scream ...HELP ME!... he takes the pipe out...and hits me...

M: Just wait- *(I am remembering – my body begins to take control again. I am straining to breath.)* He hits you – twice?

P: He... hits me...on the head... then...I fall down... *(The memory comes to me in a flashback – it is vivid, real, present in the room and in the moment. It like I am there in the moment of the original assault.)*

M: You fall.

P: Then... I leave my body... *(I am struggling to keep out of the memory – it is so clear and real.)*

M: You leave – out of your body.

P: I leave...so I don't remember him...breaking my leg... *(I feel the pressure in my chest. My breathing is becoming labored – I am very upset. I cry out.)*

M: Breaking your leg. *(He holds me in his arms and hugs me as I weep.)*

P: I don't remember... the rest of the beating of my body...I... don't remember that...I don't remember... *(I hear the sound of someone crying out beside me – a piercing, intense, uncontrolled weeping – keening. I wonder if it is me. I whisper.)* ...I'm so lucky.... *(I weep freely – grieving this poor body. This body that managed to survive this ferocious beating.)* I didn't have...to be there...for that...

M: That's right. (*M is weeping, too. It is so sad.*)

P: I didn't have...to be there...when he did that to me...(*What Grace is this that set me free?*)

M: When he did that to me - that's right - I was gone.

P: ...I was gone...I didn't have to...be there...it must have really hurt...(*I am sobbing deeply.*)...it must have...(*I force the last words out.*)...really hurt a lot...

M: It's OK – just stay here. You know what's behind you, don't you? She's there. I was there when he hit me at first -

P:...yes...

M: But I wasn't there afterwards - when he assaulted me more – when he sexually assaulted me – I wasn't there.

P:...I wasn't...there...

M: I was gone.

P:...I was free...(*I am able to gather myself again – calming.*)

M: I was free, that's right.

P: ...it must have...hurt so much...

M: Must have hurt.

P: ...I didn't...feel it...



Figure 13: The Experience of Assault (painting)

Journal entry: I cried today after I looked at some photos that were taken with myself and some friends. The damage to my forehead was so obvious. The shadow hung on it like a distorted demon - laughing. It was so clearly visible in the photographs. I think about showing them to my friends and I know that they will be able to see this shadow too. I don't like that. I don't want it to be like that. I feel angry - furious. I can feel this big hole when I touch my forehead. I still have painful headaches to deal with. I feel marked somehow. I hate it. It makes me angry and sad to have to walk around with this deformation - this enormous scar on my face. Sometimes it reminds me of the shame I felt - sometimes of the miracle that I survived. Right now, I can feel the rage starting to take hold of my body - my beautiful amazing body! What heroic strength did I have in me to have lived through that? How can I shout this miracle and this rage out into the world?

M: Lucky you were free of that. Where did you go?

P: ...I went away... (*I did not dissociate, I was knocked unconscious - this is a very different experience. It was a shock and a surprise.*)

M: What was it like?

P: (*I am quiet, calm - remembering this astonishing experience.*) ...peace...

M: It was peace. Did you see anything? Hear or feel anything?

P: ...just peace... bodiless peace...

M: How do you feel now? I can feel peace without going away in the moment - is that right?

P: ...yes...

M: That's the difference now - you don't have to go away to find peace - to be peaceful.

P: ...I was waiting... peacefully...

M: You were waiting and then you came back for a short time.

P: ...yes... I did...

M: Then you saw him for a short time and then you went away again. Maybe what we should do is we should go down to the floor - when you are ready. You've been hit, right? Did you see him beating or did you feel it?

P: ...when he fractured... the front of my skull... I saw him do that...

M: You saw that.

P: ...when he... fractured the back... I didn't see that...

M: You didn't.

P:...my leg...my hand...I don't know...

What is the experience of not being able to remember or know what happened? For me, it is a blessing. This was the Grace that was with me that night. I called out to the spirit world for help and I was taken away from the hell. I was knocked unconscious and there are no logical scientific or medical explanations for what I experienced while I was gone. My head was being crushed – but “I” was not. The memory of what the perpetrator did to me is solely in my physical body – my “I” was free. It was a fortuitous gift.

M: (We are making a plan about what is going to happen – setting out the steps.) OK what we want to see is him raising the pipe up above your head. Then you will go down with us. Then you will go to the place where you are peaceful.

P: ...ok...yes...

M: At some point you'll come back and he'll still be there.

P: ...yes...

M: And you'll see that and you'll go away again. And then-

P:...then I decide...

M: You decide and from there you will go to where there is a light and then you will be at a house.

P:...yes...

M: So the Medusa helps – I think that is inside of you now.

P:...yes...*(Yes...yes she is.)*

M: OK when you are ready – he will lift the pipe up and hit you right here **(M lifts up his hand and shows where the pipe will strike me.)** and then we will go down. Look behind you. **(M points to my spirit self.)**

P:...yes...she is there...and my baby's safe...*(I touch P.'s hand as it rests on my belly.)*

M: And your baby. Do you see it the pipe from the side?

P:...yes...I see it from the side...

I see the perpetrator reach and pull the pipe out of his belt. He has a clear plan about what will happen tonight. He must have been thinking about it for a while. Maybe he had planned the whole thing – every second of the experience. When he pulls out the pipe it is like a warrior pulling a sword out of the sheath to fend off an enemy attack. It is quick, sure, and

looks tied or practiced. It only takes an instant for him to test the pipe in his hand – adjusting or weighting it – preparing for the strike. He is strong as he pulls me into the lane by the neck. His steps are heavy and forceful. I have an intense feeling of powerlessness - it rushes through me – I can't stop this. Stop it, stop it, I just want to stop it. It is all happening so fast. I don't have time to think about it – I can't stop it. I just want to think about it – I want to understand what is happening here. What have I done? What did I do wrong? What can I do to stop you? I can't get away from your grip. What are you going to do to me? It is not the pain that I am afraid of – it is the powerlessness of not knowing what you are going to do to me – the extent of your intention. I need to know. It is your unspoken plan – it had such power – such blackness. I want to stop it – just stop it. I scream and from my peripheral vision I see him lift the pipe high above his head and then I see it ...

M: When you are ready. He'll bring it up like this (M repeats his direction about how the perpetrator will strike me.) and that will knock you down – OK? You're going to be there for a while – so we'll need a pillow for your head.

P:....yes...I fell forward...onto my hands... (*When he struck me – it was a shock. I felt the quick motion of the fall forward.*)

M: Forward onto your hands - we will get a pillow to support you. (Someone brings a pillow and sets it up on the floor.) When you are ready- just like we've been doing. Know that he can't get to you - he can smash your skull but he can't-

P:....he can break my bones...but he can't get me...

M: When you're ready we will do it.

P: (*I looked at M and felt P beside me.*)... OK... go.

M: Go.

P: (*I repeat the scene.*)...HELP ME! ... Then he hits me (The perpetrator simulated the action of striking my head) and I fell down...like this...maybe...(I go down to the ground and I lay on my side – I close my eyes.)

M: You don't know. You only remember the first hit and he's beating you now. You don't feel it.

P:....yes... (*I am quiet - waiting.*)

M: You're gone – say where you are now.

P:....I'm in a place...of waiting...

M: You're waiting and the beating is going on. (T enacts it for the witnesses. In slow motion he strikes me a number of times, but never touches me.) The beating is finished – you turn to the side.

P: *(I was not conscious yet. I don't know what happened.)* ... he must have... pulled me up...

M: He pulled you up. You come back for a while. *(It was a short flash – maybe five seconds.*

M speaks to T giving direction.) You move your hand across. *(He reached for my breast.)*

P: ...pull me up and then... *(It is tough to show this – tell this part. I don't want to remember it. It has been a secret. I can hardly admit it to myself.)*

M: Tell what you remember seeing.

P: **(I speak to T telling him what happened.)** ... get down on your knees (T sits down on his knees with his legs tucked under him. *The perpetrator is between my legs. He is close to my face. I can see it too clearly. I will never forget it. T is further away – simulating the actions.)* ... you put one hand... on my crotch... and the other... *(It is difficult to be in this moment. It was so humiliating – violating - disgusting. I am aware that everyone is seeing this. It is shaming and filthy. I am beginning to struggle again.)*

M: OK – stop. Just stay right there and breathe. **(We pause for a few moments. I try to keep my breath under control. I am trying to keep the tears from my eyes as I write this right now.)**

P: ... he looked at me... that way again... like the first time... *(It was more a look of greed or anticipation. There was a different energy to it.)*

M: When you are ready to look, you don't have to now – you're in control.

P: *(I try to reassure myself.)* ... he just has my body... he... doesn't have me.

M: Say it again – you just have my body but you don't have me. You're in control.

P: ... you just have my body... but... you don't have ME.

M: Say it again.

P: You have my body... but you don't have ME.

M: Because what I have is inside of me.

P: ... Yes... and you can't get it... no access... no access... no access.

M: You're not getting my baby.

P: ... You're not getting my baby... because she's waiting with me... we are going to make a decision together...

M: That's right.

P: So I did... what I needed to say...

M: That's right.

P:... so he came forward at me.... and he... sexually assaults me... I'm going... I'm going... *(When I say this here – I wished I could go so I would not have to be there telling this to all of these people. I wanted to be gone, but I could not. In the actual assault – it was quick. I was only conscious for a flash.)* I'm gone.

M: (M speaks to T.) Lean forward. (T leans forward over me. *I don't know what happened.*)



Figure 14: Birds of Death (painting)

Journal entry: It is odd that I am experiencing this again. I had forgotten how it felt. Now, since the enactment when I shower, I can not get clean. It is like the water cannot penetrate deeply enough into my skin. I need the soap and water to wash me – purify me. It is as if the filth, the dirt of this experience has absorbed so deeply into my body (right into my cells) that nothing can penetrate deep enough to help me feel clean. It feels like I have the thick skin of an alligator – no soap can ease or soften it. I have struggled with this feeling for the last five or six weeks. I don't like getting into the shower, because I don't like the feeling of not being able to scrub this filth off. I feel like I am going crazy with it!

M: Tell the people who are here witnessing this – hearing this- that when you went away you thought you died, didn't you? Tell us, when you are ready, what happened. He can't get you because you were gone.

P: ...yes... I'm free ...I'm free... it's very... peaceful... *(Can you imagine what it would be like not to have a physical body? There is no breath, no weight, no boundary.)*

M: I don't know if I want to come back.

P: ...I'm not wanting... to come back...

M: Are you dead? *(What is death?)*

P:I am out of my body... *(There are no eyes – no senses. There is another kind of sense. There is no time, no movement – it is so still.)*

M: I'm out.

P: ...I'm out... and I'm surrounded by a presence... *(There were two beings that I could perceive. It was a feeling. I could hear voices that were genderless and decentered.)*

M: The presence of what?

P: ...the soul of my child... we are deciding... *(It is in pictures, vague images, and voices.)*

M: Deciding about what?

P: ...whether she needs to be born...

M: You don't want to come back.

P: ...It's too painful... but I want this baby to be born... *(I don't worry about the pain. There is mercy. The struggle is going back over the threshold - reentering.)*

M: That's important to say it. I don't want to come back.

P: ...I don't want to come back... so I choose... to go back so my child can be born... *(I experience no judgement, no pressure – only an engulfing love that seems to be in the air around "me". I have true freedom.)* ...the love feels unbelievable... we made a choice... now I see a pinpoint of light... really far away... it's very far away... just a pinpoint of light.... *(They show me the light way and I know what I need to do – it is somewhere in "me".)*

M: You see a light.

P: ...and I know that light is... *(I am not alone but I have to do something through my own human will. There is a question if I can do it. There is a feeling of urgency.)*

M: Is what?

P: ...my life...

M: Your life. Are you going to go towards it?

P: ...if I don't go... my baby won't be born *(I lay for a moment in these feelings of deep love and compassion.)*

Dream – I was laying in bed with a women. The bed seemed to be very close to the ceiling. The ceiling of the room was a huge round window. I could see the vast and deep blue sky and the sun reflecting on a silver metal rim around the window. The light of the sun was so beautiful in the blue. I commented to the woman how incredible it was to see such vast openness. As I looked out, the light got brighter and brighter and I sat up to see it more clearly. I was absorbed within the light. As I continued to look, I could see a shimmering of light right in the center. The shimmer became more formed. It became like a delicate flowing circlet of light. It continued to take on form until it was like a delicate shimmering jellyfish. I was amazed and said to the woman that the sky was like the sea and that my sight was becoming insight.

M: *(He is thinking about the perpetrator.)* He's gone isn't he?

P:yes.. he's gone...*(I am still unconscious – I did not see anything until I was at the door of the house. I was only aware of the struggle of getting my "I" back into my body.)*

M: They are all gone – Medusa and the perpetrator. There is a door that we have to go towards. **(T and D/Medusa have joined the witnesses in the circle. They are wearing neutral masks now.)**

P:...I don't know how I get there...it's a kind of miracle...actually...I'm sure I didn't do this alone...because my body is mutilated...

M: Broken – mutilated. How do you get there?

P:...I don't know ...my leg's broken...my hand's broken...my skull is fractured...I don't know how I got there...

M: You know – I think you may have got there on your angel's back.

P: Yes! *(I laughed – that would be the perfect symbol of how I got back.)* That's how I got there! **(H left my side and got down on her hands and knees. I got on her back. As I get on her, I am overcome with strong feelings. I cannot hold it – I begin to cry.)**

M: Just stay here for a second. **(M puts his hand on my back. I am crying – I forgot how difficult it was to come back.)**

P: ...I don't... want to go there...

M: I don't want to go there because –

P:...life...hurts...*(I remember struggling – it was like a physical torture to come back to myself. There was deep, deep pain. There was considerable secondary wounding just after the*

incident. There was also the memory of the last eighteen years of trying to be normal and safe in the world.)

M: Life hurts. It hurts a lot – but there's a child –

P: ... that needs to be born... we made a decision...

M: That's right. We made a decision – I think this angel did carry you back. When you get to the door, is there someone there to open it?

P: ... yes... *(H begins to move along the floor through the middle of the circle. I am struggling to keep on her – keep up with her.)* I just experience it... being very hard... getting to the light...

M: So you're remembering and you're aware that it was very hard.

P: ... I could... hardly get there...

M: Say what's on your mind – you might not get there – you'll die? Speak to your baby.

P: ... I'm trying... as hard as I can... *(I am feeling the agony – the anguish – crying.)* I'm trying... as hard as I... can... I'm trying....

M: You're trying – do you still want to do this? *(We are still moving slowly along the floor towards the other side of the circle.)*

P: *(Crying)* ... it's hard...

M: It's hard – do you want to pause a bit?

P: ... I don't know... *(The experience of the struggle to move engulfed me; it was difficult to know what to do. I was caught in the moment. I could not stop on the night of the attack – how could I stop now? It just did not seem right.)*

M: You don't know but you've got to get there – you can't wait long.

P: ... I have to hurry... because... I'm bleeding ... to death... I have to... get help... *(Something somewhere deep inside of me - or outside of me - knew I needed to get help. I am awe-struck by the power and force of the human spirit to survive. It is so dependable – it was automatic.)*

M: You know what you have to do, right? *(Yes... yes... yes. We come to the end of the circle.)* You're at the door. The angel comes out from under you. *(H moves aside and I come forward towards M who sits in a chair in front of me.)* Get in the position that you best remember. The door is closed – now what happened?

P: ... *(Suddenly I am in my body and I see the light behind the door fairly clearly in front of me.)* ... there's a light on ... I bang on the door....

M: And the door opens?

P: ... the door opens... I can't see... very well...

M: You've got blood all over your eyes, right?

P:...yes...

M: Is someone there?

P:...yes...

M: Someone's there and you say-

P:...my baby...my baby...and I can't understand what anybody says...

M: Because you can't hear?

P:...I can hear...but I can't understand speech...I can't understand it...

I thought that the people were from another country – I could not see them that well. I heard them speak, but the words made no sense to me. I remember sitting on their couch and it seemed forever until the ambulance came. About two months later, my mother and I went to visit them. We wanted to thank them for having the courage to open the door and take me in. We brought them a silver tray that we had engraved with an appreciation note. Their kindness and their call for the ambulance were part of what helped me survive.

It was difficult as we drove up the street where they lived. In some way, I wanted to see the scene of the crime, and in other ways, I did not. I remember feeling sick to my stomach – struggling to keep myself together. I could see the half block that I had crawled (?) to their house. As I climbed the stairs to their front door, I wondered how I had made it up there with my broken body. The woman was Canadian – English speaking – very kind. She told me that they had a difficult time figuring out what had happened because I could not speak coherently. She said I lost a lot of blood – they used two large towels trying to soak it up as we waited for the ambulance. She told me that I was passing in and out of consciousness. She said that when the ambulance arrived the attendants thought that I was drunk and had been involved in a domestic dispute. I remember the attendant(s) treating me with a lot of disrespect. They wanted me to walk out to the ambulance until they discovered that I couldn't walk. One of them was hassling me to tell him something I did not understand. He was hassling me so much I remember finally being able to say "fuck you". It must have come out clearly because of the way he responded. The woman never heard what had actually happened to me and was shock that this kind of attack could have happened in her neighborhood. It felt really good to have been able to thank her.

M: (As I sit on the floor M is sitting in a chair in front of me, P is on my left side, and H on my right.) You're here now.

P:...I'm here now.

M: What's happening here?

P:...I'm safe here...I'm home...

M: Right. I just want you to sit here – sit for a second. *(He takes my hands and we just look at each other for a moment.)* The journey is over, OK? But what you did tonight – oh! What do you feel? What do you feel sitting there now?

P:...Relief...just...I don't know how I got here...it is a miracle...it's such a miracle...it's so strong...all I wanted was to keep my baby safe...it's a miracle...I'm so loved. *(My heart is filled with love. This universal kind of love that is for everyone. It is so powerful that I can hardly contain it within me.)*

M: What are you feeling inside as you're breathing now?

P:...Just love...appreciation...there's so much love there *(I am meaning in the spirit world where I came from. It had surrounded me – it was so big, so amazing.)*...you don't know how much you are loved...there's something so big...much bigger that we can ever know...*(When the hero's body is mutilated and torn apart only the Imperishable, the Ever-lasting, and the Indestructible remains – there is no fear. I experienced the mystery of God.)*

M: You know there's more to it than this.

P:...there's nothing to be afraid of...it's so peaceful...

M: You're the one that told us that.

P:...there's compassion and you just can't believe the feeling of it...it is for everyone...it is so big...it's not just mine...

M: You mentioned that when B was getting ready to go to her death. You reassured me, but now I know what you mean.

P:...it's easy to die...it's really so easy...life...that's the hell of it.

M: That's the hell of it. So you chose hell and came back?

P:... Yes I did.

M: What – are you crazy or something?!

P: I had something to tell you...I guess.

M: I think you did it more because of your baby.

P: *(I feel so inundated with the power of this new knowledge.)* ...It's such a miracle...nobody can hurt you...that's so incredible!

M: I didn't quite know that until tonight. You showed me that. You showed me more than just the pain.

P: You are so loved...loved deeper than you can imagine. The experience of love is that it's unconditional...there's no punishment...it is compassion...for all of us.

M: Patrice, I think they can all hear it. There are a lot of people sitting here that have been here tonight. They are behind the masks – look at them.

Most of the witnesses spoke of the neutral mask as being a safety net, allowing distance from the horror of the event that they were witnessing. In two cases, witnesses reported that there was a feeling of separation from the group. One witness mentioned that she felt alone until she noticed that there were wet tearstains on the masks of other witnesses. She stated that she knew that they all shared the same experience and that connected her to the group.

A week after the enactment, I looked in the box where I had stored the masks and other artifacts that I had used. I picked out the neutral masks and I saw that I had taken two masks that someone had worn during my enactment. They had tearstains on them. I felt overcome with the pain that others has experienced from watching me. They had suffered through their witnessing. They had shared my pain - intermixing it with their own. We experienced sorrow together. After the enactment was over, we had joined together in the center of the room. We held each other and we cried together. It felt like the sorrow of humanity was honored that night. It was a weeping which touched the soul of all who were there.

P: Yes. Thank you...thank you so much...(I turn and look at everyone. *I have such a deep appreciation for them. They played such a valuable role for me. They created a community for me.*)

M: Just turn around. (I stand up beside M.)

P: I love you so much...

M: There turn around so you can see them all from here. You might need a chair with arms. You might need to be propped up! (We laugh together. *I sit down and H comes and kneels in front of me. I unmask her and hold her for a minute - thanking her.*)

P: Thank you!

M: What would you like for people to do with their masks.

P: ... you can take them off if you want... (*Everyone un.masks – it's like there are people in the room again.*)

M: Take time to look around and when you give the signal people can say what they need to say. (*I look individually at each person around the circle.*)

P: You can not imagine how much you are all loved... I just can't say that enough.

M: Now maybe people can say what they need to say. (*No one speaks up.*)

P: You don't have to say anything if you don't want to. (*Everyone is very quiet, I feel very self-conscious ... D/Medusa comes over to me and cries in my arms... I hold him for a while.*)

M: I think what we need to do is to all come in the center and stand together and hold one another for a few minutes. I think we all need to be held like that – just to hold one another. (*I walked into the center and hold T/perpetrator and the rest of the people came all around us and hugged one another. It was very powerful. I felt so loved and connected to everyone.*) I think it's important to stay like this for a while – not to speak to one another. It's our shared grief together that we just need to feel. (*We stand for a while together – people are crying we are rocking together as one whole body*) Patrice – can you hear me?

P: ... yes...

M: What do you feel right now?

P: We are united. We are one.

M: Yes, you are right. This is about all of our pain not just about yours alone. It is about all of us.

When we sit down in the circle once more, it begins to rain. A witness speaks: "One of the things that is interesting is that generally after ceremonies like this – quite often after ceremonies like this – particularly after a sundance, it rains. The rain takes all the shit and washes it away – all the disease and the evil is gone. It's just like you said when it started to rain – in the spiritual path that I follow – the fact that it rained is very significant. So the evil is washed away, it is purged and clean. The earth has taken it away."

*I cannot go anymore to the marshes,
Where the gatekeeper smiles at the poisons he's made.
For my heart belongs to the one on the mountain,
Where doves build their nest in the sun-ripened glade.
For I am the mercury light of the morning,*

*Looking for shelter in this thunder and this rain.
 You like some windmill weaves light where it's storming.
 Your love - like a potion for the hunger and the pain
 Let it rain.*

*I have been bought - I have been sold in the city,
 I've dined with the demons and I've drank of their fear.
 But you - you have known and waited in silence,
 Come cradle my heart in a home-coming tear.
 We are the mercury light of the morning,
 Looking for shelter in this thunder and this rain.
 He like some windmill weaves light where it's storming,
 His love – like a potion for the hunger and the pain.
 Let it rain.*

- author unknown

Journal entry: It is exactly six weeks after the enactment - I took the coffins out of the box. I have already taken pictures of them and I wonder if I will carry them around forever. As I look at them I realize that I feel very detached. They don't have the same pull to stay mine as they did before. I thought that I could give them up. This is always a sign that I have moved past whatever they represented for me. I thought that maybe it was time for me to dispose of them; this had been my original my intention when I first made them. I take them out of the box, examine them closely, and make sure that I have good photographs of them. I decide that it is time for the cremation. It is impulsive – like all of my artistic experiences. I trust implicitly in the silent part of myself that moves this impulse within me. I light a large fire in the fireplace – it is very hot and wild. I take the four coffins and line them up beside the door of the fireplace. I take them one by one and read the words that I had written on the gold paper. These words are about loss, pain, suffering and sadness. I hold the first one, the symbol of my fear. I bless it and then set it carefully in the middle of the flames. I watch the fire consume it. I take up the second one – losses within my family. I bless it and set it in the fire. I can hear the crack of the clay as it disintegrates within the hot flames. The third – my work experience – is easily placed in the blaze. I bless it for the lessons and the learning then watched it disappear amongst the flames. Lastly, I put in the coffin that carries my broken

body with all of the consequent losses that the assaults have given me. As I place it in the flame, I can hear the clay explode within the blaze. It sounds good. I feel deeply satisfied to burn the identity that I no longer want or need. The coffins have burned one by one. I feel released; there is no going back to who I was. She is gone now. She has died. All that was left are remnants of ash and "bone". I watch until the flame dies down and the embers have cooled. I reach my hand in and I collect the ash and pieces of bone to scatter at a later time. The coffins and figures are completely destroyed. The ashes are put in a little urn. A scattering ceremony will be performed later. I am not sure where the best place will be. It will come to me in time. I trust that it will be done when I have completed my process.

Dream – I drove over the border because I had to do my enactment again. I went to the place which M had told me about. It was in a wooded area, which connected to a farm that I could work at once I was finished. M told me to go outside of the building, take off my jacket, and hang it up somewhere outside. I saw a fence with a post that had a wooden hook on it, so I hung it there. As soon as it was hung up I saw a large snake. I looked it in the eye and knew it would bite me - it was behind a bush. I attempted to run but it bites me on the thigh. There was no pain but I could see large red fang marks. I showed M because I did not know what to do. He was uninterested, casual and wanted to get on with the enactment. I saw a woman leading a very amazing rhythmical march where the perpetrator had to roll heavy logs. The whole community marched along – it took eighty hours. We sat down in a circle to debrief what had happened and the woman was upset because her well-intentioned plans seemed to have no effect on the perpetrator – he had just laughed at what he had to do. They asked me what I had done to deal with the perpetrator. I said that I had just used some nonsense words and now, whenever I saw him, I could only see his back - not his eyes. M was thrilled and said I could go now. It had started to rain and I knew that my coat was getting wet. It did not matter, however, because I had a new mask to wear. It was a heavy leather, beautifully formed mask.

The New Mask

In the far distance, the sound of his song began to mingle in harmony with the morning birds. The beautiful sound of community; he awakened us all with love and gentleness. I looked up the hill and anticipated him appearing out of the misty morning. As the sound of the

song increased, his form became more and more visible. I waved to attract his attention and we made eye contact. Seeing me, he waved between verses, without missing a beat. Within seconds he was beside me and I opened the door of the cabin for him to enter. I waited for him as he walked down the corridor serenading the weary sleepers. When he was sure that his job was done, he set his guitar against the inside wall, smiled, and reached to hug me. He was a big, strong man and his arms reminded me how safe it felt to be with him. I showed him the urn and the three dew-soaked flowers in my hand. He nodded and we held each other as we walked to the awaiting lake, the beautiful lake – Loon Lake. It held the rituals of pain, anger, joy and ecstasy we all threw in at various moments in our healing. The sun had barely said good-morning and fog was still sitting on the glassy surface of the water. It was a perfect autumn morning for a funeral.

We walked onto the dock and I set the urn and my flowers on the cedar walkway; then we went back to get the canoe, paddles and lifejackets. We pulled the boat off the storage rack and carried it silently to the dock. It slipped into the water with an expectant quiver. After placing the urn and flowers carefully in the hull, he stepped into the stern and I in the bow. An easy push and we glided off through the ethereal mist leaving the dock and the past behind us. The row was smooth and silent. I took a deep breath and filled myself with the clean moist air. I felt alive. I looked out at the beauty around me. The forest, and the mountains above, were perfectly reflected on the polished surface of the water. As we paddled, the airy mist slowly cleared to reveal the first rays of sun that illuminated the surrounding mountains high above us. I had the illusion that I was floating in the air; the reflection was so perfect. I felt overcome with the beauty and the million miles that I had walked in the last six months. I pulled up my paddle, he followed my lead, and we hung there in the moment.

The urn was filled with the ashes of my four coffins - the life I had and the person that I was. I opened the lid and looked at the gray flakes and pieces of bone. A feeling of deep relief settled within my heart – *I* was free. I prayed for a moment – honoring the painful journey of the last eighteen years, the changes within the last six months, the wisdom of my masks, and my beauty of my healers. Then I let the ashes fall slowly and silently into the water. It seemed like such a lot of ash – it was a lot of life. Before the last of it was gone, I momentarily thought that I should keep a small piece – just to remember. No - I didn't have room for the agony anywhere in my new home; I had to let it all go. I put the flowers in the water, to thank the darkness for taking the ashes into its depth. We floated, he and I, out into the back section of the lake. The ashes were behind me. I sat in the boat letting the feelings wash over me.

Impulsively, I raised my paddle up above my head and I screamed out into the wilderness. It was a scream of triumph – I had won the war!

CHAPTER IV
The Reality of Change

I had a number of dreams that symbolized the impact of the recovery process on my life. I will share two of them.

Dream: There was a graduation ceremony to be held for me. The room was decorated and ready to go when I walked in. It was full of people. The ceremony was interrupted because things started to rattle and shake due to an earthquake. Everything was falling and shattering everywhere. I could see the people running around in a panic wondering what to do. The room was in chaos and I knew I was suppose to do something to help the people come together. I couldn't remember what I had done before so had to create something new. I needed suggestions from the people. I couldn't speak loud enough for everyone to hear me because I was so tired, so I asked my assistant to help me. I spoke, and then she spoke, and the people responded. Suddenly everything started to pull itself together – all the things that had fallen apart and shattered during the quake. I was overwhelmed – it was as if everything went in reverse – very quickly. There was more of a possibility of getting crushed as things went in reverse so I had to be very still and trust that everything would fall into place. Everything came together.

Dream – There was a magical ritual in which I was endowed with the power of the snake. After I went out into the world I felt like I could do anything. I went to a small island where they did dances with snakes behind the knee, in a group of four. I danced very well and was rewarded by the people. I found myself in the labyrinth a modern building where there was a computer waiting for me. I sat down and saw all of my work in it. I pressed a button on the keyboard and everything started to backspace in fast motion, erasing everything, I had done before, at a quick pace. I tried to stop it in every way I could think of but could only get it to stop temporarily before it continued to backspace. I finally realized I had saved everything on a disk so nothing I had done before would be lost forever.

From the moment that I took the copper Medusa back into my hands I began to transform at lightening speed. The changes have been substantial and miraculous. They

include changes in my physical body, my sense of self, my feelings and beliefs about safety, my relationships with others, my personal world view, and my future goals.

Physical Changes

The morning after the enactment my body felt real and whole. It was as if I could feel it for the first time. As the days passed, my skin became very sensitive, as if it had been completely torn off and I had a whole new skin. I was extremely sensitive to sounds and touch for more than a week; all of my senses were enlivened. In some ways it was a very painful experience, but I knew that it was a readjustment to the world – a rebirth. In addition to this sensitivity, I felt exhausted. The physical effort that it took to do the enactment was substantial. It took almost two weeks before I had gained back my strength and adjusted myself within my skin.

I had been struggling with my posture for many years. After the enactment, I started to stand and sit taller without any effort. It was as if a huge burden had lifted from my shoulders and I could stand up straight for the first time. I was able to walk with assurance and purpose. People commented on my presence, my radiance, my assertiveness, and confidence. This has been a sustained change.

Sense of Self

Being able to stand and walk in the world in a new way altered my feelings about myself. When I looked at my reflection in the mirror, I saw someone different. I was not able to wear the same clothes and feel comfortable. I had to cut my hair. I wanted to change the way I looked on the outside to match who I was becoming on the inside.

Journal entry: Today I put on one of the baggy dresses that I usually wear. I felt sick to my stomach as I looked at myself in the mirror. I looked like a mark for abuse. I tore the dress off and threw it in the garbage. It scared me - I don't know what to wear to be safe. Nothing I own seems to feel right or comfortable. What I have chosen to wear in the past does not match with who I am now. Who is this new woman in me?

I am experimenting with new boundaries, new ways of communicating with people, new ideas and new feelings within me. Nothing seems to be the same. When the earthquake

has shattered everything around me the only thing I can do is live in the ambiguousness of the transition period. I am trusting that everything will fall into place in due time.

Feelings and Beliefs

One of the most striking affects of change has been within both my thoughts and my feelings. For the last eighteen years I have felt unsafe in almost every part of my life. I did not realize, but I always entered into situations with the expectation of being hurt. It was as if I was waiting for the first strike. After the enactment, I noticed these thoughts – habitual thoughts – for the first time. I was constantly telling myself that I needed to be careful, on guard, alert, cautious, and suspicious. As time has progressed, I have learned to put these thoughts to rest. I find that I am less anxious and afraid; I rarely panic. I do not take foolish chances, but I am able to walk at night with a new feeling of safety. I walk with an image of where I am going rather than an image of how I will be murdered.

I have feelings that I have never felt before. I have been able to connect with a part of myself that I had previously avoided. I trust my feelings implicitly. They are no longer my enemies ready to drag me down and suffocate me, but they are my friends. They are the wisest part of me. Safety is a feeling inside of me. I feel safe within myself for the first time. This safety allows me to listen to the messages that I receive through my feelings with open ears. I am whole at last.

Relationships

The experience of safety within myself allows me to be safe with others. I am able to experience a clear separation or boundary in my relationships. I find that I do not have to protect or hide myself all the time. I am independent and free. This allows me to be open to relationships with others where before I was not. I have been able to reach out and call people to me rather than constantly protecting myself from the closeness that can come with friendships.

The most remarkable change has been in my relationships with my children. The enmeshed bond that existed between my daughter and I has become healthy and independent. The same independence is evident in my relationship to my son. We are still very close, but there is a healthy autonomy and freedom to change. We are able to enjoy each other's differences and celebrate our independent abilities and interests. I can see that my children are

in a constant movement towards change. Change has become something to celebrate rather than something to fear. This experience has changed my view of the world.

My World View

Breath – the miracle of life. On the out-breath, I breathe myself out into the world. On the in-breath, I breathe the world back into me. During the experience of trauma, I could not breath myself out into the world – it was too painful and frightening. I was caught within the in-breath, trying to integrate the world within me - struggling. I tried very hard to keep everything the same – it was my way of building a false security. It took an incredible amount of energy to restrict myself to the in-breath. I was dying. Now, I am free of the in-breath/out-breath duality - I am not the breath at all. I am the moment between – the instant of change between in and out, out and in. That brief, infinite, indefinable moment - that is me. It is my true identity – the ever-changing moment where freedom lies. It is all that I need to be. Within that infinite second, I am changing. There are no dualities. I am decentered and non-linear.

With this new world view, I have been set free. I moved from a modern to a postmodern paradigm. Constructivist epistemology is not just a concept in my mind - it is a reality that I have experienced living. I understand the deeper meaning behind it because I have lived it. It came from my life through this remarkable process of change. It has opened me up to a different way of living and working.

Future Dreams

My identity was enmeshed with my workplace. I had struggled with my work as a teacher for a long time, yet was unable to leave. I knew in my heart that it was the wrong place for me to be, yet I was stuck. Due to a remarkable painting that I made, exactly nine months after I began the process with my masks, I was able to submit my letter of resignation and leave the job.

Journal entry: I made an astonishing painting today – it was my birth. I started out painting a fire pit with a fire burning brightly in the middle. I painted a large snake coiled up beside it and then, the school house burning in the fire. Next I painted myself leaning against the snake. I had a feeling of deep ecstasy and pleasure as I painted myself separated from the school. It was as if the snake gave me protection, security and power. As I was painting myself I made two mistakes with the brush – one above my head and one where I was sitting on the

grass. I tried to correct them, starting with the mistake above my head. I thought it was a crown, yet it ended up being another head emerging out of the top of mine. The image was similar to that of a snake when it molts – a new self emerging. In addition, it reminded me of the myth of Athena's birth – she emerged from the head of Zeus. Athena is an aspect of the triple Goddess that includes the Medusa. She carries the image of Medusa on her shield. At the base, where I was sitting, the mistake turned into the birth of a baby. It filled me with incredible happiness and I started to cry. I had the feeling that I had something else to take care of now and could no longer save the school from destruction within the fire. I knew from this painting that the resignation from my job was absolutely necessary. I resigned this afternoon.



Figure 15: Rebirth (painting)

I feel like the whole world has opened up for me. I am looking forward to what the future holds – something that I never felt before. I have moved from feeling stuck to feeling free. What more could I ask for?

(This all sounds so wonderful, doesn't it? I need to be honest and mention the struggle that I experience with this ambiguity. Throughout my life, I learned to live with a plan, a structure, and a set future. I am having to learn a new way of being. I am learning that I have a never ending, constantly evolving story. At times, through this experience, I have felt very

lost. It has been a difficult process of change. I am still in the chaos. In this moment - I am between breaths.)

Letter to a Client

Dear Friend,

You can heal yourself. You have all of the answers, all the wisdom, and all the light that you will need to do it. You have the capacity to use the resources that lay within you. You are capable. You need to be a warrior in the battle of healing - for a long and difficult battle it will be. You stand at the center of your heroic adventure, and you have the inner ears to hear the strategies that will work best for you.

There are people in the community that can help you. They know from personal experience what it is to be healed. They know what it takes to go into the underworld of evil - to disappear and then be reborn. It is not easy; it is extremely challenging. It will be hell, fire, and agony. It may feel like you are being torn from limb to limb, but in the end, you will move through the threshold into a new birth - the threshold of life. You will be able to claim what is rightfully yours - health, love, safety, acceptance, security, and peace!!! It is your right to live a full life. Are you willing to sacrifice your pain (your identity) so that you can have the life that you deserve? What are you willing to do for yourself? What are you willing to DO?

I can be with you as you walk the hard path of healing. I will do everything I can to hold you and help you, but you will lead the way. You know what you need. Let your inner voice tell you - listen as closely as you can. You may have to hear the same message repeatedly. I trust you to take charge - you are the expert. There may be so much pain that you may have to cry for along time. There is not a quick solution. Preparation takes time. You are preparing for your initiation into life after trauma.

If you give up on yourself - no one can save you. It is your life and your light. Through your gifts as a human being you have choices. You have the choice of whether you want to live a full life - or you can choose to have your face scrapping along the ground. What do you have the courage to do?

Best wishes,

Been There.

Reflections

I have experienced the telling of my story three times. The first time was when I walked through the details of it in the therapeutic reenactment. The tale was made public – I thought that all secrets were revealed. It was intense and seemingly complete. The second time that I told the story was in the writing of the transcript of the enactment. It was a telling in slow motion – painfully reexamining every second of the account. I experienced a traumatic reminder of the power of survival. The third time is in the present, within this narrative, where I have experienced still greater insight and perspective. All three times have shown me a different side to the story. I have struggled with the emotional waves that have washed over me with each telling; more and more being revealed each time. I found that the three separate experiences of the telling changed, moved, and exposed new meaning. I have seen myself as a process – shifting and changing with each account. To illustrate this experience I have included a painting. In this painting three figures rise out of fiery depths (see Figure 16). The three figures move in the direction of another light-filled space. A third figure waits there – my genie, my genius; in the repeated telling, my true genius is born.



Figure 16: My Genius (painting)

Throughout the telling, I found myself moving in and out of “it happened” and “it is happening now.” There was little separation for me. At times it was the images in my mind that were the clearest and at times it was the feeling in my body. As I wrote I found where my

memories lay. Often I was not sure if I experienced a *memory* or an *embodiment* of the experience. I saw details that I did not remember before the telling. Even though I know what the event entailed, I created the story anew each time. I found different words, more exacting metaphors, and deeper clues to understanding. At times, I found myself hiding my emotions or a personal truth behind a quick detail – avoiding some deeply painful or shameful place. I would have to work with myself to tease out the honesty and be true to the whole experience. I could see crystal clear at times, and at others, I was almost blind. I reflected, through thought and feeling, finding my way to a truthful telling of the story.

I have struggled with my objective and subjective voices. I wondered what you would think of my writing. I worried that you would not be able to follow me as I wandered through the labyrinth of my experiences. At times, I sacrificed my heart for logic - thinking that you would prefer it. At times, I indulged in the writing of my heart not caring what you might think. I saw my academic training dictating what I ought to write, and I saw my creative spontaneity exploring the limits of my language and the picture that I could create through words. I was able to take many positions within the text and speak with many voices. If I started anew today, the story would be different – just as it was in each of the three times that I told it.

Through this narrative I have written myself into a moment in time. The words are here on the page and we can both read them over and over again. It seems to have been imprinted in time, yet it is only a spark of who I am. It has exposed a taste of my culture, my upbringing, my values and beliefs. I have tried to hold myself in the moment, yet every time I work through the story and edit it, I find myself writing another moment, a different aspect, or a new perspective. For me, the story remains incomplete, undone, and evolving. It is a brief moment of lived experience.

Dream: I experience myself as words – totally filled with words – healing words. There are paragraphs and paragraphs, loads and loads of words. It is like a lecture flowing endlessly with healing words. I heal myself through my words.

CHAPTER V

Literature Review

Historical Perspectives on the Mask

I wish that I could take the time to tell you all of the sacred, spiritual, and holy ways that our ancestors and their descendents created and used masks. Because this is not an anthropological text, I will only present a small example. I think it is important to know how psychologically significant and pervasive the mask was, and still is, within the community life of cultures around the world.

Ancient peoples used masks for disguise and protection in hunting and warfare, for transformation and healing, for honoring the dead and dying, in ceremonies that marked life transitions, in times of hardship, and in times of joy. Masks were a means to process a variety of emotional and social events that happened within the community. For example, numerous authors tell of death rituals involving masks. One report recounts how people incorporated the death mask, placed upon the face of the deceased, to preserve her personality and to help her soul on its travels to the spiritual world. In New Guinea, after the funeral, all masks and paraphernalia that the dancers used were placed on a raft along with the deceased and were floated down the river to the sea. It was hoped that the raft would sink and the spirit of the dead would become a shark, snake or crocodile (Hunt & Carlson, 1961). In a more involved ritual, a mask for the dead was made from a tree which grew in the burial place. The tree, the mask and the earth were then consecrated by the Shaman. The mask was buried so that it would collect the spirits of evil in the burial grounds. Masks were used in ceremonies to persuade the spirit of the deceased to leave the tribe. Other masks and rituals of protection were enacted to chase the spirit of the dead away (Pernet, 1992). In the South Pacific, the people believed that the spirits of their dead ancestors could return in masked form. They created masks for these individuals so that they could be present in ceremonies and rituals (Halpin, 1983).

As people came to know more about the world, the exclusive use of masks within sacred ritual began to expand. Individuals were chosen to wear masks, not because they were shamanistic, but because they could sing or dance as part of the ritual or celebration. Rituals became stories with a plot and they were performed through song and dance. Half masks were developed so that the storyteller could speak and eventually the "play" was developed. The mask helped the actor become the "spirit" of the character in the story (Eliade, 1964).

Today, masks are still a powerful symbol for human experience. The mask still lives strongly within our culture. It finds its way into our emotional lives through literature, entertainment, and human transgression. Age old myths (cloaked in a mask) can be found in films and murder mysteries. For example, the terror of death and dying is portrayed in Edgar Allan Poe's story *The Masque of the Red Death*. In the story the mask of the Red Death appears in the midst of a masquerade warning people of their mortality (Zone, 1981). In addition, *The Phantom of the Opera* (Leroux, 1987) is a metaphor of the asocial self, illustrating the cruel manifestations of loneliness and despair. As economic depression and lawlessness spread within the social world the appearance of the masked hero entered the scene – *the Lone Ranger, the Shadow, Zorro, and Batman* to name a few (Zone, 1981). These characters give us hope and faith in the goodness of others. A variety of films represent the mask as an boundary marker that aided facially scarred protagonists in surviving as individuals within a prejudiced society. The struggle with duality was depicted in stories such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – where parts of the self are in conflict. The mask is present in contemporary life, used to form an identity such as with wrestlers or terrorists (ski masks and the hood of the Klu Klux Klan). Masks are still popular as a disguise for celebrations such as Halloween or the New Year masquerade ball. They lend security and allow risk-taking behavior. Lastly, masks may appeared in a more subtle form. People may construct an illusive identity through an outer "mask" that is formed using make up, clothes, and other social symbols.

The Psychological Function of Masks

Through observing how and when aboriginal peoples used masks, anthropologists classified masks into five functional categories – mask-as-frame, mask-as-mirror, mask-as-mediator, mask-as-catalyst and mask-as-transformer (Eldredge, 1996; Jenkins, 1981; Napier, 1986; & Tonkin, 1979). These categories are highly transferable when evaluating the psychological functions of masks. Firstly, masks can serve the function of the frame which holds an image within. It is able to focus attention on the content of the symbol that it represents. The mask-as-frame creates a boundary between what is framed and what is not. Framing allows me to step out of the ordinary into another reality within the frame. The mask frames what is physically and psychologically significant to me. Secondly, masks can function as a mirror. The mirror allows me to see a reflection of myself and my world. It opens the way into another reality. It reflects my tacit knowing as I make the mask, observe it or wear it. It reflects my inner transcendental nature as a human being. The mask is reflexive of a myriad of

inner emotions. As I look at my masks the emotions are visible as I observe them. I then have a possibility to respond to the emotions which the mask reflects rather than to the mask itself. Thirdly, the mask functions as a mediator between two opposing worlds – tacit and explicit, society and nature, individual and social. The mask-as-mediator can act as a conductor or exemplar as I move through the death of an old self towards the birth of the new. It mediates as I explore my psychological and physiological world. Fourthly, the mask can function as a catalyst. It stimulates and supports my change process - especially during times of transition. It is a medium where I can recognize and explore new attitudes, behaviors, and ideas. Lastly, and most important, the mask functions as a psychological transformer. My strongest impulse is to change, develop, and expand. I am always within this process of transformation. The mask allows me to create inner understanding and knowing. It allows me to extend myself and increase my awareness. My masks *show* me the progress of transformation; they are a record of my journey.

Eliade (1964) suggests that masks have two further functions – to preserve or alienate the personality. The personality (characteristics and disposition) is preserved through a death mask, a personal spirit mask and so on. The personality is alienated through ritual or theatrical endeavors. Eliade proposes that a primordial myth can be relived or actualized by changing (alienating) the personality and becoming the “Other”. The mask has the capacity to proclaim some being who does not belong to the everyday world (tacit wisdom). It sanctions the transcendence of earthly time, even if the mask is of my own face. It is able to do this because the mask focuses and concentrates the symbolic power of the myth as it is lived within my emotions and the meanings that I create. My reality resides within the mask. It appears almost as if there were two people - the mask and myself (mask-as-mediator). The self disappears and the self remains. Consequently, the mask can be a compelling image for releasing and transforming unnamed or unknown emotions and beliefs.

Mask Use in Counselling

When I hide my face behind a mask or have everyone around me wearing a mask, I can take risks that I may never enact in everyday life. As a result, I may be able to overcome any limitations that I have imposed on myself. The benefits of this experience may go beyond the single moment that the mask is used. I have the possibility of being freed from old habits. I have greater awareness, choice and control. In the study that was done with children that stuttered, the use of masks helped them to overcome their speech difficulties (Janzing, 1998).

The masks, combined with psychodrama, allowed the children the opportunity to take risks which resulted in the disappearance of their speech problems. This method combined the art of masking and the experience of drama to achieve its results.

Most therapeutic methods using masks incorporate elements of art and drama (see Table A). As an artistic act, the making of the mask is healing in itself. Art is a medicinal agent that contains therapeutic forces within it. The mask images that I make are healing as I mediate on them, tell stories about their creation, speak to them, listen to what they have to say, dream about them, and dramatize them through my body movements. The very action of forming the mask is a dramatic enactment of my inner life. The images that come through me seem to have lives and souls of their own. Therefore, art can activate a spiritual resonance as it comes out of both the conscious and implicit worlds (Shorter, 1996). Art allows the externalization of an image. The externalization can become an "Other" which stands as an agent of transformation (McNiff, 1992). For example, within my enactment the individuals who wore my masks became externalized others-in-action. They all enacted parts of myself – they were me. In the process, both my tacit and explicit world view expanded. This created flexibility and liberated me for change (Gladding, 1992). The artistic symbol of the mask helped me to understand my challenges differently although the external problem still existed before the enactment. As I spent time making and observing my masks, the energy of their messages were free to flow and be received. I could explore the associations that were present for me. In addition, I could amplify important aspects of the masks that brought me new ideas and understanding that were beyond my explicit knowledge (Furth, 1988). For example, Medusa's hair of snakes became an important symbol for me related to consciousness and strength.

The use of dramatic play, psychodrama, or sociodrama are often combined with mask making (Janzing, 1998; Landy, 1984, 1985). In my case, I chose to do a therapeutic enactment (see Corey, 1995 and Hollander, 1978 for further information). The subject of therapeutic enactment is beyond the scope of my thesis, however it is crucial to emphasize the importance that it played in my experience of recovery when combined with my use of masks. I believe that the combination of the two were essential to my recovery.

As you experienced in my self-narrative, therapeutic enactment is a reenactment of the exact trauma event. Spontaneity in this type of dramatic representation is minimal in comparison to a psychodrama. I wore the mask of the actor - reenacting my lived experience. With the help of my guide, I told and moved through the story of my assault with slow intentional steps. The enactment was primarily standing on a foundation of unnamed or

TABLE A - Possible Uses for Masks in Therapy

<u>H. Petzold</u> Start with an exploration of feelings	<u>N. Breitenbach</u>	<u>L. Sheleen</u>	<u>K. Sommer</u>	<u>H. Saigre</u> A mask based on families of characters is chosen	<u>R. Landy</u> Masks representing parents and siblings	<u>Fryrear & Stevens</u> Combine masks and video
make mask (paper, cardboard or papier-mâché) or choose from a series of ready made masks	use make-up (three phases- prep, make-up proper and make-up removal)	clay model is used and participant molds papier-mâché with eyes closed (hidden mask)	creation of first mask at home (avoid intragroup influence) free choice of materials	non-verbal play with masks	interviews with masks, improvisation alone or with others that take family roles	with mask on participant reads questions while being videotaped
participants wear explores own mask then - "mask play" interaction with others (two aspects- joyful and playful vs. ritualistic		participant mounts stage and presents to a group then offers mask to another who presents it in a different way (preliminary play), then open play with a mask of choice	interactions (such as psychodrama) - brief "play trials", to develop role, coexist with others and make contact, then "play projects" - deal with personal issues, then improvised "open play"	feedback and reflection	masks that represent three different roles (positive, neg., neutral), name and present to group (those wearing masks can be sculpted, moved, vocalized or verbalized)	without mask, participant listens to video and answers the questions (dialogue created between client and parts of his/her own personality)
reflection and feedback	at the request of the participant, debriefing the experience happens after make-up removal	reflection and feedback		participants are invited to make masks to complete series already available	debrief: what happened / retell the story of the enactment and gain further insights	

Information within this table has been compiled from information provided in Janzing (1998).

unknown feelings rather than “unconscious” feelings, attitudes or wishes as suggested by Kahn (1964). The enactment allowed me to be more in touch with myself so that I could experience what lived in my body memory. In moving through the actions of telling my story, high emotional energy was created through my involvement with the intensity of the memory.

As we entered into the narrative space, the neutral masks of the audience created a container of safety for me. The audience was extremely important as a community of witnesses. The aspect of social responsibility played a key role in my experience. The value of the enactment came when I was able to take the experience of trauma back into the social realm in which it happened. It was essential to shout out the injustice and shame into a world which allowed it. I was able to release the ownership of the trauma and place it back into the community and society. I believe that community needs to be used in this way because the sharing of the story opens the possibility of change within a community. It is not only me that has to recover from violence and abuse but it is also my community that needs recovery. In this way, I saw the limits of the process of individual therapy in a closed room. Without community, it was like perpetuating a secret or denying that atrocities of this kind happen to women every minute of the day in our communities.

Within the expanse of the enactment narrative the masks served to contain (frame) the experience of the assault. They mirrored the deep emotional feeling of terror allowing me to name and experience the phenomenon for the first time as I physically experienced the story. This process allowed the mask to act as a catalyst in transforming my inner experience because they were worn and moved by others. Most prominently - the Medusa mask - which opened the door to my tacit knowledge - helping me to manifest the action that was needed so that I could find the place of safety within me. Finally, using masks in the enactment served to mediate between my explicit and tacit knowing, as well as between me, as an individual, and the community as a whole. It was the participation of the community in this ritual-of-recovery that helped me find my way out of the darkness of the assault.

Practical Implications and Counter-indications

A taboo is a restraint imposed by social usage or a protective measure against danger. Historically masks and mask-makers were protected by specific taboo. For example, to see, touch or wear a shaman's mask was absolutely forbidden because of the power that existed around it. Tafoya (1981) tells an account where a family was displaying the songs and masks of their adopted family. The father put a mask on his young daughter and told her to dance.

When she was finished she could not remove the mask. The relatives worked over her for a long time before the mask could finally be removed. One of the elders admonished the father for acting irresponsibly and allowing a child to wear a mask that she was unprepared to carry. Proper training and preparation are essential for an individual's safety. In an extreme example, instant death was the result of touching or even looking at a particular mask if one had not been initiated into the handling or understanding of the mask (Jenkins, 1981). In essence the uninitiated individual was possessed by the spirit of the mask (Makarius, 1983).

Masks are a powerful medium. In using them in a counselling setting there are a number of precautions that must be presented. It is important to realize that masks radiate power – even ones that the clients make for themselves. As Turner (1981) reported, internal confusion, dissociation, isolation, or the displacement of body feelings could result from wearing masks. In this way, if masks are worn by the client a certain level of maturity is necessary within the client. She must be able to come out of a mask on demand or be able to recognize an uncomfortable or dissociative experience for herself. It has been indicated that with clients who have dissociative tendency or weak ego boundaries wearing of the mask should be avoided (Emunah, 1994).

In work that I have done with traumatized women, I have always used the mask they have made as objects for observation whether it be made from paper, plaster, or maché. Wearing the mask is a very different experience. Usually strong emotions are evoked, even if it is a joyous experience. Therefore, it is important to use containment strategies to center the client back into herself. These strategies are most beneficial when a client is experienced in using them *before* the mask work begins. Some strategies include centering and reality training, such as touching, saying client's name, calling client into the present and into the room, or breathing from the central area of the solar plexus (Petzold, as cited in Janzing, 1998). On occasion, it may be indicated that a mask needs to be destroyed. In some cases, this may represent a loss of self or a loss of a part of the self, therefore the destroying of a mask needs to be accompanied by a transformative image - a new mask or a small ritual.

In order to move the client slowly through an experience of masking, masks may be constructed in a progressive manner. For example, the client may start out with a paper mask or a mask on a stick, move to a clay mask, a plaster mask, and then a character mask. Sometimes moving too quickly into mask play may overwhelm a client. Lastly, it is always important to attend to any resistance the client may have to working with masks. I introduce the possibility of making and using masks to clients who I think would be interested in the

medium and would benefit from using them. It is important to talk about the client's views on masks, their interests, and their fears around them. It is important to know if a client has had an experience of abuse from a masked perpetrator.

Summary

Masks have a long and complicated history throughout the ages. From antiquity to the present the symbol of the mask can be found within every culture. From sacred ceremonies to literature, the power of the mask has been utilized to examine and heal the deep psychological mysteries of human life. Due to the incredible flexibility of this symbol as a psychological tool, masks have been incorporated into the therapeutic process. Combined with drama or enactment, the psychological power of the mask is amplified.

In my life, my masks have been significant aids to my healing process. It has been through their intricate construction and their beautiful images that I have explored different parts of myself. Through this art form, I have been able to live within and witness my own tacit knowledge as it has guided me towards growth and development. By following this tacit knowledge and using my masks during a therapeutic enactment of a serious trauma event in my life, I have found my health. Through the telling, I have framed the lived experience of my recovery process.

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