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Empowered narratives: drama praxis and the archetype as a means to authentic voice for women

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Empowered Narratives: Drama Praxis and The Archetype

As a Means to Authentic Voice For Women

By


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ABSTRACT

This thesis contests the status of gender as a social construct by considering how women develop a personal ethnography when engaging in drama and expressive arts practices.

There is no known research on drama praxis as a signifier to Australian women's identity, a major focus of this work will be, 'Who has the authority over women's expression and means of expression? Who has the authority to interpret the experience? Who has authority over other people's experience?'

This thesis addresses the internalised oppression which refers to the process by which women internalise the 'fictionalised' reality prescribed to them as women marked by the binary construct of gender duality, i.e., male/female, in which the male as the ascendant partner in the duality has the power to mark those on the descendant as 'other' to the norm.

The limits of 'knowing' only through positivist science will be extended into multi modes of knowing and within the drama praxis the reflective processes enabled by personal engagement will be investigated within the personal, universal and analogous modes.

This thesis, being written from a poststructuralist perspective, is a means of giving the study group authentic voice. It proceeds from an explicit framework engaging archetype as a means to modify consciousness and is an invitation: a "call to action".

This thesis has utilised drama praxis and expressive arts to describe, analyse and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centres and
assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain women. An awareness was reached whereby existing choices, attitudes and understandings were seen to reflect hidden meanings and unrecognized consequences thus new ways of knowing and thinking and the ability to "name" were experienced by the writer and the research group.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: [11th June 1997]
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Snake Dreaming

Who dreams me? Dances me? Am I the dancer and the danced?
The dreamer and the dreamed?
I call myself 'dance maker -- dream maker'
I take my own shape ....... keep on shaping
I dream my own dream ....... keep on dreaming
My own gatekeeper ....... I dance through the portals if so moved
The mysteries are veiled, but in the dance
I am Mystery

Snake Dreaming

Ishtar? Tapered thighs, taught sinews
wise warrior
protector of sacred lovers
Dreamer of dreams -- oniennancer

Snake Dreaming

Marilyn? Marilyn Monroe? Tell me .......... why?
Huskily, intimately she draws me, fires me:
'I seduce men to live, My death their seduction
My life is in you, your breasts, your womb.
In your dark night, I am the gateway.'
The dew issues ..........
Moist ....... I laugh in her shadow
And she is gone.

Snake Dreaming

'And who are you? Beautiful woman in clear blue gown, plump arms, full breasts?
As I shelter in your lap
gossamer rivulets spill to my feet
tidal veil trimmed with pearl
foam lace
the waters meet
'stop shimmering ....... I can't focus!
Who are you?'
'Isis, Mara, Miriam, Mara, Maya, Maria, Moirea
Star of the sea .......... with the moon at my feet

I
AM
ALL
WOMEN.'
Snake Dreaming

He stands in the garden, at the well,
arms outstretched, clear eyes pleading.....
"Let me be your lover, for I have loved you since Time began
and will love you forever more."
No seduction this ache
and my heart, incomplete, weeps .... to be held .......by Him.

Snake Dreaming

Snake Priestess, guardian of the Portal
chevroned arms
sybilline,
"What am I to do?"

"Ride the shaman’s wand
(the snake your Mother gave you in case you’ve forgotten)
To the Time of no Time!"
.......past the singing rocks ... my head aches ...through the eye of the
spinning discs

lunar ..................................................
solar ..................................................
stellar ..................................................
symbols, sigils, glyphs

ESOTERIC VORTEX !

No ‘I’ once through this eye!
......A scream ....... My scream ........... sucked silent by the void ...........

Snake Dreaming

‘Crystal egg!
Centre of Time?
Crystal ouroboris ...... and YOU! ...... Here?’

‘Yes, I AM!’
‘Did I lift the veil?’
‘You danced your dream ...... Welcome!’
MAPPING THE WORK

The Starting Point

From my own experiences I knew that the drama process has the potential to change attitudes, values, understandings and thinking. I decided to ask the question: ‘Can drama be a change agent for women who have been ‘psychologically disenfranchised’ within a patriarchal paradigm?’

Further questions emerged. ‘How do women establish a sense of self and identity when many of the behaviours expected of women and attitudes towards them are based on constructed ‘fictions’?’

I realised that my dream (in which my mother handed me a live snake) represented another way of knowing. That drama was the link between the tacit and the explicit dimensions of knowing. The dialectic relationships between the archetype and drama praxis could provide women with another way of knowing within the parameters of their relationships and this discourse. A sense of agency and the authenticity of their own narrative could also develop as the links between the tacit and explicit became apparent.

This chapter explains why female archetypes were selected as the framework for the workshops. The process of writing the workshops was much like action based research, I became totally immersed in the work.

Both self reflection and workshop discussions indicated the value of tacit knowing and this thesis will add to the available literature on this subject.
The issue of gender as a social construct created a tension as I chose to work with female archetypes. This required further clarity and in the face of many feminisms I felt I had to justify my decision to stay with gendered archetypes, e.g., 'the lady of the dance', 'the hearth mother' instead of working with 'the dancer', 'the keeper of the hearth' which held no obvious gender constraints and overtones. Poststructuralism and its lens led me to investigate story, myth and archetype as a means to define self. Poststructuralism has to do with the nature of discourse, position and agency in which language is a powerful tool for constructing or deconstructing the self and others.

From this point I was able to develop some ideas as to why drama worked as a change agent. I the studied the workshop journals and had discussions with the women. We determined whether my ideas about drama as a change agent were congruent with the participants.

Because of the drama praxis my implicit knowledge became explicit and further investigation of binary gender divisions were necessary. There was some thought about the consequences of the 'fictioning' of gender for men.

**Orientation of The Thesis**

This chapter contains an introduction addressing the purpose and significance of the thesis. The choice of using the personal 'I' is explained with reference to Bobis (1994). The conceptual framework illustrates my endeavour to produce a thesis which integrates theory and practice.
I will illustrate that language is a powerful tool for marginalising, limiting and colonising. Expressive arts processes were used as a means for experiencing and reflecting on the agency of power within the naming process.

This chapter identifies the seven key research questions investigated in this research.

**Why Women? An Historical Context**

Femininity and feminine are constructed ‘fictions’ validated by powerful institutions and seen as ‘fact’ (Walkerdine, 1990). This chapter addresses the socialising of psyche and how women adapt to cultural definitions of themselves constructed by patriarchal systems. Patriarchy, for the purposes of this thesis refers to any system in which males use their position of power, be it within domestic or national contexts, to marginalise, minimise and oppress others. Schussler Fiorenza considers sexism, racism, classism and colonialism to be manifestations of the patriarchal system.

She clarifies her use of the term ‘patriarchy’ as ‘not just ideological dualism or androcentric world construction in language but a social, economic and political system of graded subjugations and oppressions (Schussler Fiorenza in Hogan, 1995, p.91).
Bobi\(^n\) (1994) adds to the definition,

For the purposes of this paper I use ‘patriarchy’ in a feminist sense of the term: the historical accretion of power - as institutionalised in language, family, social authority, gender relations, political power, et al - that reflects, projects and protects in all its relationships the superordinate interests of the male, both collectively and individually (p.5).

Both these definitions provide a backdrop against which this thesis contests the status of gender.

Circumstances within the Australian context are examined attending to age, income, education, employment and Western religions with some attention to past and present laws regarding discrimination on the bases of biological sex and gender (Summers, 1994). This chapter calls for an examination of the masculinisation and feminisation of spirituality. The crisis of tradition faced by some women in the Christian church is addressed and the Western notion of religion is then compared with the containing matrix of women centred religions which existed 25,000 years ago (Gimbutus, 1989).

**The Gendered Self: Sovereignty For Women**

In this chapter I attempt to resolve my ambivalence between constructivism and essentialism. Feminist theorists (Grant, 1994; Alice, 1994) argue that there should be no uniformly gendered variance in our interpretation of lived experience, being a man or woman needn’t colour our perspective, reactions
or responses. But this thesis takes the stance that artificially imposed constraints according to gender restrict and limit choices. Discrimination according to law and social mores have denied many women the opportunity to participate fully in history and politics and the shaping of their public and private worlds.

Perhaps it is universal to 'genderise' the world. The notion of dualities and my own cultural bias about duality becomes clear in this part of the thesis. Further discussion illuminates the social realities of a gendered society. In this part of the thesis I consider the notion of identity within various disciplines, e.g., psychology, sociology and politics, and acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual to utilise their lived experience as an important source of knowledge to define self.

Personal experience and praxis are seen as the primary source. I will identify that there is no map of standard truth (Hogan, 1995), only the multiplicity of interactional processes. Additionally I will illustrate that as individual experience is subjective, unfocused and unanalysed experience there was the dilemma of how such personal experiences could be a 'truth'. Narrative theology gave insight into the way each individual is simultaneously mapped by the greater story and shaped by personal experiences. Narrative theologians make many claims about the positive aspects of story with no reference to a sense of agency or position, or how stories have the power to maintain the dominant social paradigm. The use of archetype to re-shape, re-vision, re-view and re-cognise the self is discussed as a powerful metaphor which can take us beyond the limitations of the local, historically and culturally.
constructed self. Myth is also examined as a means to identify self and a transcript is included of the Dame Ragnall, Sir Gawain story (Mystery School, 1995) as an example of how myth works in our lives. This example was chosen as it grants sovereignty to women.

The Beginning of the New Story

The closing chapter defines the parameters of the thesis and investigates the use of expressive arts modes as a means to explore, recreate, redefine and reflect on lived experiences.

Some explanation is given to the difference between drama and drama therapy as much of the practical work was closely aligned to that of drama therapists. For the purposes of academic requirements and personal integrity this had to be clear.

Drama is a valid way of knowing and is a way of fleshing the story into physical form, when this is done, aspects which were hitherto unknown or hidden come into view. New insights, understandings and ways of thinking are developed. Drama constructs parameters in which the actual and the unreal become a creative synthesis from which new meanings issue.

Ritual contains the drama, both creates and sets apart a safe place in which to work. The journal entries illuminate the power of ritual and reveal how ritual positioned me as a 'non-intrusive facilitator'.

Drama is a powerful change agent as participants can negotiate their positions and develop a sense of agency. The drama process is not constrained by the
limitations of rational thinking processes, e.g., analysis and deductive reasoning, but embraces the imaginative process as a means to reveal depths, dimensions and new ways of knowing from quite ordinary situations.
CHAPTER 1 – THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The Starting Point

This journey has two starting points which when merged became the driving force of my investigation. The life I lived as the marked ‘other’ in our binary social construct of male/female and the idea of drama as a change agent.

The initiating event was a dream.

Drama Praxis As Change Agent

I had read about the status of women in Australia and being a woman have had my own experiences of being positioned as ‘other’ according to law and accepted social practice.

I was also very interested in drama as a change agent, knew from my own experiences, particularly from work done with Peggy Nash Rubin and Jean Houston that personal engagement in drama processes had changed my attitudes, values, understandings and thinking. With further reflection by way of my own journals I became aware that the drama processes had helped me to reach a point where I could understand how I developed these same attitudes, values, understandings and thinking.

So from what started as a hunch with some substantiation from my own experiences I formulated the question, ‘Can drama be a change agent for women who have been ‘psychologically disenfranchised’ by the patriarchal paradigm?’
My first task was to search the literature for evidence that women are a 'special needs group' and investigate the history and the economic, legal, social and spiritual position of Australian women.

**Empowered Narratives: Authentic Voice For Women**

As female, 'other', I was tired of the patriarchal system for what it was doing to me but also to the men I know. Angry that the knowledge given to me by way of a dream has no status in our society.

I wanted to learn how to express myself in my own way, from my own power base how to claim an experience as mine, how to have it, know it, in my terms.

I wanted to find out the reasons which have prevented women from having a voice in a society in which they are more than 50% of the total population and yet so minimally represented amongst the power brokers and decision makers in politics, finances, government and the law.

How do women establish a sense of self and identity when so much of what is deemed to be appropriate for women is a 'fiction'?

I wanted to find out how this had happened and why it continued to happen. What was going on for this to continue in spite of government attempts to redress the issue?

What stories do women have to tell? How are these stories constructed?
Are the stories and myths still appropriate? How do they influence the roles and masks we continue to appropriate in our lives? Can they be changed? How do we change them?

I wanted to find out if drama and arts processes could make a difference for women who wanted to change.

The Hunch, The Dream

Del Coultaas (1995) suggests that we need to develop new thought patterns. I knew that there was another way of knowing, I had my own very real world of dreams, visions, precognitive knowing and knew that body knowing, its perceptions and movements precedes language, that language creates form and drama shapes new knowing, new ways of thinking and new expressions. Drama is the link between the tacit and the explicit and the process which enables synthesis is cyclic:

An ever cyclic process where one forever turns away from oneself in order to come back to oneself, as I heard in a play, 'the only journey is the journey home' ("Inside dry water", 1995).
I decided to write a series of workshops in which I would work with a group of women from the community, who responded by word of mouth and who were interested in these same issues.

**The Point Of Entry**

I wanted to find a frame which was not too culturally loaded, traditional fairy stories are so rigid in the roles assigned to men/women and the ideals of masculine/feminine. Although Jennings and Minde (1993) have written extensively on the work they have done using traditional fairy tales. Both have professional qualifications in therapy and psychology. I have not, I chose not want to rewrite these fairy stories or work with personal experiences in the style of dramatherapy and/or psychodrama.

I decided I would work with six female archetypes from the nine described by Gilchrist (1991), using guided imagery, in this way I hoped the participants would be open to images and ideas which would be less culturally loaded. In order to be clear on this I investigated the literature on the archetype, imagination, narrative, identity, imagery and arts processes.

**The Workshops**

I then wrote and facilitated the workshops during which participants kept journals and were encouraged to make daily entries about dreams and day to day events, conversations and interactions. As I wrote the workshops I began to understand the nature of action based research and heuristic inquiry. Heuristic in that I became totally immersed in the process, ideas would
incub"e until I 'thought' of the content of the next workshop. I was constantly on the 'lookout' for strategies, procedures and props, e.g., music, art work, references, and would spend hours selecting these. Much of the time I worked on hunches, just had a feeling that the music would be 'right'. I have included my own journal in the appendix; this is what I wrote in between workshops sessions, my own musings, it was very much a subjective, lived experience. It was only when I stood back, distanced myself from the work while I completed further research into feminist theory, feminine psychology, drama as a change agent, authentic voice, postucturalist theory, story, myth, the archetype and feminine spirituality that the cyclic nature of the process became clear; writing and implementing the workshops had indeed been action based research. The participants had actively negotiated some aspects of the content, the pacing of the sessions and their degree of personal engagement. Each session was based on what had occurred in the previous session, this is why I did not call it a course, it was not pre written, the only given at any time was the archetype as the framework.

Tacit Knowing

As a result of my own self reflection following each workshops I investigated tacit knowing (Polyani, 1966; De Beauport, 1996). There was evidence in the group discussions when experiences were shared that there is such a thing and it was powerful. Did it work with anyone else? I investigated the possibility of research on tacit knowing but although I found it discussed in literature, there was no specific mention of work done with women.
Binary Construct Of Gender: I Face A Major Dilemma

As the workshops progressed I was developing a uneasy feeling that maybe by working with female archetypes I was restricting the participants to stay within the confines of the gender binary construct. I sensed that we ought to move beyond the binary notion of gender, the duality maybe, but wondered what the consequences would be? I even played with the notion of neutral archetypes; The Weaver, The Dancer, The Creator, The Fool, and although I reached the conclusion that this could be done and would be more suitable for a mixed sex group, I still felt it was necessary for the purposes of the work to stay specifically with the female. This created a real dilemma as I was aware that I could be criticised for 'penning' the participants with just another construct, another 'fiction'.

Feminist Theory

I undertook further investigations and this led me into feminist theory as I had to determine where I stood and how I would write as a feminist. Postructuralist theory guided me and helped me to clarify my understandings and stance. I investigated female psychology as I didn’t understand why it had to be a separate discipline. It was here that the work of Jung became very important to my discussions and I drew heavily on the work of Wehr (1978), it was of major concern to me that by staying with a ‘feminine or female’ psychology that we were continuing the binary construct which positioned
women as descendent and 'other' according the 'norm' of the dominant paradigm. To clarify these issues I sought psychological, biological, and spiritual explanations. It was at this point that female spirituality and feminist theology entered my searching and from this I decided that I would stay with gender and adopt the stance of an 'holistic ethic'. I decided I had to write and work from the standpoint of one who believes there is an essential feminine essence.

**Story And A Sense Of Self**

With the awareness that developed from my studies of postructuralism I returned to story, myth and the archetype as a means to define self and grappled with the narrative theologians who being male write from the privileged position of ascendant male in the binary construct. This in turn led me to study the role of language in constructing our social and personal selves and started to understand how language is never innocent. I followed this lead and investigated feminism and the social sciences and the notion of the multiple 'I'. The nature of discourse and how discourses position individuals and the degree of agency within those positions.
How Does Drama Work: Some Findings Emerge

It was at this point that I began to reach some definitive ideas of how drama worked as a change agent. Ritual was a strong component of the workshops and I drew strongly on the work of Driver (1991), Landy (1992), Jennings and Minde (1993), this led me to an understanding of why ritual worked, I knew it did work, I had a hunch that it would but further reading led me to understand why. My findings in the readings are substantiated by the journal entries. The ritual contains the drama and creates a space for things to ‘happen’.

I then moved towards further inquiry into drama as a change agent, examining the contexts and texts of the drama process and also analysed pedagogical models of drama to establish any similarities between these models and the workshops. Ross (1996) provided some interesting insights into the meaning of authenticity and I juxtapositioned my understandings from his work with my understandings of discourse which I had established from the poststructuralist perspective. I became aware of the nature of discourse, its constraints and limitations. Discourse positions us in the world but within any discourse we can claim our own agency. If this is done with an awareness of the specific discourse, the individual has a greater sense of ‘self’, power and control. It removes or lessens the powerless ‘victim’ to a sense of ‘I’ll get what I can from this. It may be limited, but I know where I am being positioned and from this point of awareness I can make decisions’. I know how the discourse is framed but within the discourse I will ‘do my own naming’.
Return To The Journals

At this point it was time to return to the journals and read them through and then return to the women to discuss the contents of their journals. It was at this point that I realised why Krieger (1991) was so strong in her determination to, 'rescue the women from becoming data'. I realised that I was being afforded the entry into very private lives. It was a humbling experience and I felt the burden of responsibility. Can the amount of talk, the sharing of personal experience, the deep knowings and insights, the degree of emotion felt and shared mean anything? The discussions were long and tiring and I took great care to review what was said, what I said, in order to establish a representation in which I had not appropriated the material to serve my own ends. Then I began to wonder if I had become too cautious and I reached the decision that I could never do justice to the depth these women had gone to on their journey. The journals would be included so they could, 'speak for themselves'. I would invite the reader to reveal my assumptions, disagree with my interpretations only asking for the right to be a 'visible' writer. Every researcher in social science runs the risk of misappropriating the actions and expressions of others. This is where postructuralism has been of value in that it demonstrates how texts position and mark the subject of the writing and the writer.

Back To The Beginning

What started as a hunch has become explicit knowledge, through the framework of the archetype. Using drama and expressive arts processes, this
group of women were able to develop a sense of empowerment, an authentic
voice. Their personal engagement in the process enabled personal, universal
and analogous reflection. The nature of the work allowed for some women to
open to the numinous and spiritual.

A return to the binary notion of gender – I have come full circle and Davies’
(1994) work has made it clear. I was 'stuck' as the one marked by the
male/female duality or binary construct, unaware of the extent to which the
implications of this particular social construct was influencing and possibly
skewing my investigation. Now I have moved to a position where I can
appreciate the multiple 'I's of the many discourses of life, I have come to the
realisation that I do no have to agree with or be subordinate to these
discourses, due to their structures and rules and regulations I may be
constricted, my choices limited. But this very awareness gives me a sense of
agency in determining the lived experience of my life.

I return to my very early comments where I muse about my son and question
the notion that we need a separate psychology or that our cognitive processes
are different, given that as humans we have more shared similarities than
differences. I have decided that we do need separate psychologies because as
a male he has also been psychologically disenfranchised. Sons are born into a
society in which once over the age of eighteen they are possible 'front line
fodder' for the armed forces and live to 'give their life for their country.' Our
society is filled with images of 'toughness' in which boys and men are
encouraged to shut down their emotions. If young men are to commit
atrocities, i.e., kill another human being, to defend democracy and freedom of
speech, then they, like the hero, must desensitise themselves to feelings and emotional responses. The Hero has a code of conduct to live by which gives him permission to kill and then return to live an heroic life (Houston, 1993). Heroic sacrifice is honoured in this country by the annual Anzac Day ceremonies and marches. At this point I want it understood that I do not denigrate in any way what men and youths have done in the way of combat service for this country. I know what it did to my father's health. I witnessed his malaria attacks and was woken by his nightmares as a very small child. Two male family friends were both interned in P.O.W. camps in World War Two and when I was old enough to hear their stories I vomited at the first telling. The cost to human life is appalling and the consequences spread through families like tentacles carrying crossgenerational family patterns which are depleting and dysfunctional.

Women know they may lose their lives giving birth; men know they may lose their lives by being forced to kill. When I was very young I was on a bus and sat in front of two women in their seventies, who had not seen each other for many years. This part of their conversation has stayed with me for almost thirty years,

> How have you been Vera?, 'Oh, I have a good enough life with Jack
> ...... you know we lost our three sons in the war.

Lost her three sons in the war! Yes, men and women do need a separate psychology as social constructs have created psychological disenfranchisement for both. Men have to move in a body 'performative' and are consequently
subject to the whims of the world politics. The law is not always written to protect them.

Women, by contrast have endured centuries of oppression and discrimination; they have suffered.

Through drama praxis, the image and other expressive arts, it is possible to change if there is a desire to change. By personal engagement within the drama praxis,

I can endeavour to recognise the multiple discourses which try to position and frame me, I will be my own agent, I will know the 'I' that I am, and claim the 'I' that I can be!

**Conclusion**

This work became my Mother's story and as it evolved I realised it is every woman's story, every woman who has lost her Shakti (Noble, 1991), who has been denied the Sophia (Griffiths, 1994) and therefore unable to connect with the 'dreaming' reality of the 'shadowlands and mists' where perceptions blur reality and whispers scream, where intervals between spoken words carry meaning, where senses so finely tuned amplify perceptions and walls move, where no solid state exists. All things tangible become connected by movements and fields, of fractals interwoven, the whole world shimmers and a flight of Sacred Ibis in chevron formation wrenches the heart back to a time of shared mysteries?
I know this and yet there is no way of validating this knowing as knowledge and wisdom which holds the potential to make our lived experience richer and real, as De Shong Meador (1992) says, ‘...the vast world of the feminine with its particular world view which informs beliefs and action ... is largely unknown to us but lies waiting in the psyches of women and appears regularly in women’s dreams ...’ (p.133).

I do not want to be an invisible writer – we have been invisible for too long – my Mother felt so invisible that she could only come to me with her gift of transgenerational authority and wisdom in a dream. My Mother who symbolises the knowledge and wisdom of all previous generations of women felt so denied, marginalised, so without authenticity, so ‘other’ that she slipped away into her own reality. I, her daughter, cannot reach her, a legacy left to us by Oedipus on the road to Colonnus, the Sphinx leapt off a cliff, my Mother retreated into neurosis and then dementia. But she came to me in a dream and handed me a live, healthy, active and pulsating snake which refused to have the breath squeezed out of it, which is what I tried to do in my terror. “I can’t hold it!” I said. “Yes you can,” she replied, “It’s time for you to take it.” And she smiled. I was forty five. This represents the last moment of shared reality between my Mother and me. I had not started this work but kept a dream diary and knew this was important. I was angry and felt an acute sense of loss. Our society had no way for me to honour and celebrate this dream. I came to realise its importance when I read of the 25,000 year continuous history of a religion oriented around the archetypal feminine from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic (De Shong Meador, 1992, p.136) but it was
Gimbutas who gave the final, resounding affirmation, 'the Snake Goddess ... guardians of the family clan ... they oversee the continuity of life energy, the well being and health of the family' (1989, p. 315). My Mother, trapped in her dementia, came to me in a time honoured way to pass on the symbol which stands for the well being and health of the family. It was important. She did not hand me a brooch or bracelet or carving. She handed me a live, pulsating, writhing snake. She knew!

There is much written about snake symbolism in mythology and religion (Eliade, 1964; Cooper, 1978; Johnson, 1981; Gimbutas, 1989). There is the ancient Snake Goddess, the serpent of Christianity, the serpent in the Cabbalistic Tree of Life, the Australian Aboriginal Rainbow Serpent and the Kundalini to name a few (Cooper, p 146). Could I say that my Mother was unable to maintain the power of the kundalini, the struggle had been too great, and as I reached menopause she handed it over to me, 'It's time!' The Kundalini can come to women with such power as they reach menopause that the only way to reconciliation is a journey to the descent. Was it her way of saying the Kundalini will rise, 'Take it! Do something with it! Find the strength, you will be able to do what I could not do!' She knew what was to happen, three months after the dream, I became extremely ill with pneumonia and nothing mattered except life itself – friendships, ambitions, the greater story. Nothing mattered – but I had wonderful dreams about the 'sisterhood' and completed enough craft and sewing projects to last a few years. I tell people that for a few months I 'went to pasture' the 'parapraxis', there are no such things as accidental 'turns of phrase'. My Mother handed me the snake in
the middle of a vibrant spring pasture. Over twenty years ago my Mother asked an old aboriginal man who lived in Derby, Western Australia, to make a carved, wooden snake which she sent to me after my son was born. An unusual gift we all thought, but I cherished it, and I wonder what the Rainbow Serpent has to do in all of this.

As we worked with the Queen of the Earth during the workshops, one of the women ‘saw’ a group of aboriginal women dancing. They moved in serpentine formation and rhythm and she said it was a birthing dance.

The journals are evidence that there is another way of knowing but for those whose reality has been marginalised by those in power both the ‘knowing’ and the ‘reality’ are often denied or fictionalised. I must be honest, in this Australian context those others are men, our fathers, husbands, brothers as well as the law makers, politicians, church leaders who determine the cultural norms and values of the day. It has become clear to me that men too, have paid a terrible price in the name of patriarchy, it took a workshop in Sacred Theatre with Peggy Nash Rubin (1994) in which we studied Aeschylus’s ‘The Oresteia’ for me to get insight into their plight, but that issue is not within the parameters of this work. I hope that this work in some way helps to, ‘reorient the matrix of the feminine psyche’ (De Shong Meador, 1992, p.136).

I Honour the Dream.
CHAPTER 2 - ORIENTATION OF THE THESIS

Introduction

This thesis has contested the status of gender (as a social given) by considering how women develop a personal ethnography when engaging in art and drama processes embedded in a series of community based workshops. These workshops addressed authentic private and communal selves for a group of women using the 'archetype' to experience notions of identity. The concept of archetype was based on and draws heavily from the representations of the female archetype developed by Gilchrist (1987).

The theology of feminism (Hogan, 1995) has been investigated to enable for personal and collective empowerment with attention to authentic narrative and experience within both a theoretical and arts based learning practice.

The Writing Style

This writing mirrors the action research cycle, 'it is theory and practice integrated, action and understanding integrated' (Lipp, 1996). My voice will be juxtapositioned against more formal theoretical discussions in order to demonstrate a requirement of heuristic research, 'there must have been actual autobiographical connections' (Moustakas, 1990, p.14). This is a personal document, it started with a dream and a hunch, it has been driven by the momentum of the creative energy of the work itself, at times it has carried me along and I have had to trust the process. I have chosen to use the personal 'I'
for part of this work as it is, ‘not a postulate that needs to be argued in academic discourse’ (Bobis, 1994, p.7). Like Bobis, I chose to merge personal style with theoretical explanations in order for the work to be, ‘passionate scholarship ... humanly dynamic, it writes the world with a heart, without ditching the mind’ (Bowles & Klein as cited in Bobis, p.9).

**Significance And Purpose Of The Study**

‘I begin the heuristic journey with something that has called to me from within my life experience ... but whose nature is largely unknown’ (Moustakas, 1990, p.13).

What called to me from my own life experience? What was the ‘human problem or experience’ (p.13) that engaged me to such an extent that I wanted to research it rigorously in full knowledge that it would for some time become my life?

As a female Australian, schooled during the fifties and sixties, I have had first hand experience of being discriminated against according to law and firmly entrenched social mores. From this knowledge emerged the questions, ‘Who has authority over my expression and means of expression? Who has the authority to interpret the experience? Who has the authority over other people’s experience? (Maracek, 1996). Why does my Mother come to me in a dream? Why isn’t the wisdom of the dream acknowledged in mainstream society?
I also ‘knew’ that if women wanted to address their internalised oppression, their sense of marginalised other in order to find new terms of reference beyond the bounds of male-generated gender related images, it could be done in a series of workshops engaging in drama and art processes. It was a hunch and I had no idea where I would start.

Action research revealed itself as the most appropriate means of inquiry and I began with the first hunch, that the drama and expressive arts would in some way move us towards the, ‘multiple I’ (Davies, 1994, p.34).

So I took the first step as Moustakas writes, ‘determined to extend my understanding and knowledge of an experience. I begin the heuristic investigation with my own self awareness and explicate that awareness with reference to a question or problem until essential insight is achieved, one that will throw a beginning light onto a critical human experience’ (p.11).

In a moment of exquisite synchronicity as I searched the library shelves I dislodged Cherry Gilchrist’s book and it fell to my feet. The ‘way in’ had dropped in! I wrote the workshops and undertook to facilitate them with a group of women who by their attendance and willingness to participate could be said to be committed to change and, as Dick says, ‘for change, you want a methodology which generates a commitment to change’ (1996). The process of writing the workshops was action research in itself in that as I wrote them from week to week, I reflected on the events, discussions, mood, my feelings, types of interactions both formal and informal. Most of it I did not record but let it ‘swish around’ (incubate) for a few days before writing the next
workshop, alternating action and reflection in an ongoing cycle. I conducted literature searches to authenticate my hunches which took me into a variety of disciplines, art, music, art therapy, drama therapy, transpersonal psychology, religion, religious experience, imagery, feminine theology, the imagination, the goddess, spirituality and women in Australia. Again, to quote Dick, ‘a cycle that captures the progression from fuzzy question → fuzzy methods → fuzzy answers. This leads in successive cycles to less fuzzy questions, methods and answers. The later cycles test and refine the conclusions, and the actions, from earlier cycles. The continuing testing of theory in action adds to understanding, ‘it is theory and practice integrated. Action and understanding integrated’ (1996). Like Moustakas, I turned inward to ‘draw from the focal factors every possible nuance, texture, fact and meaning ... and followed clues wherever they appeared ... indwelling requires practice to enable the researcher to tap into intuitive awakenings and tacit mysteries as well as the explicit dimensions which can be observed, reported, and described’ (1990, p. 24). There was a lot of ‘trusting the tacit’. The only structure I allowed myself was the order in which we worked with the archetypes and that was open to change, there was no rigid framework. I had ideas, the use of ritual, drama processes, the participants were encouraged to keep a journal to which they could add bits throughout the ensuing weeks (including dreams), but the process of writing the workshops was cyclic.

As I wrote and facilitated the workshops I developed a means of inquiry which was to persist throughout the research. A constant cycle of reflection and query, searching always for some indication into the meanings and
knowings that always started as a hunch. As the search continued it was like 'peeling away the onion skins' until the point is reached where one has to stop and perhaps that is one unexpected insight about the nature of heuristic research, the knowing when to stop creeps up from the tacit as well, there comes a point where to go further would detract from the value of the inquiry.

The Literature Search

I came to realise that I have read and written from a poststructuralist perspective in which we are all authors (Bobis, 1994) and invite anyone who reads this document to, 'raise its assumptions to full view ... to join in or challenge them' (Agger, 1992, p.115). I hope I have recognised my own investments, my own context, using action research as a means by which to do this, 'methodology tells a story in spite of itself' (p.115). I have not written out my subjectivity, I very much wanted to be subjective about the whole process, I was to be fully participant in the workshops and the research, my own perspective was to be very important but the poststructuralist's lens allowed me to raise my investments to full view in order to allow readers to engage in dialogue with the text and 'reauthorise' it (p.120). I have become highly self conscious about the ways in which my own writing may impinge on or distort the experience of others, I would hope my investigation does not conceal any value positions or assumptions and that every creative gesture underlying my authorship is evident, I hope it invites the reader to engage in their own 'authoring' to create a new discursive.
This entire research has been about ‘change’ and drama as a ‘change agent’. It took rigorous, focussed reading to establish my entry points.

I had the questions: how did I get in? When I got in, how was I to write? Poststructuralism has shown me how to write with the ever present awareness which invites readers to negotiate the text and context, to investigate the nature of the discourse and to become the author. My discourse, when combined with the reader’s, is created into a new discourse, not quite the same as either original, always progressive and creative. Thus, as in the model I have chosen (although I feel it chose me) heuristic research with an action research methodology, the method of arriving at the final product reflects the processes of the workshops, I refer to the cyclic nature of the process, how we worked is what the reader is invited to do, negotiate. There was no hypothesis to prove, I just had a hunch about change and drama as a change agent.

Why have I gone to further reading, to theorists? Because as Agger (1992) suggests, Poststructuralism ‘casts doubt on ethnographies which rely on subjects’ accounts of their experience as if these accounts, like the accounts of experts, are not already encoded with undecidable meaning’ (p.126). Yes, the journals provide evidence of change but that does not explain why drama has the capacity to be a change agent.
The Conceptual Framework

This study has emphasised mutual participation in which the researcher and the participants were seen to undertake the research together within a 'feminist' paradigm, aiming to empower women to do the research for themselves on issues of interest to them. I had to investigate and examine my own feminist ideal finally coming to a point where I decided that to delete gender would be detrimental to our spirituality and like Bobis (1994) I realised that a combative position, warriorhood, would be as oppressive as the paradigm from which I wanted to be free. I moved into an 'holistic ethic' and saw the dualties as complementary, saw as necessary the tension between, which manifests the dynamic of creation.

As we worked with the archetype I understood how we were redefining, rediscovering, renaming, reclaiming, ourselves into multiple selves as is evidenced in the journals, e.g., 'the hearth is not domestic, it is a place of power, it is a place where I am respected for having that power' (Black Swan, Appendix 2), 'I realised that I am the hearth and the flame of the hearth is my body' (Vanessa, Appendix 2) and found links to ancient Minoa. 'Eileithyia's torch acts as a reminder that fire, the first principle, is associated with women through the hearth ...the hearth on which fire was laid became the sacred centre of the household' (Johnson, 1981, p.147). I became aware that the power and wisdom of the archetype accessed via the guided visualisations and named and experienced within the drama praxis, 'represented the multiple possibilities of an empowered woman' (Bobis, 1994, p.6).
In my literature search, I endeavoured to consider assumptions about women's knowledge and 'found' Bobis, (1994); Davies, (1994); Grant, (1993); Griffiths, (1994); Hogan, (1995); Hampson, (1990); Jones, (1995); Krieger, (1991); Porter, (1991); Rhedding-Summers, (1994); Spender, (1992); Tulip, (1987); Walkerdine, (1990); Wehr, (1987); to name just a few and as I worked with their ideas, thoughts and theories I began to realise that my very modes of data gathering, analysis, interpretation and writing would reveal as much about me as it would about the research. I considered the relationships between the researcher and participants and surprisingly (to me) the journals revealed the importance of ritual as a catalyst to establishing relationships which would allow for creative synthesis.

I was aware of the diversity of views about women which would be present among the women and became nervous about the risks of appropriating participation simply to generate data for my research interests. Again, the journals will show this was not the case and consequently the journals of eight women are included in the appendix as I want the journals to 'be as they want to be'. It is for the reader to determine the meanings. The journals are a creative effort and are held in respect as such. Just as I want to write from my own authority I trust the journals to speak with authority from their own empowered narratives and like the Poststructuralists I do not want the journal writers or the participants to be marked, i.e., 'other' (Derrida cited in Davies, 1994) in the discourse of this thesis or the discursive it generates.
From the start the conceptual framework explained my endeavour to produce a thesis which was, 'an integrated synthesis of experience and theory' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p.196).

**Ethnography And Art Processes**

This thesis set out to recognise the meaningfulness produced and reproduced in art works, ritual and drama. Meaningful social life is produced and reproduced through the use of language which is used and modified to constitute the way we live, through language our social life is represented (Atkinson, 1992, p.30). I investigated story and myth to demonstrate and reveal how language has been colonised by male experience and through the drama praxis we were able to find a language which, 'described the female experience adequately' (Bobis, 1994, p.73). As we developed a 'self consciousness' we became aware of the influence of naming and being named, 'I will do my own naming' (Esme Journal, App.2) and realised that the power of naming can either define or cut off, the agency of power is with the name giver and it is the agent’s sense of reality and value which is handed down with the naming process (Bobis, 1994).

Chami’s assertion that ‘I will be my own gatekeeper’ (Chami, Appendix2), reflects beautifully Cixous’ notion of discourse being 'penned' by man with the consequence that woman has been ‘penned up’ or ‘penned in’. ‘If woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man it is time for her to dislocate this “within” to explode it. turn it around and seize it: to make it hers
continuing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of" (Cixous as cited in Bobis, 1994, p.73)

My hunch foreshadowed changes in cognition for the participants which resulted in new ways of thinking, an important step towards recognising alternatives. I began to see how Postructuralism allows for multiple discourses including discourses about gender (Davies, 1994) and to think about my position as a feminist and ask myself the following questions when dealing with any discourse: Who is speaking? From what position are they speaking? What is the context? What is the political effect (meaning who has the power base)? I began to look at the way in which discourse can define, describe, delimit and grant permission with regard to what can be or cannot be said (1994, p.17). The work moved closer to the multiple 'I'.

To fix women within a structural discourse is to reduce their political potential by essentialising their identities around a structurally defined core. To fix their identities in a poststructural context is a momentary process, a temporary halting of the discursive flux. It involves inhabiting a location within a discourse that coexists with multiple locations (places of performance or action) at one moment and over time. To view women’s actions in postructuralist terms is therefore to liberate a multitude of political subjectives and to make visible a wide variety of possible interventions (Davies, 1994, p.182).
The archetype proved to be a gateway through which we could enter another social world and see ourselves as we are positioned to negotiate the position and view it through the drama praxis, itself another interpretive lens. It is through the drama praxis that we can 'self examine' and identify how we accomplish becoming the person we are as is demonstrated in Medina's journal (Appendix 2), 'I did not feel pressured to join in and because I was not overwhelmed with defending my choice, had the freedom to negotiate how I would participate, I was able to see myself in the drama of others and began to understand more about myself, not doing the drama was more powerful because it forced me to 'sit with' my discomfort and think about it'.

Data Collection And Analysis Techniques

Participant observation, interviews with significant informants, field notes, photographs, journal entries and audio recordings are recommended and tested data techniques in qualitative research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Relationships established in the field, interviews with the women, along with the conversations and discussions of their drama processes and the ensuing art works have co-determined the results. These results are not to verify a pre-determined hypothesis but to extend my knowledge of an experience which began with my own self awareness and to explicate that awareness with reference to a question or problem to achieve further insight or throw a beginning light onto a critical human experience.
Data Convergence

Data convergence requires the researcher to be intimate with the research. The most important “instrument” in qualitative inquiry is ourselves as researchers (Eisner, 1991), and our most crucial task may be to prepare ourselves to conduct the research. The process of attending to recurring variables, issues and categories of themes produces patterns of themes which are credible, unique, having heuristic value. Moustakas outlines a procedure for data analysis, the preparation for data convergence and I have drawn heavily on his guide (1990, p.51). Throughout the workshops I made my own notes as I planned and facilitated the workshops, I then ‘immersed’ myself in the material, my own notes and the journals and began to construct an individual depiction of each experience, from there, I gathered together all the information to make a composite depiction to represent the common qualities, themes and core meanings as experienced by both individuals and the group as a whole. Finally, I looked for the creative synthesis of the experience:

The researcher taps into imaginative and contemplative sources of knowledge and insight in synthesising the experience, in presenting the discovery of essences-peaks and valleys, highlights and horizons. In the creative synthesis, there is a free reign of thought and feeling that supports the researcher’s knowledge, passion, and presence; this infuses the work with a personal, professional, and literary value that can be expressed through a narrative, story, poem, work of art, metaphor, analogy, or tale (p.52).
I have not chosen to express the findings using the above text forms but have commented during the research that the entire process could be likened to the classic hero's journey. Indeed, it would be quite easy to juxtaposition the stages of this study with the journey, e.g., 'the call to adventure', 'the resistance', 'the belly of the whale', 'the road of trials', 'the magic gift' etc., but this remains an idea.

**Data Divergence**

Once the thematic strands were identified in the research (these include my own reflections and questions – self identity, feminist theories, story, myth, etc.) I endeavoured to enlarge or extend the areas of value identified and in doing so addressed moments of story, image, ritual and drama which are important to the thesis. These are embedded within the Conceptual Framework and Reflections.

**Data Display**

This includes the series of workshops and my own in action reflection as it as an example of the action research process. Some art works are included with the workshop outline. The journals are included in the appendix.
Validity And Reliability

All areas of analytic inquiry require that validity and reliability be attended to. Various methods are suggested in research literature to safeguard against the failure of qualitative research to be valid and reliable. Chenail (1992) cites several studies which address alternative views on validity (e.g., Eisner, 1991; Kvale, 1989; Maxwell, 1993; Mishler, 1990; Wolcott, 1990). Chenail, Atkinson and Heath wrote a paper detailing validity as 'an interactive process which unfolds between writer and reader in public research and between researcher and research participants or co-researchers in private research'. In this instance the research participants are the community of women.

Chenail and others suggest the validity of a study is, 'constructed in an ongoing dialogue' between the researcher and the other (in this case the women who participated) as well as by myself as I reflect privately in my own research (Chenail, 1992).

Eisner (1991) has said validity is not something established textually in the research paper. It is something we create in relationship to that which we view, read and interpret. The invitation is for the reader to 're-author' the text, to negotiate with the text and the discourse from which it was created in order to come to new meanings and knowledge.

However the researcher must also be able to attend to the credibility of the findings - how can one establish 'truth' of the data? The credibility of the data was be established through data collection which was triangulated with raw objective data - such as images, journal entries, discussions, interviews and
field notes. External validity refers to the generalisability of the findings and this will be achieved by attention to a large field of images, interviews and discussion during the research, however it was not the purpose of this thesis to facilitate definitive judgements which might generalise to other contexts.

Other researchers (Mishler, 1990) 'measure' generalisability along interactive lines, meaning to what degree do the results or findings of this project have a life beyond the project?

Do people talk about the results after the project? Is the study ever cited again? Did the report of the project excite other researchers to do new studies? Did the study become an exemplar for others seeking templates for their own research? Was the work inspirational? Do fellow researchers embrace the findings and act as if the results are 'true'? Do the ideas live on for the researcher of the study in his or her future works, or are the ideas abandoned or discarded because they no longer fit or make sense for the researcher? And in the same vein, will the ideas like the ones presented in this paper be discussed by the reading audience in the future? (Mishler, 1990, p.415-442).

Internal validity has been addressed by attending to referential material with the assistance of colleagues outside my interpretations. Throughout the research I have had discussions with George Trippe, Fiona Griffiths, Tarquam McKenna (academic supervisor), Del Coultas (the feminine divine), Peggy Nash Rubin and in the closing weeks participated in a workshop facilitated by
Peggy Crince le Roy. On the latter occasion I experienced the final ‘aha!’,
when the ‘magical synthesis’ happened (Arieti, 1976).

The inferences made from the data have been validated in the light of
communication with other researchers in the field and this is evident in the
Conceptual Framework in which I investigate the themes of the research.

I have addressed the reliability of the study by asking myself if it could be
replicated and have determined, as is often the case with naturalistic research,
that dependent replicability would be difficult. However, the heuristic nature
of the research and the methodology are an example of how one ‘follows a
hunch’ until it becomes an agent for rigorous research. This aspect could be
replicated. The workshops are structured and detailed and could be facilitated
with a group of women to investigate drama as an agent of change, the
variables alter, but this mode of research is not about variables, as Maxwell
says:

Interpretive accounts are grounded in the language of the
people studied and rely as much as possible on their words
(images) and concepts. The issue, again, is not the
appropriateness of these concepts for the account, but their
accuracy as applied to the perspective of the individuals in the
account (1992, p.289).

In the light of this statement, I repeat the concerns previously mentioned.
From the position of writer I have analysed, outlined, examined, interpreted,
reflected and amplified on the work produced but a constant has been my
awareness of each individual as their own agent given the opportunity to negotiate their own stories. This conscious negotiation or re-negotiation became the vehicle for the 'empowered narratives'. Meanings must be made from the perspective of each individual, abstract definitions will not do to hold the meanings in place, everything written, every art work produced, every nuance of expression, must be looked at in terms of who is speaking, from what position and in what context thus leading to multiplicity. (Rhedding - Jones, 1995, p.18).

**Data Process**

Thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour. I endeavoured to create a sense of themes or patterns which were constituted in the drama practices, journal reflections and art works of the women in the workshop series. Aronson (1995) writes that these themes will emerge from the informants' stories which are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of our collective experience.

The thematic analysis, the archetype as a gateway to multiple selves, ritual as a catalyst to change in group dynamics, symbols as beacons to new knowing and meaning and the drama discourse as the change agent, has brought a sense of coherence to the work, such that it fits 'together in a meaningful way when linked together' (Leininger, 1985, p.60). The sense of coherence has also been developed by the juxtapositioning of the practical and the theoretical, the
practical sessions, the journals and reflections are as much part of the research process as the literature review, reflecting a philosophy of synthesis.

**Methodological Appraisal And Technique**

This research proposed to represent multiple, complex, contrasting and unpredictable experiences (Hogan, 1995, p.169) with a view to generating an understanding of new concepts, meaning, complexity, and the context of multiple layered experiences of this group of women are written about by the thesis author and the participants. Insights, outcomes, conceptualised as non-prescriptive thematic ways to interpret encounters were considered to move beyond aesthetic approach to appraisal to one of what is understood in ethnographic research to be an emic perspective and understanding (Kvale, 1983).

It was proposed that the actions within the drama praxis were intended to produce change, while the research practices, i.e., the data collection, generated effective understanding and new learning. The cyclic research action with its constant in action reflection identified new learning which alternated within the cycle of reflection, change, action (Dick, 1996). Critical communication was achieved in the practical sessions (Jennings & Minde, 1993) as the frame of action and the frame of reflection both encourage risk taking and openness. Participation in this study was enabled by my own participation, the group's participation and art works as texts to be considered alongside participant journal entries. This study was a journey (McKenna, 1994). It started as an ethnographic study in which I
was totally immersed in my own experience and from there the focus for further research began, ‘you first have to know where you are, and where you want to go’ (Dick, 1996).

The “hermeneutic circle” described by Schleiermacher (Palmer, 1969) addresses the myriad ways in which people create and view a work of art and how they are mutually transformed through continuing interaction. There is an internal dialogue in the hermeneutic circle in which the researcher continually uses metaphors, explanatory principles, and prior knowledge to understand the action of the participants.

**Research Questions, Reflections And New Meanings**

1. How does this community of women develop a personal ethnography whilst engaging in theatre, art and movement?

Ethnography is the study of human lived experience and ethnography ‘in process’ (Prus, 1994, p.58) involves the study of social processes, interactions, experiences and participation in community life. Although Prus (1994) and Davies (1994) both mention multiple perspectives in the development of a sense of social identity there does appear to be a clear distinction between the two. According to Prus (1994) the social self depends on the recognition of oneself as an object, a self reflective process which can only happen if one is able to take on the role or viewpoint of the other, ‘thus, there can be no recognition of self without a prior recognition of the other’, (1994, p.15). In light of what Davies
(1994), says about binary constructions in our society, I ask the question, "Does Prus's notion of object, his ease in talking about the objectifying of human beings come from the perspective of one who has never been marked as 'other'? Does the 'recognition of other' align the other as a subject with 'difference' or as an object who is 'different'? To me 'difference' is a celebration of diversity, an acknowledgement that there is no hierarchy along the continuum of what it is to be human, however 'different' puts aside the diversity as without, not belonging.

Davies urges that a move be made away from the constitutive forces of 'object' and 'subject', language and the way we use it has created this binary notion of social positioning, from a poststructuralist perspective what are the details which create object/subject?:

'In a fundamental sense then, there never is any subject/object to be studied - only its discursive formation. The more detail we can find in relation to the multiple possible formations, the more likely we are to undo the illusion of the independently existing subject/object and to find ways of seeing how it is that subject, object and discursive practice are mutually constitutive elements of the life process' (p.43).

The concept of agency needs to be considered as it is through agency that the subject has the power to recognise and utilise self/other relations. An individual with a sense of agency will not remain invisible or silenced and recognising the multiple 'I' is able to make decisions which may include
accommodating pressures and contradictions of institutions and structures. The individual with a sense of agency has a different starting point from one who is marked, the sense of agency manifests the knowledge that, 'the personal is political ... that subject is specifically and materially en-gendered in its social conditions and possibilities of existence...' (Davies p.35).

Were the women able to explore the subjective reality of their individual lives (Armstrong, Newland Papers, p.8) and focus on specific aspects which may otherwise have remained invisible? Our life stories are temporal (Cupitt, 1991), we can be at no point in time without it being influenced by what went before. Most social and educational research fragments aspects of lives, categorising them into personality, IQ, attitude, social status, sex, divorcing the individual from life's experience.

Did the women reflect on their lived experience and create a vision of what is possible outside the current constraints of what is taken to be real and create a different set of realities? 'write yourself' is Cixous's call (Davies, 1994, p.37), by doing this the imagery and the unconscious can be freed from the negative effects of logocentrism, of specific forms of thinking, of the structure of political and subjective economy, of the pillars of property, of homogenising reasoning which produces normative criteria, which in turn reduces its subjects to objects measured against the norm.
The drama praxis allows for the investigation of personal identity in a situation which is always ‘now’. There is no script and so the sum total is always working within. The local self interplays with the social, political, historical, economic, biological self to develop a dialectical relationship between the individual and the broader context (Armstrong, p.11):

...the people in an interaction, speakers and listeners ... take on characteristic postures at the same time, in concert with one another. In this way people are each other’s contexts in that they form an environment for each other about the reality of that environment for each other and offer feedback to each other (Davies, 1994, p. 21).

Has each participant had the opportunity to develop a sense of agency, thus moving into ‘self’ consciousness?

But the most important outcome for n.e is that because of the workshops I have learned that I ‘can read’ if something is important for me, I have learned to trust my intuition and acknowledge my instincts ...I’ve reconnected with them as I feel now that they have always been there I just didn’t know how to reach them or work with them. Its like meeting something in myself that I didn’t know I had and what is even more special is knowing other women have it too, its something we share. So now I can say that I can, ‘read if something is speaking to me’ (Medina, Appendix 2).
When we did the Queen of the Earth, I had a big connection with my grandmother and I was told to find out more about her. I wrote to my Mother to get a sense of the connection across the generations (Ursula, Appendix 2).

I have a greater sense of centredness within my own ‘knowing’, these last few weeks have been like the icing on the cake of my seven year journey towards reclaiming the feminine and acknowledging/valuing the woman aspects of me. This has recently culminated in the need for being gentle with myself. Realising I don’t have to be strong in the world, I was able to experience the group process and the individuals within it in terms of gentle nurturing and acceptance of the gifts of others, our vulnerability without judgment (Esme, Appendix 2).

I was able to reconcile things within an historical context. When you work like this you see yourself in a different way, different to normal, e.g., the lioness so fearless in the jungle, no fear, so empowering, strength and power no-one can touch, I can call it ... I came to a personal understanding, I am a lot stronger than I realise, I have an inner strength that can’t be doused by my thoughts ... I knew about the unknown and yet it was known and I was not afraid. That was such a strong feeling in my body. (Rose, Appendix 2).
Although I have done a lot of my own work the workshops gave me a greater sense of connecting to the greater story, when you do that you do not feel so alone, you find others are experiencing the same things and it doesn’t matter if you find out in dreams, or visions or real life, you learn how to connect all the information, trust it all as a way to knowing and understanding. All realities connect to make a greater whole in which we can get a sense of well being, a psychic wholeness (Black Swan’s journal).

2. How does drama, art and ritual, referred to as arts based learning practices enable personal and collective empowerment and authentic narrative for this group of women?

By using the archetype as the ‘way in’ and the drama frame as context the women were able to renegotiate story lines, they were literally in the position to ‘unpen’ themselves:

The levels of meaning for me were in the ritual and the images of the archetypes, they seemed to unlock things for me, they are the opening … you are in control, its not like a personal affront (Ursula’s Journal).
The fundamentals of Postructuralism are to examine the discourse, the constitutive power within the discourse, the subjective position, the positioning within the discourse and the story line. Discourse is shaped by discursive practice expressed according to, 'a body of anonymous rules, historical rules, ... and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area' (Cherryholmes, p.3, 1988). Positioning is preferred to 'role' as there can be no 'self' independent of position, role can be taken up or left off, 'position is far more fluid than role and recognises the constitutive force of discourse to make/fabricate the stories or narratives through which meaningful lives are made,' (Davies, 1994, p.23). As the participants engaged in the drama praxis was it the role or the position they were able to realise within that role? The constants throughout the workshops which I consider to be significant in developing a sense of agency and power are as follows; there were no interruptions from the outside world, a certainty of identity was available through the archetype, i.e., there was no confusion about 'how to be'; there was the opportunity to question hegemonic 'truths', to awake to the multiplicity of being. In the drama the women were not marked within a binary mode and had the freedom to determine their own subjectivity. There was permission to be passionate, emotional, shy, active, passive with no imposition to be any of these, there was no power struggle. The dialectic relationship between the archetypes and the drama praxis encouraged 'conversations' in which, 'each participant listens to facilitate the speaker's telling' (Rhuedding-Jones, 1995, p.27).
Did the women ‘read’ their multiple selves? Develop a sense of agency within their own narrative?

Be aware of my own hearth, bringing warmth to it, it doesn’t need to be a fire, or a symbolic fire because my hearth is me, my body, I am the hearth. It is not the abundant cauldron or being there to dish out soup. It is me. It has a very personal meaning. As we worked I came to feel my own fire. I need to know I can fuel my own fire, have the self confidence to do it. (Ursula’s Journal).

What we said (in the ritual gifting): ‘we give you the gift of joy, womanly love, contentedness, expression’. It felt so good to be there in that environment to be able to give gifts that did not involve commercialism – it was tangible but more powerful than anything you could buy. Not only the giving but the receiving, it was very vulnerable and a tender experience to receive a gift in such a symbolic way (Vanessa’s Journal).

I needed a nurturing of the feminine, the deep trusting of women and being prepared to dive deep into it. The Lady of the Dance – The Fool – God the Clown, God who throws another ball and says, “Catch!”
There is also the pathos and woundedness. This experience gave me the permission to keep explaining the ‘foolishness of the cross’.

The ritual created the space, not Beryl, the ritual created and held the space. I trusted her to hold the space for freedom, for things to happen.

I have become open to the connectedness of dreams, images and things that actually happen, I am taking this trusting openness of the feminine/intuitive into the everyday world, making the space to nurture it for self and for others from a centred power within that I use to be grounded, it will be a balance. I am willing to open up to the numinous, to let it speak and to make a response in love and gentleness (Esme’s Journal).

In the giving there was a sense of revisiting, I didn’t question, the trust was very strong.

The shock is that the acting makes the inner visible and helps you re-connect. You have to rediscover, you have to have a sense of who you are as a woman, its been there, but as you become conscious of the richness you get the message that there’s no end point – the boundaries dissolve. It was all a series of meeting with myself, I realised it didn’t matter where I
was, it was what I did with it that mattered. This was so empowering, it meant I didn’t have to be in a passive place just to protect myself from getting hurt, I might get hurt, but it’s what I chose to do, that’s the empowering thing. (Rose’s Journal).

The most powerful aspect of the workshops was the single sex aspect. It was so important to me to be able to work just with women, I think having men there would have changed it completely, no matter what they are like personally, they represent all those things that the patriarchal system has done to women in the past few thousand years or longer. It sounds like stereotyping, but that’s the reality of it for me, I can’t relax with men around, they are part of history and my history. I expect them to have expectations of me. In fact this is one of the insights that came to me as we worked, of how I expect men to be towards me and I realised I need to change first.

It’s like meeting something in myself that I didn’t know I had and what is even more special is knowing that other women have it too, it’s something we share.

(Medina’s Journal).
It was like moving into mystery, there was a sense of being part of something that's happened before, the ongoing story. It reminds me of that 6,000 year old hymn to Eredu, it was like and encounter with the eternal feminine ... a greater sense of connecting to the greater story, when you do you do not feel so alone, you find others are experiencing the same things (Black Swan's Journal).

3. Given that this study will contest society's definition of 'women', what is the emergent notion of authentic communal selves for women?

Pringle (1995) raises an interesting point in the discussion around patriarchy and suggests that patriarchy is more of an obstacle than an aid. Much of her argument I have dealt with in the conceptual framework, e.g., the predicament of retaining a 'patriarchal unconscious' to understanding the specific operations of power (p.199), patriarchy as a social system, feminine psychology and self identity. Pringle urges that specific instances of power be contested in order to understand how family, state and professions have moved beyond patriarchy while remaining patriarchal (p.211).

From my own perspective I have moved from a position where I felt marked by the binary notion of the male/female, masculine/feminine to an understanding of the discourses in which I find the multiple 'I'. I have learned to ask: 'who is speaking, from what position, in what context, for what
political effect?’ Within each discourse I will be able to establish my own position and agency, will not be made invisible (a devious way of marking) by ‘truths’ and so be aware of my own subjectivity. Within the drama praxis there were no social superordinates thus creating a context in which hegemonic assumptions could be made visible, and ‘truths’ shifted or questioned.

In consciously renegotiating their story lines the women were able to discover ways they were trapped in the old ones (p.51):

I got some insight into my own lack and of how we try to fill the gap, how its never said explicitly, but there’s always that hidden implication, “Girls don’t need an education, they get married,” I felt I lacked intelligence (Ursula’s Journal).

Don’t be afraid of the murkiness, allow it, allow it! You will really enjoy it if you let go into it, just like the primordial slime, you will step out of it … I will learn to trust this way of knowing that I have, that we are not taught to value or use or pay attention to (Vanessa’s Journal).

I needed a nurturing of the feminine, the deep trusting of women and being prepared to dive deep into it … what happened was a naming which I looked up and did further research, I was staggered by the connections, things I would
never have known about ... my story will not be shaped by any one else, I will do my own shaping (Esme’s Journal).

You have to rediscover, you have to have a sense of who you are as a woman, its been there, but as you become conscious of the richness you get the message that there’s no end point – the role boundaries dissolve ... you can get much further, but in society there are still barriers and conflict and you continually have to reaffirm the inner. Women don’t traditionally get to do this (Roses’ Journal).

Its like the real world is a reflection of what’s coming to me in other ways of knowing. Like the real world is manifesting these things so that I will learn to trust this way of knowing that I have, that we are not taught to value or use or pay attention to (Vanessa’s Journal).

I was able to experience the group process and the individuals within it in terms of gentle nurturing and acceptance of the gifts of others, our vulnerability without judgement (Esme’s Journal).
At no time did I ever feel as if I had to do something because someone else wanted me to or expected me to (Medina's Journal).

It felt like we were part of the Moon Lodge, when in ancient times when a woman was menstruating and her intuitive, psychic powers were at their height, when she turned inward and connected with the mysteries, that is what the workshops felt like. It was an opportunity to re-experience the moontime (Black Swan's Journal).

4. How do these women consider that their journal reflections and art images are ways of 'knowing' within the multi-state paradigm?

What is the multi-state paradigm? (Roberts, 1996, p.9). A preparation, enactment and reflection of learning and understanding which encompasses and values the body, mind and brain in which the tacit, the hunch, insight, emotion, sensory response, the kinaesthetic, the body physiology and cognition integrate for creative synthesis. It is a framework not governed by a critical or controlling authority but accepted as a means of learning in which 'to understand' is not a priority. 'Knowing' can emerge from both somatic and psychic processes:
To what degree is the universe “knowable” only through science, and to what degree does full knowledge require using several modes of knowing? Full knowledge requires that we balance science’s exterior orientation toward knowing with knowledge derived from the inner search. It is also includes balancing our preference for knowledge derived from our ordinary mind-body state (the single-state fallacy) with knowledge from all mind-body states (the multi-state paradigm) (Roberts, 1996, p.9).

The image produced in altered states has symbolic value and because it comes from the ‘self’ it carries its own authority and needs to be listened to in an intuitive way, it is the message coming from the mind/body/spirit complex (Achterberg in Lovell, 1991, p.94).

By working with drama, movement and image to access imaginal worlds we have direct access to personal meaning, it is not clouded or distracted by cognitive reasoning. Imagery is the language of the senses which may be more accurate than cognition as we search for personal truth. By working with the multi-state paradigm we open to possibilities and may recognize something in ourselves we did not know before. This is the ‘naming’. By naming (not labelling, i.e., marking) the experience or the image we are able to redefine our own reality which, ‘helps women proclaim for themselves what is the truth of their own experiences’ (Lovell, 1991, p.50).
The journals are often written with imagery, with reference to the archetype, animals and symbols but I believe these can hold a greater truth. They are ‘once removed’ as in the drama frame and open to collective and personal reflection. It is through imagery that our senses communicate to us, the bridge between body knowing and mind knowing. ‘Imagery is the interface between the body and the mind’ (p.117). Work with imagery and symbol is not about passive reception, the experience is one of re-union, of recognition, perhaps a shared partnership in which each partner takes one half, the image alone carries no meaning but needs a human response to create a total experience (Ross, 1996).

I am a very visual person and gradually learning to trust the inward image making in meditation, the poem making has been a very real source of revelation, wonder, enjoyment. But the past few weeks have taken me into depths, helped me to make connections where I have experienced the ‘scary’ feeling that others talk about, the melting inner connectedness. I trust it enough to realise that a whole new dimension is available for us to tap into as image makers, but I also need to trust the intuitive aspects. I have become open to the connectedness of dreams, images and things that actually happen (Esme’s Journal).
As I walked as a lioness taking one powerful step at a time, I knew about the unknown and yet it was known and I was not afraid. That was such a strong feeling in my body. It affirms that inner knowing, learn to trust and listen to that voice (Rose’s Journal).

The workshops gave me a greater sense of connecting to the greater story, when you do you do not feel so alone, you find others are experiencing the same things and it doesn’t matter if you find out in dreams, or visions of real life, you learn how to connect all the information, trust it all as a way of knowing and understanding. All realities connect to make a greater whole in which we can get a sense of well being, of psychic wholeness (Black Swan’s Journal).

I now realise we all have this deep knowing, is it something that women are able to reach and work with and if so, why? I’m not sure. During the workshops I began to read about the collective unconscious and it was like it was, “Yes!”; it is a knowing which goes beyond the five sense. I have learned to trust my instincts and my intuition, I’ve reconnected with them as I feel now that they have always been there I just didn’t know how to reach them and work with them. Its like meeting something in myself I didn’t know I had (Medina’s Journal).
5. How do the participants in this study address 'authority' and consider:

Who has authority over the expression and means of expression?

Who has the authority to interpret the experience?

Who has authority over other people's experience?

Authentic? Authority? Defined by Ross (1996, p.55) as, 'authentic personal voice — of speech that is peculiar to the speaker and adequate to her expressive needs'. How do we find authentic voice? By appropriating, taking as one’s own, making use of all that a discourse holds including the multitude of agendas. By recognising how we have been marked, constituted, positioned we are then in a position to make choices.

How will I not be constituted through the words of others? Everything I write, speak, think is mediated through my lived experience and the contexts in which I live. As previously mentioned, this is a society based on the binary constructs of male/female which are considered to be the norm. Such constructs are acceptable if one is constituted or placed in the ascendant position (Davies, 1994, p.18), however this is not the case for women, women/female/feminine are placed on the descendent, i.e., as ‘other’ to the norm, as an exception and as such have limited authority over their placement. It is this very notion which has mobilised and sustained my investigation. Women are now questioning and debating what is meaningful and acceptable.
to them in many aspects of their lived experience and to do this they may have to use different thought structures (Coultas, 1995, p.27) and access the multi-state paradigm.

Coultas uses the South Australian Hindmarsh Bridge hearing as an example to illustrate that the, 'agents of our institutions assume 'sacred women's business' is contestable within the 'rational', historical and legal critique which is rooted in the 'certainties' of its patriarchal theological, historical and rational realms and which is interpreted in a language foreign to aboriginal culture' (p.27). She is damning of the legal institution's audacity, calling it 'hubristical contempt', in its attempt to authenticate the truth of the women's knowledge and the interpretation of their sacred 'business'. I too, am shocked. I applauded, with almost a thousand others, when I heard an aboriginal woman speak at the opening of the Sixth International Interdisciplinary Congress for Women in Adelaide, (April, 1996) she said, in reference to the Hindmarsh hearing, 'I said to them, I do not recognise your authority, you have no authority in this business!' What courage, to stand up to the legal institution and tell them they have no voice, to say, 'I do not hear you!' Is the same stance reflected in the Journal entries, 'I will do my own naming' (Esme's Journal), 'I will do my own shaping' (Esme's Journal), 'I will be my own gatekeeper' (Chami's Journal). Ursula (Ursula's Journal) realises how she was positioned within the biological duality of male/female, 'I got some insight into our lack and of how we try to fill the gap, how its never said explicitly, I was happy as a child and at school, but there's always that hidden implication, girls don't need to get and education, they get married. I felt I
lacked intelligence’. Esme develops a sharper awareness, ‘...the fact that the universe/God/the numinous can and does speak to us in many different ways’ (Esme’s Journal).

That’s about my own authority, its going to be a life long process of sorting out, the cultural expectations are always there and I have to constantly re-affirm my own authority in any situation (Black Swan’s Journal).

I can’t relax with men around, they are part of history and my history. I expect them to have expectations of me. In fact this is one of the insights that came to me as we worked, of how I expect men to be towards me and I realised that I need to change first (Medina’s Journal).

Medina develops insight into how her own expectations mark her and suggests by her comments that she alone may be the instigator of attitudes and expectations. However her preference to work with a group of women is reflected in the suggestion made by Ruether (...:logan, 1995) that there is a need for men and women to withdraw from communication with each other because,

Women need separate spaces and all-female gatherings to form the critical culture that can give them an autonomous ground from which to critique the patriarchy (p.116).
Davies (1994) also acknowledges this very real issue for women, 'boys and men are often not conscious of the ways in which their activities are to do with the establishment of their masculine dominant position' (p.16). Medina may be 'reading' the intangible, the invisible, very accurately, i.e., to hold a masculine position is often at the expense of the female. The same can be said of race and class, as Kimmel (quoted in Davies) says, 'What had been concealed – race, gender and class – was suddenly visible. As a middle-class white man, I was able to not think about the ways in which class and race and gender had shaped my existence. Marginality is visible, and painfully visceral. Privilege is invisible, and painlessly pleasant. (p.16).

6. How does this group of women reflect on arts based learning practices and the dynamics of group process to create meanings and choose courses of action?

What is learning in drama? Like all expressive arts drama is the making of worlds, Ross (1996) provides a useful summary of the various arts processes and how they uniquely, 'articulate the world as we encounter it' (p.47). He describes each expressive act as follows, 'In speech itself we word the world. In drawing we inscribe the world; in dancing we phrase it; in making music we enumerate. Drama embodies our ritual impulse to imitate or enact the world through bodily gesture: to enact the unacted' (p.47).

As the group and individuals within the group developed a 'self consciousness' we became aware of the influence of naming and being named,
‘I will do my own naming’ (Esme’s Journal) and realised that the power of naming can either define or cut off, the agency of power rests with the name giver and it is the agent’s sense of reality and value which is handed down with the naming process (Bobis, 1994).

‘I will be my own gatekeeper’ (Chami’s Journal), this reflects beautifully Cixous’ notion of discourse being ‘penned’ by man with the consequence that woman has been ‘penned up’ or ‘penned’ in. Spender has also investigated how women have been written out of the history books in her work, ‘Women of ideals and what men have done to them’ (1992). ‘If woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man ... it is time for her to dislocate this “within” to explode it, turn it around and seize it; to make it hers continuing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of’ (Bobis, 1994, p.73)

Within the drama praxis fiction meets reality (O’Toole, 1992, p.75) and perhaps, particularly for women, who have been ‘fictionalised’ by the dominant paradigm (Walkerdine, 1990), the fiction and the ‘fictioning’ of reality is revealed.

It was all a series of meeting with myself, I realised that it didn’t matter where I was, it was what I did that mattered. This was so empowering, it meant that I didn’t have to be in a passive place just to protect myself from being hurt, I
might be hurt, but its what I chose to do, that’s the empowering thing! (Rose’s Journal).

The Dark Woman - she is from my shadowlands, the ‘life I hadn’t lived’ - the intellectual part of me that had not lived. My Father would not support me, i.e., fund me to go to university, women were to marry and have babies. Therefore I had no intellect. The diamond sword is my intellect. (Black Swan’s Journal).

O’Toole (p.121) discusses the reflective tasks of drama, the means by which new meanings, insights and understandings develop as a consequence of personal engagement in the drama process.

It is apparent from the journals that reflection and insight occurred while participants were engaged in the drama and arts processes, further reflections occurred in the intervals between sessions, indicating that distance from the experience offers another perspective. Bolton identifies three types of reflection; personal, universal and analogous (Timms, 1994) and it is suggested by Timms that rather than being, ‘different in kind, these are really different types of meaning’ (p. 188). The following draws heavily on the Timms’ work.

‘Personal reflection’ refers to a change in self awareness or, a change in a particular attitude (p.188), ‘I can’t relax with men around ...this is one of the
insights that came to me as we worked ... I realised that I needed to change first’ (Medina’s Journal).

‘Universal reflection’ refers to a movement from the particular to a generalised theory or principle, Heathcote’s ‘dropping to the universal’ (Timms, p.189), ‘the workshops gave me a greater sense of connecting to the greater story ... all realities connect to make a greater whole’ (Black Swan’s Journal), ‘the keeper of the hearth ... had to always keep guard that the coals did not go out .. this was also a remembrance that man would refrain from destroying the planet again, the hearth has to be tended carefully, the hearth represents the magic to come back to oneself’ (Vanessa’s Journal).

The ‘analogous reflection’ (Timms, p.189) refers to the participant’s ability to draw parallels between the drama context and another context, ‘as we ‘dressed up’ we giggled and I found this energising, upon reflection I realise that all the clothes I named had been used by my mother to restrict me’ (Esme’s Journal), ‘my Weaving Mother seemed a strong character who gave guidance and comforting words of advice and support. I found this most welcome and emotional as she was the strong mother I have been craving all my life. My own strengths seem to have been a threat to those around me all my life’ (Demeter’s journal).

Timms (p.190) proposes that meanings are not limited to these three types of reflection and I propose that there is evidence of a shift beyond the personal, analogous and universal to the numinous,
Take your practice powers and stretch them out

Until they span the chasm of two contradictions

for the God wants to know Himself in you.

(extract of a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke in Black Swan's journal).

The ritual was a communion with others, it created a union, one with the cosmos'

(Rose's Journal).

It was moving into Mystery, there was a sense of being part of something that's happened before, the ongoing story, it reminds me of that 6,000 year old hymn to Eredu, it was like an encounter with the eternal feminine' (Black Swan's Journal).

I believe the uniqueness of the arts based learning practices as a means to 'in action reflection' is best expressed in the following journal entry,

The most powerful aspect of the workshops was the single sex aspect. It was so important to me to be able to work just with women, I think having men there would have changed it completely, no matter what they are like personally they represent all those things that the patriarchal system has done to women for the past few thousand years or longer. It sounds like I'm stereotyping, but that's the reality of it for
me, I can’t relax like that with men around, they are part of history and my history. I expect them to have expectations of me. In fact this is one of the insights that came to me as we worked, of how I expect men to be towards me and I realised that I need to change first.

There was a lot of freedom in the workshops to decide how we wanted to do it and how much we wanted to participate. I didn’t think the ritual was all that important at first but then I realised how much it developed a feeling of bonding as a group. It felt like it was protecting us and putting us all on the same footing. Although the sessions were planned, what we did was very open to discussion, we were given lots of options and if we came up with an idea we could go ahead with it. If nothing happened, that was okay too, it was nice to feel that you didn’t have to do things, what you did was your own stuff. We had the choice of selecting our own partners or groups and even that was important, we learned from each other and I became aware of how I instinctively seemed to choose someone each time who would teach me a lot. We stimulated each other, asked questions, shared experiences but I felt we could also keep silent if we wanted to and that was so important. At no time did I ever feel as if I had to do something because someone else wanted me to or expected me to.
There were times when I felt uncomfortable, I feel very self-conscious with the drama and movement, but as there was no pressure to join in I could sit with my feelings and started to get some ideas about where my discomfort came from, this was new to me. I'd never been given the space and permission to just be uncomfortable, people sort of force you to examine it or to try to overcome it, but in these workshops I was left alone and it made a difference.

In this way the drama was very liberating which may sound strange for someone who chose not to participate, but because I didn't feel under pressure I found myself seeing myself, in that way I was forced to negotiate with my feelings, it's as though in the drama you see yourself as you are even when it is someone else who is doing it (Medina's Journal).
7. How does this group of women engage in arts based learning practices to move beyond mundane practical understandings to a place where they engage language, art and drama to attend to an evolved self-consciousness?

The workshops created a supportive environment in which the women were free to move beyond the stereotypes and cultural expectations of their gender to develop and express their creative potential. They became witnesses for each other and were witnessed without judgement, projection, or interpretation within the space created and held by the ritual. We share a deep longing to be seen as we are by another (Adler, 1992) and yet this can only happen if we shift to the collective consciousness, a rare possibility within the frame of daily living but quite possible when working within the frame of expressive arts. I investigated Adler’s ideas on Authentic Movement and appropriated them to the expressive arts. We engaged in these processes outside and beyond the constraints of personality (p.77) to a level of personal engagement which invites reflection at a personal, universal and analogous level. (Bolton, 1979, p.126). The arts processes put us in touch with the ‘here and now’ and paradoxically take us beyond the place of dualities, closeness/distance, universal/individual themes, personal/collective unconscious, greater/local story. We are inspired to create, experiment, discard, refine and recreate (Jennings and Minde, 1993, p.19) and this thesis has set out to emphasise the way in which arts experiences provide for position and agency to claim, reclaim, shape, voice and re-author. We can
have direct experience of tacit knowing without the distraction of intellectual operation and thereby access the image, perception, light, sound and bodily sensation. In this way we access the unconscious (psyche), collective or personal, which can then be represented through art images, symbols and movement (soma). The content originates in the unconscious but the expression is created by the individual (Furth, 1988, p.18). Individual creative expression plays a vital role towards developing a sense of wholeness as the unconscious can empirically project what is happening in the body although we might not be aware of this consciously or have access to means of interpretation. 'We are touched ... we know they belong to us, they are true, they carry meaning we cannot explain' (p.18). This is the great paradox of artistic expression, if we accept the 'what is not' we are able to apprehend change and acknowledge truths which cannot be expressed in any other way.

The expressive arts process enables a meeting between the inner self and the outside world and because we are emotionally distanced from the local, historical personality we have a deeper experience. 'We are safely contained while experience and change take place ... to look to our own darkness and shadows' (Jennings and Minde, 1993, p.27).

I have researched the universal meanings of the symbols and animals included in the journals (Cooper, 1978; Gimbutas, 1989; & Johnson, 1981). Three women mention mirrors or the mirroring aspect of the drama praxis, on the night of the 'gifting'. Esme was 'given' an oval mirror, 'oval As the lozenge it is the female life symbol; the vulva' (Cooper, 1978, p.124), 'Mirror Truth; self realisation; wisdom; mind; the soul, the 'mirror of the universe'; the
reflection of the supernatural and divine intelligence; the clear shining surface
of divine truth' (p. 106).

There was a mirror of me reflected back so clearly, what a mix of feelings (good grief! Oh, no! Not really!) but I ended up in fits of laughter, especially at the mad hatter effect of dashing here and there, not prioritising, being so busy I'm not actually there for anyone. When they collapsed in a heap, back to back I realised that I need to look for others for support. My thoughts and feelings churned. (Esme's Journal, from a section not included in the appendix).

In the drama I was the mirror and we reflected sacred woman wisdom. First we looked into the mirror and we could see ourselves and the reflection said, 'I know you,' and I knew that I knew the reflection. Sometimes seeing yourself can be a shock but the way we did it with the drama, in this way, there was a sense of recognition ... the shock is that the acting makes the 'inner' visible and helps you reconnect. (Rose's Journal).

In discussing reflection and the mirror, Von Franz (1986) has this to say,

*What we see in the mirror held up to us by the Self is hence the only source of genuine self-knowledge; ... therefore when the ego follows the signals given in dreams, it is helping the Self*
attain realisation in time and space. It is then “mirroring” the Self by lifting it out of its unconscious, merely potential existence into the clarity of the ego-consciousness’ (p.37).

Von Franz refers to the development of ego-consciousness and the role of dreams, however, her notion of ‘the signals given in dreams’ applies to the universal aspect of the drama praxis. Through the mirroring process drama enables the development of potential beyond its existence in the unconscious and can create shifts in which potential can be actualised in personal, lived reality as evidenced by the Rose and Esme’s journal entries.

I am aware that it is imperative for individuals to make their own interpretations, meanings and associations for their own purposes. Jennings and Minde (1993) caution against overlaying other interpretations on to the individual meaning of the symbols, images or dreams as such a procedure may serve to, ‘reinforce the needs and identity of the teacher or therapist’ (p.72), i.e., they may become contaminated by other’s contexts or agendas. Further to the uniqueness of drama praxis and other expressive arts, Cox & Theilgaard state, ‘the transitional space takes on a sensory quality, the body itself and all its sense receptors become alive in a vital way. The human body is a primary means of learning - all other learning is secondary to bodily experience ..... the body itself may become the transitional space through which there is an attempt to reconcile polarities’ (1987, p.140). The origin of the image, symbol or dream may be unknown, perhaps, ‘related to the deepest root of nature’ (Blomkvist & Rutzel, 1994, p.24), they arrive spontaneously. move us beyond
the mundane to a meaning which, because it comes from the body, calls us to participate, respond and so create.

The Fool’s mischievousness revealed itself again and again ... I was now in the very dark forest and I was frightened ... I told the Fool I did not want to play these games with him anymore... I now interpret this as Fool’s games being necessary experiences of life I was to have and he was in fact acting in friendship as he was showing me the way to get in touch with my spiritual side’ (Demeter’s Journal).

I drew a mandala in the exercise when we were drawing about what has been repressed or blocked. I did the opposite to what the others did, I stayed with the positive, the things we had discussed before we started drawing. There was so much yellow, the mandala is like an opening, it was very strong and liberating. There were three hearts in the middle. The image created itself. The image was the insight. (Ursula’s Journal).

Weaving too tightly

tangled web

cut some strands

weave in some new ones

opportunity to change the fabric

of

your life

(Vanessa’s Journal)
Dialogue with the archetype – I found this difficult but through doing the process I connected with a previous image that I got from the Lady of the Hearth and what I got was a naming ... I was staggered by the connections, things I would never have known about (Esme’s Journal).

I went on a journey back to the original hearth. There was an old woman dressed in black and she was the Keeper of the knowledge – that was very empowering. As a woman you have to give up so much, we’re only now getting empowered and valued. This ancient hearth that I visited valued this, I have a strength and a power I can call, no one can touch this (Rose’s Journal).

In the gifting I received a diamond sword, it was given to me by the lady of the lake, she was 'dark' and represents the dark feminine, the spiritual warrior. The sword represents clarity of vision, the part of the feminine essence is the clarity of vision, not in the masculine sense of holding a vision to be reached as something one achieves, but clear seeing in a holistic way, the ability to 'see' everything in the full picture, clearly. I use 'seeing' as a metaphor for 'knowing'. As she offered it to me I
felt fear because I knew the responsibility of knowing what to tell, it is the cutting edge which crosses boundaries and moves into unchartered territory, cutting through allusions and false pretences and masks, being able to see through the mask (Black Swan's Journal).

Conclusion

I have worked with the journals and art works, the interviews and my notes to uncover how we moved towards change or 'changed'. Why did we perceive a need to change? Because we have internalised patriarchal oppression and we have thereby been marked as 'other'. I outlined, examined, analysed, interpreted, criticised, evaluated, reflected and amplified. Doesn't this create an issue over ownership and authority? How do I avoid the positivist stance of objectifying the women and turning them into 'data'? Because embedded within the processes mentioned was my own constant reflection and self questioning. I wanted to see the difference but not reduce anyone to 'different', the processes created avenues for reflection, the meaning of the writing cannot be found within the writing, language is not the only semiotic of meaning (Rhedding-Jones, 1995, p.491), embedded in the writing (which Davies says is the veil we need to move through) is the personal, cultural and historical story of the writer. Perhaps it is not too far fetched to suggest that the words which appear on the page are 'the sum total of my life - nothing is left out'.suggesting that the words on the page are transparent, merely a
shadow of the meaning which lies beyond, the text invites the reader to create new worlds of meaning.

In these discussions my research processes were critiqued, my interpretations investigated (shredded), my assumptions revealed and challenged. I had to cope with the heuristic nature of the inquiry which forced me many times to 're-immerse' myself into the initial question. I suggest that heuristic research is more often spiralled (and can gain the momentum of cyclonic strength) rather than cyclic, so there is an interesting contrapuntal movement of the research within the research, as spiral dances with cycle. Colleagues can help keep the dance to a moderate pace and even tempo!

It is not the moment of the activity but the sum total of the whole of life's experiences that comes to the moment. From the uniqueness of the individual — and it can only ever be unique — there is a co-joining and co-creating, it is a consequence of what each individual brings to the moment. It's not the pedagogy or the model, but the individual and where they are positioned. What I don't hear or see or feel today I may hear or see or feel tomorrow, there are so many variables, but what happens is up to the individual, the drama has the potential to be the change agent (which means learning), but the degree to which learning happens depends entirely on the degree to which the participant is able to make the choice to engage in the process. We are only restricted by our ability to chose.
CHAPTER 3 – WHY WOMEN? AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Fictioning of Femininity: Questions

Australian women born prior to 1950 will almost certainly have direct experience of economic, social, educational, spiritual and legal discrimination. Many women would be able to recall anecdotal ‘lived experiences’ of how discriminatory laws, rules, regulations and attitudes have affected their options and choice of lifestyle, e.g., the resignation of female teachers after marriage; the signature of a male guarantor required for women who sought to borrow from a bank or use credit cards; the requirement of a husband’s signature as permission to perform a tubal litigation; restriction from public bars; limited (i.e., not full) membership in private clubs thus denying any right to vote or involvement in decision making process; less pay for women who held the same qualifications as their male counterparts. There were also restrictions on courses of study available in secondary schools for both male and female students. These anecdotal recollections are employed to show that women in Australia have special needs as a consequence of social attitudes and expectations of women which in the past were affirmed and sanctioned by legislation.

In 1985 the Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, introduced The Affirmative Action Bill; the past Prime Minister Paul Keating introduced amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 (Summers, 1994, p.37). Australia could be perceived as an inadvertent pioneer in the status of women in politics (p.15). Australian legislation addressing federally funded child care, mandated maternity leave and the existence of women’s policy
advisers at every level of government reflects political initiative and awareness of women's needs which does not exist in the United States of America (p.15). However, following a conference in Australia held in October, 1994, during which the centenary of women's enfranchisement was celebrated, the editorial article in *The Australian* commented on the length of time it subsequently took before women entered parliament:

> This demonstrates how legislative reform does not of itself bring about sweeping political changes and how political principles do not automatically become common practice. (*The Weekend Australian*, 1994).

This is verified by Summers who also maintains that no act of parliament can change the: 'accumulated cultural prescriptions which still play on women's psyches and which affect men's expectations of women' (Summers, 1994, p. 479).

Although the government has been giving assistance to women since 1972, the main beneficiaries are women who work in the Public Service with little flow on to women in wider society (p.43). A split situation exists in Australia where, contrary to Labor policies, the political right and the church argue for the 'right of the family', thereby perpetuating sexist attitudes, the retention of the sexual division of labour and the differences in opportunities this creates. Past legislation in Australia forced Australian women to become dependent on men for their own economic survival in the role of either wife or daughter, 'the most reliable means for a woman to protect herself against poverty was
through marriage, giving her access to her husband's income which was deemed to be greater than any income she could generate for herself" (p.31).

The economic situation for women has improved since the 1970s. However, women as a group still earn less than men and have less access to non-pension retirement income, thereby making women of retirement age more reliant on social welfare than men (p.31).

As a result of sexual discrimination and attitudes towards women who have lived as 'other' according to the 'norm' of the dominant paradigm and within the patriarchal social construct of gender division, women in Australia have become a marginalised group. Two recent Labor prime ministers, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating introduced legislation and established The Office for the Status of Women to redress the situation for women in Australia.

It is suggested by Walkerdine (1990, p.xiii.) that the concepts of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are fictions but the fantasies of role and expectations linked to these fictitious concepts are so deeply ingrained in our society they are perceived as fact and validated by powerful social institutions. The concept of 'self' develops in the psyche which in turn develops by and through social influences. Summers (1994, p.139) maintains that the female 'self' acquired in childhood is a sex-discriminated self through which girls learn that they are 'another' and inferior person, who will also be inferior as an adult attending to the greater status of men (Lovell, 1990). The nurturing, passive and subjugated self which develops in the psyche of girls results in mature women who accept passive roles and low status (Walkerdine, 1990, p. xiv & Summers, 1994, p.159). Summers claims the female psyche is ravaged in a
sexist and patriarchal culture in which the only way to share male status is to become dependent on a male.

Further to the socialising of the psyche, the pressures of society can be so strong as to force instinctual drives into a form of bondage so that behaviours are in accordance with the perceptions and beliefs of society (De Shong Meador, 1992). Women must continually adapt to a culture defined within a frame of reference in which the male experience is deemed to be normative.

The Lavarch Inquiry into Sex Discrimination was followed by the Lavarch Report 1992 (Summers, p. 36) which concluded that latent sex discrimination in the work force is no longer evident, e.g., advertised job vacancies are no longer gender categorised; most clubs are open to women and care is taken that the admission criteria of educational institutions do not discriminate against women. In spite of political awareness and government recognition of the need for equal opportunity, the work place must still address professional conduct within the work place. Change in social attitudes and behaviours is slow in realisation as evidenced by Summer’s need to state, ‘sexual behaviour of any kind is not appropriate in any way in the work place’ (p.36).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 1987 showed that regardless of age, income, education, social background or employment status, women do twice as much unpaid work as men (p.41).

It is common for middle aged women in the work force to have to deal with aged parents as well as care for dependent children, and yet the effort that this extreme workload requires of women is not valued by society. There even
appears to have been a negative consequence to the opportunities accorded women in the work force. The Office for the Status of Women prepared a report in 1992 which presented evidence that the proportion of opportunities for women was met equally by an increase in violence towards women, 'violence is virtually seen as the price paid by women for their new found freedom and independence' (Summers, 1994, p.45).

One hypothesis may be that the increased violence is a backlash because an ancient legal principle was revoked by all states in Australia as recently as 1989:

> by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself and her kind unto her husband which she cannot retract (Summers, 1994. p.46).

Summers demonstrates how women in Australia have become a marginalised group having special needs. Prior to 1970, legislation in Australia discriminated against women who were forced to become economically dependent on men and afforded low status. The lack of carry-over of political reforms to the wider society begs the question: 'why are attitudes and beliefs in the fiction of 'masculine' and 'feminine' so deeply embedded in our society and so slow to change?
Women And Christianity: Answers

The answer may become apparent if an institution as powerful as the church is investigated. What status are women afforded within the institutions of Christianity? The decision was made to limit religious investigations to Christianity. This is not to deny or ignore other religions practised in Australia, but historically Christianity has been the dominant religion in Australia. The investigation of women's status within the many religions now practised in this country is beyond the scope of this work.

Hampson, (1990) a member of the Church of England until recently, finds feminism and the church untenable to the extent that she has found it necessary to reject Christianity and is searching for a religion in which, 'explicit value and recognition are accorded to each person, with good and equal relationships between men and women' (p.112).

Christianity gives male humans status which can be given to no woman. She argues that the second person of the trinity, the Divine Christ, is related to the human Christ, who being male tends to make God look like a male. Any Christian service must make the archetypal Jesus actively present as Lord of the situation and consequently women at the very core of their religious experience are dependent on a male.

In the Bible, God is conveyed in male metaphors. Priests, prophets and disciples are male, which conveys a subtle message that the bible is evaluated from the patriarchal perspective. The Bible is considered to be the sacred text of an historical religion, socially situated in a patriarchal past in which women
were not seen as equals. This, for Hampson has created a biased text which she is unable to accept as sacred (p.84). She claims that women were marginal to the historical Jesus’s perception, that He did nothing to reconstruct a society in which women were repressed. The parables never challenge male privilege and she maintains that Jesus did not, ‘comprehend the ethical necessity of human equality’ (p.89).

Although women are present in the Bible, the perceptions and understandings have been defined by men with never any question of the rights of men over women. She asks, ‘can males ever understand what it does to one’s relation to oneself for being discriminated against for who they actually are?’ (p.103).

Hampson states that she would like to belong to a religion which stresses relationships between humans and the rest of nature in which each person is afforded explicit value and recognition, where each is present for and to the other (p.112).

Hampson has rejected Christianity but there are many women who although acknowledging the blatant sexism of the Bible and the firmly entrenched patriarchy of the church continue to be committed Christians. Randall (1987), a lay preacher with the Uniting Church of Australia, is aware of the amount of discrimination against women in Australian society, but contrary to Hanson’s views, she sees Jesus as a feminist who affirmed women, valuing their spiritual life. However, she rejects the Church hierarchy and the masculinity of the Church, feeling excluded from worship and celebrations, due to the language used which refers to men and their experiences. In spite of
this overt discrimination against women, her faith in God and the examples of
Jesus, enable to continue her work in the Church.

Fiorenza (1992) discusses her experience in the Catholic tradition and in spite
of the masculine terminology of prayers, catechism and liturgy and the blunt
patriarchy of the Catholic Church claims she does not see God as an
authoritarian 'other' but as the creator and nurturer of life central to feminist
spirituality.

It is suggested by Tulip (1987) that feminist politicking has led women away
from the patriarchal God to the divine spirit within, an energy and power
which connects all living things and elements of the universe. As women
discover this within themselves, they become more present to each other,
thereby discovering their autonomy and religious and political identity. Unlike
Hampson, who has completely rejected Christ and the Church, Tulip believes
'that by liberating ourselves, the Church and society from sexism, we are
making possible the new community of love and truth which Christianity
claims to offer' (p.140).

It is suggested that as a consequence of living a theology which is the product
of privileged men, women are split from community and disempowered. This
notion of 'splitting' is also given attention by Starck and Stern (p.14) who
argue that with the coming of patriarchal religions feminine sexuality was
disconnected from procreation and motherhood. This dissociation of the
female element is a cultural phenomenon acquired through 3,000 years of the
patriarchal gods during which time women have lived according to the
masculine definition of being a woman. The Judeo-Christian religion considers female energy not only inferior but potentially evil and is biased against the dark, chaos, the cyclic, the feminine thus producing a polarised culture. Because of the repression and subjugation of women in patriarchal religion and culture, the feminine is primarily in the sub-conscious. Recent political initiatives are challenged by patriarchal beliefs, attitudes and expectations which have been verified by powerful social institutions for centuries. How can a woman reactivate the female system and develop attributes which are not embedded in 'goodness', 'virtue', 'fairness', 'obedience' and 'nurturing'?

Archaeologists have discovered historical examples of feminine cultures in which female deities were sustained with temples set aside for women to observe their cyclic rituals. Many identical images of the feminine occur from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic Age indicating a 25,000 year history in which religion was oriented around the archetypal feminine (Gimbutus, 1989 in Starck & Stern, 1993) which is, 'a containing matrix for women, an archetypal ancestor to whom we may turn to inform our development and on whom we may ultimately fully rely' (p.136).

Perhaps De Shong Meador (1992) has the answer:

'there is the possibility that the vast world of the feminine with its particular world view which informs beliefs and actions, with its distinctive forms of initiations and transformations, is largely unknown to us but lies waiting in the psyches of women and appears regularly in
women's dreams as a call to individuation along a path we, as a culture have long since abandoned' (p.133).

The decision was made to develop a series of workshops for Western Australian women who felt some need for change in their lives. Six female archetypes (drawn from Gilchrist, 1991) would provide the framework and entry point as the participants engaged in drama and expressive arts practices to:

'find a way of being a woman who is not split from herself, to focus on the reality of being a woman in which her own experience is seen as the real and valid experience and to become an empowered woman, certain of her own position, authority and agency within any given discourse'.

And to,

'experience their own experience and articulate it beyond the cultural expectations of patriarchal society' (Hogan, 1995, p.147).
Essentialist or Constructivist?

It has been necessary for me to engage in a personal confrontation in order to clarify my position, I have researched feminist studies to investigate feminist theories and then moved onto Jung’s psychology of the feminine. At the time of writing this I still have not reconciled the need or validity of a psychology for females as distinct from a psychology for males, if that’s what ‘feminine psychology’ means. However, Porter (1991) makes some distinctions which I have found useful in helping to clarify the issue:

The nature of women, as females, to be biological, constrained by cultural beliefs about the nature of femininity. This is distinct from the nature of women and men, as human beings, which defines shared characteristics. Women as female humans, specifies sex-specific experiences which reflect social and philosophical ideals of femaleness, or more individual interpretations of being a woman (Porter, 1991, p.83).

Does our biology, our sex, make such a difference to our psyche? Given that there is an inseparable interplay between sex and gender with complex relations between our physical construction, the environment and social organisation it hardly makes sense to discuss the one without the other (p.84).
Upon reflection I can see that I started this work from the perspective of 'women as female humans' and have moved to women and men as 'human beings', but I am aware that in the broad social sense we are very influenced by the notion of 'the nature of femininity'. Gender has been called a product of the social relations of sexuality, whereby 'man/woman', 'masculine/feminine' are constructed according to the social relations of sexuality whereas kinship systems construct females and males as 'men' and 'women' (Rubin, 1992, p.42). Females are coerced to perform and behave according to the dictates of the dominant paradigm and psychoanalysis has revealed the consequences of this on the female psyche. I observe my son, a young man, and wonder if his cognitive processes, use of imagery, perceptions are all that different from mine. Most of what I see and hear I would put down to social construct, but again Porter urges caution here, 'it is naïve to imagine that the only differences between men and women involve a mere physical awareness of the consciousness of having a sex specific body and nothing more' (1991, p.60). Because of our different biologies or anatomies, we will have different life experiences and maybe we do need different rituals and ceremonies to determine and affirm our roles, but there need be no hierarchy, value of one over the other, or one group of people marginalised to empower the other but a 'modern anthropology which sees every human as including femaleness and maleness' (Griffiths, 1994: intro). Griffith's view could be interpreted to include both the physiological, the psychological and the spiritual as her definitions of the masculine/feminine principle are based on the work of Jung and research into the feminine principle in Christianity.
I have given heed to feminist theory and endorse hope for a pluralist society but have chosen to focus on 'feminine' psychology, which investigates the dispossession and oppression of women in Western Society and the consequent results on the sense of self. I concur with Wehr's opinion that, 'both feminism and Jungian psychology contribute significantly to an understanding of the human situation' (Wehr, 1987, p.8). Jung has made some very real contributions to human self understanding and was, 'a pioneer of holistic psychology of self and of nations' (p.125) and his valuing of what he called the 'feminine' has brought attention to what is lacking, undervalued, misunderstood and feared in the Western world.

However, Wehr has issue with some of Jung's understandings about the ego, which when very strongly based needs to be recognised as illusory and thus annihilated but he makes no distinction between the male and female ego. Given the self denial and oppression that accompanies most women, any work towards individuation requires work towards a healthy sense of self. Wehr claims that Jung made no distinction between men's and women's consciousness in the individuation process and assumes a similar state of ego in both men and women. 'He fails to account in his model of the constant toll that misogynist society takes on women's egos and thus he perpetuates an illusion of quality between men and women' (p.103).

If women are to 'die' to an old self, then it is the false self that has been superimposed by an androcentric society. She claims that Jung comes 'dangerously close to patronising women' (p.107). But, Jung's psychology has appeal as it is essentially a meaning making psychology which offers
balance in a rational and materialistic world. The unconscious is a source for meaning making and the collective unconscious embraces all humanity and so Jungian psychology allows us to deal with both the individual and society.

It is not the aim of this study to recover a 'distinctly female experience based on gynocentric values' (Lynne, 1994, p.107) or to engage in a discursive with regard to an 'essential female experience' but to accept that there will and must be a diversity which is comprised of 'positive religious, racial, ethnic, national, and cultural identities that shape our lives as women – identities that come together in holistic and interactive ways. Women's experience and sexism are not constants for every woman to which are added other dimensions of self-definition. The experience of being a woman is, 'inseparable from being the kind of woman one is' (Christ & Plaskow, 1989, p.5). This study acknowledges the diversity of all women's experience but chooses to work from the basis of 'depth psychology' (Wehr, 1978, p.7) with the view that to understand society and the individual there is a need to understand the psyche. 'This Jungian concept is actually a bridge between sociological and psychological explanations, since it takes in both the individual and the collective' (1978, p.7). This foreshadows the choice of the archetype as a framework and the need to investigate the role and power of story, ritual and drama to develop a sense of self and self-identity.

Although this study is a feminist theology (Hogan, 1995) it is not intended to be a study of feminist theory but aims to help women find authentic voice and come to a sense of authenticity of their own experience, within their own terms and own frame of reference without having to compare it to some other
defined 'norm'. The category of 'woman' lacks universality (Grant, 1993, p.185) but it is safe to state that all Australian women in very recent history have the shared common experience of discrimination according to law, thus 'creating a reality apart from men' (p.39). Women have been excluded from fully participating in history and politics and had no real influence in shaping their reality, their behaviours with personal and social expectations measured against patriarchal values and judgements. As Spender (1982) argues, when over fifty percent of the population are denied access to influential positions to determine the use and allocation of resources they have no option but to develop a different frame of reference as a result of different experience, 'The patriarchal view of the world is held to be the valid one and the sum total of human experience ... men control knowledge and because of this we do not have a history of women ... women's history is silenced and interrupted, there is no historical past or contextual past, women's activities are not sanctioned by centuries of tradition' (p.30).

'Experiences mean little in and of themselves, the key is to how they are interpreted' (Grant, 1993, p.125), but for women the truth can only be determined from the view of gendered subjects. Human behaviour, the agent of experience is an, 'ongoing formulative process on the part of minded interactive beings who possess selves and are able through symbolic communication to take the role of other and adjust their activities accordingly' (Prus, 1994, p.26). We come to know ourselves and recognise the self as an object of our own awareness through social interactions with others. As our sense of self develops we are able to take the viewpoint of others with respect
to our own being. Prus (1994) maintains that even long established activities are subject to ongoing definition and adjustment so that they remain viable and appropriate. The feminist movement and research have had a major impact on the 'definition of on-going activities' resulting in changes in law to protect all citizens from discrimination based on gender, race, religious beliefs and age, (although in Western Australia there is no protection against discrimination based on sexuality, see further into this document). Yet, in spite of all the changes and challenges, women can only find truth from a gendered perspective. If this is not done, the need for change would not be recognised or made visible. Prus's discussion on our abilities to recognise and respect the perspectives of others and to concede their realities may not have much parallel with 'life as it is lived' by many people. It is the gendered subject with a feminist lens who recognises that 'long established activities' may no longer be appropriate or viable. Until very recently, 'women's social reality was determined by men' (Grant, 1993, p.109).

Feminism 'is a choice to view the world differently' (1993, p.180); it is about rights, responsibilities, choices, perspectives and pluralism. To remain within the constraints superimposed by gender constructions is to limit the potential inherent in all human beings to become fully self determining. The rules of gender are not based on the realities of lived experience but have been so strongly underwritten by established institutions that they are accepted as natural 'givens' and thereby not seen as social constructs. However it is very difficult to separate social expectations from conventions and 'to accept as natural the whole gamut of social and conventional expectations and roles is
to fail to question their validity’ (Porter, 1991, p. 66). Australia’s workforce is still distributed according to gender and it is gender which bars women from aspiring to leadership in the Catholic Church. While such factors exist, even though feminist research and practices attempt to move away from gender divisions, they continue to impact on the experiences of Australian women in their daily lives. It is this life history which creates the inner, subjective reality which cannot be viewed apart from previous history; it is the cumulation of both from which we can determine our own truth.

It would seem there is no other way of knowing but, as this work aims to demonstrate, there is a knowing available which is not contaminated by ‘local’ prejudice. This will be discussed further in the section on drama, ritual and the archetype.

It may be argued that men and women share more similarities than differences, that our ‘humanness’ is our common bond and suffers at the hand of gender division, but the ‘data of life, the experiences, are different due to the systematic and gendered differences in the way that information is interpreted and acted upon’ (Armstrong, 1993, p.109). This information is structured by the dominant social paradigm which in spite of some recent legal changes is still very androcentric and continues to marginalise women. This study contends that all women share a social reality different from that put forward by patriarchy, definitions of gender are socially contingent rather than a natural given, and all humans are variations on a continuum of masculine and feminine. It seems that some feminist theorists (Grant, 1994; Alice, 1994) argue that there is nothing about women per se that necessarily leads to a uniformly
gendered variance in our interpretation of lived experience. But it is a given in this study that to be a woman is to subordinate to be artificially superimposed gender constructions which restrict choices and limit the possibilities of becoming self determined human beings, aware of and comfortable with their unique selves. ‘The rules of gender have become the reality of our lives’ (Grant, 1994, p.185), consequently there will be no attempt to move beyond gender but to reconstruct and affirm the lived experience within the social givens of gender. To move beyond gender would require many cultures to devise new ways of assigning roles to men and women, ‘in the simplest societies sex and age are the fundamental principles for organising social reality, though the content of age and sex roles differ from one culture to another’ (Mattoon & Jones, 1987, p.15). Mattoon and Jones have also investigated what they claim appears to be a universal tendency to ‘genderise’ the work as a way to organise symbolic reality (p.15). This is evident in religious pantheons and the ‘gendering’ of nature and the cosmos, e.g., mother earth, father sky, lunar – masculine, solar – feminine. ‘In this way, gender, sexual opposition and sexual joining (the “conjonctio”) serve as metaphors for a wide range of social, natural, and spiritual experiences’ (p. 15). This whole issue, and why it has been such an issue for me became clear during my participation in a workshop in which we used Balinese masks. It was explained that the dualities or polarities were not in opposition but are complementary to each other, that there can be no unity or wholeness until these are attracted to the opposite for which they search, or, as one participant said, ‘I felt seduced to search for the one that I am not’ (Mask Workshop, Peggy Crince-le-Roy, Sept.,1996). I realised how my own ‘cultural loading’
had clouded my understanding of the 'feminine/masculine' duality, I had only been able to see it through my own lived experience, no amount of reading or discussion had provided the clarification as did the incident with the mask. In my lived experience most things feminine had been defined as lesser than the masculine and for me that created a sense of opposition in which one aspect was always working to dominate or colonise the other not as complementary aspects which, when joined, create a unified whole. I was writing and reading as the one 'marked' by the dominant male paradigm in which the male/female or masculine/feminine binary construct positions the former as the ascendant and normative and the second descendent to the norm, the former as male is unmarked and carries invisible assumptions about power and agency, the second is marked, categorised and analysed.

I have moved from a position in which the dualities were 'either/or', to one where they exist as 'both/and' and have become aware that in any discourse I can position myself and locate my own agency.

In time, mainstream society may acknowledge the continuum of gender where it is possible for anyone, male or female to be positioned at any point 'masculine' or 'feminine' but while anatomical/physiological differences are the criteria for the distribution of the workforce in Australia there is no option but to form self identity predominantly on the basis of gender. While such division exists in our society, even though feminist research and theory attempts to move away from gender, these divisions continue to impact on the day to day lives of Australian women at both a physical and psychological level. Research and epistemology may move away from the constraints of
gender but this is extremely difficult to do in the lived reality of day to day experience, partly because the media bombards us with the objectification of women's bodies which if young and thin make commodities saleable. How can we when surrounded by media constructions possibly move away from gender and its constraints? The issue is very real in Western Australia. There is still no legislation to protect against discrimination based on sexuality. Amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act were defeated in State Parliament on the 18th September, 1996:

Amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act which would have outlawed discrimination on the grounds of sexuality were defeated last night in the State Parliament ....the amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act contained in the Bill would have made discrimination in the areas of accommodation, employment and provision of goods and services on the grounds of sexuality illegal (Anthony, 1996)

There are, however, some contexts in which the sex of a person plays an important role and there is a need for each individual to discover their own context and not have it determined by exterior prejudices, constraints, mores or laws. Sexual identity contributes to the formation of identity and as such influences the development of self respect, integrity and self determination and as such we must be sensitive to contextual detail as suggested by Porter (1991) as she considers women, men and moral identity, the differences and
commonalities of the experiences of both men and women, ‘An holistic ethic must consider the uniqueness of being a woman or being a man as well as of being human’ (1991, p.195). We are bound to have different experiences because we have different bodies but our experiences ought not to negate our lives but enrich them. ‘When we stay with dualistic psychology we polarise and limit the creative possibilities of men and women’ (Porter, 1991, p.33) and in Western Australia it is within the law to limit access to equal rights if one’s sexuality is an issue. Mattoon and Jones (1987) suggest that the dualistic divisions based on gender may go beyond social/cultural expectations, thus they may come from a deeper source, gender divisions may have spiritual/religious beginnings. According to Luke, (1996) whose work is based on Jung’s depth psychology, masculine and feminine qualities are found in both males and females, claiming that, ‘those who assert that the only differences between men and women is biological, and that in every other way they are equal and have the same inborn potentialities, have disastrously missed the point’ (p.7). Luke goes on to explain that to her the biological differences are fundamental, that they do not stop with the body but create an equally fundamental difference of psyche (Luke’s italics).

Referring back to my observations about my son, I still favour the notion that although our psyches may, as a result of our biology, be different, I am still inclined to think that cognitively we are more similar. Grant goes so far as to say that authentic female experience is a fruitless quest (1994, p.191). She argues that each human being’s experience, perceptions etc. are, by nature of our human condition unique, that authentic experience means to be fully
present to the uniqueness of self and affirmed for who they by nature are and
can say, 'this is how it is for me', with no shame, fear, guilt or sense of lack.

The body (corporeality) is not a vehicle but a multiple being (Alice, 1994, p.80), speaking not only with verbal language but with temperature, flush, movement and the monthly cycle of menstruation, the shape of pregnancy and the experience of birth all speak to self and 'others' and are a part of the construct of identity. These biological aspects of being female both construct and fragment women's lives. There are differences physiologically which impact on the lived experience; the differences in sex hormones entering the brain must result in innate differences but these are differences in the physiological state only and don't necessarily refer to differences in behaviour, cognition, ability and motivation. 'Femininity and masculinity do no correlate neatly with biological sex' (Porter, 1991, p. 68). In ancient religions, 'matter is the sacred and mysterious expression of the goddess, not only are women's bodily functions not hampering of creativity, they are imbibed with divine meaning' (De Shong Meador, 1992, p.153) but the masculine-adapted adult feels deep unconscious shame about the female body.

Women have had to adapt to a masculine orienting frame which determines life's meaning and predictability. Unfortunately the masculine frame, which promotes male experience as the social norm, has to be built over a 'fictional lack' (Walkerdine, 1990, p.135).

The issue here is not about feminist theory and a need to reframe 'gender' or continue the debate about the concepts of 'gender' and ‘identity’ and lived
corporeality but to acknowledge for the purposes of this study that they are concepts which remain in common usage by those who may be ignorant of feminist issues or theory. The concept of gender from the feminist theorist perspective will not be investigated but acknowledged as, 'tools to be grappled with as building blocks to more dexterous naming of experience' (Alice, 1994, p. 222).

By remaining within the framework of gender, (i.e., female archetypes), I run the risk of being criticised for limiting the possible complexities and potential of each individual. I would argue that this is not the case. 'We need to know where we are in order to start' (Moustakas, 1990). Hence I have chosen to stay within mainstream terms of reference. It is my belief that it is necessary to stay within the frame of 'female archetypes' to create a boundary and a focus for the work. Theatrical scripts, the Greek pantheon, fairy stories, myths, and popular novels could have been used but all carry with them the influence of the dominant paradigm. It is possible that we all 'carry within our individual psyches archaic components from many races and traditions' (Lovell, 1991, p.150), and that 'in a patriarchal society we will find the feminine primarily in the unconscious and this must be developed to reorient the matrix of the feminine psyche' (Wehr, 1987, p.136). Although, again, it is my opinion that the feminine is in the unconscious due to social construct, it is also my belief that by working with the archetype we have a greater opportunity to discover 'uncontaminated' information which has not been filtered through the cultural loadings which accompany the local, historical self as most ideas about the feminine carry patriarchal overtones.
This framework provides the opportunity for expansion of experiences to reach understandings within the familiar and known social norms. It is not the purpose of this study to create a new framework but perhaps to open the door to questioning of social 'givens'. It is not a study which sets out to investigate feminist theory or make radical changes in social attitudes but to give each lived experience a new perspective which may kindle the desire to investigate the multiple and diverse ways that life can be lived. This study stands with Griffiths, Luke, Estola Pinkus and Jung to name but a few who work with the 'hypothesis' of the archetype as a 'patterning part of the brain images' (Wehr, 1978, p.55) in which there is an 'essential masculine' and an 'essential feminine'. As I have come to understand it, our bodies are a carnal representations of this 'essence' and from this stance I choose to look at self identity as something which is, 'born out of the crucible of our own struggles' (Luke, 1996, p.9). The various disciplines, social, psychological, historical etc. have their own means of defining the development of self and Krieger provides a description adequate for this work:

In sociology, for instance, the self is often constructed as a hollow core, best understood as a reflection of external forces which act upon it. In experimental psychology, the self is something we typically know only in terms of measurable external behaviours, or we know in terms of cognitive processes that do not comprehend the whole self. In economics, the self is expressed through preference functions: choices about what is valued over what. In political science, the self is something symbolised in rights, powers, and acts of political
participation. In depth-analytic psychology, ideas of the self become internal, but they also become extremely complex: the self appears as a structure (id, ego, superego), as patterns of defences, or as a pattern of internalised object relations. In the fields of self psychology, where the self is the subject, it is still difficult to grasp a sense of the self as a unique inner experience because the concern is with the demarcating processes all selves share (1991, p.430).

I would argue that it is the purpose of this work to pursue the notion that the self can be defined by individual, inner experience. There exists within the uniqueness of each individual the ability to self regulate and organise their experiences as important sources of knowledge but this value of lived experience as a source of knowledge has been, 'traditionally minimised in social science' (p.44).

Towards A Definition Of Self

As this work takes shape and I reflect upon the content of the journals, the expressions throughout the drama and movement praxis and art works I find myself coming to new meanings and understandings and 'read' and hear that the same process is occurring for each participant. As I do this I become aware of a sense of awkwardness, an embarrassment. I do not want to become what this work has been about overcoming or reworking. I do not want to take the position of 'gatekeeper' and claim to be an 'objective authority'. To do so would be to, 'reassert control over the production of historical
knowledge, to regain the power of gatekeeper over the annals of 'truthful' history' (Gegenbach, 1994, p.627). To take on the role of gatekeeper would be to construct the participants as 'other' thereby creating a relationship of domination which would be a complete contradiction of the purpose of this work. But, like Krieger, I want to be able to, 'say something that was mine' (1991, p.166). How can a researcher understand the process of developing self identity unless engaged in the same process? It is necessary to have, 'a full enough sense of self, so that understandings of others will not be stilted, artificial or unreal' (p.165). Krieger’s work investigates the problems of expressing the self in the Social Sciences which can create a kind of prohibition which in turn can have strong effects on the self-expression of women and anyone not speaking a standard truth. In this work I do not want to achieve an analytic distance but come to new understandings of myself and others through a multiplicity of highly interactional processes (the multi state paradigm).

One of the means by which we can make sense of ourselves, each other and the world is through story, as we move, draw, speak, dance, act we hear our own story and become aware of the greater story, when witnessing someone else’s story, ‘it is not the match of someone else’s reality that I can judge but the response that person’s sense of reality evokes in me’ (Krieger, 1991, p.60). It is not the purpose of this work to ‘construct’ the participants or to tell their stories but to ‘take on’ (p.166) their stories. The reflections and new meanings are about their lived reality as perceived through my lens, I can’t, ‘tell it as it is’ (Armstrong, p.8) but by witnessing their stories as they are
expressed in the images, movements, acts and journals, it may be possible to, 'rescue women from the stories of non-data' (p.11) and acknowledge the stories as, 'an alternative exploration of a definition of reality' (p.11) as compared to the reality determined for women by governments and institutions in which women have minimal representation.

'I AM THE STORY I CAN TELL ABOUT MY LIFE' (Cupitt, 1991)

Why is story so important? It is a, 'dialectical reality between individuals and their social, political, economic and historical contexts' (p.11) and I would add 'sexed and gendered bodies'. Through story the 'personal experiences are woven into the fabric of society' (p.14).

Each individual has their story, shaped by their sex, culture and local society through storytelling we 'we derive meaning from the past which becomes a question to put to the future' (Navone 1977, p. 35), our understanding of the past equips us for the future and story provides the meaningful frame of reference which opens up new possibilities. Navone is a narrative theologian and as such does not write from the perspective of one who has been overlooked, misrepresented or marginalised. As previously mentioned women's history is silenced and interrupted, women seem to disappear in history, each generation must search for 'women of ideas' (Spender, 1982). This has implications for story as a means to develop a sense of self.

It is from the image and movement that a tacit knowing can emerge but it is story which brings these together to create an inner coherence from which can
develop a sense of self. 'Our stories, dreams and fantasies work continuously to produce and maintain the dynamics of self' (Cupitt, 1991, p.54).

Life is temporal and without story we would live in a constant state of uncertainty unable to orient ourselves in time; story puts us on a time line and give us a place in life. Navone (1977) and Jung (in Jennings and Minde, 1991) describe the central nervous system as self regulatory, working to keep itself in equilibrium. Through story this process of self regulation can be maintained by retrieving the images from memory into sequential form. Memory contains the sense of before and after with images that are present in a constant transient stream, cinematic in form (Crites, 1989, p.75), which has to be stopped in order to isolate the images and refigure them into order of past experiences and future anticipations. It is story which provides the framework, in telling story we organise our cognitive processes and thus our lives by knowing our roles, our desires and our place in life. The affective operates convergently, 'on the moment from a rich plurality of directions and sources' (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 40), it is the affective which provides the interface between what is and what might be, when reason and logical thought is relaxed, the imagination can open up to the past, present and future, the absent and the unreal (Warnock, 1986, p.143). It is through the affective that we can respond to knowledge of which we may not be consciously aware by mixing outer images with inner images via an interplay of the brain hemispheres (Hughes, 1992) we have a sense of total awareness.

Although the past and future can only be seen from the standpoint of the present they are inseparably linked by language (Crites, 1989, p.76). It is only
through the tenses provided by language and our imaginative function that we can distinguish between past, present and future.

Our sense of personal identity depends upon a continuity of experience through time, it is the bridge between remembered past and projected future, 'our sense of self is at every moment to some extent integrated into a single story' (p.76).

Cupitt (1991) also maintains that we are temporal beings who make sense of life and shape life within the framework of story. It is through the existence of universal narrative patterns 'mythemes' (p.13), that we are able to synchronise our own psychology with objective reality. These universal narrative patterns help to shape a psychological 'inside' and behavioural 'outside'. However, the ancient myths, which carry the pattern of the dominant paradigm are no longer appropriate for a society which is reconstructing. The patterns which we live by are the patterns of millennia which have prepared us for a different world and story than the one we are living today. We are faced with exponential change which has uprooted the values and traditions which have been the structure of our society; there is no clear direction and the old story is becoming antiquated. Our lives are complex, we live in a multicultural culture which is facing a breakdown or radical change in traditional values, social and family structures to which there are not yet any obvious solutions (Mystery School, 1996). The following quote from the speech made by the Queensland politician Pauline Hanson (1996, Sept.):
immigration and multiculturalism are issues that this government is trying to address, ... I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians ... a truly multicultural country can never be strong or united.

is evidence of the fear that a developing multicultural culture stirs within the 'psychological inside'. The fact that she has become a guest speaker at other political functions attests that she is not alone in her fear and the behavioural 'outside', as Houston explains:

without a matrix, a story, chaos is going to rule .....can we change, reinvent the myth?

Below the surface of consciousness, indigenous in every human being, is a teeming array of myth and archetype. We seem to come with them......mythic structures not only support the work of any culture but allow the psyche its own healthy development...... in the past, personal identity and cultural identity seemed to be consonant with each other, now the psyche is adrift because the old, stable stories are no longer operative ..... myth contains the greatest story that ever happened (Mystery School, 1996).

Stories give us our self and our culture, they recount events in the common public world and at the same time help to shape a self, the interaction is fluid, one unable to exist without the other. Individuals hear stories from multiple
perspectives, just as they are told from multiple perspectives but there are shared feelings, patterns and values which create a sense of community. 'A culture's stock of stories may be seen as creating a community of harmonised selves and their common world' (Cupitt, 1991, p.60).

This common world or external point of view is a vast and intricate organisation of interests, drives, instincts, beliefs, values, customs, laws, constitutions, inventions, geographic and climatic data. But it is our internal selves which creates a community of selves, 'we live among ourselves, they live in us and we live in them' (Crites, 1989, p.34).

It is through story that we are able to shape our 'inner story of experience' (p.79), establishing a sense of the meaning of our own drama and when socially shared link our inner lives and orient them to the outside world.

'Our narrative consciousness is our power for comprehending ourselves in our coherence with the world and ourselves' (Navonne, 1977, p.18). The stories we tell and the symbols contained within them reflect how we grasp ourselves and our world, how we are affected by what we grasp, how we relate to reality.

Navone claims that story is an act of affirmation, as we listen to story we are able to separate the content from the fuller act of knowing the context which comes from our desire to know which in turn creates a dynamic involvement in the full context of the experience (p.35). Through story we can reach towards a depth of meaning in the reality of our experience that includes the actual and the possible. He defines storytelling as, 'an act of thinking
expressing the power of affirmation; the meaning which it communicates is to be sought in act and content' (p.35). However, the existence of a discourse does not mean that the individual has access to discourse or that discourse alone provides a means by which the subject can become agent to reflect on the content with power and knowledge. The wider dynamic must always be considered, stories can be personal, cultural, historical or universal (p.44) and must be seen from the dynamic (which includes the dominant social paradigm) from which they have developed and for women this has often meant the denial of the right to speak and be heard. (Rhedding-Jones, 1995, p. 481).

To be an agent is to be able to mobilise agency in new ways, inventing, and breaking new patterns (Davies, 1991, in Rhedding-Jones). By engaging in the drama participants can become the agents of their stories, the drama process reaches to meanings beyond language into complex, hidden ideologies, multiple meanings and amazing possibilities (p.485). They can witness their stories told by others, reflect on them and come to new insights, see what was not seen, hear what had been silenced and reach deeper understandings of both context and content.

Cupitt also maintains that stories have the power to order chaos, reconcile conflict, solve problems, compensate for loss and inadequacy, beguile the night and defer death (1991, p.107). I would argue that many stories maintain the dominant social paradigm and have been sanitised and changed to do so, 'most old collections of fairy tales and myths existent today have been scoured clean of the scatological, the sexual, the perverse, the pre-Christian, the feminine, the Goddesses, the initiatory, the medicines for various
psychological malaises, and the directions for spiritual raptures. But they are not lost forever' (Pinkola Estes, 1992, p.15).

As human beings can only live within an order of meaning we tell our story to keep ourselves going, ‘I am the story I can tell about my life’ (Cupitt, 1991, p.66). This is never more than evident in the work done by Bell as she collected stories about the transmissions of objects from generation to generation of Australian women who were subservient to patrilineal inheritance, ‘in recalling the stories of transmissions of objects a search for self was manifest, the need to know ourselves, as individuals with a unique past, the objects provide a link to the past ... and take us to the core of women’s culture’ (Bell, 1987, 261.)

Cultural stories carry the message of oppression and disenfranchisement of women; our thinking and our selfhood are constituted by language (Cupitt, 1995, p.56), but language can also ignore and silence (Cherryholmes in Rhedding-Jones, 1995, p.485). Thus the use of metaphor can both evade, innovate and veil. If language is used to make meaning it must be considered that there can be a deliberate choice not to make meanings, what is unsaid and unwritten are of equal importance, hence the use of the archetype to tell and reach a greater story. Metaphor has the capacity to suspend the actual world and open up potentials and possibilities. (Fodor, 1995, p.134). The archetype provides the opportunity to: re-imagine, re-view, re-cognise, re-pattern, the images present to our conscious awareness and represent that part of the self which may not be in conscious awareness and in doing so works as a metaphor. Metaphors can, ‘both allude to and veil ...... resolve conflict of
scale . . . . assimilate scales to each other . . . . identify the world by pointing out correspondences' (Cupitt, 1987, p.610). The use of archetypes as metaphor is a powerful means of investigating the lived experience 'once removed' in which the, 'verbal and the non-verbal are united at the core of the image-ing function of language' (Ricouer as cited in Fodor, 1995, p.156). The archetype has the capacity to work like the mask which creates a space for the drama to unfold, within the mask and the archetype inner meanings become visible, the unconscious moves into a place of awareness, the inner meanings and feelings become visible in the body. (Mask workshop, Sept. 1996).

Metaphor can take us beyond the local/historical/spatio-temporal network and by its very nature (Brook, 1968), 'opens up or discloses a possible world' (Fodor, 1995, p.134), which suspends or suppresses discriminations and references to the everyday world. The Bi-cameraal Brain model demonstrates the function of both left and right hemispheres which when engaged mix 'inner' and 'outer' images. In modern western society, verbal efficiency is valued which in turn puts an emphasis on the left brain function, however, this removes individuals from the inner side of life as the left brain screens out direct experience and life is experienced as 'once removed'. In fact, the left and right hemispheres engage in co-operative activity and at any time the interplay of each hemisphere is variable and either one may be dominant. Hughes (1992) explains that as the right side produces images, the left produces a metaphor in order for the right brain to view as image what has been processed by the left. The metaphor holds (i.e., contains in short term memory) what would otherwise be an overwhelming mass of information in one concentrated form. The two hemispheres interact to produce a hologram
of a total event, a glimpse of awareness is possible and the brain undergoes an explosion of poetic effect. Thus metaphor is a link between our 'inner' and 'outer' experiences as it enables the brain to cross associate between clusters of related images and meanings, to reach interpretation and meaning. Houston (Mystery School, 1996) identifies historical periods in human development as 'pre-perspective, perspective, postperspective' and 'aperspective', aperspective perception and vision describes the capacity to 'see' beyond the 'local' and I would suggest that the use of metaphor produces the same effect cognitively, not via vision but via language and 'inner vision', the image. The neuro-physiological responses may not register as concepts; they may in fact lie beyond perception or precede perception, but register in the body as endcepts (Arieti, 1976). Such tacit knowing is then transformed into image, movement or sound or expressed verbally and thus, 'create consciousness' (Cupitt, 1991, p.66). The very terms 'inner' and 'outer' and 'depth' are metaphors to try to explain something which cannot be seen, 'self' does not exist without language and it is metaphorical language with which we both grasp the concept and understand ourselves. In his discussion around this issue Cupitt suggests that we have a brain but no 'deep inside' (p.66). He maintains that our 'self' is only skin deep until it is accessed via the physiological system to become image, then language then expression (thought or speech). To talk of our 'inner' and 'outer', 'depth' and 'tacit knowing' is to acknowledge the vital role of metaphor in bringing meaning to life.

We Need to Change the Story Myth of course is the universal metaphor (although some might disagree with this, but I use the term to mean that
which takes us beyond ourselves and yet into ourselves) and throughout drama praxis the women have had the opportunity to re-envision and re-write their personal myth.

Definitions of myth vary considerably and this section will draw substantially from the work of Houston’s Mystery School (1996) ‘for my truth the world gives only lies’ (May, 1991, p.19) wails Deborah as a young and rational psychiatrist tries to destroy the illusions of her gods and extraterrestrial kingdom which she had created through her need for them. They were her myths and her cry rings true for all those who have suffered as marginalised or ‘other’, whether from mental illness (as was Deborah’s case) or the values, attitudes and laws of the dominant system. For so many women, the dominant paradigm ‘gave only lies’. Deborah responded to the need for myth present in all humans as a means to interpret the inner self in relation to the outside world. Myth bridges the gap between the conscious and the unconscious and the forms they take are as varied as there are individuals but individual myths, ‘will generally be a variation on some central theme of the classical myth’ (p.33).

These classical myths however, which in the Western World come from the Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Israelite societies have had a major role in the oppression of women and women are now, ‘awakening to the suppression and denigration of the feminine divine for over two millennia which (sic.) has left over half our species sorely psychologically disenfranchised’ (Coultas, 1995, p.4).
How do myths work? According to Tilley (1985) psychologically they centre and harmonise the life of the individual within the social structures that the myth has validated (again, a dilemma for women), myths can define societal roles and bring harmony to the various aspects of life. Myths give concrete models to live by and provide psychological support but paradoxically, when individuals or society push beyond the limits, myth will also support such action. The story of Dame Ragnall and Sir Gawain supports the woman who feels ugly and 'other' as a result of her oppression and this story turns about the 'knight in shining armour to rescue a poor woman' to, 'my ugliness is not mine but someone else's projection'. (This is, of course, only one way that this story can be 'worked' it is also about championing the Goddess.) Not all Dame Ragnalls will be given choice or sovereignty of the land but it is supportive and shows the way.

Can we change myth: Does Dame Ragnall still need a champion?

Houston (1996) suggests that myths are indigenous in every human being, they are the DNA of the human psyche and can function as a mode of discovery or explanation. Sansonese's (1994) work which is anchored in biology and science investigates the body as the originator of myth and claims, 'myths were composed because they were descriptions of the primitive, mythmaking, proprioceptive consciousness from which the species has evolved and to which, by means of your nervous system, you yourself are still very much linked' (p.36). e.g., the head of the gorgon is a description of the brain and its twelve cranial nerves. Interestingly he argues, contrary to Houston, that authentic myths are not being created today but his argument is
not clear. The one challenge to make against his very detailed work is the lack of any myth which is specific to female organs, the reader is left to assume that the ancient yogis who discovered the information about the body while in deep trance were all male.

We can work the old myths as 'keys and levers' to our own becoming. Myths are more than story (which also suits us physiologically) but operative, structured forms in which we are anchored. The larger, richer stories can enrich and mobilise our own story. We face a present day dilemma (Mystery School, 1996) in that the shared myth or archetype needs to emerge into each individual, The psyche is now too complex for a single 'hero' or 'saviour'. Such constructs no longer fit the personal as they once did. We can re-write, re-envision our own personal mythology by recognising our own personal myth, the primal myth into which we were born which is then challenged by the counter myth (and unless this is done deliberately it will come in the form of dreams, fantasies and impulses). The counter myth needs to be tempered by reflection and real world experience, forming, testing and refining. The dialectical tension between the primal myth and the counter myth creates the opportunity for a re-visioning and a re-write, a new plan for life. This new plan is the new mythology, the new template for life and as it is put into action more capacities will become available – physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual. Myth keeps us going; it is the energiser. The women's movement at all levels of society is re-thinking the primal story with its outmoded perception of women and their relationship to men in society:
I don’t like Sita, she is too weak, too passive. We women in India are much stronger than that, she should have something to do with her own rescue and not just sit there moaning and hoping that Rama will come. We need to change the story (Mystery School, June, 1996).

Houston and Bobis have both investigated myth and their impact on the lives of women, the ‘old myths’ no longer serve modern Western society, the very language of myth, ‘has been colonized by male experience’ (Peterson in Bobis 1994, p.55).

if woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man ... it is time for her to dislocate the “within”, to explode it, turn it around and seize it; to make it hers continuing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of (Cixous in Bobis, 1994, p.257).

Although it is not the purpose of this work to rewrite a myth it may give women the opportunity to appraise their personal myth, e.g., being the ‘dutiful daughter’ like Athena, and as the personal myth is rewoven so the universal myth will change over time.
**Dame Ragnall And Sir Gawain: Sovereignty for Women**

A story from the Arthurian canon which goes back thousands of years but this is the 15th C versions of it. It is the story of the two Perfect Guys who are living out of the old myth, in fact they represent the notion of human excellence up to about the year 1,000 AD, they are Sir Gawain (he of the glorious sunny hair) and King Arthur. They feel protected. Sir Gawain is the perfect knight but he does things without too much depth or complex thinking. Arthur, is the secular Christ in the world. They are in their greens on this particular occasion because they are so sure of themselves they don’t have to wear their armour anymore and go through the forest and they come to a ford in the river and standing on the bridge is an eight foot giant whose name is Sir Gromer Somer Jour.

**Giant:** Stop in the name of unliberty, I want to kill you both, you’re just entirely too arrogant let’s fight, you can’t get past this river, you’ve got to fight with me! I’m what is called the recalcitrant myth and you’re doing something to the world that I don’t even like, so I’m stopping you here, now! Let’s fight.

**Gawain:** But we are unarmed men.

**Giant:** So what, there are two of you and one of me, let’s fight.

**Gawain:** But in the chronicle of knightly behaviour a knight does not fight unarmed men and you’re a knight aren’t you?

**Giant:** Alright I won’t fight you, then I’ll give you a challenge instead, you’ve got exactly one year to get the correct
answer to this question or you will have to fight me and will
take this new counter myth down with me.

Gawain: What new counter myth, what do you mean?

Giant: You, a world of peace and round tables, this is place where
fights, do or die, kill things, exist, beat it all up.

Gawain: So we have the counter myth?

Giant: Yes and you have one year to get the correct answer to the
following question, 'what do women really want?'

Commentator: So this is very interesting because what was the counter
myth becomes the old myth when you were young the
strategy of 'try again' for me, that was the counter myth
against passively just taking it all and now it's the old myth
and fallen into a certain hubris and become vulnerable to the
world. So we're at stage one where what has become the
counter myth becomes the old myth and is challenged
forcefully and surprisingly.

Gawain: Well, let's set off in our own direction and we'll find women
and ask them the question. (Meets a woman), "Madame,
what do women really want?"

Woman: Something which is the equivalent of a 6th century Cadillac.

Gawain: Meets a little girl, "little girl what do women really want?"
Little Girl: I want someone who will beat up my brothers and stop them beating me!

Commentator: In the dark night when you know the old is not working and you can't find the new, you can't find the counter myth.

Gawain: Meets an old lady. "What do women really want?"

Old Woman: Somebody to come every single day and sweep my house and bake some bread.

Commentator: So the culture provides all sorts of images they can be drawn towards.

Gawain: To Alicia the juggler, "what do women really want?"

Alicia: An equal chance to juggle balls.

Gawian: Meets a prostitute, "want do women really want?"

Prostitute: Oooh, sonny! I just don't feel that I can express it!

Gawain: I think I'd better try the holy women who go to the convent, here's blessed mother Hildegarde, "Blessed Mother, what do women really want?"

Blessed Mother: I don't think I could possibly express it.

Gawain: (ha: reached castle) Queen Gwenyvere, "What do women really want?"
Queen: Ask Lancelot, he really knows!

Gawain: (meets up with Arthur again), “Sire here we have thousands of answers and neither of us has the right one, but I hear there's a woman who lives by a well and who abides wisdom there and who is wondrous strange, I know we only have one day left but can't we just try.’

Commentator: The culture provides many new myths and we have to listen with your heart to know if it's the right one or to keep going deeper.

Gawain: I see a shape there and I do ascertain that it is female, Madame, what do women really want?

(He turns around and sees the ugliest creature he has ever seen in his life, she has boars teeth and she drools like a mastiff. Her eyebrows are so long they are braided to the top of her head and she has little rat eyes and warts that have warts that have warts.)

Dame Ragnall: I know the answer to that question young man! What'll you do for me sonny if I tell you the answer, eh?

Gawain: As a knight of Camelot I will do whatever you ask.

Dame Ragnall: Will you marry me in front of the whole court, how do you feel about that, eh? EH?
Gawian: I will do whatever you ask because I am a good and faithful knight.

Dame Ragnall: Then, the answer to the question is Sovereignty!

Gawian: Sovereignty? What exactly is that madam?

Dame Ragnall: Sovereignty is another name for the 'being female of the earth' and until it is recognised that a woman’s connection to the earth gives both the earth and human kind its power, the earth will be dead and everyone in it will die, there’s a simpler way of translating the word 'sovereignty' which could be 'choice'.

Gawain: I don’t understand.

Commentator: The new information does not always come in the form you expect it or a form which is appealing in our culture the path is often not in the form that you want so we have this new information which is a little bit difficult to assimilate and understand.

So they go up to the giant and tell him the answer.

Giant: What sort of a counter myth are you if you can’t even ask a question which will elicit an honest, truthful, heartfelt answer? I’m killing you both!

Gawain: What women really want is sovereignty!
Giant: Aaaagh! You've been talking to my sister.

Commentator: So the answer to the problem is often in the problem itself, there is a heart relationship between the two and when you bring it back to the problem you are engaged in the dialectic.

The next day is the wedding and Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnall are married (people are fainting in disgust). So they have a medieval feast and Dame Ragnall is so disgusting as she eats that people vomit with disgust, then it is time for the first night. Sir Gawain lies like a statue and not until early dawn does she ask him,

Dame Ragnall: Well, aren't you going to do something?

Sir Gawain: Like what madam?

Dame Ragnall: Well, you could give us a kiss.

Sir Gawain: Yes madam, I will do that, and I will do more.

So poor Sir Gawain, with his eyes tightly clenched, reaches over and gives her a peck.

Commentator: The counter myth often brings you into strange and unfamiliar territory.

And wonders why the hair does not smell terrible in fact it smells lovely, where are the spikes, where are the warts, where are the tusks, he draws back and sees the most beautiful woman he as ever seen in his life.
Sir Gawain: Where's Dame Ragnall?

Beautiful Woman: I am Dame Ragnall. I have been caught in sorcery, both my brother and I have been caught in this terrible sorcery, in this thing of seeming to be what we are not, and now we are still in part caught in that sorcery, you must make the decision, I can either be beautiful for you at night and ugly during the day for the court or beautiful for you in the day and ugly at night for the court, which would you like?

Commentator: The mythic conflict often leads to some difficult decisions.

Sir Gawain: You choose!!

Dame Ragnall: Oh, Sir Gawain, you have given me sovereignty and I can be beautiful all the time!

Commentator: And life does test us and give us opportunity to discover how deeper we have integrated the new myth and you often find what has been repressed in the old form, when the partnership societies were trashed and the women were repressed and lost their power of choice and connection to the land because the women owned their own land and this myth is a reflection of what happens in part to the feminine psyche when it got repressed and not responded to, it then contracted, this is also a sociological tale but it is also about our selves, when that which is essential being is repressed, it
looks like its opposite, for example when the young and innocent Sir Gawain, who is the counter myth, meets the wisest of women, she looks like the ugliest of women...............................you have the counter myth which is underdeveloped but is ready and willing who then meets the wisest of the wise who looks like her opposite but is actually the most beautiful woman in the world. He seeks the question through many people, he seeks a mythic expression everywhere doesn’t have the right answer the real answer is right there with the one who looks like the repressed. So we can often look at was has constellated as a result of the old myth and the repression of our lives from the old myth has constellated as our worst quality but beneath it, if we really begin to look at it is our best quality and the beginning of the new story.

A final comment on the Gawain, Dame Ragnall story:

Gawain’s story, in the end, is a triumphal one, in which his marriage to Ragnall becomes much more than a physical union. There are many aspects of the Goddess (Matthews, 1990, p. 174).
The Beginning Of The New Story: The Drama

This work did not set out to work within any one theory of drama or dramatic frame or to put theory or frame to the test, from the very outset it was to be a journey by a group of women who had agreed to work together using expressive arts modes to explore, recreate, redefine and reflect on their own lived experience as women in a culture which has marginalised and discriminated against them legally, socially and spiritually. There was no explicit drama model upon which the work was based.

In answer to those who may suggest that the approach is closely aligned to dramatherapy it is acknowledged that this may be so. Many of the ideas about drama have come from Jennings and Landy who have contributed to ideas of how drama and other creative arts can be powerful mediums for learning and they have also provided clarity around the issue of ‘therapeutic’ versus ‘therapy’. Landy (1986, p.40) cites Irwin’s definition of therapeutic as, ‘any experience which helps an individual to feel a greater sense of competence’ and includes Irwin’s definition of therapy as, ‘a specific form of intervention, to bring about intrapsychic, interpersonal, or behavioural changes’. It could be said that anything which is enjoyable is therapeutic, but therapy was not considered to be a component or outcome of the drama praxis, the work was not deliberately designed to be an intervention. Dramatherapists evaluate outcomes in terms of the well being of the client rather than the success of the product (p.40). This work was to have no predetermined outcomes. There were no ‘clients’ and no intent to measure the success of a product. The only way in which there was any resemblance to any type of therapy was the, ‘working through a creative process to foster a greater sense of self
awareness’ (p.40). The participants were provided with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences but the actuality of change or transformation was something left to the individual, to occur in the personal, reflective processes.

The aim of drama, whether in play, performance, education, recreation, or therapy, is to have an experience in the imaginary realm, one that mirrors the reality of one’s everyday life, and to undergo some sort of transformation as a result. The dramatic experience is essentially subjective, even though certain role types and certain archetypal scenes embody universal qualities. The actor in any dramatic mode has the responsibility of making sense of his own dramatic experience (Landy, 1992, p.109)

Landy (1986) defines drama as, ‘a facilitating symbolic experience to get in touch with self in groups through vocal and physical communication’ (p.58).

**Why Drama?**

‘Because the most valuable perceptions of reality are those articulated by bodily presence ... when we immerse ourselves in the experience of being alive ‘in’ the body then meaning becomes something lived rather than examined’ (Grainger, 1993, p.169). Scientific truth is only one way of knowing, there is another system of knowing based on the knowledge of experience (Lovell, 1990, p.112). The body is the most sensitive and accurate instrument we have. To read its sensations gives a strong sense of reality. All
bodies see, feel, hear in the same way but culture determines individual responses. We react to each other's reactions and within those actions lie all the resources of our unconscious senses, we broadcast to each other through a continually changing field of resonance, 'like a choir of visibles and invisibles' (Redgrove, 1978, p.113). Engaging the body forces one to move beyond the safety of cognitive processes, the objectivity of the scientific paradigm to the threshold of possibly unknown territory in which conceptual, personal, social and behavioural changes can take place (Landy, 1986). Given that the oppression of women is deeply internalised (Wehr, 1987; Lovell, 1991) to a point where cognitively the oppression is accepted as the norm, it is necessary to move beyond cognitive knowing to access the tacit dimension which rests within the body and the unconscious. Rubin (1994) calls this the 'fleshing of the story into physical form' through a powerful medium (the body) which is dynamic and interactive. The body is another threshold out of which the story can 'become'. As Lovell (1991, p.69) says, 'what can I trust? It seemed I could trust my body to speak to me; one missing part however, was to trust myself to hear my body talking!' Can I trust myself to 'recall our ancient right to incorporate our symbolic mind' (E. Weiland, personal communication, October, 1996). By working with symbols, images and archetypes a link can be made between the inner and outer worlds, 'the multiple layered dramatic metaphor allows us to come face to face with with the unfaceable' (Jennings & Minde, 1993, p.27).
Constructing Parameters

Drama is a powerful medium in which participants construct their own parameters of involvement and degree of self declaration creating a sense of empowerment and ownership of the text and context. This in turn creates meanings which are authentic for each individual. This thesis is concerned with ‘authentic voice’ i.e., the speaker is ‘heard’ such that agreements are adequate and appropriate to the needs of the ‘speaker’, the consequences of this ‘voice’ adequately meeting the speaker’s needs. ‘Voice’ used here as a metaphor (analogy) for recognition and acknowledgment by others as an individual who is a witness to another’s presence.

Drama is a group act which emphasises the intuitive, creative aspects of human interaction in which the tension of the dramatic act enhances awareness and behaviour at a personal and social level (p.29). It is a means of experiencing and reflecting on experience in a profound way, a way of thinking through an issue by means of a dialectical construct (Ross, 1996) drawing issues into confrontation ahead of theorising. Personal knowledge and tacit knowing come into play, a combination of thinking and action, a ‘learning as we live through existence’ (Courtney, 1982, p.221) which includes hunches, guesses and intentions. Drama creates a way of knowing, as a form it holds the potential to create meaning, in which the tacit and the explicit are complementary, the latter being built on the former, both are cognitive processes but with a different emphasis. Goffman (cited in Courtney, 1982, p.71) queries the assumption that a wide range of existential learnings can transfer from enactments and this same issue is taken up by
O’Toole (1992) in his discussion on the universal and the specific. According to Goffman and O’Toole new meanings will only occur if the fictional context contains something of the real context (1992, p.97). The two realities of the drama, the everyday, the actual and the representational, the fictional (Landy, 1986, p.11) must interact, interplay, become a creative synthesis. By working with drama a group can work collaboratively on general, existential learning and specific items of learning (Courtney, 1982, p.221) but the extent of the meaning created depends entirely on each individual. Drama and other expressive arts are, in fact, ‘living behaviour’ (J. Walker, personal communication, October 2, 1994). They were once the, ‘native tongue of mankind’ (E.G.Horovitz, personal communication, October, 1996), thus, the significance to an objective truth is the ‘felt meaning’ (p.145), the significance of the experience creates the extent and depth of the meaning for each individual. What is specific to one may be general to another. As Courtney says, ‘it is myself who gives it meaning, I acknowledge it contains my own potential’ (p.145). True meaning is ‘felt’ and ‘affective’, the drama dialogue authenticates one’s own experience, i.e., the dialogue is, ‘peculiar to the speaker and adequate to express her needs’ (Ross, 1996, p.55). We can only have our own experience:

I am struck increasingly with the impossibility of getting outside my own skin. The more I try to grasp someone else’s experience, the more I am impressed with how hard it is, how much beyond me that other experience really is (Krieger, 1991, p.54).
The Expressive Theory

The expressive arts have been chosen to explore the realities of women's lives because, 'all art expresses things we are unable to express in any other way' (Jennings & Minde, 1993, p.18) but it is the distancing within the art form which both contains the experience and allows it to be seen from many perspectives. As noted previously participants engaged in the drama process are both watcher and watched, player and witness, never quite totally involved, always partly watching themselves and others and therefore the individual is protected from being overwhelmed in the process of 'facing that which could not be faced'.

It is this 'containment' aspect of the drama which creates a boundary from the outside world in which internalised worlds can be externalised (Landy, 1992, p.100), new worlds are created and like traditional theatre, the drama 'stage', the 'contained space' allows the interplay between, the real and unreal, the self and non-self. What occurs in the drama praxis is once removed from everyday reality, taking place in a reality which is different in space, time and consequence (Landy, 1986, p.5), hence the inclusion of ritual.

Ritual is a bridge from one condition to another, from the old to the new (Driver, 1991), effecting change rapidly as the ritual act bears more meaning than words. Through ritual it is possible to suspend belief and enter into the spontaneity of the moment, the point of freedom, the creative moment of possibilities, the creative synthesis, where, 'our brain is receiving continuous input from both our external environment and the internal environment of our own feeling, thinking and bodily processes' (Lovell, 1991, p.115). Ritual
creates the bridge by its very action, not by what it symbolises, ritual does not have a rational meaning but is, ‘primarily an instrument designed to change a situation’ (Driver, 1991, p.93) and in the case of the drama praxis to create a focus for the work to come, to create a ‘safe’ place and space, to link the psychic, social, natural and cosmic orders which language and life pull apart (p. 149). In order to work in imaginal worlds with symbol, myth and archetype some delay in expressive verbal language may be preferred as language divides, separates and creates barriers, ritual, by contrast unites and re-unites the forces which everyday life pulls apart. Thus a space is created which allows for the full scope of play and thought and feeling, an ‘holistic perception’ (Gadamer in Ross, 1996, p.52).
Drama Praxis as a Change Agent

As previously mentioned in this work women are seen in terms of being 'in relation to' (Hampson, 1990), i.e., as not existing as individuals but seen or valued or recognised only when in relationship with someone other, father, mother, husband. I recall as a ten year old child hearing my mother introduced as Mrs ......... ....... (my Father's name), it took me by surprise and I wondered why they didn't use her name, where was she, who was she? Where was I? Who was I?

Except that over these years, the woman, his wife, has begun to think of her name, her maiden name, which is really only the name of her father. She thinks also of her mother's maiden name and that too is the name of her father. She thinks of all the women stretching back and back and she realises she doesn't know their names. To her it's as if, nameless, they are lost. How many generations will it take for her name to be lost? Her daughter's? Her grand daughter's? Wherever she goes she takes with her these long queues of lost women (Modjeska, 1994, p.95).

The substance of the physical universe is about relationships not things (O'Toole, 1992; Courtney, 1982) but from this perspective each item or object in the relationship is recognised to exist as itself, i.e., as a given separate existence. In an atom the proton is not given recognition at the expense of the neutron, both have equal status within the existence of the atom. But this has not applied to women in the past where 'role in
relationship’ was valued over personal identity. To illustrate this point the ‘poor thing’ attitude towards unmarried women and widows has permeated the Australian culture until very recently.

This work is not about defining or developing or testing a drama model but is more a reflection on what can be learned or understood within the dramatic frame however O’Toole’s (1992) model seems to fit the way the Drama Praxis developed throughout this work.

Ross (1996) and O’Toole discuss the real context and the fictional context of the drama which is dynamic and operates within both contexts. The real context is the percipient’s reality (p.13) which is all that they ‘bring’ with them, attitudes, beliefs, culture, physiology, social status etc. The fictional context is the make believe world created within the drama with a text which is not pre determined script but is created by and because of the actual dramatic event (p.4). Drama does not have a repertoire that pre-exists, if it does, it then becomes theatre (Brook, 1968, p.22). As these two contexts operate within each other the Metaxis of drama is at work (O’Toole, 1992, p.13) in which the interplay and the ‘immediacy of the relation” (Brook, 1968, p.25) transform meaning for use. As both contexts interact there is no certainty as to how the process works, ‘the fictional context may be a refraction of the real context to leave residual, operative traces’ (O’Toole, 1992, p.13). This is understood to mean, perhaps, that the real is seen differently within the fiction, the ‘seeing’ itself may alter, become aperspectival or postperspectival with no preconceived notions of how things should or ought to be both visually, cognitively and affectively. The imagination works
at negotiating the fictional context and may leave traces on the real context, thus providing new insights and meanings which enable a re-working, or revisioning and finally an assimilation. It is within the negotiation of the fictional context that learning is likely to be achieved (p.220), the imagination holds the negotiation in place via the, ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ (Landy, 1986, p.48), it is through the negotiation that a ‘change in understanding’ can occur. This is the tension of the drama praxis which does not quite concur with that defined by O'Toole. The tension comes from being, ‘poised between the life of the imagination, the fictional subjective and the life of the everyday, the actual, the objective’ (p. 48).

**Imagination**

All the meaningful parts of our lives are imaginary experiences most of which occur beyond the scope and awareness of the conscious mind. The ‘synaptic summation’ (Nachmanovitch,1990, p.38), occurs in a single flash, the entire nervous system comes together combining all its complexities in the present instance, it is a total convergence of everything we know and are, beyond feeling and thought. This process creates a synthesis (Bryant, 1989, p.203) in which particulars are subsumed under general categories from which are generated forms and patterns through which the world can be understood and given meaning. Bryant maintains that even perception of the particular parts of the environment is an imaginative act. The imagination has the capacity to bring many diverse elements into one, responding as a whole (Coulsen, 1984). The imagination is not confined to cognitive processes but creates an
interplay between past and present, opening up possibilities of new insight, discovery and experience and thus has a determining role in how experiences are shaped. There is always the possibility of new interpretations of the past with an awareness of possibilities for the future (Bryant, 1989). It is imagination which expresses that part of human experience which is not always available to logical, empirical investigation, the 'epiphany' of the moment in which an ordinary event reveals dimensions and depth, a new way of knowing (Fischer, 1983). Ricouer (cited in Bryant) links imagination to metaphorical process in which one thing is seen in terms of another, combining discovery and invention, juxtaposing images, events, feelings etc., which may have been far apart, to disclose truth. The bizarre and the idiosyncratic can play juxtaposed to the real, and creative imagination, 'can be understood as a metaphoric process generating new insight through novel combinations as new extensions of meaningful forms' (Bryant, 1989, p.204). Houston (1993) calls this a metageography, a state of being in which the human mind and senses expand their dimensions, the inner world is remythologised and all patterns and meaning resonate to a higher order and we become the knower, the knowledge and the known (p.224).

In this Thesis I have demonstrated my belief that there is another way of knowing.

Drama has been shown to be a link between the tacit and the explicit by a process of journey in which one forever turns away from oneself in order to come back to oneself.
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APPENDIX I

THE WORKSHOPS AND MY IN ACTION REFLECTION

This section is presented very much as it was written and is included to represent the process of action based research, it is not intended to be viewed as a tightly written or well edited academic study.
HANDOUTS GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE
FIRST WORKSHOP
WELCOME

WE ARE HERE TO MAKE OUR LIVES INTO HIGH ART AS WE WORK COLLECTIVELY WITHIN THE REALMS OF AMPLIFIED POWER

ABOUT LEARNING

YOU CAN'T DO IT WRONG

TRUST AND WITNESS THE PROCESS

HANG IN THERE – WHATEVER HAPPENS WILL CARRY DEEP WISDOM FOR SOMEONE

FEELING GOOD IS THE BEST WAY

THE WAY TO DO IT IS TO TRUST IT AND GO THROUGH IT

NO LEARNING HAPPENS WITHOUT PHYSICAL INVOLVEMENT

CREATIVITY MEANS CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY - DON'T FIGHT IT

USE EVERYTHING – YOU DON'T HAVE TO BELIEVE IT

"HAVE A CENTRE WITHIN YOURSELF THAT TELLS YOU THE TRUTH OF YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE"
TO BEGIN:

- you are here to go on a journey, what you make of your experiences is up to you. At certain times things may resonate deeply within you and then you may have an evening when nothing much seems to happen for you. This seems to be part of the process and may require some patience. If it seems to be working for you and not for many others that’s fine, hopefully the others will be witnesses for you.

- please try to be on time as I do not want to interrupt the guided visualisations, it can be quite jarring and uncomfortable to be “pulled back” suddenly. If you arrive late and the door is closed you will have to wait until we open it to let you in.

- should you have any reason for not attending or withdrawing, please let us know so that we can acknowledge your absence or departure. Sudden and unexpected departures can have an unsettling influence on the group’s energy; they leave a gap. At times we do not realise that we matter to others. So please let me know beforehand if you can.

- there may be times during our sessions when one of you comes by wisdom so deep that you may feel that you have been ‘taken over’ and it can be a bit scary if this is new to you. I would ask the rest of you to stay quiet and witness the process honouring the sacred place around each other. The person may appear distressed but allow the process to keep moving until the expression is complete. I will ensure that you are well grounded at the end of each session.
• Be aware of your own boundaries and express them appropriately for the moment, e.g., "I don’t want to join in with this thankyou." Respect the boundaries of others, we are not here to rescue each other.

• You may wish to bring in objects that hold a special meaning for you, we will put them in the centre of the circle as we begin each evenings work. Be creative with this, space is the only constraint.
ABOUT YOUR JOURNAL:

there are many ways of keeping a journal and you can choose a way which makes most sense to you. Don’t be too quick to put experiences into verbal/expressive mode. If you prefer to draw or doodle then do so, doodling can in fact “spawn” further insights.

keep your dreams in your journal

be aware of daily events, look at people and situations that hold resonance for you. Don’t spend too much time analysing these just develop an awareness that what happens may be linked with the evening work.

you will be asked to share your journal work but you always have the option to “pass” on that. As far as my study is concerned I will ask you at the end of the course to hand over whatever you are willing to share. This may be a complete photo copy of your work, or a summary. You may prefer to have a one on one interview with me, again, let’s be creative.

I WILL TAKE EVERY CARE TO ENSURE YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY. “WHAT IS WITNESSED HERE STAYS HERE.”
THE WORKSHOPS
Introduction to the Workshops

This series of eight workshops has been planned with objectives. This has been done quite deliberately. I did not want to use outcomes as it was not my intent to assess or evaluate the learning which occurred. For the purposes of my research I needed data to investigate my research questions. The data could be generated from workshops which were structured around my objectives.

These workshops consisted of 8 x 3½ hour sessions each of which contained the following:

- a warm up activity which invites full body movement, e.g., dance
- a short explanation about the evening’s work
- the welcoming ritual
- a guided visualisation
- a period of silence for journal writing
- some form of dramatic expression as a way of sharing processes, experiences and responses
- closure and grounding
The six archetypes selected from Gilchrist (1991) were:

- The Lady of the Hearth
- The Weaving Mother
- The Queen of the Earth
- The Lady of the Dance
- The Queen of the Night
- The Great Mother.

**Reflection on my Planning Prior to the Implementation of the Workshops**

Although I read Gilchrist’s book to get a ‘sense’ of each archetype, the course developed from my own ideas, with further reading and in consultation with my academic supervisor. I gave a lot of time to ‘think time’ or ‘incubation time’. Ideas would come to me in images or words and I kept a notebook with me (it literally ‘never left my side’) to record these as they came. In this way I also chose the music, selected readings, art works etc. By the time course commenced I had an outline of the order in which I would present the archetypes and a general sense of the objectives for each session. Initially I visualised the workshops like scenes in a movie or play and from there I determined the objectives by asking myself, ‘why?’ or ‘what does this mean?’ or ‘what’s the focus?’
I selected the archetypes with some order in mind. I decided to work with the Queen of the Hearth first so that we would, as a group, have a sense of our own hearth. I then selected the Weaving Mother to develop some insight into the 'threads and patterns' of our lives. With the hope that the participants might develop an understanding and some insight into their reasons for attending the workshops. As one of the objectives was to develop and learn to trust intuitive abilities I decided to work with movement and touch so chose The Queen of the Earth. The essence of this archetype is perceived via the senses, i.e., perception, not logical, deductive reasoning. The Lady of the Dance followed because I felt a need to 'lighten up' from the previous session but paradoxically had a sense that this would take us deeper into issues and insights resulting from the Queen of the Hearth workshop. As dancing and movement were an integral part of the course I decided to use dance as an introduction to the Queen of the Night (the one who knows what she wants to get and is almost amoral in how she gets it.) The final archetype was the Great Mother and I deliberately left this until last as I felt the power of this session could only be done with a group which had developed a sense of trust and cohesion. This was the session of the 'descent' and I needed to be certain of myself and the group before working with this.

Notes On The Guided Visualisations:

I always have a broad outline prepared for the visualisations, i.e., how it will start, the steps we will take to reach a meditative state, what will occur and how to close. But I never write these down as it comes to me in pictures as I
speak and on the odd occasions I have written them down, it has caused me
confusion, so I trust my intuitive sense to guide me with the actual content. I
am very particular with the selection of music and take great care to ensure
that all participants have returned to an alert state. I emphasise at all times
that each participant is in control of the process. I explain that it’s okay not to
do the guided visualisations but ask any one who makes this choice to remain
relaxed and quiet until the visualisation is complete. However, I also mention
that it may be a time to work with ambiguity and perhaps go beyond the
comfort zone. I assure participants that nothing comes from the unconscious
which is not in some way theirs. I explain that the impact of disturbing or
strange images may help us with new insights and understandings as we draw,
write, move or dramatise. I also explain that images can be ‘sent away’ with
conscious effort so that participants realise they are in control of the process.

Participation is always by invitation.
'as I encountered a dark tunnel from amongst the trees, a dark woman emerged .... she handed the sword to me – it was shining with its own light, it was not made of steel so much as a diamond'

'Why must I be given a sword?' 'It is the cutting edge, it cuts through.'
Workshop One: The Gifting

Objectives:

• explain how the workshops will be structured

• teach the welcoming and cleansing ritual and explain its purpose

• lead a guided visualisation to a ‘sacred place for women’ where they would each receive a ‘gift’

• invite participants to make journal entries after the guided visualisation

• for participants to get into small groups and discuss their gifts and to present their gifts to each other and dramatise this ‘gifting’ in moving tableaux with vocal/verbal accompaniment to the whole group

• instruct on the importance of grounding and closure

The Welcoming Ritual

The purpose for ritual was explained in the previous section, but to recapitulate briefly; ritual can serve to clarify intention, creates an experience by using symbol and gives a sense of commitment and empowerment. I have found in my own experience that ritual produces a remarkable emotional response which can be both ‘lifting’ and ‘deepening’. This produces a sense of ‘now we can really get on with the work’.
The Ritual:

The chairs are placed in a circle.

The participants stand in front of their chairs inside the circle.

A gap between any two chairs is designated as the exit point and one person stands at this point, outside the circle, holding a lighted candle.

Another person holds a cup of water and stands at the selected re-entry point, a gap between two chairs, usually opposite to the exit point.

Each person leaves the circle and goes to the candle. They move their hands across the flames and as they are doing this they think of anything that has occurred during the day or week that has been negative, distressing to upsetting. As they move their hands they imagine problems burning in the flame and disintegrating. The one holding the candle responds with:

'May the flame of love protect you tonight.'

They then move around the outside of the circle to the one holding the cup of water.

She dips her finger into the water and touching the participants forehead says:

'Welcome to this special place.'

Touching the throat says:
‘You are cleansed of your worries and cares.’

Touching the chest says:

‘You are free to be your own true self.’

Participants in the ritual give the reply:

‘Thankyou, I am cleansed, I am free, I will be my true self.’

Following this they return to their chairs to commence the night’s work.

This ritual was performed at the commencement of every session.

I am aware of the symbols contained in this ritual -- the circle, chalice, fire and water but did not explain this as I believe the symbolism must work at the unconscious level. Ritual works at the personal unconscious as well as the collective unconscious.
sustenance from the dark woman, from the dark womb ... I am invited to partake of womb wisdom .... I carry the hearth within myself, both for others as the wise woman and for myself .... keep the wisdom and return to your true selves for nourishment, the hearth is your spiritual home
**Workshop Two: The Lady Of The Hearth.**

Ladies represent action, they do things and create flow and movement when things are static. They handle change with ease. They can turn ordinary material into something of charm. Their essence is ‘transforming’. Theirs is the feminine ability to create and sustain energy. (Gilchrist, 1991, p.11).

**Objectives:**

- begin with the Greek dance ‘Enas Mithos.’
- review the need to respect boundaries and remind participants that this course is not therapy but a personal journey. To explain how each person is here to bear witness to other journeys but to be aware that we are not here to ‘rescue’ or ‘fix’ things for each other; to explain that participation is optional in order for each participant to feel comfortable about not joining in.
- group into pairs and reflect on what may be ‘the edge’.
- perform this in pairs using the Playback theatre strategy, ‘conflict’.
- ‘connect’ with the ‘Lady of the Hearth’ by guided visualisation.
- record images, thoughts, responses and insights from the guided visualisation either by writing or drawing in personal journals
- share in groups of three and develop a means of expressing ‘The Lady of the Hearth’ as movement, dance or poetry.
- close and ground
In Action Reflection Workshop Two: The Lady of the Hearth

Following the dance and review of respect for boundaries etc., I asked the women to think about what might be ‘the edge’ for them in this course and to write it down. Pairs were formed and then the anonymous papers were put into the middle of the floor. Each pair then selected a piece of paper to work with. They were invited to discuss what was written on the paper and rehearse the ‘conflict’ strategy in which one person expresses the negative and the other the positive aspects of the statement. Pairs then joined into fours and repeated the process and presented them to the group.

Following the journal period I asked them to form groups to consider the following questions and to integrate any knowledge, impressions, revelations, etc. which may have been accessed during the visualisation: How did the hearth you visited compare with the hearth you have today? How can you integrate what you perceive in the psyche, i.e., the depth wisdom, with the real world? How do you energise your own hearth? Time prevented a group sharing. Upon reflection, group sharing would have been beneficial for developing group identity and trust. I would now make sure that I included it. Sharing feelings and responses moves individuals beyond their individual story to the ‘greater story’.

The session closed with us standing in groups of five in a circle with each person completing the phrase: ‘What has been good about tonight is..........................’
We then made a large circle and standing very close took turns around the circle saying, 'I am the Lady of the Hearth. I ........................................'
watch the dark space between the windows .... she of the moist rheumy eye .... she has seen it all before .... the cyclic nature of change, forming a pattern as old as time itself, yet in itself a myriad of forms .... we ignore her at our peril, she will unravel us if we do .... she knows and will be there in the end, snip – and its done, time for a new pattern
Workshop Three: The Weaving Mother

'The rulers of structure and order, they create a space and receive within it, protecting and enclosing. They take what is necessary for further growth and reject the rest' (Gilchrist, 1991, p11).

Objectives:

• renegotiate the conditions which encourage trust, honesty and freedom of expression within the group

• review last weeks journal entries and share the positive aspects of the 'Lady of the Hearth' in small discussion groups

• work individually and attempt to 'get in touch' with repressed aspect of the Lady of the Hearth by 'free associating' using drawing

• engage in discussion in small groups to identify what is 'artificial' and what is 'real' about their behaviour in this role, i.e., to develop and awareness and insight into social construction of role

• discover what is shut out and/or superimposed by social expectations of behaviours in this role

• take part in a guided visualisation of the Weaving Mother and record images, thoughts etc in the journals

• participate in the ritual closure weaving a crepe paper web and in the final moments stand still in the circle and complete the following statement, 'I am the Weaving Mother I...........................................'
In Action Reflection Workshop Three: the Weaving Mother

During this session the aim was to work with both the positive and negative aspects of the Lady of The Hearth and for participants to develop their own sense of the 'essence' of the Weaving Mother.

Following the circle dance and the welcoming ritual I suggested we re-negotiate confidentiality and trust. Each group member stated why they felt comfortable and safe within the group and the working space. One member said, 'Because I can be my true self.' Another said she liked working in a single sex group and two chose not to comment.

I stated again that this was not therapy but a place to express and share and be witness for each other. I explained the difference between a 'response' statement and a 'fixing' or 'rescue' statement. I suggested the best way to do this was to stay with 'I' statements about similar experiences, feelings, images etc., this opens up broader possibilities and depth as we share. I also explained that in our present society we are caught up in the 'cult of the expert', but with this work there is no expert. When people are engaged in a personal journey it is up to each individual to chose how they will work with the experiences and images, 'you are the only one who decides what is right for you.' I also suggested they hold on to a healthy scepticism and challenge new experiences to find a sense of authenticity. Just because its new doesn't mean its right.
Members got into pairs to share their positive experiences from the 'Lady of the Hearth' workshop the week before and what had occurred as a consequence during the following week.

I introduced the concept of the suppressed aspects of the Lady of the Hearth and put the following questions: 'Have you felt any restrictions and limits by taking on this role?' 'Have you felt resentment, anger, sadness?' 'How are you asleep to your own potential?' I then explained 'free association' and suggested they let it 'swish around' for a while in order to reach a state where imagery came easily. I reminded them not to be too quick to put the images into words or question or try to understand what was being formed on the page but to trust the process, it would speak when the time was right. 'Be guided by the imagery of your hands.'

With music playing very softly as a background they drew on very large pieces of paper and were very focussed. To complete this exercise I asked if anyone felt ready to share their insights, a few did but I got the impression that it was a bit too soon and that maybe it was best left to 'incubate'. Some of the images were very strong.

To move onto the next section of the session I taught the group another grounding technique in which you 'stroke' a partner about ten centimetres away from her body. There was surprise expressed at the 'tingling' sensation that many of the group felt and it proved to a good way of making a break in between activities.
I then read excerpts from Bell (1987) which I had selected as I thought they were good examples of 'The Weaving Mother' aspects in Australian society and gave examples of women defining their own reality. Before commencing the guided visualisation I again reminded the group that if they felt uncomfortable during the session to come out of it gently and sit quietly. I also explained that they may 'see' an image that they don't like, but they can consciously replace it with an image they prefer. I also reminded them that it can be beneficial to stay with 'uncomfortable' images as there may be much too learn. The basic message being, 'this is yours, you be in control.' The guided visualisation took the group into a place of their choice, e.g., cave, castle, room where they met 'The Weaving Mother'. Time for journal entries followed. To close I had made a very large ball out of crepe paper streamers and we stood in a circle and threw it to each other, holding onto each section as it came to us. I suggested that the patterns we were making could represent the patterns and threads in our lives.

To close we stood in a very tight circle with each one saying, 'I am the Weaving Mother and I.................................'
'O Nabu, protect my boundary stone.'

'Feel my strength as you try to be of service and yet must serve, I was honoured and respected in my time, I offer my strength to you.'

'I feel as if the 'I' that is 'me' is stretching back into the past, losing all boundaries. So who am I really? A sum of parts or vibrations echoing beyond time and space?'
Workshop Four: The Queen Of The Earth.

This archetype represents female figures who act as the centres of life, they know how to be, maintain and get what they need. They represent presence and confidence and have a domain over which they rule. (Gilchrist, 1991, p.11).

Objectives:

• following the dance and welcoming ritual to encapsulate the journey so far with one word, participants to write this one word in their journals and then share this with as many others as they wish to

• develop an understanding of the nature of this archetype (see notes) by experimenting with psychometry and from this to understand how our bodies and senses can inform us about the world

• explore and develop awareness, attitude and responses to being touched as part of a movement process

• take part in a guided visualisation on the Queen of the Earth

• share experiences and compose a group prose/poem to express these

• to ground

• Excerpts read to the group following the welcoming ritual.

'I saw a woman clothed with the sky -- the pictures of the earth's magnetic field resemble a great hooded, winged angel'

'It is remarkable how often in both Whitman and Wordsworth the experience of poetic inspiration is connected with the experience of lying under trees, and with respiration. The tree is a tremendous electrical machine connecting earth and sky, and in its presence the normal potential difference in humans between head and foot is reduced. It is also an energetic chemical laboratory of psychoactive pheromones. To say this is not to reduce the value of poetic inspiration, but to point to its reality and certainty in the body ... nature speaks upwards to the known sense of man, downwards to the unknown senses .... every process in nature, rightly observed, wakens in us a new organ of cognition .... creating in the wake of an ever-creative nature ....

The Black Goddess speaks of her own voice in Ecclesiastics: 'it was I who covered the earth like a mist.... alone I made a circuit of the sky and traversed the depths of the abyss.... I grew like a cedar of Lebanon, like a cypress on the slopes of Hermon, like a date palm at Engedi, like roses at Jericho, like a live tree in the vale or like plane tree planted beside the water.... I was redolent of spices: I spread my fragrance like choice myrrh ..... like a terebinth I spread out my branches, laden with honour and grace. I put forth lovely shoots of the vine. Whoever feeds on me will be hungry for more, and whoever drinks from me will thirst for more' (p.116).
Notes handed out for discussion following the welcoming ritual and dance.

'the menstrual period is viewed by some as sacred and spiritual and it appears that the whole of Judeo-Christianity was built on the repression of the Lilith-Melusine figure' (Kolotov in Redgrove, 1987 p.167).

Redgrove claims Jung calls Lilith the 'shamanistic anima'. The heavenly aspect of woman has been exalted but the earthly has been cast out and rejected in post biblical times. The earthly aspect has the following qualities:

- receptive, open, related – in anticipation of ovulation. If there is no conception there may be anger and bitterness, but this is also the gateway to magic and extra – sensuous perception

- instinct and sexuality, the potential of the body, the subliminal senses

- prophetic inner logic, directly felt and experienced within oneself, unmediated by word of law, a direct sensuous intuition of reality, no other authority is required

- There are no separate things, there is only force and the continuum, everything is force and energy.
Women should relate dreams to their fertility cycle, there is a powerful rhythm in this cycle and dreams can carry information according to the stage of the cycle. Dreams are poetic events, are synaesthetic, like poetry and contain irony, paradox, ambiguity, tension and symbolism, they condense meaning and displace the accent' (Redgrove, 1987, p.167).

In Action Reflection Workshop Four: the Queen of the Earth

I find the passage taken from Ecclesiastics strangely moving and almost erotic, someone is describing an experience with their lover, and yet it eludes me, it is just beyond my grasp. I wanted to share this with the group, to continue the sense that the universe consists of ever moving particles, but in our society we have lost that connection and women have even lost touch with their own bodies and its cyclic rhythm.

To me the Queen of the Earth represents the sensual nature of our being, she takes full possession of her sensual powers and meets the challenge of how best to manage them.

She knows about her inner resources and cycles and uses this knowledge to bring work and projects to fruition. She is bound up with the cycles of growth, knowledge of the seasons (and this includes the seasons of human life) and the nature of the earth itself. Unlike today's woman who ignores her cycles, or doesn't know how to challenge the differing energies she experiences and at worst has her responses and behaviour ridiculed. She may
feel bad about her body and perhaps have experienced only sexual touch not sensuous touch. With this in mind I decided that the group would have to be comfortable about their bodies to really appreciate the strength and nature this archetype has to offer. We had the ritual welcome and I asked the group to reflect for a moment and put their experience to date into one word. I then invited them to form groups of four and share this, then to change to another group and share again, with the idea of providing a ‘frame’ to express insights, responses, fears etc., which to this point in time may not have been articulated.

I then had one of the group members, who I knew had a very highly developed ability with psychometry (the holding of an object to ‘divine’). They were invited to put articles of jewellery into the circle and the demonstrator picked one up and gave her impressions. The owner acknowledged them to be accurate. This was done a second time with the same result. I then invited the group to split into pairs, with some-one they didn’t know, to experiment with the psychometry. Before commencing I encouraged them to trust everything that they ‘got’ in whatever way it came – thoughts, pictures, sensations or just an unexplained knowing. Each member in the group had a degree of success with this activity.

I then explained that before we could do the visualisation we needed to do a little more body work. I invited someone who felt comfortable about being touched to demonstrate with me. She and I touched and stroked each other, moving against each other, intertwining our limbs. We demonstrated how to communicate likes and dislikes, to set boundaries without reproach, by
pushing a hand away or guiding the hand. I stated that participation was
optional and those who chose not to participate were invited to take on the
role of ‘sacred witness’, i.e., to witness without judgment, this affirms the
authenticity of those participating in the process. I offered scarves to be used
as a blindfold and chose to use candle light, and all except two joined in.

When the music finished I suggested they stay on the floor and welcome that
lost or repressed part of the female which is powerful and feared. We then
went into the guided visualisation to visit the Olgas to meet a ‘guide’ who
would be waiting at a campfire. This ‘guide’ would ‘take’ them to meet the
‘Queen of the Earth.’ They were then invited to go on an individual journey.

Upon completion of the visualisation and the journal time I chose to close and
ground by introducing humour. Each one selected a sense, i.e., taste, sight
and as we stood in a circle they had to repeat the phrase, ‘In the land of
...............when we go on a picnic, we take.......................’ This became
somewhat bawdy and risque with much reference to media sex symbols and I
like to think it was our very tame version of a Dionysian rite, the element of
sexual release was evident albeit tame in comparison to the real thing.

To close the session we stood in a tight circle and said, ‘I am the Queen of the
Earth and I.................................’

This work was the most difficult for me as I could not anticipate the group’s
response to the readings and notes or the body touching exercise. Open
discussion about bodies and sensuousness is not common in our society and I
had a very real fear that some of the group would reject the exercise and
refuse to participate and I have to admit that I had an alternative activity planned. I just wasn't sure how they would respond. Upon reflection I realise they welcomed the opportunity and to quote from one of the journals:

I had no problem watching but when we were asked to join in my barriers went up and I knew I didn't want to be touched like that. At first I was reluctant to get up and dance but I did so in my own space and way..........then some-one's hands found me and it was okay but I didn't want them too close so I passed them on....... I was sorry in a way when the dancing stopped as I'd just moved into my own sense of rhythm; (Esme's Journal).

And from another journal:

snake, oh, wondrous snake, curving, curling, swaying, in ..... out.......and around, one rhythm of time, earth, eternity.......... Earth Mother, residing in your cave, surrounded by earth capped mountains. No need for the trappings, the things of life, naked, so old – ancient, gnarled skin and white hair, you are of the earth and know all, mortality is no acquaintance of yours, we share time you and I, no questions, no answers, it is and always will be. Mists of time swirl round you and through you, I see you from a distance. The deep knowing is beyond words (Chami's Journal).
'it's alright to fly'
Workshop Five: The Lady Of The Dance

The spirit of the dance, the one who delights in knowing the world through movement...she teaches how to cope with changes in our lives, to meet with variations in the music, and feel gratitude for the gift of life (Gilchrist, 1991, p.163).

Objectives:

• begin the session with circle dance and cleansing ritual

• share impressions of the Queen of the Earth and expressive these collectively through a shared or individual poetic composition

• discuss The Lady of the Dance by sharing in a group dance lead by one group member and to discuss 'La Prima Vera' (Botticelli, S.)

• investigate how we respond to the 'call of life' and the consequences of not responding

• guided visualisation to meet the archetypal Fool

• illustrate 'the call of life' and share insights by verbal discussion

• close the session with a repeat of the circle dance
In Action Reflection Workshop Five: the Lady of the Dance

The collective prose was completed and shared and is attached in the appendix.

In this session I gave an introductory talk about my approach to this particular archetype, explaining that I had chosen to use 'La Primavera', linking it with the major arcana of the Tarot. I made it clear that this was my interpretation and only one of many possible interpretations.

I chose 'The Primavera' because it shows us the call to life. I linked the Lady of the Dance with the Tarot selecting the Fool and The Magician (who I believe also represents the trickster).

La Primavera show us the three forces of creation – initiation, resistance and balance or, energy, rhythm, and form.

In the centre of the composition is Venus, draped in red with the background shaped like a Mandorla, to me this represents the sacred gateway, the entrance to life. I see a strong resemblance here to the Major Arcana tarot card The World. The Fool is our innocence, we are urged onto life and our energy freed for creative use, our vulnerability is okay. We can fall into foolish experiences which we later realise were crucial to the pattern of our lives. If we admit to our foolishness we can experience quite disarming results, it can have the effect of breaking down barriers of resistance and in a conflict situation can
'disarm' the aggressor. During this session I put the question, 'What path do you take, the unknown or do you retreat back to the familiar path?'

Venus is The World, 'I am that I am', future development in tune with the universe, moving through life in a natural, integrated and spontaneous way.

All things dance, we are just part of the particles. You can never lose yourself or be anything but yourself, you remain the same through all conditions, you are complete not perfect. Serenity is not freedom from the storm but equilibrium at the centre.

When I study La Primavera I am puzzled by the studied nonchalance of Mercury with his back turned. However, Mercury (Mercurius) is considered by some to be the transformer and I feel Mercury is just waiting to turn and 'fire' at those who choose not to respond to the 'dance of life'. He is there just waiting to play his tricks and I put the question, 'Have you ever been tripped up or pushed in the back to get on with life?' This can be manifested by sudden unexpected change in life circumstances in the form of accident, illness, and what we could call 'life's tricks' e.g., theft or traffic infringement. All have the impact of forcing us to do a bit of reflection on how our lives are going.

For the guided visualisation I took the group to a place where they would meet their Fool and left them to discover some insights. Following this, instead of the usual journal time I suggested they draw 'Your Response to the Call'. A sharing session followed, many symbols and images had been drawn and these were discussed. One group member came to realise that whenever
she had to make major decisions she found it necessary to walk in the bush, she had not been aware of this need in herself to connect with nature. I was very careful during these discussions not to put forward my interpretation but to allow the individuals to come to their own realisations, some invited group input and I was always very mindful of saying, 'for me this could mean...................'.

To close the session we repeated the circle dance and stood in a tight circle, 'I am the Lady of the Dance and I..................'.

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'the lion's power is innate, he leaps without exerting himself, his muscles all in tune in a totally unconscious way. He has no feelings about his actions — there is no right or wrong — the deer is his due, life sustaining, it is there for the continuance of life'}
Workshop Six: The Queen Of The Night

HANDOUTS FOR PARTICIPANTS
QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

This archetype:

- is about survival, the power of fierce and primitive instinct

- shows you how to know and understand your own wildness, vigilance and cunning, to reduce the risk of getting lost or overwhelmed to be ready to face the unexpected.

- allows you to feel power and energy which is not restricted by convention.

- is knowledgeable, magical and primitive

- brings in power when all the duties of the day are left behind

- draws from the powers of nature using the sense of the night.

- may be to do with survival and reproduction

Our society does not teach women how to handle and express this primitive energy and emotion – desire, anger, fear, protectiveness, and basic love. We need strength and experience to deal with these strong drives.
Creatures Of The Night

The association with birds and animals is linked with the ability to use natural drives and extended abilities of perception which 'know' the world in a much broader sense. The night represents different paths of perception. The veil of ordinary thinking drops away and associations can surface at a deeper level. This world is shadowy, changeable and deceptive. It is advisable to 'go in sideways' and not confront it head on. It can be like slipping on fishes, very similar to the world of dreams. It is a world of potential – ecstasy, fear, love, anger, pain or communion.

Women have the power to empathise with the animal kingdom, to use their strengths and attributes.

The female way is to know and to tame – males have to hunt and master. She rules them based on their trust of her and her knowledge of them.

Tarot – Strength

Come to grips with our rages, learn when to give forth and when to act with patience and restraint. A natural force which can be integrated. The 'I WILL' of the self.

Get in touch with the instinctual side. Her power is human, personal and direct and is a very permanent and intimate part of herself. If we accept our bestial nature we are not only tamed but transformed as well. If we fear our beast we
restrict our own self knowledge and growth, approach it calmly, gently and indirectly, with give and take, adjusting to whatever situation arises.

The lion's golden substance seems to flow up the woman's arms and become part of her. Tamed by her magic, the beast offers his honey freely. She need not kill him to obtain his gifts. (Nicholls, 1980)

**Workshop Six: the Queen of the Night.**

They provide a kind of basic emotional energy which we need in order to keep relationships alive, and to put energy into life's work... we need to accept that we can be fierce, cunning and predatory before we can start to use these energies in a constructive way (Gilchrist, 1991, p.78).

The Queen of the Night has the largest kingdom. We see only 1% of matter in the universe, what is the other 99% like?

**Objectives:** (group members had been asked to dress as a 'night' creature.)

* commence the evening with the welcoming ritual
* distribute the handout and invite discussion
* dance to express this archetype, performed by one group member as solo with others invited to join as they wished.
• in pairs imaginatively dress each other in a gypsy outfit in preparation for a journey (the guided visualisation) to meet the lion, the owl and their own animal totem.

• following the journal time to share experiences, impression, emotions etc. to the whole group.

• ground by physically stroking each other and completing the statement, ‘I am the Queen of the Night’

In Action Reflection Workshop Six: the Queen of the Night

Following the welcoming ritual and discussion around the handout one group member, who had come dressed in sensuous clothing, danced for us, she was evocative with her body and the group response was very positive, they all joined in and we repeated the dance a few times. As I had explained in the introduction, they were to meet The Queen of the Night, the one who uses her instinctive knowledge to work at taming energies around her. I had decided the best way to understand this ‘wild’, strong unrestricted energy was to experience the ‘nature’ of the beast by a guided visualisation. To prepare themselves for the journey I invited them to form into pairs and ritually dress each other as gypsies because it is the gypsy which represents the wild and carefree. We then proceeded with the visualisation in which I took them to a forest clearing where, in their gypsy costume they sat and waited for a lion. They stroked and played with the lion, then lay on the lion’s back and became the lion. They then transformed into an owl who took them to meet their
own animal symbol of strength. Many of the group expressed surprise at the possibility of actually experiencing what it felt like to be an animal:

fearing nothing I ran for sheer pleasure to experience my own power. It was magnificent, strong and I was aware of every muscle and nerve in my body. I felt so aware, with great power and security, so physical (Chami’s Journal).

The feeling of power had quite an impact on the group and so I invited them to go around the circle saying, ‘I feel my own power and.............................................’ This workshop finished with the usual grounding, but as we were about to break the circle one group member recalled an image of an old crone she had seen during the visualisation, she was given the message:

‘Take great care of your gifts, don’t cast them to the wind’
'Welcome back.' 'Is this heaven?' 'Oh, no! This is the waiting room.'

'What are we waiting for?' 'For your permanent home.'
Workshop Seven: The Great Mother

'She is a symbol of the way in which life is brought into being in the world........but she can also be the symbol for the return of life into that darkness........she is not the originator of birth and death but rather the one who shapes the coming and guides the going of each life' (Gilchrist, 1991, p.97).

Objectives:

• engage in the 'empty chair' technique or 'voice dialogue' with the archetype of choice

• 'dress' for the descent to the 'Great Mother', by voicing negative beliefs about self and dressing in these, e.g., 'I put a scarf around my stiff neck, my judgement of others'

• undertake a guided visualisation down to the cave of the Great Mother by first passing through seven gates and shedding a garment at each gate, then a deep sleep amongst the furs, then a call to awaken to be dressed in new garments followed by rejoicing

• select a partner and in view of the circle to 'dress' in the new garments to acknowledge the 'new self' with the remainder of the group as witness to this.
In Action Reflection Workshop Seven: the Great Mother

I demonstrated the voice dialogue with one of the group members who commented on ‘how real it felt’. She was surprised at some of the opinions, feelings that the ‘archetype’ made which she had not been aware of but ‘made sense.’ The group chose partners and were quickly engaged in the activity. During sharing they commented on how they felt in the ‘role’, some experienced sensations within the body, e.g., tingling, a ‘day dream’ focus of the eyes and one group member said her partner’s face seemed to change. Others commented on a change in posture or voice. No one appeared to find the activity in any way threatening as this had been a concern for me. What if they discovered something they didn’t want to acknowledge? This may have happened in the partner work but was not voiced during the sharing. As I have proceeded through this course with both the readings and the practical sessions some new understandings and insights have developed. I suggest the archetypes are perhaps internalised role models, because of the external frames of reference in society, it has been necessary for women to engage role models from the inside, that although they are viewed as larger than the individual, they represent the greatest possibility. ‘Here are all the possibilities of you.’ Throughout the course group members have been very open to take on new qualities of thought, feeling and expression, to take them away and reflect on them.

The preparation for the journey to the cave of the Great Mother was done very seriously by some pairs and with great hilarity by others. This worried me at first but they were so concentrated on their own process that it only
seemed to be of concern to me, so I ‘stepped back’ and let the process happen. I did not explain the implications of ‘the descent’ or its history as I felt it best to allow each member to work at their own level and take from it what was right for them. The guided visualisation was considerably long and took about half an hour but this did not create any problems. As we got to each gate I had them take of a garment and burn it in a large urn placed outside the gate, when they had done this the gate would open and they could proceed to the next level. Once through the final gate they entered the ‘great cave’ which was strewn with animal furs, naked they covered themselves and were invited to ‘sleep in the womb of the great mother’ who would nourish them while they slept. When they ‘awoke’ it was to find they were in a beautiful landscape with many ‘attendants’ who joined them in a dance of celebration. I was very careful as I asked the group to return to a wakeful state as I was aware of the depth we had journeyed to and that for some it may have been disturbing or just ‘deep’ so I watched very carefully and had them stretch gently and move a little before they engaged in the journal writing. However, there were no problems, one member was crying quietly but did not appear distressed and so I did not intervene at all. I learned that each individual goes to the depth of the experience to the extent that their ‘psyche’ can deal with it, as though there exists an inouilt protective shield which will not allow anything to appear that will in anyway rend the psyche. Should anyone have had an experience which they found overwhelming or distressing I would have made sure they had liquid intake, were warm and offered to gently rub their limbs. This was our final working session as session eight was set aside as an evening to say goodbye.
What new meanings were created? I have included some journal entries:

There is a change — it is subtle — but I have become aware of my own truth and integrity as a person.

'Giving birth is an intensely spiritual moment — at that moment women are at one with the force of the universe — the creator of all things.'

'Power means being present,'

'I have learned to trust my dreams,'

'I feel strange, more powerful than before, more complex; these workshops have validated the value of all the roles I have.'
ANALYSIS OF "GIFTS" SESSION ONE
THE 'GIFTS'

Some general or universal interpretations of your 'gifts', remember also that your gift will have a very personal meaning. I usually combine the universal with my own meaning in order to come up with something that makes sense to me. These interpretations are in the main from Cooper (1978) unless otherwise indicated.

Sea Urchin – the 'serpent's' egg; latent force; the seed; the life.

White bird with blue wings – transcendence; the soul; divine manifestation; ability to communicate with gods or enter into a higher state of consciousness. White – perfection; simplicity; innocence; illumination; sacredness. Blue – truth; the intellect; revelation; wisdom; the great deep; the Great Mother; a lunar colour. ‘The Snake and the Bird Goddesses are guardians (genii, penates) of the family, clan ... They oversee the continuity of life energy, the well being and health of the family’ (Gimbutus, 1989, p.315).

Turquoise Cat – the varying power of the sun and the waxing and waning of the moon and the splendour of the night. Turquoise is also very significant to the Amerindians. ‘Cat Bast, the quintessential Mother, embodies the greater aspects of the sun. Egypt, ca. 2nd century B.C.E .... the cat’s variegated patterns and nocturnal habits make it a natural symbol of the moon’ (Johnson, 1988, p.106).
Pearl – lunar; the power of the waters; the essence of the moon and controller of tides; the embryo; cosmic life; the life giving powers of the Great Mother; the feminine principal of the ocean; initiation; law in cosmic life; justice

Red Stone – garnet, devotion; loyalty; energy; grace. Red – the zenith colour; masculine; active; love; joy; festivity; passion; health; strength

Red Rose Bud. Rose – a highly complex symbol; heavenly perfection and earthly passion; time and eternity; life and death; fertility and virginity. Red – the zenith colour; masculine; active; love; joy; festivity; passion; health; strength

Crystal Orb – Orb the world as circle and sphere; the self-contained; universal sway; dominion over the earth; power; imperial dignity; held in the left hand it represents far reaching dominion.

Crystal – purity; spiritual perfection and knowledge; an aboriginal symbol of the Great Spirit; a crystal object can mean a transfer from one plane to another or change of state.

Key – all powers of opening and closing; binding and losing; liberation; knowledge; the mysteries; initiation.

Axe – solar emblem of the sky gods; power; thunder; conquest of error; sacrifice; support; a stay of help; the double axe suggests the sacred union of the sky god and earth goddess; thunder and lightning. ‘The
double axe of the Bronze Age was originally an hourglass-shaped Goddess of Death and Regeneration' (Gimbutas, 1989, p.271).

Scroll – learning; knowledge; the unfolding of life and knowledge; the passing of time; the extent of life; the scroll of the law; destiny.

Ruby – royalty; dignity; zeal; power; love; passion; beauty; longevity; invulnerability. For me the rough edges indicate a connection with the 'earthy' aspects of life, well grounded, and/or something which may need smoothing over or polishing up before the aspects of the ruby can manifest.

Sword – power; protection; authority; royalty; leadership; justice; courage; strength; vigilance. The masculine principal, the active force; phallic. Discrimination; the penetrating power of the intellect; spiritual decision; to protect the sacred. Gimbutas refers to the sword in the section of he work which outlines the continuity and transformation of the Goddess in the Indo-European and Christian Eras, 'a remnant in the historical era of the goddess's ruling power is indicated by the usage of the word queen for those who were not married to Indo-European deities but who continued to be powerful in their own right' (p.318).

Black Woman - ................she is black because she is the symbol and the gateway to everything we could know in the blackness beyond physical sight; she represents all the forces around us which are not perceived in the eyes. She is the goddess of vision of the night, the
dream and all the marvels we see by inner light when our eyes are closed. She is the goddess of clairvoyance, clear seeing and second sight, of intimacy 'in touch'. There are over 200 Western European shrines to the Black Virgin. Black is the colour of the unknown, the unconscious, and there we must seek what is repressed or lost. (Redgrove, 1978)

Oval Mirror – oval is the female life symbol; the vulva; the sacred yoni. Mirror – truth; self realisation; wisdom; mind; the reflection of the supernatural and divine intelligence; supreme intelligence reflected in the sun, moon and stars; both solar and lunar. (see also, Parabola, Mirrors, 1986, XI (2).

Book – the universe; the Quest; learning and the spirit of wisdom; connected to tree symbolism.

Box with Silver Egg – box, the feminine principal of containing; enclosure; the womb. Egg – potential; the hidden origin and mystery of being; cosmic time and space; the primordial matriarchal world of chaos; the germ of all creation; the Great Round containing the universe.

Hands of Light – power; strength; providence; blessing

Butterfly – the soul; immortality; rebirth; resurrection; a symbol of the Great Goddess containing all previous incarnations and the promise of future generations. 'the butterfly was one of the many insectomorphic manifestations of the Goddess in whose hands was the magic transformation from death to life' (Gimbutus, 1989, p.275).
Crystal Chalice (with lid) containing a Moon Beam;

Crystal – purity; spiritual perfection and knowledge; self luminous; magic powers.

Chalice – the source of never ending sustenance; abundance; amniotic fluid of the placenta.

Pink Diamond – light; life; durability; constancy; sincerity; innocence.
APPENDIX 2

THE JOURNALS
Reflection on Working with the Journals

I feel a resistance at re-working the journals, the more I ‘sit’ with them, the more I come to the realisation that they are sacred texts, they invite me over the threshold into personal, lived experience, into worlds I don’t feel I have any right to comment on, I feel I am trespassing, and yet it must be done.

They have all said it is ok for me to do this. But I cannot do justice to the depth of their insights or awakenings, by making comments and reflections, the small amount of analysis with the symbols and images, am I colonising them? Is it ever appropriate to work with such personal expressions in this way? Does this explain why I have always been uncomfortable when reading ‘case studies’ as written up by therapists, counsellors, psychologists etc., is this why I have always wanted to ask, ‘But what did the client think of all this?’ I have become too sensitive to the fact that I am working with human beings, I am fearful of misrepresenting them or taking away their authority, authenticity, I apologise before I start. This does not rest easily with me.

Two of the journals are works in their own right, to try and tease out bits and pieces for the sake of my work is impossible, removed from their full context they become watered down versions of work that is powerful, rich, full of imagery that takes the reader far beyond local time and place into the world of myth, archetype and other, they are living proof of the ‘multisitate paradigm’ that we have available to us if we know the means of access. The length of the journals is beyond the scope of this work and hence they are not included as such, but the owners will recognise their thoughts and reflections interspersed within my reflections.
Demeter
Sacred Place And Gift

In my meditation, I walked through the arch of a vaulted room with a crystal ceiling and out onto a brick path of happiness, joy and love. Beside the path were many incredibly happy, smiling little cherub faces, small animals and flowers of intense delight and colour. At the end of the brick path which forked, there was a wooden bench against a tree with a dense, lush green canopy. I walked along the path and sat on the bench with many of the small cherubs following me. There I embraced them with love and joy and felt nurturing and caring toward them. They continued to smile with such joy throughout and so did I. The colours in the garden were so intense, yet shimmering and luminous. It was beautiful. I sat there in peace, nurturing the cherubs and soaking up the beauty. When I was full I headed down the path, my cherubs came with me. The path became white crystalline and we ascended a few crystalline stairs.

There we experienced the most beautiful light and love. The rays penetrated right through me and filled me with the greatest feeling of total acceptance and love for who I am, unconditionally. The feeling was totally uplifting, all embracing, joyous and beautiful. The gift of love and acceptance was given for a job well done. I momentarily saw God's face in amongst the continually vibrating, penetrating rays of light and love which went on for eternity.

I t was with some regret that I needed to return from this beautiful light yet accepted with grace the need to return to give this gift and experience to others, to do further work and know further experiences.
I slowly walked down the path happy and in peace. I left my cherubs behind in the garden as I walked back through the archway, accepting that I would meet them and this experience again.

**Dreams In The Week That Followed:**

I had a vision of stone carvings with symbols on them.

I dreamed of a single Gothic bed (perhaps from medieval times). It was carved with a gold embroidered white cloth which was crinkled. It was against the stone wall of a room.

I dreamed of an Egyptian pyramid. I could see the chambers inside brightly lit as a cross section.

(each of these dreams was broken by my restless husband)

I dreamed my husband and I were driving down a pot holed, clay road in the countryside. There was a HUGE space ship ahead on the road as we drove closer. My head and scalp felt a gentle crawling pressure which I find hard to describe.

I also dreamed of an Indian headdress on an altar. It had one long feather on each end and cored beads. It was brown and earthy in colour.
I was woken with incessant ticking noises so that I would record these.

**The Lady Of The Hearth**

I returned to a time many hundreds of years ago and was amongst red Indians. I was accepted as a young woman, early pubescent age, into a tepee of many women gathered around their hearth, a fire contained on the ground and surrounded by stones. The women ranged from young to old, some had babies in arms and several children were bedded down in papooses or under skin rugs. The atmosphere was quiet and calm with a feeling of warm boning amongst them. The powers and strength women held in this era was permitted and respected.

The gathering was a common occurrence and a time to share amongst each other for the benefit of maturing young females, all things involved with being women. The knowledge was shared freely and was very broad covering information pertaining to procreation, childbirth, raising children, medicines and appropriate berries etc to collect and administer for different ailments.

It was a sisterhood of acceptance of one another and support. There was a great strength in this sharing and knowledge of life. It was very comfortable amongst this companionship and I felt totally secure and was ready to bed down for the night and remain amongst them forever. I was reluctant to leave.
**Reflection:**

I feel I provide my own hearth where I give knowledge and share and include other females I have been amongst in a caring manner and help to develop their own strengths. In particular the young ones, my beautiful daughter and son's girlfriends and their female friends.

**The Weaving Mother**

I was transported back to early Egypt. I was in a brightly lit room within a stone pyramid. My weaving mother was sitting on a raised, ornate, beautifully carved chair. Further away from her were women at tables working on creating beautiful gowns. My weaving mother seemed a strong character who gave guidance and comforting words of advice and support. I found this most welcome and emotional as she was the strong mother I have been craving all my life. My own strengths seem to have been a threat to others around me, this lifetime, but my weaving mother accepts me for being strong.

My question was:

"Is it now time for me to progress safely in the material world, as my true self, unaffected by others fears?"

Her reply:

"It is time for you to wear new robes from cloth of finer beauty and to wear them proudly and with confidence."

She took me over to a table and showed me the softly draping robe with beautiful embroidery that was being completed for me.
Dream that night:

I had along conversation with my weaving mother and the other women. I woke in the middle of the night and thought “How beautiful, I must record this in the morning.” When I awoke I couldn’t remember anything other than what I have written here.

Reflections:

In my daily life I believe I am a strong and supportive mother of guidance to my young, adult children, especially my daughter. I am currently being a weaving mother and sewing my daughter a beautiful wedding dress of fine silk and pearls.

Queen Of The Earth

Sister girl was welcoming and comforting to come across. The earth mother she took me to was an Incan woman of power. I asked her if I could reclaim my rightful strength and power, especially all the knowledge and healing ability, including symbolism, rituals used and to once again reconnect vibrations of this earthly existence to the vibrations and knowledge shared by all galaxies.

The Incan people in my visualisation were of strong character and knowledgable. They wore majestic clothes and jewellery of beautiful strong colours. I was around regal energy. I felt like a priestess who had returned to reawaken my lost power.
They were also very industrious people. I felt myself that I was perpetually occupied using my strengths of healing to help keep these people in a balanced state of health and to show them how to stay in balance and in touch with their own powers.

I felt confident that this ability is emerging around me.

The Incan community I attended lived in homes carved in the earth and rock on the side of a hill. I felt close to this element.

**Dreams:**

During this week I dreamed of a silky black cat with gorgeous emerald eyes looking at me intently.

I dreamed I was a vulnerable reptile, low on the ground amongst the dry trampled grass. I could see these monstrous thick grey legs of a beast charging through the grasses very close to me. They were like elephant legs but then again they could have been dinosaur legs. I was so low on the ground and this creature was so huge that I could not see its body but only its massive legs, and in proportion to my size it seemed enormous. I felt anguish at threatened vulnerability by size, i.e., that this 'thing' being so close could trample me. I fearfully stayed very still in that spot. So, yes, I consider that I was that snake in a past existence.
Queen Of The Dance

I met my 'fool', my fun part of my being. We began in the middle of a green, grassy field. I dressed my Fool in elfish clothes and I felt very happy and childlike and enjoyed the permission of being able to know my fool and play and be happy with him. We laughed and danced with glee like children. He took me on a journey through the gate of the field we began in with its hedged border. We followed a country path and dance over the bridge of a pleasant stream and continued laughing and playing on the other side with childlike innocence. Then I became confused as the country path turned into a dirt lane through the forest, we agreed to play hide and seek. I was being followed by my Fool in a mischievous sort of way and had to go deeper into the forest to find a secure hiding place. I then became unsure and felt tricked and felt unsure if I should be at ease with my Fool. He found me in my hiding spot and was good humoured about it so I trusted again and we began laughing and playing further down the dirt lane where the forest was thinner and the sunlight could touch us. We sang and played but soon the Fool's game became mischievous again and he was chasing me into the deeper and darker woods. I didn't like it here and felt very nervous and insecure. I ran around in a panic for a while until I found my way back out into the sunlight and security on the lane. The lane seemed to be skirting the field where we had began and running in and out of the forest and bridging the stream. My elfin had caught up with me on the sunny path, laughing and making light of the incident. I felt I had been over reacting and did enjoy the fun and happiness he showed me in the sunlight, so in childish innocence I accepted his friendship again, we continued on singing for a short distance.
Then Fool's mischievousness revealed itself again and he began taunting me and manipulating me into the forest to play a game. The chase began with the Fool after me laughing naughtily. I had to run so very fast to keep ahead of him. I was now in the very dark forest and I was very frightened and panicky and decided this was not fun and happiness at all. I ran and ran with urgency, out of the deep dark forest until I found the sunlit path again with the Fool maintaining the pace. I told Fool I did not want to play these games with him any more. I felt secure at last and at peace.

**Reflection:**

I now interpret this as Fool's games being necessary experiences of life I was to have and he was in fact acting in friendship as he was showing me the way to get in touch with my spiritual side and leading me into the arms of my guides who would guide me from now on along the path of light and knowledge.

**Dream:**

My dream this week showed me a sandstone altar which was carved with curious designs and symbols.

**Queen Of The Night**

I began my journey as a gypsy in a field of flowers from where I walked into the forest, aware of squirrels and other busy animal life around me. I walked
down into the deep forest and sat on the rock looking across the small clearing. A beautiful golden lion walked into the clearing and rested below me. I descended the rock and walked over to the lion feeling at one with him.

I lay down beside him and snuggled into the thick fur of his neck. I became the lion. I strutted off and felt very strong and powerful. I clanned with a group of lions and cubs feeding off a carcass. I stayed for a while feeding and feeling very relaxed and with no fear of any forces being able to harm me. I mounted one of the lionesses in the pride and then ambled off down to a pond for a drink. A few of the pride followed behind me. After my drink I sidled off for a solo journey, feeling very comfortable and at ease on my own. This was a contented feeling, fearing nothing. Then I ran for the sheer pleasure and to expense my own power. It was a magnificent, strong run through the grasses. I was aware of every muscle and nerve in my body, performing in health and perfection. This also gave me a feeling or awareness of great power and security. It felt wonderful to feel so physically fit. I loved the wind rushing over me. I ran back to where I began, to the clearing in the glade.

The gypsy I was emerged from the lion and was beside him. I found my place on the rock again and was beside a huge motley coloured owl. I have always loved owls for their composure and knowledge, it felt comfortable to climb onto the owl's back and trust him. He flew up into the night with the forest shrinking below, leaving the nocturnal creatures busy below. We flew very high for a very long distance, it was very dark and I was aware of holes appearing in the blackness of space. I was to be shown the secrets of the night.
We seemed to get caught in a very strong air current which sucked us across the night. We seemed to be getting sucked side on for a mighty distance. Then we gained direction again and flew slowly, then entered through one of the holes in the darkness. We had by now travelled for a long time span. We were taken to a clearing below and seemed to be observing from a distance just witnessing.

A strange city with active people alien to me were engaged in great preparation. There were dwellings of stone laid out with streets like a city and many people occupied working metal into shape. They seemed advanced, intense and had very strong physiques.

There were vehicles of all sorts moving on the streets which seemed to be in the process of delivering metal to be worked or collecting finished articles. There was much concentration on their part. I could not determine what they were making but I had a very clear sense that I was observing these people preparing for the future — a time looming near. They seemed to be producing necessary implements and structures that would be required.

The time came to fly back with the owl to my rock and sit there aware of the lion at my feet. My animal guide walked into the clearing beside lion. He was a tan gazelle with a beautiful face. He gave me the gifts of grace and speed of knowledge.
Great Mother

For this journey I was clothed in daggy, granny long line knickers and bra to hide my sexiness, a mask to prevent me knowing the world completely, a rope around my neck which others pulled tight at times when I spoke with strength and knowledge which made them feel insecure, a very tight corset to prevent me from fully filling with the breath of life, a nurses cap representing all the sickness and pain I have experienced because I wasn’t allowed to be in touch with my true essence, skin tight pants which made me cranky form all the restrictiveness and stiletto heels worn with the intent of spiking anyone who crossed my growth.

My journey took me down the steps into a cave where I had to pass through seven gates. Each one did not open until an item of my past negativity had been burned in the copper urn and replaced with flowers. This then allowed that side of me dispensed with, to now blossom into positiveness. It was incredibly satisfying to watch each item burn into nothingness, especially that nurses cap, what glee. I looked pretty strange at one point, left wearing only my daggy unattractive underwear and stiletto heels and had a chuckle at how bizarre I looked. I recognised that none of these items had sat right with me and was happy to dissolve the lot into nothingness.

Once through the seventh gate, I walked in my beautiful nakedness deeper into the cave which was covered with skins and furs of all kinds all over the floor. I merged into them, at rest in this protected womb, wrapped in a gorgeous soft and comforting fur, I lay in embryonic state for a delightful and much needed sleep of respite for a lifetime. I awoke refreshed and nurtured...
and free from all suffering. There was a pretty blue light at one end of the
cave which I went towards in curiosity. It was a door, I chose to pass through
it and there saw a crystal blue, sparkling pool. One of my guides was three
beckoning me in. I gladly entered and was completely submerged and
contented with my guide. The pool did not wet me, yet revitalised,
reenergised and invigorated me with liberation and freedom. It felt ecstatic.
My guide took me from the pool and over to the side of the cave where there
were several chests filled with assortments of clothing. I chose a trunk and
my guide helped me dress in a pretty soft flowing feminine frock with layers
of fine chiffon flowing from it like scarves. I wore soft pretty ballet pumps
and a circlet of flowers in my hair. It felt very feminine and incredibly happy
and joyous. I also felt very fairy like. I went through one more door which
took me out into the light and into a cool, green meadow where I lay down
for a while. Then it was time to dance and that I did with glee, displaying all
the freedom and beauty and joy of liberation I could now feel within me. It
was a dance of such happiness and lightness, I danced like a fairy feeling very
pretty, around and around, very light footed as if there was no gravity, kicking
up my feet and swirling with glee. Many other fairies of a happy nature
joined me and we flowed in and out of the trees of the beautiful forest and
across meadows and were aware of all the beauty of nature and animals and
plants around us.
Dreams

One night I dreamed a satisfying sex scene where two beautiful young men were brought by my sister in spirit so that we could play with them and enjoy the pleasure of their gentleness and delight from their bodies. They were blonde and happy and seemed to be in their twenties. They were willing to enjoy not only the pleasures of our bodies but to also enjoy our beauty and love and happiness at our true essence. It was a very pleasing experience and a beautiful and satisfying dream.

I also had a dream as 'Just Mother' voicing my disdain at political 'tit for tat' games. I declared that it is not democracy while men play their feeble games, attacking one another and censoring debate on issues not popular with them. While politics is boring, the thrust of this dream was that I was strongly speaking my opinion and others or should I say 'significant others' actually listened to me with the credibility I deserved.

I also dreamt of further dancing with happy little energised fairies. They darted quickly as they danced with much energy and glee. They wore chiffon. Light cloth of the palest mauve blue. Their wings were gossamer and of faint tan colour. I loved seeing them.
Chami
Sacred Place And Gift

How to put into words the splendour of the vision - leaving and archway and finding myself catapulted onto a horse dressed in some sort of hunter's garb, with leather strappings criss-crossing my legs, a bow and quiver slung over my back and thundering, thundering along the country side astride the most magnificent and spirited steed - both entrapped in our power and freedom..................I can’t write fast enough. We came to a glade of waterfalls, rocks, trees, the steed and I bathed. I flattened my youthful strong female body on warm rock and drank in the essence of the sounds, smells and calls of nature.

My gift giver - oh shimmering apparition, all wings and fairy glow, quivering, floating, expanding, hand materialises, the gift of stars and stardust, alight and of changing brilliant colours. Not poured from the hand into mine and showered around me. This is the stardust of woman’s soul that flowers increasingly from woman’s hands to all those that she touches, holds, loves, and cares for. It is the love of the universe, the divine. I took it with me and yet it also remains behind – I share this with all others and yet it never decreases in my hands.

This week I cleaned out my “sentimental” drawer – some things I’ve kept, some I threw away and some I’ve not yet resolved.
The Lady Of The Hearth

‘what does tending the fire mean to me?”

1874 – Dakota Indian Village. I leave the lift and walk towards the tepee. There is fire burning outside with sticks crossed and standing and the smoke slowly billows up into the night school. The atmosphere is subdued. I enter into the wigwam and the hearth and the warming rocks and bricks and small burning fire inside. I am woman, long dark braided hair, regal and straight in stature. The tent is filled with our warriors and they have declared a tribal war with the Sioux tribe. So my hearth represents the knowledge of women left behind, of losing my man. I know he does not return. But we are stoic women and there are the children to raise – but oh, it is empty and lonely. Not the sort of hearth where companionship is shared, where dreams of growing old come maturation, where stories of tribal dance are told and retold, where the pip of peace is shared.

Question – when will the Pipe of Peace once again be shared? There is no answer, for tribal warfare is the way of our Indian life and we are stamped with this pattern of living from birth to death. I leave the empty hearth, walk into the brilliant, starry night, sniff the air and return to my lift, knowing that woman keeps the hearth burning, be there people to share or not.

Reflection:

During the week I made myself two wood fires and sat and enjoyed the warmth. I’ve not done that this much this winter.

I’m in the process of changing my hearth – a slow but evolving process.
Queen Of The Night

She’s my party girl!! That sensual, live, sweaty, swaying, gyrating ethereal being who emerges at night and retreats with the dawn.

Where is woman’s power base? Women tame the beast.

I had embraced my lion before the request. I buried his face in his tawny mane, sensing the musky dustiness of his hair. We roll on the grass and his long tail flexes and whips the air, swishing to and fro. This African savanna is my domain and I’m king of all I perceive. I smell the dusty air, the disturbance of the animals is scented on the wind. It’s three days since I fed and must kill. Prowling through the long yellow grass, upwind from the antelope who are tentative and afraid. They sense me there, I’ll go for the young, injured one. Yellow flash, rolling, dust swirling, noise, I snap its back and in a few moments the death throws cease. Warm flesh and blood on my muzzle – satiated I slowly walk away – the rest of the pride can finish, I’ve had my fill and I’m disdainful of their needs. Lazily, under a tree I clean myself, strong paws wiping my muzzle. Mating time, I grab the neck of the tawny lioness – she’ll carry my lineage. I sense my power! Owl and I circling above the world in quickening time, round and round we go – I’ve seen it all, experienced it all – from the opium dens to the whore houses, to the quiet still desert nights, to the deeply quiet snow country. Owl and I we circle and dance with the stars, exploding, dying, recreating.

Cheetah – CHAMI – is your name. You are sleek, fluid fast, lithe, sensual, individual, aloof. You bring me your fine gifts of knowingness, fleetness,
freedom and your essential state of your own - my own - beingness, instinctual.

I found it difficult to return to the body - my night queen is strong and she pulls me back above the earth to dance among the stars - the world is my playball.

**The Great Mother - “I Honour My Own Ecstasy”**

The Earth Mother for me represents peace, dissolving, calmness, safety. I burnt the clothes and entered the room and felt that I had drifted off somewhere but came to with the sense of being in my bed and then commenced to dance, dressed in light filmy, gossamer type fabric that floated. I was on my own and didn’t want or need the company of others. She supplies me with what I need - this night I needed rest and that is what I got a re-emergence with a sense of being rested. The Great Mother nurtures totally and is a place of deep relaxation.

**The Weaving Mother**

See the threads of life unravelling to be woven again – is my quilt, unfinished for five years, ever to be completed? The weaving mother had no room as such – she appeared on the projection of a rock jutting into the ocean and the tides incoming and outgoing represented the weft and warp, the rhythm of coming and going, commencing and completing life’s moments. She had a spinning wheel, was old with light grey hair knotted up under a little white,
lace edged tea cosy type bonnet. (answer) the threads can be rewound and used again to recreate another, but different life's pattern. The quilt will be finished in its own and appropriate time. She is timeless and not confined to one room, but resides in all of life. My cloth is more like an opened patterned gossamer lace, almost ethereal and floats easily in the air.

People expressed discomfort at the changed space (Chami refers to the night we had to vacate our usual room and use a much larger room) – I came down on hard on myself for perhaps not being as 'sensitive' as others. But I looked at this and realised that the larger room felt more expansive to me and that my freedom to dance, move, explore and 'go' was not hampered by a small room.

**The Earth Mother** (snake dance)

Snake, oh, wondrous snake, curving, curling, swaying, in out and around. One rhythm of time, earth, eternity, from whence all knowing comes and is born and reborn into each of us.

Earth Mother, residing in your cave, surrounded by snow capped mountains. No need for the 'trappings' the 'things' of life, totally naked, old – so ancient, with your brown, gnarled skin and long whitened hair – unkempt you appear to be, but you are of the earth and know all – mortality is no acquaintance of yours. We share time, you and I, there are no questions, no answers – it just is and so it will always be. You are a little unclear – mists of time swirl around and through you and it seems that I see you from a distance. I'm receding from you now, returning to my women's circle.
Thankyou for the time shared in the deep knowing, beyond all words.

Return To My Sacred Place And Gift

My lift descended and upon stepping out into the pool, forest and rock, radiating with sunshine, I was different!

I had a long white flowing gown, blond long hair and a halo of flowers and leaves in my hair. I had fairy wings sprouting from my back, all shimmering, transparent, fine and radiating light iridescent colours. A crystal orb of the same shimmering colours floated from above the waterfall and into my hands, where I was seated on my rock. On some level, I felt that I had become the butterfly or absorbed the butterfly which was represented by the fairy wings. I held the crystal orb and we both floated upwards into nothingness and then softly landed on the rock. I released the orb and it floated away into the distance. I returned to the lift and emerged as myself.
Ursula
Tap into the unconscious by using the arch as a means of entry.

My gift was the Tomahawk and I felt connected with my Father's sense of energy, male energy and the support it can offer. **Gimbutas p.270 goddess, butterfly, double-axe, p.274 illustration

The guided visualisations were most powerful for me.

What has called to me from my life's exp.? To be strong, to have the inner strength, to have enough inner strength to do it on my own.

I got some insight into our own lack and of how we try to fill the gap, how its never said explicitly, I as happy as a child and at school, but there was always that hidden implication, "Girls don't need an education, they get married." I felt I lacked intelligence.

I don't have enough of my own male energy and in relationships with males I "Squeeze them to death" I have started to get some insight into the kind of person I'm choosing in relationships.

**Lady Of The Hearth**

Be aware of my hearth, bringing warmth to it, it doesn't need to be a fire, or a symbolic fire because my hearth is me, my body. I am the hearth. Its not the abundant cauldron or being there to dish out the soup.

It is me, it has a very personal meaning. As we worked, I came to feel my own fire. I need to know that I can fuel my own fire, have the self confidence to do it.
**The Weaving Mother**

I drew a mandala in the exercise when we were drawing about what has been repressed or blocked. I did the opposite to what the others did, I stayed with the positive, the things we had discussed before we started drawing. There was so much yellow, the mandala is like an opening, I experienced and opening, it was very strong and liberating. There were three hearts in the middle. The image created itself.

The image was the insight. Strength seemed to come up again.

**The Queen Of The Earth**

Big connection with my G/mother and I was told to find out more about her. I wrote to my Mother to get a sense of the connection across generations.

In the guided vis. I saw Egyptian heads of gold and a bizarre array of many cultures – Peru, Red Indians over Stone Henge. My G/Mother was Spanish Italian and because of something her father did they had to flee to England.

When we had to do the collective poem about this arch. I realised that my words ‘grass roots’ were about the connection I had to make with my G/Mother.

**The Queen Of The Night**

Dressing up as a gypsy was a lot of fun and I felt as though I really was preparing for a journey.

I became the lioness, I went with the ‘wild one’. Whatever that means.
I felt I was flying free in the unconscious realm.

Nature is not wasteful, the lioness only kills to feed herself and her two cubs.

**The Great Mother**

This is how I dressed myself for my journey, it was fun to do even though it was about serious aspects of my life.

Ear muffs – to block out any negative things I might hear, to protect my feelings of vulnerability

gag across my mouth – to stop my own self expression

scarf around my throat – to stop self expression

cloak – my barrier to stop things getting in

black velvet pumps - because I am clumsy.

Tight bodice – to hold the emotional turmoil and the storm in

The levels of meaning for me were in the ritual and the images of the archetypes, they seemed to unlock things for me, they are the opening – if the image, episode is confronting its still manageable because you are in control, its not like a personal affront.

The dancing was a lot of fun, I don’t like to dance in public, but this was okay, it had a sense of fun, that although the work we were going to do might be serious, there would be that element of fun as well.
Rose
The Gifting

My gift was a scroll and I had a sacred mirror from the Goddess of Sunsets who said, ‘I am cleansed, I am free, I will be my true self.’

As she gave me the scroll she said that it was a gift from the Goddess and a message to guide you on your journey.

The Gifting — in the drama I was the mirror and we reflected the sacred woman wisdom.

First we looked into the mirror and we could see ourselves and the reflection said, ‘I know you,’ and I knew that I knew the reflection. Sometimes seeing yourself reflected can be a shock but the way we did it with the drama, in this way, there was a sense of recognition.

In the giving there was a sense of revisiting, I didn’t question, the trust was very strong.

The shock is that the acting makes the ‘inner’ visible and helps you to reconnect. You have to rediscover, you have to have a sense of who you are as a woman, its been there, but as you become conscious of the richness you get the message that there’s no end point – the role boundaries dissolve.

It’s scary being vulnerable with the new, learning to trust, even though its safe people see you in the old way. You can go much further, but in society there are still barriers and conflict and you continually have to reaffirm the inner.

Women traditionally don’t get to do this.
The confidence developed in me to trust my inner voice – I won’t take on the outer – I will go against the grain, I will feel isolation but I’ll hold onto that. I know now that I can consciously choose.

**The Lady Of The Hearth**

I went on a journey back to the original hearth. There was an old woman dressed in black and she was the Keeper of the Knowledge – that was very empowering. As a woman you have to give up so much, we’re only now getting empowered and valued. This ancient Hearth that I visited valued this, I have a strength and power no one can touch, I can call it. The strength in that old woman, with the old man next to her, encouraging her!

**Dream that Night**

Had a cathartic dream about a life crisis of about 15yrs ago, felt it in my body and was able to re-visit the trauma, name it and resolve it. The old woman had told me I had the power and in the dream that night I used it.

**The Weaving Mother**

I remember the silken threads blowing in the wind, she said to me, ‘I can weave your pathway in any direction, just ask for what you need and I will be your guide.’
The Lady Of The Dance

The Fool said, 'The Fool plays our music, listen!'

I drew a flame and a rose heart. It's the spirit that's always there, has its own life regardless of what I do with it, I can call on it or forget that its there. It's a matter of knowing how to use your energy.

I am coming to a personal understanding, I am a lot stronger that I realise, I have an inner strength that can't be doused by my thoughts, our mind interferes with our nature and spirit.

Queen Of The Night

My power animal was a peacock, I took that persona on in the dialogue and told my story, I named my strength, its instinct and intuition.

As I walked as a lioness taking one powerful step at a time, I knew about the unknown and yet it was known and I was not afraid. That was such a strong feeling in my body!

It affirms that inner knowing, learn to trust and listen to that voice then you can't be hurt, if you disregard it then you are hurt.

The Great Mother

Chair Dialogue – I felt male, the beginning of recognition and some clarity of the contradiction of the masculine and feminine within me. My ambition is masculine – I clarified contradiction within myself of what it means to be
female — female doesn’t mean just sweet and polite or ladylike it means the masculine aspects as well.

There is no right or wrong, our conditioning or upbringing categorise them into nice/not nice.

The chair dialogue helped me come to a decision — instead of separating, I decided to unite and not to wrestle or fight with my shadow (this is what the flame was about last week — there is a bright flame but it has to have a shadow). The flame and the shadow are at one. When I wrestle with my shadow I am trying to protect others.

The light is transformative, the light transforms the dark.

**The Ritual**

The communion with others, not alone, it created a union, one with the cosmos.

It was all a series of meeting with myself, I realised it didn’t matter where I was, it was what I did with it that mattered. This was so empowering, it meant that I didn’t have to be in a passive place just to protect myself from being hurt, I might be hurt, but its what I chose to do, that’s the empowering thing!

**The Archetype**

It was a means of entry, it seemed to make a space for the image that I could resolve in terms of my own psyche and use it as a long term message for
inner wisdom. I was able to reconcile things within an historical context.

When you work like this you see yourself in a different way, different to

normal, e.g., the lioness so fearless in the jungle, no fear, that was

empowering
Vanessa
The Gifting

Place – waterfall dropping steeply yet smoothly into a deep, still pool. A cleared area by the pool had a cane like lounge with a large calico canopy supported by bamboo poles. Feminine, robed women had large peacock feather fans to cool me and a table was laden with fruits and refreshing drinks. The personal coming towards me was dressed like an Egyptian priestess – heavily jewelled around the neck but a soft flowing golden robe.

The gift she gave me was a turquoise scarab beetle – its shape made of wire. She put it in my hand and I reacted like it was real – a creepy, crawly beetle. I jumped and flicked it out of my hand and did not want to hold it – and had difficulty coming to terms with it. The priestess smiled warmly and then gave me a smoothly carved cat also made out of turquoise, and I held it and endeared it, the feeling was serene, calm and contented.

The Gifting Enactment – Reflection

What we said: we give you the gift of joy, womanly love, contentedness, expression.

It felt so good to be there in that environment to be able to give gifts that did not involve commercialism – it was intangible but more powerful than anything you could buy. Not only the giving but the receiving, it was very vulnerable and a tender experience to receive the gifts – the drama made it so poignant. It's touching to receive a gift in such a symbolic way.
My dreams have been very vivid for six nights – it seems like the real world is following the dream sequence which is following the workshops. The night I received the cat gift the cat I was minding could not be found, I left a window open and she was back in the morning, I put a turquoise ribbon on her collar to remind me of my gift.

**The Lady Of The Hearth**

I was in the time of about 2,500 AD. The pasture was quite green with some shady trees. (The earth had been destroyed 500 years previously and vegetation had grown again as man had made a pact to remain living simply.) People were wearing white loose robes and the hearth was constructed either end of limestone rocks with a canopy over the top. *(this was an image in the previous week, the canopy)*

The glowing embers were burning. I asked someone why they kept the embers continually burning and he said, 'Because it keeps the flame in our hearts aglow – the illuminati – which enables us to be alive and joyful.'

The keeper of the hearth which was done on a shift basis had to always keep guard that the coals did not go out and that the fire did not become too fiery which would burn the canopy. This was also a remembrance that man would refrain from destroying the planet again. Hearth has to be tended carefully: 'the hearth is the magic to come back to oneself.'
Reflection

The week after the Lady of the Hearth it was very difficult to recall dreams. I did remember on Sat night having a dream where I woke up and had increased heart rate but I could only vaguely remember and it was along the theme of being oppressed and caged. Then on Sunday I had a terrible headache.

HEARTH: ‘power to unite and act as a catalyst.’

The Weaving Mother

weaving too tightly
tangled web
cut some strands
weave in some new ones
opportunity to change the fabric of your life ...........

I went into a castle into a large room with cut glass designed windows (in clear textured glass), sitting at a spinning wheel was a very feminine, beautiful woman with a loose, chiffon style dress (Josephine style) and a long cone shaped hat with chiffon flowing from the top. I ventured in and she smiled warmly and lovingly as she continued to spin. There were large spools of coloured wool, thread and laces around the edges of the room. I moved closer and asked her if I should but the unit next door (a question I have been
mulling over all week) and she said, "If you buy the house next door you will not have the freedom to weave around the things you may choose to follow or the opportunities that may come your way. You are about to embark on new ventures and paths, don't weave yourself into a corner, or the needles will become locked in."

**Reflections**

The night of the weaving Mother I had a very restless night and did not sleep well, the next night I dreamed about suitcases and moving on. A few days later met my potential new neighbour and felt very excited that it was someone I knew.

Then I dreamed about packing up, clearing out and moving on. It was something like the ranch when it was folding and I had to pack and clear out quickly.

**The Queen Of The Earth**

My aboriginal sister took me to the realms of the river Nile, lined with fields of corn, rice and vineyards, all irrigated and growing in the rich soil of the banks of the Nile. She took me to the Queen of the Earth who had a strong resemblance to Cleopatra, dark hair, be-jewelled necklet and a robe with pomegranates painted on it. ***My Notes pomegranate – immortality, multiplicity in unity, perennial fertility, fecundity, plenty. Cooper, p.134."
I asked her how I could help the earth and she replied saying that I was contributing responsibly with what I had done with my back garden but I needed to do the same with my front garden – feed and enrich the soil and plant an exotic garden. I then asked her what I could do about the darkness of the earth that seemed to come over me at times and she advised me to eat tropical fruit to bring sweetness and light.

**Reflections**

When we did the psychometry my partner said, 'You need a holiday!' I was surprised that she could be so intuitive as she was a stranger and didn’t know that she was absolutely right. She also told me to trust my guardian angel, they are there for me.

Three very strong dreams during the week – 1) sheltering a large crowd of hungry, frightened children in a monastery in the bush and how it would be impossible to meet all their demands, i.e., food, hygiene.

2) A lonely wife at home with two kids while husband who worked in a band was out a lot and having fun. I realised our relationship was just not happening and that it was not nurturing for me, I knew that I would have to finish it – I had a feeling of loss and being bereft.

3) I was at the marriage of an ex-boyfriend. The wedding was very casual and I was in a lot of pain that it was not me he was marrying. But when I looked at him with a more objective viewpoint I began to see that he was actually
quite weak and passive and his talk was shallow and empty. But still my heart longed for him even though I could see that we would never be compatible. I walked over to my Mother and a friend and I had to stop my Mother from interfering. I told my friend he was my greatest unrequited love and she said, ‘Well, I find him quite dead.’ I had to look at him wistfully and come to terms with the fact that I was so in love with someone who was not suitable.

Car Problems – during the week the radiator in my car sprung holes and I had to get a reconditioned radiator.

I am beginning to realise how the events of the real worlds are somehow reflecting the images and insights from the workshops.

Queen Of The Night

When I was the lion I felt very regal and proud and strutted lithely around the jungle and then I was with my family and felt very protective towards them. I climbed to the top of a large rocky mountain and basked lazily in the sun – tossing my mane.

My animal totem was a slinky, black panther snarling just for effect with glistening, white teeth. I asked, ‘What is your message for the night?’ and she said, ‘Don’t be afraid of the murkiness, allow it, allow it. You will really enjoy it if you let go into it. Just like the primordial slime, you will step out of it.’
The Great Mother

Reflections

Wondered why everyone was scribbling furiously and was puzzled that I had nothing to write but learned that it can sometimes happen in that way.

The guardian angel and trust .... I have received notice that I can have leave from my job for twelve months.

Dreams

I was involved with a man (but not really in love with him) and was waiting because he had gone away to Canada and he was going to send me a ticket to come over.

The I was in some sort of vehicle that had a control panel in the back as well as the front and I got in and felt the exhilaration of taking off – it must have been some kind of flight vehicle because I was zooming happily through the air.

Final Reflection

What has amazed me tho most is the way things have happened in daily life that are linked to the images, expressions, etc of the workshops. Its like the real world is a reflection of what’s coming to me in other ways of knowing. Like the real world is manifesting these things so that I will learn to trust this
way of knowing that I have, that we are not taught to value or use or pay
attention to.
Esme
The Gifting

I received a mirror, and as one who is involved in pastoral care I can see that my role is to hold the space and ‘mirror’ back.

Trustingly the Imagery – I got in touch with another sense of reality – learned to trust moving out of the cognitive and helping other’s realise that their reality is equally valid – the Divine speaks to us not only through creation and Sacred Texts but through dreams and visions.

The Queen Of The Earth

While I watched he other women moving and touching I realised that I have not been comfortable with my own body – I enjoyed watching the feminie in their body whereas in the past I would have been embarrassed. I delighted in their enjoyment, I enjoyed watching, I wanted to be in touch with the rhythm by just watching them, if I had been touched physically it would have broken the focus for me. That exercise was a bit challenging.

Reflections

What Called to me from My Own Life? – I needed a nurturing of the feminine, the deep trusting of women and being prepared to dive deep into it.

The Lady of the Dance – the Fool, God the Clown, God who throws another ball at you and says, “Catch!” There is also the pathos and the woundedness.
This experience gave me permission to keep explaining ‘the foolishness of the cross’, it puzzled me – I am working with deeply wounded men who have had sexual abuse, been in the armed forces, they don’t know how to look after themselves.

In the guided visualisation my Fool was a very wise old man that I knew, he stood firm in his truth, he was my mentor.

In the vision He was the old man and I was a little girl holding his hand as we walked along a road. We saw men on stretchers in a church. (this ties in with my work.)

I gave the old man made a daisy chain and he was happy to wear it, that’s the sort of man he was when he was alive.

**The Great Mother**

Dressing up – we giggled when we did this and found it energising. Upon reflection I realise that all the clothes I named had been used by my Mother to restrict me.

I had a black cloak which meant I could hide everything from the world but the inside was red, I was hiding my sexuality and vitality but experiencing it for myself.

Dialogue with an Archetype – I found this difficult but through doing the process I connected with a previous image that I got from the Lady of the Hearth and what happened was a naming which I looked up and did further
research. I was staggered by the connections, things I would never have known about.

BIZARRE/IDIOSYNCRATIC – so much!

In the first workshop I saw a raven then during the week while at work a raven came and tapped at the window. I am moving into menopause. That week I had a dream then a friend came to visit and she told me about something that had happened to her a few months previously – it was my dream.

I have learned words to articulate the experiences so they are not seemed as crazy.

I learned to value synchronicity, I know that something will come through a dream or creation to help with everyday reality.

My story will not be shaped by anyone else, I will do my own shaping.

In my own work I can enable people to have their own authority and encourage them not to give their own authority away.

**The Ritual**

It didn’t mean much to me but in discussion with Beryl I can see how she used the ritual to hold the space, the ritual created and held it, not her. I trusted her to hold the space for freedom for things to happen. I didn’t feel I needed the ritual all that much but I can see how it worked for Beryl, by using
ritual she moved away from an ego, control position to a place where she could 'hold' the space so that we could feel the freedom to 'be'.

**Reflection On How I Feel About Being A Woman**

I have a greater sense of centredness within my ‘knowing’. These last few weeks have been like the icing on the cake of my seven year journey towards reclaiming the feminine and acknowledging/valuing the woman aspects of me (before that I operated from and was surrounded by the masculine – two brothers, academic training, two sons). This has recently culminated in the need for being gentle with myself, realising I don’t have to be strong in the world. I was able to experience the group process and the individuals within it in terms of gentle nurturing and acceptance of the gifts of others, our vulnerability without judgement!

**Reflection On My Own Authority**

These workshops have helped me to bring things into sharper awareness, especially the fact that the universe? God/ the numinous can and does speak to us in many different ways! Part of my life work from now on will hopefully be to support/walk alongside others in making their own spiritual connections and also in regaining the feminine values but I will be doing so in an hierarchical environment. I am aware that this will be a difficult at times but I think I will be able to return to use the skills of returning to the still, small centre.
Reflection On Trusting Intuitive Knowing

I am a very visual person and gradually learning to trust the inward image making in meditation, the poem making has been a very real source of revelation/wonder/enjoyment. But the past few weeks has taken me into depths/ helped me to make connections where I have experienced the a) ‘scary' feeling that others talk about, b) the melting inner connectedness. I trust it enough to realise that a whole new dimension is available for us to tap into as image makers etc., but I also need to trust the intuitive aspects. I have become open to the connectedness of dreams, images and things that actually happen.

I am taking this trusting openness of the feminine/intuitive into the everyday world. Making space to nurture it for self and for others from a centred power within that I use to be grounded, it will be a balance. I am willing to open up to the numinous, to let it speak and to make a response in love and gentleness.
Black Swan
Working with the archetypes has given me a sense of recognition, a remembering of the disempowered parts of the feminine self that has been disallowed within patriarchal society. It was a reconnecting with the larger story.

**The Gifting**

I received a diamond sword, it was given to me by the lady of the lake, she was dark and represents the dark feminine, the spiritual warrior. The sword represents clarity of vision, part of the feminine essence is the clarity of vision, not in the masculine sense of holding a vision to be reached as something one achieves, but the clear seeing in an holistic way, the ability to 'see' everything, the full picture, clearly. I use 'seeing' as a metaphor for 'knowing'. As she offered it to me I felt fear because I knew the responsibility of knowing what to tell, it is the cutting edge which crosses boundaries and moves into unchartered territory, cutting through allusions and false pretences and masks, being able to see through the mask.

The duality is about BOTH/AND not EITHER/OR best expressed in the poem by Rainer Maria Rilke,

> Take your practice powers and stretch them out

> Until they span the chasm between two contradictions

> ....

> For the God wants to know himself in you.
Reflections On The Ritual

It was powerful, women together, the effect of being part of something. The form is less important than the ritual. The candle flame was so precious, when we switched off the electric lights and worked with the lights of a few candles. To me it seems that the electric light is masculine and the candle is feminine, it was like working in moonlight. It was moving into Mystery, there was a sense of being part of something that's happened before, the ongoing story. It reminds me of that 6,000 year old hymn to Eredu, it was like an encounter with the eternal feminine.

It felt like we were part of a Moon Lodge, when in ancient times when a woman was menstruating and her intuitive, psychic powers were at their height, when she turned inward and connected with the mysteries, that is what the workshops felt like. It was an opportunity to re-experience the moontime.

It's ok to fly

That’s about my own authority, its going to be a life long process of sorting out, the cultural expectations are always there and I have to constantly re-affirm my own authority in any situation. It’s quite a personal conflict and I’m still sorting, there’s an enormous amount to do. Where do I need to sort it out? There are times when the fluidity of my feminine nature takes over with the wisdom and there are times when the masculine must be put to use.
**The dark woman**

She is from my shadowlands, the 'life I hadn't lived' – the intellectual part that had not lived. My Father would not support me, i.e., fund me, to go to university, women were to marry and have babies. Therefore I had not intellect. The diamond sword is my intellect. I am reclaiming the opposite, in my menopause, the animus is making its presence felt, I think the opposite happens for men.

The knife has become a symbol for that part of myself that I am developing.

The dark woman came to me as I descended into a breakdown as I entered the age of menopause.

Although I have done a lot of my own work the workshops gave me a greater sense of connecting to the greater story, when you do that you do not feel so alone, you find others are experiencing the same things and it doesn’t matter if you find out in dreams, or visions or real life, you learn how to connect all the information, trust it all a way to knowing and understanding. All realities connect to make a greater whole in which we can get a sense of well being, a psychic wholeness.

**Reflections On The Drama**

It's not just the moment of the activity but the sum total of the whole of life's experiences that comes to the moment.
The uniqueness of each individual – it can only ever be unique – if there is a co-joining and co-creating it is a consequence of what each individual brings to the moment.

It's not the pedagogy or the model, but the individual at the point in time, what I do not hear, see, feel etc., what does not move me today may move me tomorrow.

The variables – the setting, weather, relationships etc., but what happens is up to the individual – the drama holds the potential to be a change agent (which means learning), but the degree to which learning occurs depends entirely on the degree to which the participant is able to make the choice to engage in the process.

What can restrict the choice – capacity or ability to be able to chose.
Medina
The most powerful aspect of the workshops was the single sex aspect. It was so important to me to be able to work just with women, I think having men there would have changed it completely, no matter what they are like personally they represent all those things that the patriarchal system has done to women for the past few thousand years or longer. It sounds like I'm stereotyping, but that's the reality of it for me, I can't relax like that with men around, they are part of history and my history. I expect them to have expectations of me. In fact this is one of the insights that came to me as we worked, of how I expect men to be towards me and I realised that I need to change first.

There was a lot of freedom in the workshops to decide how we wanted to do it and how much we wanted to participate. I didn't think the ritual was all that important at first but then I realised how much it developed a feeling of bonding as a group. It felt like it was protecting us and putting us all on the same footing. Although the sessions were planned, what we did was very open to discussion, we were given lots of options and if we came up with an idea we could go ahead with it. If nothing happened, that was okay too, it was nice to feel that you didn't have to do that you did was your own stuff. We had the choice of selecting our own partners or groups and even that was important, we learned from each other and I became aware of how I instinctively seemed to chose someone each time who would teach me a lot. We stimulated each other, asked questions, shared experiences but I felt we could also keep silent if we wanted to and that was so important. At no time
did I ever feel as if I had to do something because someone else wanted me to or expected me to.

There were times when I felt uncomfortable, I feel very self conscious with the drama and movement, but as there was no pressure to join in I could sit with my feelings and started to get some ideas about where my discomfort came from, this was new to me. I'd never been given the space and permission to just be uncomfortable, people sort of force you to examine it or to try to overcome it, but in these workshops I was left alone and it made a difference.

In this way the drama was very liberating which may sound strange for someone who chose not to participate, but because I didn't feel under pressure I found myself seeing myself, in that way I was forced to negotiate with my feelings, its as though in the drama you see yourself as you are even when it is someone else who is doing it.

But the most important outcome for me is that because of the workshops I have learned that I 'can read' if something is important for me, I have learned to trust my intuition and acknowledge my instincts. Before the workshops I had no idea that I had such a strong ability to visualise, I had no idea at all, I didn't believe that I could do it and so it was a test of courage to come along. I was sure everyone would be able to do it and I wouldn't. What a surprise. I now realise that we all have this deep knowing, is it something that women are able to reach and work with because they are women and if so why? I'm not sure. During the workshops I started reading and learned about the
collective unconscious and it was like it was, 'Yes!', it is a knowing that goes beyond the five senses. I have learned to trust my instincts and my intuition, I've reconnected with them as I feel now that they have always been there I just didn't know how to reach them or work with them. Its like meeting something in myself that I didn't know I had and what is even more special is knowing that other women have it too, its something we share. So now I can say that I can, 'read if something is speaking to me.'

My Reflections

I did not assume control of their experience and often what happened surprised me or even had me a bit worried, e.g., the giggling as they dressed for the descent, but I held with the ambiguity, believing that what happens is right for the moment, even if I can't see the sense of it.

I was not teacher or instructor (Ross, p. 45) but facilitator as in allowing things to be once procedures had been explained. Dare I say that perhaps, at times I was shaman, that I enabled things to manifest, did I understand myself to be, 'an agent of transformative power' (Driver, 1991, p.73), 'the shaman flits all over, cuing others to take their tasks ... this active standing in, standing for, standing out of the way, is what the shaman performs' (p.74). It was my intention to provide as many pathways as possible, not for spirits to enter or possessions to occur as in traditional shamanic practice, but to open gateways and reveal new pathways. To call myself 'shaman' or the drama 'shamanic practice' does not sit comfortably with me, I respect the role of
traditional shaman too deeply, however, I think that shamam is closer to my role in the work than facilitator -- the use of ritual to create the working space moves beyond the drama of external criteria which fits pedagogical models (p.53). Was I fully present to the occasion?

Was I there for my own context? Of course I was! I am female and have been marginalised, discriminated against according to law and in the workplace, been silenced and colonised by patriarchal language, it was my journey, their journey, our journey! This is why the ritual was so important to me -- it gave ownership of involvement to the participants and often they shaped it in a very different way to what I had envisioned. They owned it!
APPENDIX 3

CONSENT FORM

Beryl Chalk - Masters of Education Candidate
Edith Cowan University, Western Australia

I am undertaking research in the area of drama studies to investigate how drama, movement and art can change understanding about self identity.

My thesis is called, ‘Drama Praxis, Authentic Voice and Experience for Women’.

My research requires me to facilitate seven practical workshops with a group of women and I am inviting you to participate.

Before agreeing to participate you need to be aware of the following points:

1. Participation is voluntary.
2. You have the right to withdraw at any time.
3. The workshops will be safe but you need to be aware that the drama activities can produce strong feelings.
4. You will be asked to keep a journal in which you record your responses and impressions.

I will be asking questions such as:

- Can you write about the strongest feelings you experienced while engaged in the drama activity?
- Can you write about what it felt like to share your impressions with others?
- Can you put a name to the image you have drawn?

If you agree to participate in the workshops please sign and date in the place indicated.

Dear Beryl,

I understand that I am participating in these workshops on a voluntary basis and can withdraw at any time. I understand the purpose of the research and give permission for the data to be used towards completion of the study. I understand that my name or any other information which could identify me will not be used and every effort will be made to ensure anonymity.

Name: ____________________________
Signature: __________________________
Date: ____________________________