

The Call to Individuation: Spirituality and Creative Practice

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Abstract

This research explores and documents a contemporary phenomenon in a selective historical context and seeks to elucidate Jung's theory and the practice of Individuation as being a lifelong process.

The thesis is constructed in two volumes. Volume one is the creative work: *Kissed by a Deer*; a travel memoir exploring journeying in the context of both the external and internal world. In essence the book is a search for identity, connection, belonging, and self acceptance. This search was undertaken in the form of a spiritual quest which makes up the content of the memoir, but also continues in the analysis of themes in the exegesis.

Volume Two is the exegesis: *The Call to Individuation*. Themes which arose in the creative component of the research are critically analysed in the exegesis, elaborating, elucidating and contextualising the creative work. As well the exegesis seeks to analyse the importance of creativity in relation to Jung's theory of individuation, and how the relationship between the process of individuation and creative practice can serve to form, inform, and transform our sense of self, spirituality, and wellbeing. Insights from other artists around the themes which emerged in the creative component of the study are also drawn upon in the exegesis, through informal interviews.

In both volumes the study offers a naturalistic inquiry into the search for self; allowing for the observation and exploration of phenomena rather than forming a hypotheses and subsequent answer.

As per the requirements for Victoria University creative theses, the creative component forms 70per cent of the thesis, and the critical exegesis, 30 per cent. The preferred reading order for the thesis is the book [Volume One: *Kissed by a Deer*] and then the exegesis [Volume Two: *The Call to Individuation: Spirituality and Creative Practice*].

Student declaration

'I, Margaret Ann Gibb, declare that the PhD thesis entitled '*Kissed by a Deer*' [Book] and '*The Call to Individuation: Spirituality and Creative Practice*' [Exegesis] is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.'

Signature

Date

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1. Introduction

Kissed by a Deer, a travel memoir exploring journeying in the context of both the external and internal world is the creative component of this two-part study. In essence, the book is a search for spiritual identity, connection, belonging, and self acceptance. The search takes the form of a quest which is revealed in the contents of the memoir. It continues in the analysis provided through this exegesis. *Kissed by a Deer* embodies many of the characteristics and qualities associated with the Baby Boomer generation: principles of spirituality and philosophy that have been compounded and acted out through creative practice.

Intuition guided the process of writing the memoir and shaped the work, by employing the creative principle of letting go and allowing things to happen. This allowed `data` to arise from the subconscious and coalesce into themes that could later be categorised and analysed.

My original intent was to create a series of short stories. The intention was overturned three months into the writing process when I found myself writing a full length book, which in turn served as a conduit for the underlying subconscious themes. It was as though I was no longer in control of the creative process but, rather, the creative process was in control of me.

Kissed by a Deer is a response to asking the question `how did I get here?' – the stage of life Jung calls the midlife transition. In essence, it is a journey of self inquiry and a quest to create meaning. It is not so much an answer to this question, as an attempt to make sense of the quest, and understand the search.

Having reached the sixth decade of my life at the beginning of my Ph D studies, I am in the process now, of living what I`m writing about. This illustrates Tacey`s claim that unable to find security in society, people are turning to meditation, retreat and autobiographical reflection to make sense of what he terms the emerging `post modern landscape` (Tacey 2003, p. 42). Incorporating spirituality into the search for identity remains my primary motivation.

The memoir seeks to give voice to my own experience of searching for and practising spirituality within contemporary culture. This too reflects Tacey`s argument (2003) that, since the elements of meaning and purpose are no longer provided by or

evident in secular society, spirituality now has to be sought by individual effort. As a result more and more people are becoming mystics and visionaries, as they search for an understanding of the spiritual in a culture that has become distanced from previously received and accepted 'religious truths'.

Kissed by a Deer was written as autoethnography, a process described as people 'figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles'(Bochner & Ellis 2001, p. 111). Simply put, autoethnography re-enacts an experience, enabling people to find meaning and, through this process to accept their experience.

Themes which emerged from *Kissed by a Deer* are critically analysed in the exegesis: *The Call to Individuation*. These themes were not preconceived, the memoir wasn't written with them in mind. The exegesis elaborates and contextualises the creative work. As well, it seeks to analyse the importance of creativity, using Jung's theory of individuation.

I became aware of individuation as a concept while studying the application of the mandala in the 21st century and subsequently Jung's work in the early 1900's with mandalas*. I treat individuation as a lived ongoing experience, a process of uncovering and discovering, and while I use Jung's theory, I argue neither for it nor against it. Rather it functions as a frame of reference for the process of finding and making meaning of my own search.

The research explores and documents an example of lived experience in the search for self, and the struggle to develop a coherent identity within the context of the 'post modern landscape'(Tacey 2003, p. 42). Accordingly, I have chosen to situate the study within the field of naturalistic enquiry, where context is seen as holding the key to all meaning (Green 2002). This allows for the observation and exploration of phenomena, rather than forming a hypotheses and finding an answer. As such, the study offers a snapshot in time of the interplay between the inner and outer worlds, in the historical context of a life lived in a time of great social change.

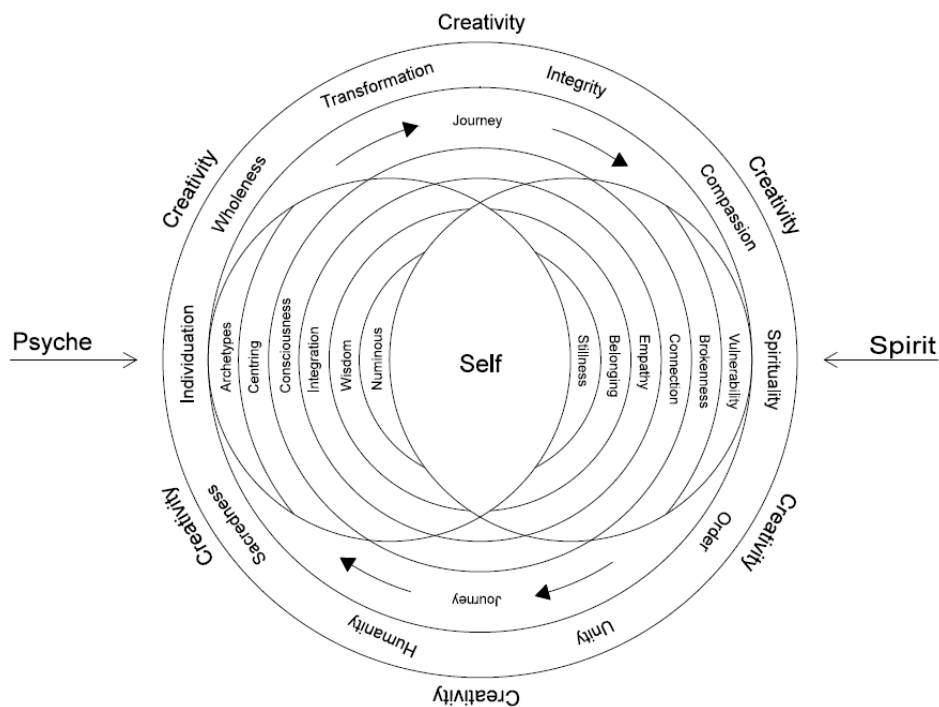
* Gibb M, 2005. The Application of the Mandala in the 21st Century

Writing the exegesis has been a creative process in itself. The themes explored are:

- Individuation
- Self
- Spirituality, and
- Creativity

Because of the fluidity of thoughts, the changing nature of terminology, and the esoteric nature of the concepts themselves, giving a definitive definition of these concepts is not achievable; however I recognise that the work needs to start somewhere. As such at the beginning of each chapter I open with a point of reference for definition. The way in which I deal with these themes represents an individual expression: a word mandala woven together with the threads of voices engaged in the discourse

I have represented my understanding of the relationship between self, spirituality and individuation in the following diagram. As creativity is central to this exploration, I represent the relationship in the form of a mandala. Concepts embodied in the mandala are analysed in the exegesis.



Mandala 1: (Gibb 2013©)

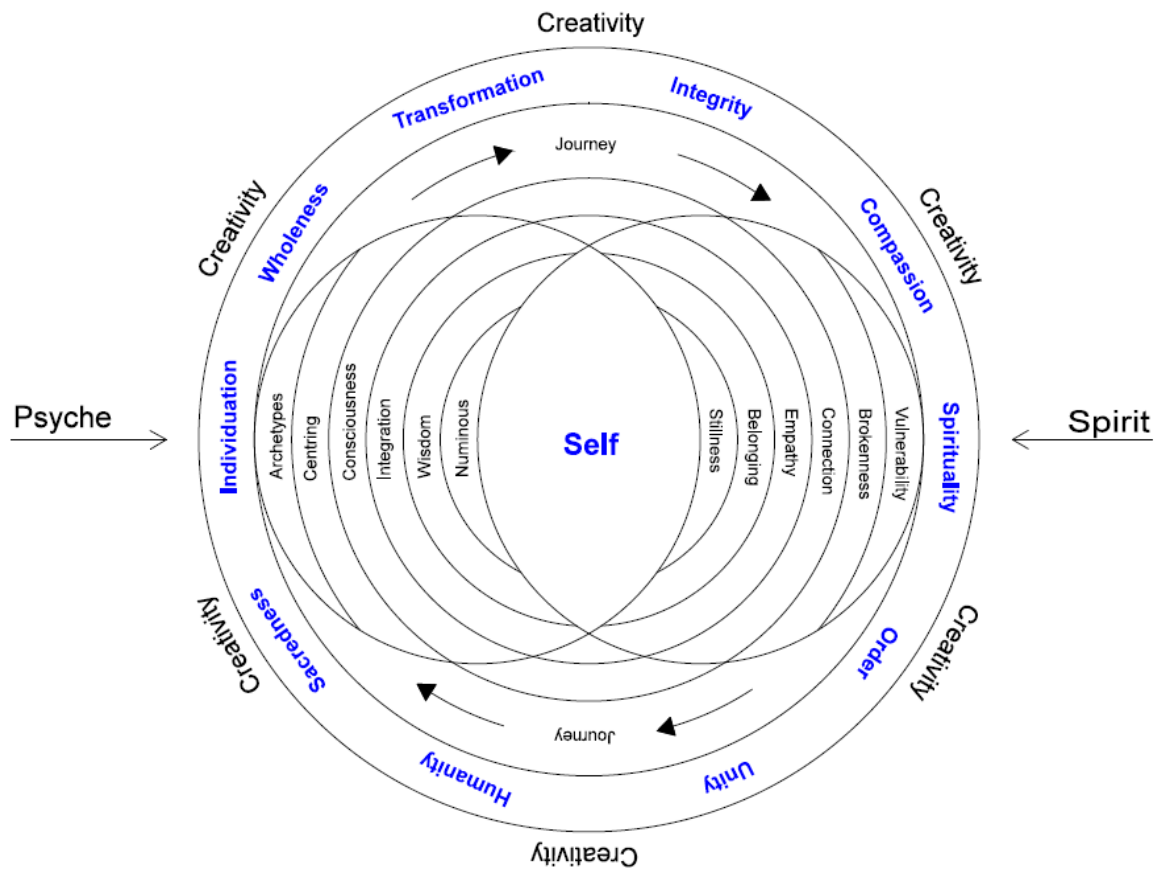
A mandala in essence represents the universe and everything in it. Within the mandala there is a mandorla – an ancient symbol of the tensions of life, the interaction of complementary opposites. The space where the two circles overlap, the almond shape in the middle, the liminal space, is where transformation occurs. The circles constituting the body of the mandorla represent individuation and spirituality, both portrayed as interplay of movement, overlapping in the liminal space. At the same time, these circles are constantly circumnavigating the Self.

The diagram shows how the psyche, [self image] and the spirit, [the ideal self] engage in a creative interplay throughout the life journey, transforming the subconscious realm into consciousness, overlapping in the liminal space – the Self placed in the middle of the diagram representing totality and unity of being. As described by Jung, each aspect of the psyche– anima/animus, shadow and persona – represented by the archetypes, the phases of individuation, and the numinous, radiate from the core Self in the centre.

The aspects represented within the circles of the mandorla are not necessarily chronological: they can run parallel and be passed through more than once. Each time, the individual is challenged to embrace and integrate opposing opposites: thoughts, feelings, archetypal images, instincts, personal factors and memories. If this is negotiated successfully there will be greater unification of all the psychic pieces, creating a more balanced and whole Self.

In the diagram the outer circumference of the mandorla interconnects with the circumference of the mandala, implying a dynamic life long process propelling us forward. This illustrates how all stages and aspects of the process are interconnected, not separate states of being. The entire experience is infused and encircled within creativity, which I have endeavoured to capture by writing *Kissed by a Deer*.

2. Individuating



Mandala 1: (Gibb 2013©)

The following chapter of the exegesis presents a distillation and synthesis of the theoretical framework for this study, Jung`s theory of individuation.

Now I Become Myself

Now I become myself. It's taken
Time, many years and places,
I have been dissolved and shaken,
Worn other people's faces,
Run madly, as if Time were there,
Terribly old, crying a warning,
"hurry, you will be dead before -----"
(What? Before you reach the morning?
or the end of the poem, is clear?
Or love safe in the walled city?)
Now to stand still, to be here,
Feel my own weight and density!.....
Now there is time and Time is young.
O, in this single hour I live
All of myself and do not move
I, the pursued, who madly ran,
Stand still, standstill, and stop the Sun!(Sarton 1993)

2.1 Individuation

Jung, as cited by Ando, stated through individuation 'we become ourselves' (*Self and No-Self* 2009, p. 14), and that in this process the centre of personality shifts from the seat of consciousness toward a state of integration with all the conscious, and unconscious elements of the Self.

Individuation is a complex process, not easy to define. My own understanding aligns closely with McNeely who states, that in its simplest form, individuation means 'choosing to be conscious, or mindful and especially, it means becoming conscious of the person we are capable of being in our fullness, our strengths, and our limitations' (McNeely 2010, p. 5).

Erikson (1968) perceived the importance of individuation, as a process by which people achieve and maintain psychological stability by separating themselves from others.

Erikson(1968) did not allude to consciousness or mindfulness in his theories of human development, but placed individuation ahead of social success as a barometer of health and wellbeing. Fordham (1958), claimed individuation begins in infancy, and that the underlying process of individuation is the same in childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Fordham (1969) identified the essential features of Jung's (1971b, p. 561) definition of individuation as, 'the process of forming and specialising the individual nature... (and) ...the development of the psychological individual as a differentiated being from the general collective psychology' (Fordham, F 1969, p. 1). This process paradoxically, allows for a greater sense of connection and relationship between the individual and the whole: the self is relational, and individuation is dependent on relationships with others.

Jung(1993)stated the *whole goal* of human life was psychic development through individuation. For Jung, the Self is present before the ego. Jung uses the concept of the Self (explored later in the exegesis) to describe his understanding of who we are, and the concept of individuation to describe the process of becoming and fulfilling all it is that we can be. Jung came to the conclusion that ultimate knowing or truth could only emerge as a consequence of the inner path. He defined individuation as becoming a single, homogenous being, and, in-so-far as 'individuality embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own Self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to Self hood', or 'Self-realization'(Jung 1993, p. 181).

2.2 Individuation and Individuality

It is important not to confuse the concept of individuation with individuality that the *'know thyself'*, of Socrates does not translate to *'it's all about me'* (McNeely 2010, p. 6). To some extent the concepts do overlap, but whereas individualism can end up creating a narcissistic, self centred individual, who focuses on the rights of the ego, its wants and needs, individuation is much broader – it is not limited to emphasising only the ego. In the early stages of individuation there is a degree of ego development and selfishness as it must

incorporate individuality. But the process moves forward to include an integration of the polarities and complexities within (the internal journey) and without (the external journey). Individuation essentially seeks to raise consciousness beyond the ego and individual attitudes, habits and cultural identification to a 'much wider horizon of self understanding and wholeness'(Stein 2006, p. X1V).

The Self, when it is understood in this way, is not the central focus of our being, it has become dispassionate and less, rather than more important, as 'Individuation implies something other than maturation, good self-esteem, success or fame. It involves restructuring the mind'(McNeely 2010, p. 6).

Jung claimed that to avoid suffering the existential emptiness of individualism, it was imperative to become aware of the relationship with the Self. Jung did not place emphasis on the development of the individual ego, but rather emphasised 'The Self is our life's goal, for it is the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality'(Jung 1969b, p. 238). Individuation is an inner path which leads to the experience of an impersonal individuality, and extends our consciousness into the archetypal or non-personal.

Jung (1971b) claimed the path of individuation is fraught with mistakes. Being human we cannot help but make mistakes. Our mistakes sculpt our character and our individuality – they are also an intrinsic part of the individuation process. This is reinforced by Dowrick who stated, 'we can afford to fail, to make many mistakes- and still go on. Practising, we make it our own'(Dowrick 2010, p. 6). It's this experience and discovery that is transformative:

A spiritual life may be presented in different packages, but it existed in the same place: deep inside our self, residing in every thought, action and decision we make. I was far from perfect, often wrong –but as my father had said to me once, 'It's alright honey. We all make mistakes' (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p. 274).

Jung stated:

When one follows the path of individuation, when one lives one's own life, one must take mistakes into the bargain: life would not be complete without them. There is no guarantee – not for a single moment (Jung 1963, p. 328).

In the process of individuation growth towards wholeness and inner wellbeing is ultimately being done on behalf of other people; it is not just a selfish act. The challenge in the process of individuation is not to look outside the Self for resources, but rather to find them within.

Throughout the exegesis I interchange the use of capital S Self and a small s self. Capital S is used when referring to what Jung defined as the Self that is present before the ego the primary archetype. Small s is used when referring to the individual, the separated 'I': the ego.

Jung saw the Self as a unification of the conscious and unconscious aspects of a person representing the psyche as a whole. In Jungian theory this unification and, the process of integrating the personality, is realized as the result of individuation.

2.3 Stages of Individuation

Jung divided individuation into a twofold psyche movement occurring in the first and second half of life. The stages are not necessarily chronological in order and can run parallel. Each stage has development tasks, sequences and crises.

Jung asserted that the first half of life is primarily concerned with the establishment of the ego and the dictates of the external world – the advent of individuation occurs in the transition into second half of life when we need to deal with the displacement of the ego, and the search for greater meaning. In the exegesis I explore that although there can be a tendency among Jungian analysts to focus primarily on individuation as occurring in the second half of life, there is a case for individuation being a dynamic continuous process throughout the life span.

This claim is supported by Tacey (2011) who proposed social institutions, family life, marriage and community structures have become more unstable

than they were in the 1930`s when Jung developed his theories. Consequently `the ego now days not being given the luxury of developing itself for thirty-five years, unimpeded by interior or exterior disruptions` (Tacey 2011, p. 69). As a result of this disruption the process of individuation can manifest itself much earlier in the life stages.

Stein (2013) notes that individuation was taken up as a central theme by nearly all of Jung`s important students. Neumann, Jung`s student, and intellectual heir, conceptualised the lifelong development of the person as falling into three major eras or phases, a paradigm which does not contradict Jung, but instead, adds a further degree of differentiation to the first half of life.

The three stages of individuation identified by Neumann(1954)are:

- a) The containment /nurturance stage: symbolised as `matriarchal` stage.
- b) The adapting /adjusting, symbolised: as the `patriarchal` stage, and
- c) The centering / integrating, termed by Neumann: as the `individual` stage.

These three stages should not be thought of as entirely separate, they are stages of growth and development that graduate from one into the next signifying the predominate attitudes during the major eras of a person`s life journey. Features of each stage continue into the next but in a less predominant way, and can be revisited throughout the person`s lifespan. One does not enter a stage for a particular period of time, pass through this stage and then leave it behind when one enters the next stage (Stein 2013, p. 4).

These stages can be reconciled with Erikson`s (1968) theory of psychological development. In the earlier stages of the individuation process the ego has the task of carving out a psychological identity with some distinct qualities, but it is still not separate from the collective personality and character. Erikson described this as the time in adolescence when the identity is forming and takes on a persona as a way of adapting to the demands of a given culture. The tasks for the first half of life are largely external –the individual establishes their place in the family, career, and the world.

2.4 The Archetypes

In contrast to the tasks of the first half of life, the tasks of the second half of life are largely internal, having to find meaning in our life and in our death. The identity that has served us for the first half of life is now being peeled away to reveal the unconscious material of the psyche, 'around midlife, individuation demands that one separate from the collective qualities that have been identified with' (Stein 2006, p. 10). In this stage the archetypes must be encountered and integrated for the individual to move towards creating a deeper conscious relationship with the Self.

The individual is called to integrate and assimilate the various tensions and polarities of the unconscious, which entails forming a conscious relationship with the various aspects of one's personality. This is a complex task. Jacobi (1973) summarized this as becoming conscious of the persona, the shadow, the anima or animus and the Self: the primary archetypes identified by Jung.

Jung's claim is rising in prominence in the twenty first century as new information becomes available through brain based research –the relation of the brain chemistry to thought and mood, and the unique function of both the left and right hemispheres of the human brain.

Much research on the biological bases of human behaviour is tending to confirm Jung's view's that we inherit a great deal of mental and behavioural patterning that had been considered learned and as a result of nurture, not nature (See Satinover, 1995, Stevens, 2003, and Tresan, 1995). For Jung, the archetypes are like instincts, in that they are given with our genetic makeup, inborn (Stein 1998, p. 227).

Thus the Self is realised in response to an assimilation and relationship with the archetype. The archetype lies beyond the range of human perspective; as such we can only perceive it indirectly – in the form of its manifestation.

2.5 The Persona

The most identifiable archetype is 'the persona'. The term Jung used to denote the outer face we present to the world, the role the individual plays in life. The persona is not the essence of what one is. It is how one appears to

others in the world and is governed by external factors – culture, time in history, life stage development, and the experiences encountered. Jung argued that the essential components of the persona could be summarized as a compromise between the individual and society, a semblance, and a two-dimensional reality` (Casement 2010 p. 670).

The archetypes seek to be actualized within the context of the individual's environment. As cited by Casement(2010) Jung stated 'the temptation to be what one seems to be is great, because the persona is usually rewarded in cash'(Jung 1971a, p. 227). Jung went so far as to say, the individual who has not moved past the ego`s identification with the persona `has no real character at all: he is not *individual* but *collective*, [original italics] the plaything of circumstance and general expectation'(Jung 1971a, p. 465).

Parker Palmer, in a podcast interview with Tami Simon the host of *The Self-Acceptance Project 2013*, believes most of us learn from a very early age that it is:

not safe to be out in the world with everything we are, with our identity and integrity.....It`s not safe to be who we are. So we start building this wall of separation between true self and our public person, or face, or mask, in an effort to get along and ultimately I think to stay safe, what we regard as safety, and eventually that effort to fool the outside world about who we are, becomes fooling ourselves, and ultimately the most unsafe place to be is when we`re fooling ourselves, when we are not showing up in the world as who we are (Palmer 2013).

The goal of individuation is not to remain faithful to a well constructed persona that has served the practical purpose of our survival in relation to social success and culture. It is this faithfulness that keeps us from discovering our true Self, and forming meaningful relationships with others and, the transcendent.

2.6 The Shadow

The persona is the person we become as a result of our choices to adapt to physical and social environments. The shadow wants what the persona will not allow or accept.

The shadow consists of those qualities that do not fit neatly into these choices and constructs: the parts of ourselves we reject and disown, lie within the shadow and lead to a lack of self acceptance rather than an integrated

wholeness. The shadow is composed of repressed ideas, weaknesses, desires, instincts and shortcomings, existing in the unconscious mind. It is those parts of ourselves we seek to avoid and deny (Masters 2010).

Those parts of the personality that have been suppressed because of 'cognitive or emotional dissonance' (Stein 1998, pp. 106-7), fall into the shadow and must be integrated for a person to become wholly individuated. The shadow is created by the ego but cannot be controlled by it. It is an unconsciousness contrary psychic factor, developed in response to the moral conventions and customs of society (Jung 1963). The shadow contains the darker psychological traits, immoral or disreputable features of our nature, which we seek to hide from the world around us.

Most people want to appear unselfish, altruistic, compassionate, considerate and in control of their appetites. In *Kissed by a Deer* the nemesis of my shadow self manifested in the character of Josette. We constantly came in conflict with each other, perhaps through projections, transference and denial:

I enjoy the company of women, but through my relationship with Josette had begun to question my membership in the sisterhood. I'd never been in a situation like this before. Tenzin had told me they weren't in an intimate sexual relationship and I had seen no apparent evidence that they were, so I couldn't understand her reaction towards me. Part of me was still looking for redemption from Tenzin's claim that the difficulties were simply because Josette and I didn't get along; I was willing to get along. In my mind she was the problem, and he was setting us up to behave like jealous women (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p. 80).

Often we do not recognize we are as self centered and egotistical as we actually are. This is because the ego has the capacity through the function of the shadow to be willful, self seeking, selfish, controlling and unfeeling, pursuing personal pleasure, power and control at any cost.

Masters (2010) claims that because of psychotherapy's widening cultural influence, 'shadow work – the practice of acknowledging, facing, engaging, and integrating what we have turned away from, disowned or otherwise rejected in

ourselves'(Masters 2010, p. 43) – has become more accepted concept in today's society.

Shadow work now appears on the spiritual curricula of schools of contemporary spirituality based in an integral approach. Jung claimed integrating our shadow is central to the process of individuation. To become fully realized we must discover and reclaim the rejected elements in ourselves, a practice which requires rigorous self honesty, transparency, emotional openness, vulnerability, and the willingness to experience pain and discomfort.

In shadow work we face the prospect of the resurfacing of old wounds and traumas and in unexpected or challenging ways, asking for authentic answers to the question of who, and what, we actually are. An example of this can be found in *Kissed by a Deer* exemplified in the process of an emotional regression I underwent whilst I was in Goa:

His words stung, triggering a chain of emotions over which I had no control. My heart was beating rapidly. A maelstrom of thoughts spun inside my head, my dreams rose and fell crashing into each other, like the waves in the ocean. I felt my strength leave me as I regressed emotionally, reverting back to a vulnerable child. All this was happening deep inside me, yet on the surface I remained ... He'd pierced an old wound, a wound that ran deep, that had never healed: a wound he'd never known. After we had eaten we went and sat on the beach listening to the ocean. I was sinking deeper and deeper inside my pain and could barely talk. Years of compounded grief and loss were beginning to thaw inside me. His words had perforated my denial. Unable to accept the present I looked to the past (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.98-99).

Masters claimed shadow work does not leave us intact. The process is unpredictable untidy and painful:

the pain it brings up is the pain we've been fleeing most of our life; the psycho emotional breakdowns it catalyzes are the precursors to hugely relevant breakthroughs...Real shadow work not only breaks us down but also breaks us open, turning frozen yesterdays into fluid now(Masters 2010, pp. 44-5).

2.7 The anima and animus

Just as one must encounter and assimilate the shadow in the individuation process, so too must an individual encounter and unify the anima and animus deep within the psyche. Jung saw this process as more difficult than the encounter with the shadow and attributed it to the second phase of individuation.

The anima symbolises the female psychological traits within a man: the archetypal feminine in the unconscious, while the animus represents the personification of the masculine psychological tendencies and traits within a woman: the archetypal masculine symbolism within a woman's unconscious. The anima and animus represent the sexuality of the psyche, not the sexuality of the body.

Both the anima and the animus act as collective images in the unconscious which motivate each gender in their response and understanding of the opposite gender. Projections of the anima/us are described in *Kissed by a Deer* in my relationship with Tenzin:

He brought up our attempt to connect sexually, saying he thought we hadn't connected because he was too much like a woman, and I was too much like a man. I might be strong and independent, but a man I was not. Insulted, I looked at him and with the index fingers on both hands pointed to my body and said, 'This, this is like a man?' He laughed and said, 'No, I meant you're more outgoing and I'm more passive' (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.47).

Jung's theory of the anima/us, is in many ways controversial as it raises issues around gender and inherent differences between men and women. It is not within the scope of this study to pursue this line of enquiry. My aim here is to simply illustrate that the anima/us functions as a bridge between the individual conscious and the collective unconscious, helping the individual to navigate and adapt to their internal world.

Jung claimed projections of the anima/us are created by the unconscious, not by the ego, the features of the psyche which positively or negatively show the way towards the collective unconsciousness. The anima

and the animus are 'subjective personalities that represent a deeper level of the unconscious than the shadow' (Stein 1998, p. 126). The challenge for the individual is to accept and integrate the anima/us archetype within the Self rather than conform to cultural expectations around gender and the constructs of the ego: to connect to the Self rather than the persona.

Self is the primary archetype in Jung's theory. An exploration of this archetype is undertaken in section two of the exegesis.

2.8 Centering

Jung places Self at the centre binding all aspects of the psyche – thoughts, feelings, archetypal images, drives, instincts, and personal factors, such as memories and experience – into a whole:

When a person comes to the conclusion that reality offers greater and finer rewards than fantasy, and that reality can be mastered, that person has passed from the first stage of individuation to the second (Stein 2013, p. 12).

This is a time of centering, when people must find meaning within their Self – recognition of the impermanence of people, places, and things, including our own life, can no longer be camouflaged by the demands of the outside world.

Accordingly, Jung claims that the main task we must face during this stage of the individuation process is an open-ended process of psychological maturity – ultimately preparation for death. According to Tacey:

the ego is not keen to volunteer itself for individuation, or to put itself through the daunting encounter with the unconscious. It wants to remain connected to the outside world and tied in with the social structures that surround it (Tacey 2011, p. 71).

The question arising from this claim is then, if all ends in death, why do we need to go through the process of spiritual and psychological maturation and make the dangerous journey from the ego to the Self? Jungian psychologists argue individuation is not conditional, nor is it optional, rather it is a given.

This transition between the stages is difficult for most people, problems often occur, creating what Jacques' (1965) as cited by Stein (2006) called the 'mid life crisis'. Stein (2006) argues this is because many people seek to repress

and ignore the internal drive towards individuation, for fear of appearing different or nonconformist.

2.9 The Principle of Individuation

This need and the drive to individuate is what Jung identified as the principle of individuation, a drive within us that defines something essential about being human, a primordial drive as powerful as the drive to procreate and the will to power.

Albeit Jung did not claim to have concrete proof, he claimed there was a principle of order operating in the universe and, regardless of our culture or history: human beings behave as if such a principle exists. This principle of order, manifesting within us, leads a person to discover the core of their being, the Self, and is recognised as a dynamic life long process, propelling us forward. The travel metaphor used in *Kissed by a Deer* is an expression of this process.

The principle of individuation is that which gives unity and organization to the personality. It is an imperative that drives us forward and, if successful, releases us from the trap of endlessly repeating the patterns that have conditioned us` (Stein 2006, p. XV11).

The involuntary, habitual patterns that drive us by means of unconscious motives form the complexes of the ego and, we are not released from these patterns and the influences keeping us in a holding pattern without awareness. Individuation calls us to become mindful. To learn to identify the early childhood experiences, unrealistic ideas, attachments, and impulses that are influencing us and cause us to follow patterns of behaviour that do not serve our best interest. This can be thought of as a Buddhist feature of individuation, as it requires we become mindful of our actions, projections, and emptiness.

This principle is often illustrated in creative and imaginative stories, such as myth and fairy tales, in which the unconscious process and struggle to become free and creative are embedded in the narrative. Informing my study with the mythology of the deer enabled me to explore my own process on both

a micro and macro level. As well, employing mythology to create a frame work around my journey added greater meaning to my experience:

I was crouching down to change when, unexpectedly, a deer emerged from the scrub and walked towards me. Mesmerised by its sudden appearance, I fell to my knees on the sand. The animal showed no fear and walked directly up to me, stretched its head towards me, caught my scent, nudged me and then softly kissed me on the cheek. I sat in rapture, completely still. I'd never known a wild animal to feel so safe in the presence of a human before. The deer continued to sniff my face, pressing it's nuzzle against my cheek while I gently stroked its shoulder. ... I could barely contain myself, awestruck that such a magical encounter had taken place (Kissed by a Dee, 2012, p.18).

When this encounter occurred I intuitively knew something of significance had occurred, but I was not able to place this in the mythology of my own life for several years to come. Utilizing the principles of autoethnography in my research has given me the opportunity to reflect on this experience and subsequently create greater meaning. This is illustrated in a number of passages in *Kissed by a Deer*:

I stood still captured by the awesomeness of the mountains, the monastery and the strange other-worldliness of the place. How did I get here? I'd never even heard of Ladakh until a few months ago and had never dreamed of coming here. For me, the whole of Ladakh was sacred and full of teachings, not just the temples and monasteries. I began considering my journey. The memory of being kissed by the deer in Costa Rica came back to me – the symbol of the deer and the dharma wheel began to vibrate with a strange intensity.

For Tibetan Buddhists the gentleness and grace of the deer represent the qualities of the renunciant, a homeless wanderer never resting in the same place.

In the 42nd Psalm, David refers to the deer as a symbol of purity, reclusiveness, and the solitary pursuit of union; the soul's longing for God.

In Celtic mythology, due to its graceful form, the deer is linked the arts, especially poetry and music. The deer is also linked to alternative pathways and symbolises an animal that lures adventurers to follow them into an array of unknown landscapes, places they've never been in before, where they find themselves not knowing what they are doing, suddenly immersed in an adventure. The hind (the female deer) is believed to call to us from the Faery realm, tempting us to release the material trappings of so-called 'civilisation' and go deep into the forest of magic, to explore our spiritual nature. Had I been kissed by a hind? (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p. 82-83)

Studying the life work of Campbell and Jung has created the opportunity to form links between the value of myth and my personal story, generating a sense of connection with something greater than individual experience.

The hero's journey as defined by Campbell(1972) is a journey beginning with either an inner longing to go on a quest, or an exterior call that enlists the aid of the hero. In the journey the hero must experience steps representing the struggle for psychological wholeness, or as Jung termed it, individuation. There is usually some resistance to the call as it means leaving a comfortable existence to walk into unknown physical and psychological danger. Heroes may, at first, refuse the call, or may instantly respond to it. They cannot however avoid it. This corresponds to Jung's claim that one cannot call a psychological halt to individuation:

In becoming a person, one must necessarily create distinctions and separateness. The drive to create specificity in human consciousness, to become who or what one naturally is, is grounded in nature. It is in accord with human nature therefore, to seek individuation (Stein 2006, p. 8).

2.10 Raising Consciousness

If we do not continue in the process of individuation, our resistance may manifest in a series of out of the ordinary conflicts, or incongruities in the life journey, at unexpected and unwanted times and places. Jung claimed this is the source of much unhappiness, suffering and neurosis in the second half of life.

Assuming that the first two stages of the individuation process have been navigated reasonably well, the next stage of psychological development is not

to become a relatively independent, self-sufficient, responsible member of the community. Rather, it is to become a centered and whole individual(Stein 2013).

Jung claimed it is imperative for individuals do their own inner work to connect with and unify the Self – not rely on a collective authority to do this for us. This encompasses expanding our understanding so that we are related to the transcendent, as well as the everyday concrete realities of human existence. The developmental task is now essentially to raise consciousness. It is in this stage that mandala symbolism, religion and the search for individual meaning become most important.

Jung recognised the mandala as a pathway to the Self and creating a mandala was, for Jung, the ultimate expression of the Self. He used mandalas as an aid to psychological understanding, both for himself and in his work as a therapist, helping his patients to make deeper connections with themselves. I was twenty four years of age when I first began creating mandalas. I felt the need to create with my hands to bring about a sense of peace and gain a greater mind, body, spirit, connection. I had no knowledge of what a mandala was. Working with circles just naturally seemed to create a safe space and the conflicts within my psyche stilled. I didn't know I was creating mandalas. Without having conscious knowledge, or awareness of individuation, the process was nevertheless occurring: the ego was being subjugated to serve the Self and facilitate its expression.

My experience of this stage of psychological development began after surviving an extremely difficult and dangerous transition that began in my adolescence. I was not in mid-life at this point, nor in the second stage of development. I was much closer to the first stage of development in age and years. Regardless, I was drawn to navigate the terrain traditionally associated with that of the second half of life: to peel back the ego and begin to explore the nature and mystery of Self. As a consequence, in the search for meaning I was led to contemplate, and realise, a relationship with the transcendent.

It was several years after the crisis had passed before I discovered the work of Jung and subsequently, was able to identify that what I had been creating were mandalas. It is this experience that leads me to argue that

individuation is a continuous life long journey, neither linear, nor limited only to the second half of life



Mandala 2: *Taking Refuge* (Gibb 2011)



Mandala 3: *Release* (Gibb 2006)

After the death of my father, when I was forty two, I was once again intuitively drawn to create mandalas and reengage with this stage of development:

When my father died; my roots in this world had been pulled up and I'd lost the place I called home. I could easily spin out into the cosmos and become lost, afloat in a world of grief and disillusionment. He had been the one constant in my life, my anchor... I stopped socialising, turning inward instead, and began to paint mandalas. Workings with circles made me feel good and helped to still my mind. For most of the next year, apart from going out to work, I spent my time cocooned inside my studio painting, letting the external world drop away (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.9-10).

The process of creating a mandala is in itself, a simple act of centring. It does not require that the person has prior knowledge of this: working with a circle seems to just bring this about naturally.

2.11 Integrating

After the individual has begun the process of centring and raising their conscious awareness, the stage of integration begins. The goal in this stage of individuation is the inner union of pieces of the psyche which have been fragmented through earlier developmental processes. This stage of integration is when a strong need to join the opposites is experienced – the opposites of good and bad (persona and shadow), male and female (anima/animus), child and adult, right and left brain hemisphere (creativity/ feeling/thinking) all seek to be unified. Stein states it is in this stage that:

All of the undervalued pieces of potential development that were earlier separated from consciousness and repressed in the course of the first two stages of individuation, so that one could grow an ego and enter into relation to the world of reality in an adaptive way, now come back for integration (Stein 2013, p. 17).

Jung called this final step self-realization, or coming to Selfhood, the pinnacle of the process of individuation. It is a time of intense separation, when importance previously given to the achievement of adaptation is relinquished, and the journey of becoming an integrated individual takes centre stage. In this stage the individual must gradually let go of the persona and manifest an image of self from within.

Navigating the transition in to the third stage is often difficult and dangerous. Letting go of the former identity and the trappings of conformity, to become a whole and integrated individual, can often be painful – entered into with a depressed, confused and questioning attitude. ‘Sometimes this stage is entered as the consequence of tragic loss that shatters fixed collective assumptions’ (Stein 2013, p. 15). Working just to live and survive is no longer enough in this stage of Individuation. Now the individual must find a direction that leads to something they believe, is worth living for.

2.12 Wisdom

Direction in the second half of life grows out of the inner life of an individual who is deeply engaged with, and constructively seeking individuation.

The ego begins to draw away from the dominant social self (the persona), and create a distinction between this construct and the true inner Self. Stein (2013) notes that in this stage of the process awareness of the necessity to bridge the gap intensifies: the person has to find a personal centre, a point of inner integrity, free from the stereotypes of collective culture. A choice must be made as to what kind of person they are going to become – the aim is a degree of integration of the inner opposites to create balance in everyday life. At this stage in the individuation process, spiritual life has become crucial, important and individualized.

This stage encompasses listening to the Self, instead of living from the dictates of the ego and, may require withdrawing from things that give us comfort and being alone and still. There is a shift to the inner centre and living from the resources found there. It is in this stage of individuation that we seek the experience of wisdom. This is illustrated by Leggo who states:

What I am keenly learning from elderly people who exemplify wisdom is that the education of the heart, imagination, body, and mind are contingent on a sturdy commitment to practice, especially the practice of living well (Leggo 2004a, p. 28).

A person who achieves this stage in the individuation process is able to contain and restrain the opposites. Even in situations of extreme tension they can remain intact and balanced, maintaining a connection with the inner Self, and others, while detaching from the preferences of the ego(Stein 2013).

This does not mean that a wise individual has found all the answers to their life. Stein describes a wisdom figure as:

a person who has found the Self and lives in relation to that inner reality rather than seeking approval from others or being possessed by desire and attachment to egoistic goals...importantly, what differentiates this person is` a sense of uniqueness based upon having made many clear individual choices in life(Stein 2013, pp. 16-7).

This person is distinctive, displaying vitality, spontaneity, and freedom. Such a figure appears in *Kissed by a Deer* in the character of Tenzin Palmo:

I didn't know what to say, but knew I had to say something: I couldn't just sit there and let this opportunity pass me by. She asked what I was doing

in McLeod Ganj: 'Was I there to teach English?' I replied I'd just finished teaching English to the women in the handicraft centre. Then I began to tell her about the music program - playing the female card in an attempt to build a connection, I told her it wasn't easy to be a female guitarist. She asked 'Why not?' I explained guitar traditionally belonged to a male domain and there hadn't been a lot of opportunities or encouragement for woman to learn guitar when I was young. She paused, thought for a moment and said, 'Yes, that could be a good practice.' I didn't really understand what she meant, but her words were so infused with power, wisdom, and clarity that instantly seeds of contemplation were planted in my mind. We came to the top of the hill. It was time for me to get out of the car. I thanked her. She smiled at me with clear, peaceful, brilliant blue eyes behind which rested a profound stillness and waved as the four wheel drive pulled out from the curb (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.43).

Detachment and separation, not union, are the central themes of individuation – this is why individuation resembles a spiritual quest. Unlike the goal of a religious quest, the goal of individuation is not union or salvation but rather integration and wholeness as a result of forging the opposites into an image of unity. The dimensions of living shift from focussing on survival, and are refocussed on meaning.

Paradoxically as the ego reaches back and picks up the lost or denied pieces of the psyche and weaves them into the fabric of the whole, it begins to feel less alienated from all of humanity, becoming more accepting of the complexities of reality both within, and without.

2.13 The Numinous

Jung included a numinous experience as a necessary and central feature of individuation. He used this term to refer to a quality inherent in the archetypes, stressing that a true understanding of the meaning of the word cannot be *grasped without personal experience from a lived encounter*: what one experiences' is what is real. Jung defined the numinous as:

... a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will.... The *numinosum* whatever its cause may be is an experience of the subject independent of his will.... The *numinosum* is either a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness(Jung 1969b, p. 6).

Jung also claimed the modern person can experience the numinous regardless of whether they lived in or outside of a religion. He considered the approach to the numinous similar to a pilgrimage: a religious experience of a quasi-mystical nature which could persuade the individual that life is meaningful. The importance of the mystical experience or numinous is that its quality must be experienced directly. The numinous refers to `the power of the other whom we might encounter in intuitive, reflective or critical moments` (Tacey 2011, p. 218).

Jung includes experiences of a numinous nature as a vital part of the individuation process, but indicated having a numinous experience, or setting out on a spiritual quest is only part of the road to individuation and is not enough to establish or complete the project. Such an experience may produce a profound change in attitude and behaviour however. Jung saw the numinous experience as a hint of something larger, the recognition of a power other than the ego existing in the psyche, which needs to be brought to consciousness.

Spiritual teachers may set the grounds for attuning the mind and the attention towards the receptivity of a numinous experience but ultimately, it is only an experience which links the individual to the transcendent. Often the incentive for this experience is not a desire to transcend, rather the person is motivated to go on the spiritual quest through a pathological symptom such as addiction, behavioural disorders, or an acute sense of loss and disconnection (Stein 2006). It was the experience of the disintegration of the known that lead to my own quest:

He had been the one constant in my life, my anchor. Now the strongest link to the world of my childhood had broken and life as I'd known it ended. By the age of forty two, I'd lived through the deaths of my mother, my father, my two sisters, and all of my ten uncles and aunts, bar one. The world around me had irrevocably changed – familiarity had dissolved into dust. Life as I'd known it had ended (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.9).

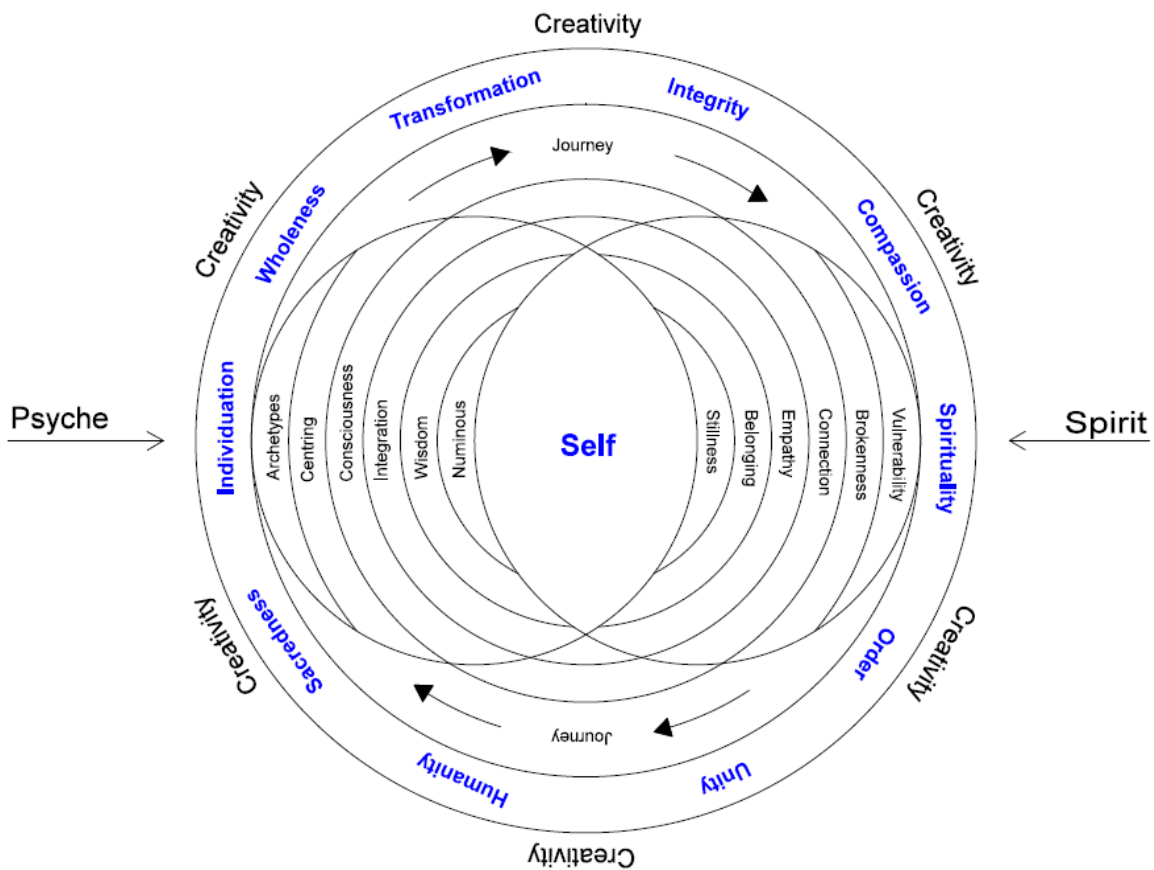
Stein argues a pathological symptom can cause an incitement that sufficiently motivates a person to go on a spiritual quest. Acting as 'a paradoxical doorway into transcendence' which in turn brings about a sense of meaning and necessity 'to the malady itself' (Stein 2006, p. 33).

Unlike the goal of a religious quest, the goal of individuation is not union or salvation. It is integration and wholeness, as a result of forging the opposites into an image of unity. Jung argued a numinous experience was not religious or mediated to people through religious symbols such as icons, statues, rituals, or sounds that related to acts of worship. The numinous experience raised the spiritual to a practical and useful level of the psyche. For Jung the object of a numinous experience was to reveal content of the unconscious psyche which needed to be made conscious.

As, in essence, a numinous experience is experiential only, it is difficult to explain, or capture the real meaning of this type of experience. As well a numinous experience is not limited to one particular path or outcome, and the idea is not necessarily a religious one. Numinous experiences, although vitally important, are not the final destination in the individuation process.

Simply put, individuation is transformation, and there is no short cut. Jung claimed individuation was the means to achieve the highest goal – unity and totality – in the form of the Self.

3. Forming



Mandala 1: (Gibb 2013©)

The following section of the exegesis critically analyses theories of Self which have relevance to the current inquiry, and have informed the creative component of the research.

3.1 Self

'In essence, Self is what it means to be human'(Roberts 2005, p. 3).

Kissed by a Deer, is an illustration of the search for greater understanding of Self. In its simplicity it is a journey towards self acceptance, and a search for meaning and wholeness through the exploration of spiritual practices and pathways which have opened and developed in the Western world over the past fifty or more years.

In my own experience I discovered the deeper one enquires into the nature of Self the more one recognizes the complexity of *being*, a state Heidegger explored in his philosophy of *Dasein*. What I have experienced is an awareness of Self and other, as having an ingrained sameness; a universal Self-existing in us all. To fully express the essence of this Self, and what it is to be human, is what Jung referred to as the process of individuation. Maslow and Rogers named the process self-actualization.

Paradoxically, my search led me to a moment of insight where I acknowledged, that what I sought could not be objectively and fully known– I could only ever have a subjective or reflexive knowledge:

In the revelation of that moment I received the grace to acknowledge and accept my own imperfection, and in doing so, to accept the imperfection in others. I surrendered to being human: to not knowing (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.268).

To argue for or against conceptual knowledge that can *only be experienced*, not proven or measured is difficult and ultimately not constructive. As such I take an exploratory approach in the exegesis. The following chapters give a brief overview of theories of Self which have influenced my own inquiry, and the journey undertaken in *Kissed by a Deer*.

On a basic level of understanding, the self is seen to consist of the unique and essential qualities which define one person from all others. However, a succinct and definitive definition of self cannot be readily agreed on, nor can it be placed into one clear cut category. Most people, if pressed to define what is meant by self, would struggle to go beyond the perimeters of mind, body, emotion, and a sense of I (some may also include soul).

Dowrick describes this as 'the centre of consciousness, the 'I' with which you function in the world... the most reasonable part of you' (Dowrick 1991, p. 7). She also claimed the forming of a sense of self is not a sacred entity coming to you through a mysterious process, but rather very much affected by the world in which we live.

Since the early 1960s, eastern philosophy and religion, Buddhism in particular, has flowed into Western consciousness, heralded in via popular culture by bands such as 'The Beatles', and their association with Eastern gurus. Consequently thousands of western youth began the search for a sense of self outside the realms of traditional Christian teachings and values. I was one such person. I began my quest from the perspective of the self being already 'formed and static'. Now I see this perspective as limited, and recognise that what I had thought was already formed is in a constant process of becoming and therefore unknowable as an absolute.

Everything about you is a fragment, a guru told his disciples, and your mind accumulates these fragments from moment to moment. When you think you know something you refer only to some scrap of the past. Can such a mind ever know the whole(Chopra 2000, p. 92).

Jung sought to address this fragmentation in his theory of individuation.

3.2 The Self: a Jungian Perspective

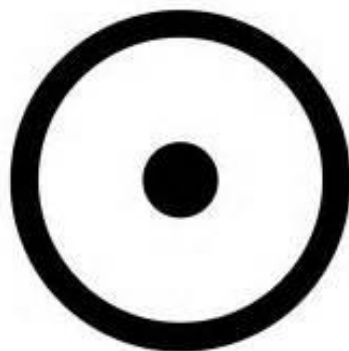
For Jung, the Self is the centre that binds together all the aspects of the psychic: thoughts, feelings, archetypal images, drives, instincts, and personal factors such as memories and experience. Self organises all this material and draws it together to create balance. 'The self is the centre, and it unifies the pieces'(Stein 2013, p. 168).

Symbolically Jung represented the wholeness of Self as a circle, or mandala. Mandala is the Sanskrit word for circle, which encompasses both the outer circle and centre. The implication of the Mandala is that it represents both the external visible world outside of us (the circle- whole world) and the internal invisible world deep inside our minds and bodies (the centre).



Mandala 4: *Contemplation* (Gibb 2013)

For Jung the Mandala was a visual symbol of the archetype of the Self, expressing the unification of the unconscious and consciousness of an individual. The circle or sphere of the mandala represents the psyche, holding within it at the centre the true Self. In Jungian theory the mandala represents a symbol of wholeness, order, unity and totality, acting as a vehicle to draw together those aspects of the psyche requiring unification (Jung 1916/1989).



Jung's symbol of the Self

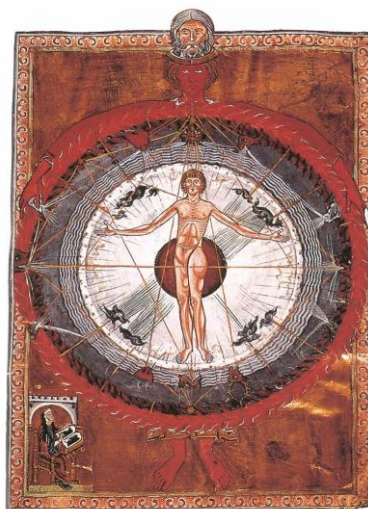
Integrative movements and the emergence of symbols of unity in the psychic system generally:

are marks of the action of the self archetype. The self's task seems to hold the psychic system together and keep it in balance. The goal is unity. This unity is not static but dynamic(Stein 1998, p. 159).

3.3 Christ, a Symbol of the Self

Jung considered Christ to exemplify the Self archetype claiming that the experience of the Self and what the New Testament describes as the “Christ within” are synonymous’ (Jung, as cited in Wright 2001, p. 6). He argued modern man was spiritually malnourished through a lack of symbolism and called for a recovery of the symbolic life which he claimed had been abandoned. Jung stated it was imperative to preserve the value of symbolism in a culture which elevates and respects the touchable, visible, literal and material aspects of life [empirical evidence], as opposed to the invisible, spiritual, symbolic and inner aspects(Jung 2012).

Differentiating between these aspects and between the archetypal Christ – symbolic/mythological truth and Jesus – literal truth/historic fact – is central to Jung’s theory of individuation. From a Jungian perspective Jesus realized and embodied the idea of Self: the Christ. We are fashioned after the image of God – only in our understanding, not in the body – but in the mind which has the capacity to seek truth (Hippo AD 354-430).



The Universal Man, Liber Divinorum Operum of St. Hildegard of Bingen, 1165

In Jung's psychological language, the Self, is a more inclusive word for the inner image of God residing in every person: the image Dei(Jung 1969a). It was this concept of Self which lay the ground work for Jung's theory of individuation:

Understood psychologically, the life of Christ represents the various phases and expressions of the Self as it undergoes incarnation in an individual ego, that is, the various stages of the process of individuation(Wright 2001, p. 7).

For Jung the self is not something consciously available to the individual, rather it can be known only through the mediation of symbolic forces, the archetypes. Driven by the archetype within us towards individuation, this process only becomes real for us when it actually happens. This takes place when we change our perspective from looking at Christ as historical or metaphysical, and awaken to the Christ within. 'Psychologically, this is the individuation process; theologically, it is the process of redemption and sanctification'(Wright 2001, p. 7). Accordingly Jung argues it is up to the individual to take full responsibility for developing their own divine capacities.

In doing this we have the possibility of participating in life's larger purposes, and of discovering the meaning of our own unique, individual life. With this comes the opportunity to uncover and discover our vocation and personal myth, the story we create to give our life meaning and make sense of the mystery of existence.

3.4 The Self is made of Stories

Kornfield (2008) stated that creating a sense of self happens unconsciously when we repeatedly identify, 'with our body our mind, our beliefs, our roles, and our situation in life... whenever we hold our feelings, thoughts, and perceptions as me or mine' (Kornfield 2008, p. 62). From this perspective, a sense of self is formed through the habitual roles we play within stories perceived as objectively real.

As cited in Leggo(2004b), Winterson (1995) asks, 'Are real people fictions?' and do 'we mostly understand ourselves through an endless series of stories told to ourselves by ourselves and others'. If the self is made of stories then the facts that colour our world and our story are highly individual and

random, they are `facts that fit whatever fiction we have chosen to believe in'. Subsequently, and encouragingly, Leggo claims `if we are always making up stories and being made up in stories, then there is room for critical and creative transformation'(Leggo 2004b, p. 99).

3.5 Zen

This then raises the question that if the self is made of stories, if there is no story, is there no self?



Zen Ensō: a symbol of the interplay between Form and Void

Nothing Exists.

Yamaoka Tesshu, as a young student of Zen, visited one master after another. He called upon Dokuon of Shokoku. Desiring to show his attainment, he said: The mind, Buddha, and sentient beings, after all, do not exist. The true nature of phenomena is emptiness. There is no realisation, no delusion, no sage, no mediocrity. There is no giving and nothing to be received. Dokuon, who was smoking quietly, said nothing. Suddenly he whacked Yamaoka with his bamboo pipe. This made the youth quite angry. If nothing exists, inquired Dokuon, where did this anger come from? (Muju 1300).

The above story is a traditional Zen Koan. Zen practice, as cited by Miller (*Self and No-Self* 2009), is traditionally described as, `the investigation and clarification of the Self'. In Zen, true Self is realized in the deepest level of one's life, and is always in the here-and-now, even though here-and-now is always changing.

Zen therefore, makes a distinction between *subject* and *self*. Subject refers to any experience from birth through to death, which entails a process of feeling and synthesizing data. Self refers to the:

particular subject in the ongoing life-history of a person which is present rather than past or future. Thus a person is a series of subjects, and a person's self is the subject which at any given moment is here-and-now(McDaniel 1980).

The paradox is that the personal self is made up of a different subject at each moment, but at any given moment the Self is only in the here-and-now. Once the subject of the moment has dissolved it no longer has an associated status with the person.

'One cannot cling to one's self; one can only be one's self at each moment' (McDaniel 1980).

Zen views the Self as having a sense of solidity as it becomes the point of departure for all activity into the world, yet at the same time the Self remains groundless because it is never the same in any two moments. Realising this one begins to experience reality in a new and creative way, living fully in the present, unable to cling to any particular moment.

3.6 Buddhism and Self

The idea of a separate self is incompatible with the ideals, spirituality and way of life with the majority of the peoples on earth. In many non dual, mystical and eastern meditative traditions there is generally a broader understanding of self as the essence of any living being, not just human being. Campbell stated:

It is not easy for Westerners to realize that the ideas recently developed in the West of the individual, his selfhood, his rights, and his freedom, have no meaning whatsoever in the Orient(Campbell, Joseph 1972, p. 61).

This is of particular relevance when considering philosophies and religions that do not identify a separate, individual 'I'.

Buddhism defines Self as a temporary combination of the five aggregates of existence: the five skandhas. In Sanskrit skandha means a pile, heap or bundle. As cited in the Abhidhamma(Ronkin 2014) in Buddhist

phenomenology the skandhas are the five aspects constituting the makeup of a human being. These are

- Form
- Feeling
- Perception
- Volition, and
- Consciousness

A person is made up of the five skandhas, without which, there is no Self – there is nothing among them that can be identified as I.

Of central importance in understanding the skandhas is recognising that they are empty. They are not qualities that an individual possesses, because there is no-self possessing them. For Buddhism, the self is not something closed to the individual, but is something clearly knowable by the conscious mind' (*Self and No-Self* 2009, pp. 14-5). For Jung also, the Self is not something consciously available to the individual, rather it can be known only through the mediation of symbolic forces, the archetypes.

3.7 Anatman

The doctrine of no-self in Buddhism is called Anatman and the true or original Self, is referred to as Atman. Buddhist phenomenology creates distinctions between the Atman of self that is 'attached' and the Atman of self that is 'free from attachment', the true Self. In psychological terminology, the 'attached self' would be the ego. For Jung this would be the persona, instincts and desires.

Ergo if the Self referred to in the doctrine of Atman as the original Self, is like Jung's individuating Self:

the self whose goal is the attainment of full self-realization, then in that sense eastern psychological thought and western psychological thought can be said to have the same objective (*Self and No-Self* 2009, p. 14).

From a Buddhist perspective, Descartes' famous statement 'I think therefore I am' (Ratcliffe 2014), is simply another way of conceptualizing self – mistakenly regarding Self as an essence that exists. One could argue however,

that it takes a real Self to create a fictional self; there still has to be an entity creating the fiction - I think therefore I am. Following this line of reasoning we cannot doubt we exist: the very act of doubting necessitates that someone is doing the doubting.

3.8 Buddhism and the Psychology of Self

The doctrine of Anatman and the five skandhas indicates that Buddhist psychology is as equally complex and detailed as the psychology of the West. For several decades there has been a growing dialogue between Eastern and Western psychology, illustrated most vividly in psychological constructs which have successfully incorporated Buddhist techniques into their practices. Mindfulness, for example has become progressively popular in many therapeutic practices: `Acceptance and Commitment Therapy' (Hayes 1980), `Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction'(Kabat-Zinn 1979),` Dialectical Behavioural Therapy' (Linehan 1977), and `Adaption Practice'(Sherlock 1978), are some examples (*Buddhism and psychology* 2014).The common denominator here, is that these psychotherapies are concerned with cognitive restructuring and share core principles with Buddhist antidotes to personal suffering.

Buddhist philosophy claims, it is identification with, and attachment to our stories, that creates our suffering. The aim in Buddhism is dissolving the self, attaining no Self – developmental psychology is concerned with creating and healing a sense of self.

Paradoxically, given that western developmental psychology may help to inform Buddhist practitioners with an understanding of the process of personal psychological development, it is understandable that a practice-oriented tradition like Buddhism, with a spiritual praxis of focusing on the present moment, would have little interest in going back to the past to explore developmental problems:

Although there was no question regarding the command to love and forgive others, I wondered if they would question the instruction to love and forgive ourselves. Tibetan people didn't suffer from self hatred; the

concept of being at war with 'the self' and 'psychological wounding', wasn't a part of their belief system. It's no surprise that western psychology and Buddhist teaching enjoy a complementary union in our contemporary culture; we have borrowed from them the wisdom to help us unify our fragmented and torn egos but Buddhism borrows little if anything from psychology. I find it interesting that in the west, we have joined Buddhism and Psychology in our endeavours to heal and understand ourselves, but for the traditional Tibetan Buddhist there is no such union (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.173).

Albeit western psychology does not augment Buddhism, 'Buddhism can augment the practice of psychotherapy by shifting the emphasis from the elimination of symptoms to the realization of inner wellbeing' (*Self and No-Self* 2009, p. 18).

3.9 Identity

As noted by Vander Zanden(1997), an optimal feeling of identity is experienced as a sense of wellbeing. An understanding of Self may include a sense of identity, but like Dowrick, I would argue 'Identity is something you can tack on from the outside which changes as you move through your life' (Dowrick 1991, p. 6).

Identity incorporates how we see ourselves. This includes gender and sexual identity, nationality, culture and religion, work identity, worldly achievements or lack of them, relationships and our place in the family or it could be identification with an illness, addiction, or even a betrayal that forms our 'I am' (Dowrick 2010).

I began to revel in the total anonymity of the place: the freedom of the wild. I could be anybody or nobody here. My past and my future didn't exist, only the stark present. The winds that swept the plains were sweeping my mind. My spirit expanded with the emptiness and vastness of the terrain, and my identity dissipated – only bare necessities were needed here (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.58-9).

We are in a constant process of becoming, moving from the person we have been into someone new, creating our personal history daily. Erikson(1980) suggested that although ego identity formation took place primarily during adolescence and young adulthood `a person's sense of identity can be revised and transformed through ongoing experience and shifting contextual and historical circumstances` (Kiesling et al. 2006, p. 1270). Through the process of simultaneous reflection and observation, as well as a process of increasing differentiation the formation of our identity continues throughout the life span (Manno 1980). An illustration of this can be found in the *Kissed by a Deer* in the chapter entitled `The gates of hell`:

It's easy to confuse our identity with what we do, instead of who we are. The death of the artist that had begun in China, continued in Australia, and it was a painful death. Not having a guitar in my hand every day was strange. I felt like I was going through a divorced: being separated from my first love (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.207).

Identity as described by Erikson is created in relationship to the individuals' experiences with societal norms, expectations, culture, significant others, opportunities, and with an anticipated future. It is `both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others` (Erikson, E. H 1980, p. 109), becoming grounded through inner continuity of a sense of self sameness over time.

In the process of identity development and formation Erikson (1950, 1963) recognised eight stages of psychosocial development with each stage marked by an important event containing or generating conflict. The underlying principle embedded in Erikson's theory is that the individual must learn how to hold both extremes of each specific life-stage, (the biological and socio cultural forces) in tension with one another. When the psychosocial crisis of these two conflicting forces is `understood and accepted as necessary and valuable, then optimal virtue for that stage can surface and become actualized'(Bilsker & Marcia 1990, p. 271).

Erikson's theory of individual development complements Jung's theory of individuation. Both cite life stages and events as pertinent to an individual's

development. Jung however, emphasized the archetypal core can give the persona a ` powerful religious dimension that raises it from the banal, workaday outer vestment of an individual via its connection to the depths of the psyche'(Casement 2010 p. 670).

3.10 Spiritual Identity

In his later writing Erikson used various forms of the word numinous, a Jungian concept, in describing a sense of I. In recent decades there has been significant advancements made in the study of identity development grounded in Erikson's psychosocial theory. The studies have focused on gender, relationships, and paid employment in adolescence and early adulthood. In light of Erikson's interest in spirituality however, it is relevant to the current study, to note that only a small percentage of researchers have focused their attention toward understanding the individuals sense of a spiritual self, particularly in the adult years. Refining and extending Erikson's work, Marcia(2002) claimed there are four stages of identity development:

1. Identity Diffusion: a sense of not having choices, or of the need to make a commitment.
2. Identity Foreclosure: a commitment is made to relevant roles, values and future goals that tend to conform to the expectations of others.
3. Identity Moratorium: a crisis when various options and choices are being explored but no commitment has yet been made
4. Identity Achievement: a stage in which the crisis has been successfully resolved, a commitment made to a role or value, and a sense of identity formed.

Kiesling et al. (2006) applied Marcia`s framework in their research to create three stages in the construct of spiritual identity. In their study spiritual identity was defined as` a persistent sense of self that addresses ultimate questions about the nature, purpose, and meaning of life, resulting in behaviours that are consonant with the individual's core values` (Kiesling et al. 2006, p. 1269). It is interesting to note that if identity, like persona, is something

we attach to the inner self, and spirit is, by its very nature thought to be free, detached and undefinable, how can we then form a construct such as spiritual identity. I would argue that by definition they cancel each other out.

Sinnott (2002) as cited by Kiesling (et al 2006) defined spirituality as 'one's personal relation to the sacred or transcendent, a relation that then informs other relationships and the meaning of one's own life' (Marcia 2002, p. 199). He made a distinction between spirituality and religious practices, stating religious practices 'may be the external sign of a spiritual orientation or simply a set of culturally cohesive practices, beliefs, and habits' (Marcia 2002, pp. 199-200). As such a sense of spiritual identity is a role-related (persona) aspect of an individual's construction of a relationship to the sacred.

Kiesling, (et al 2006) in keeping consistent with Erikson, posited 'a sense of spiritual identity emerges as the symbolic religious and spiritual content of a culture is appropriated by individuals in the context of their own life' (Kiesling et al. 2006, p. 1270). This indicates one's sense of a spiritual self is individual, structured by locality and history and is inherently social. This is illustrated in the following passage of *Kissed by a Deer*:

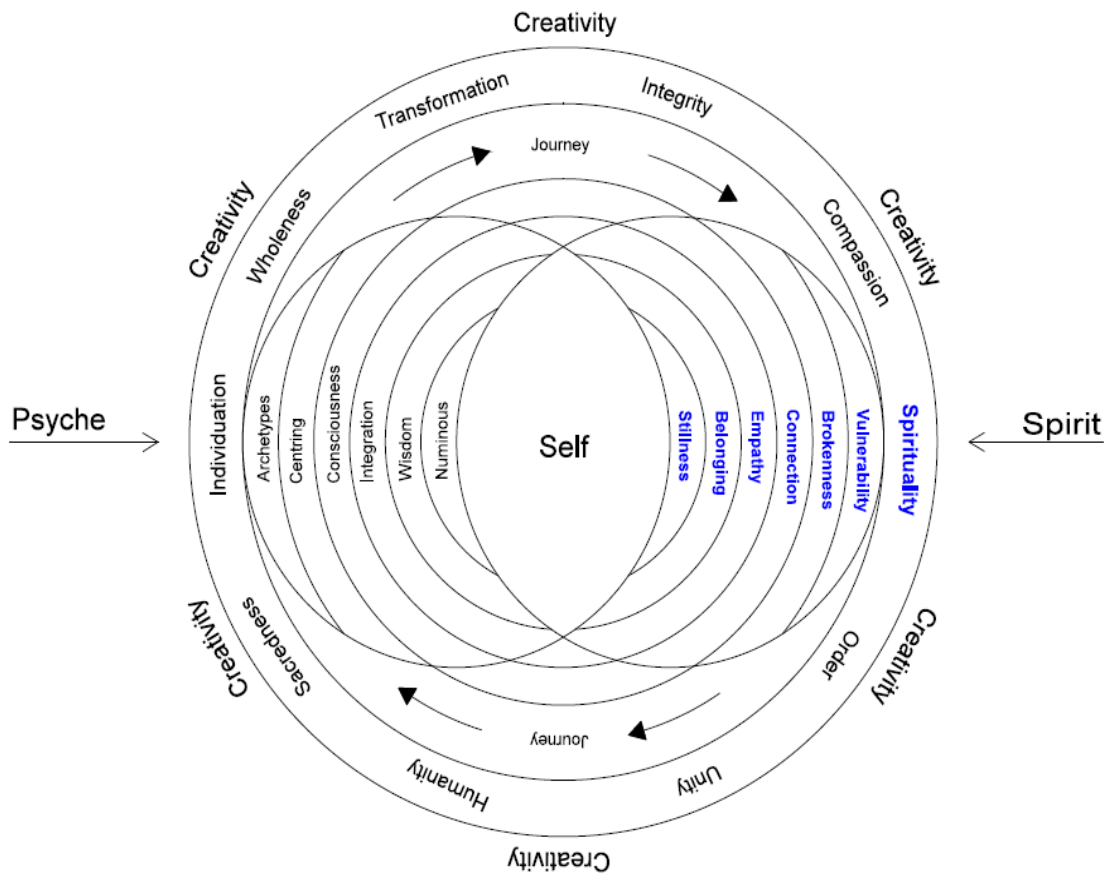
All this searching had led me to this moment; sitting with ten monks in a tent on the Tibetan grasslands. I knew that although I may be able to enter and visit aspects of their world and their reality, it would be virtually impossible for them to know mine. How could I explain to Yonten the deep psychological, political and existential reasons that drove my search and lay underneath much of my behaviour? I'd digested hundreds of books from all disciplines and cultures; I didn't have the simplicity of one religion, cultural belief or way of life to follow. I'd opened Pandora's Box and couldn't close the lid (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.171).

Although Jung never gave a definitive statement as to whether he believed in a divine presence, he did propose along with others Erikson (1980), O'Connor (1981), Tacey (2011), and Welwood (2000), that spirituality was a fundamental and important component of the process of identity development, individuation and self actualisation.

A Spiritual identity has become a dominant feature of 'the post modern landscape'(Tacey 2003, p. 42) and can provide a sense of continuity, as well as a domain for adult developmental change.

As noted by Pargament, there are now innumerable values, life-styles, practices, studies, and ideas 'being placed under the umbrella of the spiritual concept'(Pargament 2007, p. 32).He also notes that spirituality has not stopped evolving and growing, and is becoming an increasingly popular construct. Yet the concept remains difficult to define and conceptualise.

4. Informing



Mandala 1: (Gibb 2013©)

The following section of the exegesis explores the concept of spirituality in contemporary Western culture.

4.1 Spirituality

Pargament in referring to his early work of 1999, states that he defines spirituality as `a search for the sacred` (Pargament 2007, p. 32). Dowrick claimed spirituality exists when we struggle with an understanding of ourselves, our lives and, how we fit into the greater scheme of things. According to Dowrick(1991), the `who I am` question is basic to any spiritual or existential enquiry. Tacey(2000) supports this view stating, `Spirituality is especially difficult to define because it is largely what we don't know about ourselves' (Tacey 2000, p. 24). He describes the emergence of spirituality – particularly in the second half of life – as a `painful interruption' and proposed that our entry and engagement with spirituality is frequently fraught with unpleasant, difficult emotional, and social problems.

Tacey stated:

although Jung recognised the importance of secularism in the history of the West, he bemoaned the spiritual impoverishment that it has delivered... stating... if there is no spiritual system operating in society; the inner life is forced to teach us a new way of being(Tacey 2011, p. 72).

And, that with or without a religion, the ego must be transformed.

4.2 Spiritual but not Religious

In the secular West it has become common for people to identify themselves as being `spiritual but not religious'. Formerly identification with the spiritual was exercised through a religious tradition or denomination: people identified themselves as Christian, Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, for example. For many people born post World War Two this is no longer the case. Millions of people now think of themselves as being on their own spiritual path and are not affiliated with any specific religion. Rejecting religion but embracing spirituality is often accompanied by an aversion, even repugnance of the many abuses that have been committed under the auspice of the dogmas of the organised religions in the name of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. But what is it that people mean when they describe themselves as `spiritual but not religious'.

Before the 20th century the terms religious and spiritual were used more or less interchangeably, but now in a postmodern world intellectual and cultural forces have accentuated differences between the `private' and `public' spheres of life. The word `spiritual' has come to be associated with a private realm of thought and experience, while the word `religious' has become almost taboo. To identify as religious implies connection with the public realm – membership in religious institutions, participation in formal rituals, and adherence to official denominational doctrines.

Both words however connote belief in a `higher power' of some kind and imply a desire to connect and enter into a relationship with this power – through rituals, practices, and daily moral behaviours that foster such a connection or, relationship.

The first known use of the word religion was based on the Latin *religare* in the thirteenth century. Originally it meant to `to bind' and was associated with supernatural constraint, obligation and reverence. O Murchu(1997) claimed formal religions have only existed for 4,500 years, but our spiritual story, as human beings is at least 70,000 years old. Consider the spiritual stories of many indigenous cultures for example.

The word `spiritual' is reported to have been first used in the fourteenth century and comes from the Latin word *spiritus* meaning *breath*; associated with breathing and wind.

When one applies a comparative analysis between the two words, the immediate difference is that spiritual is connected to freedom, both in expression and in relationship. It infers free flowing movement that cannot be dictated to, or controlled. Religion implies the opposite: constraint, control and a loss of personal freedom. For many people who claim to be `Spiritual but not Religious' there has been a conscious rejection of the organisation of religion but a desire to maintain a belief and engagement with the supernatural component.

It is the desire for an experience of spirituality which is beyond constraint and unbound, which appears as a dominant feature of this age. Late in 2012, I attended a public lecture at the centre for theology and ministry [Uniting Church]

in Melbourne (Australia), entitled 'Addressing the Spiritual Hunger of our Times'. The keynote speaker was the Rev Dr Lauren Artress, from Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. This was a place I visited in my search, which in turn; lead me to attend the lecture:

Then I caught a free street car to visit Grace Cathedral. I wanted to walk the labyrinth, based on the famous medieval labyrinth of Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, in France.

A labyrinth is designed to bring you into a meditative state as you walk its pattern. I entered, beginning a slow contemplative walk towards its centre. The Cathedral was massive, peaceful and still. At the front end of the main hall a sermon was in progress. Just as I reached the centre of the labyrinth the priest began to pray out loud, announcing it was thirty five years to the day, since women had been acknowledged by the church, and permitted to become ministers. He prayed that this process would no longer be inhibited in any way. I stood contemplating the synchronicity of his prayer with my arrival in the centre of the labyrinth, expressed a silent Amen, turned, and began my journey out of the maze (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.8-9).

A number of themes in the lecture resonated strongly with aspects of the current study, in particular, her acknowledgement that the new buzz phrase in the 21st century is 'I'm Spiritual but not Religious'(SBNR). The catch phrase 'spiritual not religious', is now common parlance and, meets contemporary society's approval and acceptance as a statement of one's personal identity.

Declaring that 'I am spiritual but not religious', allows the individual to choose how much, or how little they relate. It also indicates that the individual wants to be personally in control of their spiritual life. The danger here, according to Tacey is that thinking of ourselves as self sufficient, can lead to loneliness and isolation as:

we are deeply communal creatures who need the support and communality of others. Freud, Jung and especially Adler felt that a person could only achieve full potential and individuation in creative relationship with others(Tacey 2003, p. 41).

We also live within the social constraints and structures of the culture in which we are a part, and religion and spirituality are intimately tied to culture. 'Even a religion's very articulation of itself takes on the cadences, metaphors, and delivery systems of the culture that it is in the business of informing' (Tickle 2012, p. 19). One could argue this is also true for spirituality: a private faith or personal belief is never entirely separated from its context:

We turned our back on traditional religions and walked through Huxley's Doors of Perception: Heaven and Hell, dropping acid with Ram Dass and Timothy Leary, drank peyote with Carlos Castaneda and went on a magical mystery tour with Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters.

In the seventies Asian drug lords began shipping their wares of heroin and cocaine to the Australian shores and thousands succumbed to living numb. By the beginning of the eighties the New Age had permeated and cross pollinated our culture. In a search to find meaning in this life, we turned to reincarnation and past lives. We identified ourselves through astrology, numerology, and the Chinese zodiac, seeking answers through the I Ching (The Book of Changes), Crystals and tarot cards. Moon calendars were posted on the back of the toilet door and the new relationship bible, Sun Signs, lay in the centre of every coffee table (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.170).

Claiming that you are SBNR may be valid, but without following a traditional path, what are the indicators of spiritual progress and wellbeing.

Because religion is a collective practice, it asks that we look after more than just ourselves. Criticisms of people who claim to be SBNR are that most seekers dabble or experiment rather than making a once-and-forever commitment. And that such an approach is inherently selfish and shallow – taken up by people who want to be entirely independent and not have to ask themselves tough questions. At the heart of the distinction between religion and spirituality lies the presumption that to think and act within an existing tradition risks making one less spiritual.

A notable difference between religion and spirituality is, I suggest, that religion is concerned with the past and the future, whereas spirituality is

concerned with the now. Spirituality does not lay claim to stories of where we have been or where we are going, rather the aim of spirituality is to bring the person into a direct experience of the present moment.

4.3 Spiritual Bypassing

With this definition in mind, I would also suggest, that at the root of any definition of spirituality there has to be a practical application. It is too easy for people to claim a spirituality that has no substance in responsibility and transformation. A definition of spirituality which has no grounded reality in the recognition of the nature of human suffering and, our need to come to terms with this, is instead a form of spiritual bypassing.

Masters (2010) states that spiritual bypassing takes place when so called spirituality, disconnects us from what is important in our life. Trying to take a spiritual shortcut is another way of describing the term spiritual bypassing: a shortcut, 'through delusion to enlightenment' (Masters 2010). The real delusion here according to Masters is 'the very idea that one can actually cut corners in spiritual practice' (Masters 2010, p. 37). Spiritual bypassing has become a contemporary byproduct of the SBNR phenomenon associated with the spirituality in the current time. However the act of spiritual bypassing is in no way just limited to people who claim to be SBNR. The world's religions are full of people who are also looking for a way to bypass the pain of life. Buddhist teacher and nun, Pema Chodron states that:

Although it is embarrassing and painful, it is very healing to stop hiding from yourself. It is healing to know all the ways that you're sneaky, all the ways that you hide out, all the ways that you shut down, deny, close off, criticize people, all your weird little ways... by knowing yourself your coming to know humanness altogether (Chodron 1994, p. 5).

Chodron claims most spiritual experiences begin with the feeling of being groundless, as though the rug has been pulled out from underneath you and everything familiar has been shown to be impermanent. An example of groundlessness is described at the beginning of *Kissed by a deer* when I am writing about the experience of loss:

When my father died, my roots in this world had been pulled up, and I'd lost the place I called home. I could easily spin out into the cosmos and become lost, afloat in a world of grief and disillusionment (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.5).

If we become caught up in a spiritual bypass we are vulnerable to the delusion that we can find a way to avoid the pain of doing the real work in life, of dealing with the nature of existence: messy relationships, grief, loss, difficult emotions and all the other difficulties we would rather avoid.

An example of the lived experience of spiritual bypassing is illustrated most clearly in *Kissed by a deer* in the life of Mia. A woman alienated in her own culture, who when confronted with the reality of her isolation and loneliness, instead of using this opening to make a decision and face her reality, reverted back to a bypass and the camouflage of her persona:

Mai didn't look at me for a while, then she came over and said, 'I woke up feeling a little groggy this morning and you know when you laid your hands on my head... well there are reiki points that connect to ... and when you touched my head it must have opened up the channel that ...' I could barely believe what I was hearing. When she had wept and told me how she felt it was probably the first time she'd gotten real with herself in years. Now, I listened astonished, as she spiritualised her experience, trying to protect a fragile sense of self hiding behind her long white robes. I had never seen the defence of denial so clearly before. She couldn't or wouldn't feel the existential pain of her current situation (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p. 133).

Masters argues:

True spirituality is not a high, not a rush, not an altered state..., our times call for something more real, grounded, and responsible; something radically alive and naturally integral; something that shakes us to the very core until we stop treating spiritual deepening as something to dabble in here and there (Masters 2010, p. 3).

Spiritual bypassing allows us to feel we are safely wrapped up in a cocoon of protection, believing we have achieved a state of transcendence when, in fact, we are in denial, shutting down and becoming numb. In this state of being we

believe in only the positive aspects of reality, effectively removing ourselves from the suffering of our own life and the life's of others.

4.4: Pseudo Religion

Previously, in times of stability, the personal and lived experience of spirituality was exclusively recognised and celebrated in religious services. People were expected 'to lead normal lives in conformity with religious doctrine and guidelines' and were not 'encouraged to discover a personal relationship with God'(Tacey 2003, p. 1).

The explosion of interest in spirituality since the mid-1960's, especially Eastern beliefs, has pulled the proverbial 'spiritual rug' out from under us and, for many people created a climate that is receptive to the phenomenon of spiritual bypassing in their search for a spiritual home creating a type of 'pseudo-religion'. There is now slippage between disciplines, spiritual practices and religious beliefs that can make it difficult to fully understand what people are talking about: or to use common language, 'where they are coming from'.

In the BBC's series 'A point of view', Shakespeare (2014) cites Putnam (2011) and Campbell (2012) who make reference to people called "Nones" – a group of people who believe in God, but don't belong to a religion:

Others have used the term "moralistic therapeutic deism" to refer to how young people are turning towards a vague belief that God exists and the point of life is to be happy(Shakespeare 2014).

The boundaries between spirituality, religion, philosophy, and psychology in many cases have become blurred, creating enmeshed hybrid versions of what was once considered separate. Consider for example positive psychology and mindfulness, coming to be seen as Buddhist psychology. At the same time, many people argue Buddhism is not a religion, but a philosophy. Perhaps then the practice of mindfulness in a psychological setting can be seen as philosophical psychology.

Added to this mix are the dialogues that are now forming between neuroscience and spiritual belief systems: Buddhism in particular. The empiricism of science is now being called upon to give weight to knowledge that

previous belonged solely in the realm of the contemplative and wisdom traditions. From the methodological perspective, both traditions emphasize the role of empiricism to account for life in terms of the complex interrelations of the natural laws of cause and effect. Another example can be seen in The human potential movement, which began in the 1960s, and has now matured to form 'Integral philosophy' and 'Integral life practice' – a way of life that offers, 'A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening' (Wilber et al. 2008). It could be argued that we are currently creating new 'forms' of religion which amount to an entire way of life and that such 'integrated or implicit forms of religion may represent the norm from which Christianity has departed. In other words, the concept of religion may itself be a religious concept!' (Dawei 2012, p. 55)

Like many of the concepts explored in this exegesis the new hybrid belief systems are not easily defined. What this does tell us however, is that in the realm of knowledge we are currently in a time of great change and reform.

4.5 The Spirit of the Times

Tickle(2012) proposes that roughly every five hundred years Western culture, along with those parts of the world which have been colonized by it, goes through a time of enormous upheaval – a time in which essentially every part of it is reconfigured and, that we are in such a time at the present. According to Tickle (2012) the last time this took place in human history was, 'The Great Reformation' – a time in which discoveries made about the physical universe, gave birth to a new way of developing literacy and ordering western governance and economics. A number of names have been used over the last five or six decades to describe and name our current time in history.

- The Fifth Turning
- The Great Emergence
- The Age of Aquarius
- The New Age
- The Great Mutation
- The Great Convergence

Tickle(2012) calls this time 'The Great Emergence', a time of transition that is neither casual nor passing. She describes our current place in history as a 'hinge period', a time when:

intellectually, politically, economically, culturally, sociologically, religiously, psychologically— every part of us and, of how we are and, how we live has, to some greater or lesser degree, been reconfiguring over the last century and a half, and those changes are now becoming a genuine maelstrom around us(Tickle 2012, p. 25)

4.6 The Spirituality Revolution

Almost ten years before Tickle(2012),Tacey(2003) referred to the radical transformation spirituality has undergone in the past fifty or more years as *The Spirituality Revolution*. 'A spontaneous movement in society, a new interest in the reality of spirit and its healing effects on life, health, community and wellbeing'(Tacey 2003, p. 32).Noting that in turning away from formalised religious practices, what was being rejected was not the spirit, but the boundaries which hemmed in the search – created in an era governed by patriarchal control, institutional mechanistic modelling, and the supremacy of rationalism.

Many of the changes that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century in response to the political and religious structures in Western society are synonymous with the Baby Boomer Generation, a generation defined for their rejection of traditional values and their subsequent redefinition of cultural norms. Baby boomers tended to think of themselves as a special generation, associating themselves with counterculture and change. They fought for social, economic, and political equality, and demanded justice for disadvantaged groups: African-Americans, women, gays and lesbians, American Indians and Hispanics, for example. In Australia, along with other social movements the fight for land rights and the environment began.

In the West the Baby Boomers comprised the first generation to grow up with television. They were influenced significantly by writers from the beat generation such as Kerouac and Ginsberg and the popular music of that time,

played by artists such as, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Bob Dylan.

Music was a strong expression of their cultural and general identity:

I hadn't escaped the juggernaut of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll as it rolled over the youth of the West in the sixties and seventies.

While Tibet was being invaded by the Chinese; her monasteries destroyed and hundreds of thousands of monks, nuns, and lay people tortured and killed, I was being swept up and washed out to sea, in the waves of social change that flooded the western world after the Second World War. Worshipping in the temples of rock n' roll, I bowed before our latest, greatest idols. The Rolling Stones, embodying the power of raw sexuality and rebellion, danced and grunted our anthem...I know it's only rock 'n' roll but I like it, like it, yes I do. Jimi Hendrix, taunting the unseen forces with his guitar, wailed I'm a voodoo child...I stand up next to a mountain and I cut it down with the side of my hand... The Doors enticed us to come on baby light my fire... Van Morrison led us into the mystic... Dylan voiced our confusion and called for change... There must be some way out of here said the joker to the thief. There's just too much confusion and I can't get no relief...we took a walk on the wild side with Lou Reed...and the coloured girls go boop de boop de boop de boop... while female counterparts like Janis Joplin crying...Take another piece of my heart now baby... were sacrificed young, tormented, and defiant (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.169-70).

I was born in 1959, just at the end of the Baby Boomer generation. Many people born at this end of the generation grew up in a time of dramatic social change, and felt a sense of disconnection with the cultural identifiers from those born earlier. My formative years were shaped by a clash of values between the old (conservative) ways, and the new (liberal) way of life of my generation:

I shunned materialism and capitalist culture and delved into eastern and western philosophies searching for truth. Beat writers like Ginsberg, Burroughs and Kerouac entered my consciousness, battling for supremacy in my young, already overloaded mind. Eventually Kerouac

won the fight. Drawn to the ideal of freedom, I became a Dharma Bum and hit the road in search of enlightenment (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.8).

Social change also brought with it the emergence of a new spirituality and while formal religion appeared to be losing its stronghold and dominant role, there was at the same time a hunger and interest in things that pertain to religion Tacey(2012). A personal relationship with `spirit`, through the figure of Christ, had begun to be replaced by a universal cosmic consumerism. Crystals, dream catchers, tarot cards, astrology, feng shui, the I Ching, indigenous cosmologies, ancient wisdoms, and spiritual psychologies flooded the market place in an attempt to satisfy spiritual longing and hunger:

But because the New Age operates in a consumerist mode, it rarely meets our spiritual needs, often providing a `fast food` service, a kind of McSpirit that fails to satisfy`. The human spirit calls for an authentic response, not simply for a symptomatic or artificial quick fix (Chodron 1994, p. Preface x).

In the aversion to formalised religious institutions in the west, Christianity in particular, The New Age has become synonymous with a rise in aspiration for a spiritual reality. But instead of meeting our need for an authentic spiritual life the New Age acts as a kind of parody that signifies a human desire for the spiritual life to be made real(Chodron 1994).

As noted by Armstrong(2011),now through electronic media, `we are bound together more closely than ever before` (Wilber et al. 2008, p. 3). Eclectic and independent spiritual teachers, gurus, coaches, and guides, can all be found on the internet, creating an entirely new level of interchange and access to information.

Ecumenical conferences also seek to create dialogues which will bind us together more closely. In 1988, `The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions` was formed which aims to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities, while fostering their engagement with the world, and its guiding institutions. This illustrates Tacey`s claim(2003) that in the present time of global culture, there is a need for common values and visions, and the discovery of a universal spirituality.

This desire for discovery is the motivation underpinning a spiritual quest. A journey arguably, many people dream about but rarely undertake. For again, as Tacey claims, 'The fact that people might be loyal, to an inner spiritual process or quest is not recognised or, if seen, not sufficiently respected' (Tacey 2003, p. 44) .

4.7 The Spiritual Quest

In the first half of the 20th century, spirituality, even in the mystic east was, primarily embodied in the domain of nationalistic religions. Religions in both the East and the West were quite possibly unaware of other faiths, and rarely willing to enter into dialogue. The spiritual lives of women and, other second class citizens were largely ignored. The variety and breadth of spiritual doctrines held by thousands of seekers in other times and other places was also ignored – the other was largely unknown, and if known, was likely to have come under ridicule and negation. Although there is still room for improvement and grounds for further change, the beginning of the 21st has brought with it possibilities that were previously denied:

The wonderful thing about hanging out with Tibetan monks is they're not interested if you're married or not. I felt completely at home, sitting in a tent on the grasslands in Tibet, with ten men I didn't know. A single woman from the West seeking spiritual enlightenment is totally within the scope of their reality and world view (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.168).

In her 2009 Ted Talk, 'Your Elusive Creative Genius,' Gilbert(2013) in defining the nature of a spiritual quest calls this inner drive and process the 'Physics of The Quest' – a force of nature governed by laws as real as the laws of gravity or momentum. Which she claims begins:

If you are brave enough to leave behind everything familiar and comforting (which can be anything from your house to your bitter old resentments)and set out on a truth-seeking journey (either externally or internally), and if you are truly willing to regard everything that happens to you on that journey as a clue, and if you accept everyone you meet along the way as a teacher, and if you are prepared - most of all -to face (and forgive) some very difficult realities about yourself....then truth will not be withheld from you(Gilbert *The Physics of the quest* 2013).

The experience I recorded in *Kissed by a Deer* supports this claim:

Whereas others may travel to India in search of a guru, my teachers had come to me in the forms of two young men who had impacted my life deeply (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.53).

It was through these two relationships that the nature and lessons of my own quest were revealed. This is a vastly different concept than that of a religious experience.

A serious spiritual quest must ensure that pursuits are not blind to the needs, events and diversity of beliefs in our modern times. The time of single-minded pursuit indifferent to the teachings outside one's own and, to the sufferings from across the globe has passed. I was acutely aware of this when journeying in Tibet and dialoguing with the monks:

one of the monks asked if I was a Christian, would I tell them about Jesus?... Being asked to tell the story of Jesus to people who have never heard it before was a challenging request. I didn't want to be responsible for putting anything out there which might create conflict, confusion, or division... It was difficult to know where to start. Jesus, I explained, was a great healer, the greatest healer to walk the earth: the Prince of Peace. He practised love, kindness, forgiveness and compassion; he was without blame and without shame; never did anything wrong or hurt anybody. The monks nodded their heads in respect. I continued the story telling them he lived on earth 2000 years ago and proclaimed he was the son of God, but the religious leaders and political authorities didn't believe him, so they crucified him by nailing his body to a wooden cross and let him bleed to death. This part of the story was visibly upsetting for them but the similarities between their own spiritual teacher being sent into exile and what was happening in Tibet made the story plausible for them.

I went on, explaining that three days after he died he manifested again on the earth; this is the miracle we call resurrection – they'd only destroyed his body, not his spirit. He rose again from the dead and is still alive in the spiritual world today. A sense of awe came over them. For

people who`d lived in a spiritual reality all their lives and had heard stories of reincarnation, the rainbow body, and ascension, there was no question as to the validity of this statement. He was obviously a Bodhisattva. Unquestionably, they accepted this as fact (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.171-72).

Although tendencies of single-minded pursuit are still strong in the collective psyche, they are no longer expected amongst the educated spiritual seeker. There has been a huge awakening in the West, to Hinduism, Buddhism (Tibetan Buddhism in particular) and, more recently Islam. At the same time there has been a commensurate adaption of Western science and technology in the cultures of the East. Armstrong(2011) argues in twenty-first-century life, with the advent of technology, both the personal and global become significant and, the challenges we now face are not just social and political but, also spiritual and personal.

Jung stated the reason that the modern world is in crisis is that it has become desacralized. Dowrick picked up on this theme stating:

To `re-sacralize' the world, as Carl Jung suggests, and to tend to what is alive, healing, tender and precious in this familiar material world, we must discover and rediscover the source and vitality of our own spirituality(Dowrick 2010, p. 9).

This supports Tacey`s (2003) claim that spirituality now has to be sought by individual effort. Consequently more and more people are turning into mystics and visionaries as they search for an understanding of the spiritual.

In her 2009 Ted Talk, `Your Elusive Creative Genius', Gilbert argues that `any era that demands that people essentially have to be mystics in order to find peace and happiness is a really tough era in which to live'(Gilbert 2009).

4.8 Mysticism

I support both Tacey`s and Gilbert`s claim that in the individual`s effort to finding meaning outside the constraints of religious structures, which has often failed them, mysticism supports and rewards individual effort. An example of this can be found in the `Twelve Step Recovery' movement.

There are now close to fifty twelve-step groups based on the set of guiding principles, originally developed in 1935 by Alcoholics Anonymous. The overriding principle in the twelve step program is that the individual must develop an understanding of, and connection with, a power greater than their self, to overcome their difficulties and recover, and that this must be sought through individual effort. They may choose to call this power God, but are under no obligation to do so. There are hundreds of thousands of people accessing twelve step fellowships worldwide. Tickle (2012) claimed AA is now the biggest underground mystical church in our culture.

Mysticism originates from the Greek *mystikos*, and is defined as the pursuit of communion and identification with, or conscious awareness of, spiritual truth or God. Mysticism centers on practices intended to nurture intuition, insight, and direct experience of this awareness. These practices can lead to significant transformation and changes in consciousness. At the heart of mysticism is the claim that the spiritual apprehension must be attained through contemplation and self-surrender. Mysticism is not bound by dogma or submission to an external authority and 'has room for profound doubt and insistent questioning'(McColman 2010, p. 7).

Many, if not all, of the world's religions have arisen around the teachings of mystics. Mysticism however, is often disparaged by conventional religion. Religious traditions have strong institutional structures, formal hierarchies, and mandated sacred texts. Adherents of the faith are generally expected to follow their teaching closely and normally are not encouraged to seek knowledge through an individual personal quest.

In contrast mysticism can allow for the possibility, and plausibility, of the average person to have an experiential relationship with God. This demands awareness, courage and commitment. There is no room for avoidance or deferring to an institutional human authority. As stated by McColman, mysticism isn't:

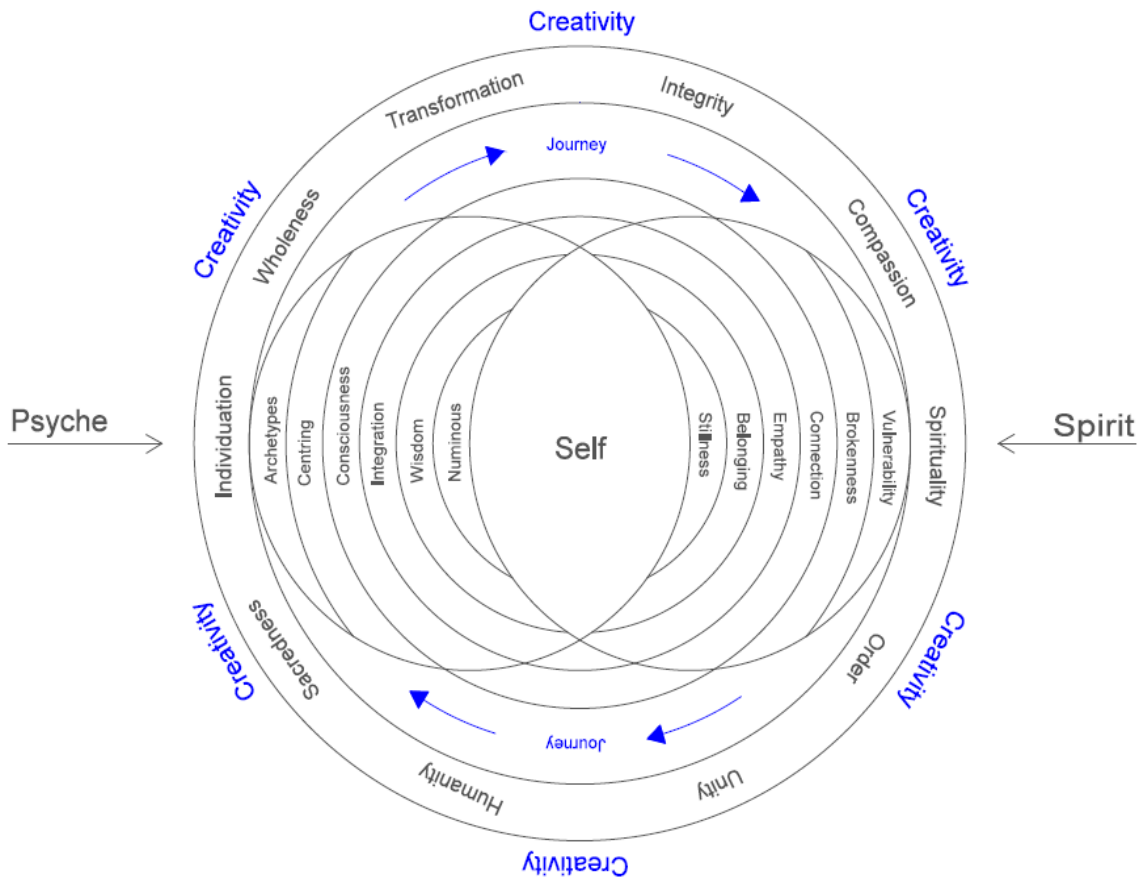
about keeping your hands clean. Rather it impels you to get them dirty...it is the spirituality of bringing heaven to earth, and of going through hell while here on earth in order to get to heaven (McColman 2010, p. 9).

The desire to connect with spirituality through creativity is another feature of our age. 'The Artist's Way: A course in Discovering and Recovering your Creative Self', a self-help book written by American author Julia Cameron, became an international best seller in 1992 and was the basis for what has since become the 'Artist's Way Movement'. In essence 'The Artist's Way' is a spiritual path initiated and practised through creativity' (Cameron 1993, p. xi). Cameron maintains throughout the book that creative inspiration is from a divine origin and that God, however we may define this concept, is an artist. When we engage in the creative act we co-create with our creator. On this point I concur with Cameron.

Many artists, like the mystics struggle to bring heaven down to earth and, creativity like mysticism, isn't about 'keeping your hands clean'. Although they function differently, ultimately both art and mysticism converge in the same direction: they are both expressions of the human search for something beyond mundane reality. Art can also be a way of pleasantly introducing meditation, as it can unconsciously, or consciously, lead the mind inward, transferring attention away from the material to the immaterial dimension of reality.

For many people, myself included, a creative practice lays the foundation for an expression of their spirituality. It is their spiritual pathway. A creative practice can offer the individual the opportunity to form an identity which includes an understanding of, and connection with mystery.

5. Transforming



Mandala 1: (Gibb 2013©)

The following section of the exegesis explores this process in relation to, creativity, creative practice, and the artist.

5.1 Artists

Artists can share a similarity with mystics, in that they seek a higher or hidden meaning, even in the most mundane of perceived realities. Reverentially created sensitively approached, respectfully used and understood, poetry, literature, painting, music, dance, sculpture, and other forms of inspired art can come close to revealing mystery(Brunton 2013).



Mandala 5: *Put your Cards on the Table* (Gibb 2013)

Artists

What they do,
The singers, tale-writers, dancers, painters, shapers, makers?
They go there with empty hands,
into the gap between.
They come back with things in their hands.
They go there silent and come back with words, with tunes.
They go into the confusion and come back with patterns.
They go limping and weeping, ugly and frightened,
And come back with the wings of the red wing hawk,
The eyes of the mountain lion.

That is where they live,
where they get their breath;
There, in the gap between,
The empty place.
Where do the mysterious artists live?
There, in the gap between.
Their hands are the hinge.
No one else can breathe there.
They are beyond praise.

The ordinary artists use
Patience, passion, skill, work
And returning to work, judgment
Proportion, intellect, purpose
Indifference, obstinacy, delight in tools,
Delight, and with these as their way
They approach the gap, the hub
Approaching in circles, in gyers
Like the buzzard, looking down, watching,
Like the coyote watching.

They look to the centre,
They turn on the centre,
They describe the center,
though they cannot live there.
They deserve praise.

There are people who call themselves artists,
Who compete with each other for praise.
They think the center is a stuffed gut,
And that shitting is working.
They are what the buzzard and the coyote
ate for breakfast yesterday (Le Guin 1988, p. 74).

Acknowledging although invariably creative, not all artists create work to represent spiritual realities, there are some artists who in their quest to express and represent something divine, or spiritual, can create an inspired work which holds both a visible and invisible reality: which comes close to representing the sacred. This can be witnessed in the art of indigenous peoples: the sacred rock art of the Australian Aboriginals for example.

Paradoxically this creates opportunities to experience a deeper connection not only with mystery, but with humanity. For many people, who have no affinity with religion or mysticism, the arts can offer an experience of spirituality and a deeper sense of what it means to be human. This poses the question, what it is about creativity that allows for these connections to be made?

5.2 Creativity

The English word creativity comes from the Latin term *creō* `to create or make. Create, appeared in the English language in the 14th century and was used to indicate divine creation. The modern meanings of the word, as an act of human creation, did not emerge until after the Enlightenment. Social attitudes towards creativity however, continue to remain divided.

Being a creative person or an artist is not eminently recognized as being a good thing. Identifying as an artist can represent a quest for a radical autonomy, individuality, and a freedom from the constraints of social responsibility: encouraging departure from society's existing norms and values is commonly seen as threatening.

Artists' are often at the forefront of social change, subject to mass criticism and misunderstanding. A contemporary example of this can be seen in the life of Yoko Ono, who blurred the boundaries between music and conceptual art and sang in her own defence:

Yes.
I'm a witch,
I'm a bitch,
I don't care what you say.
My voice is real,
My voice speaks truth,
I don't fit in your ways (Ono 1974).

It is only now as an octogenarian that she is receiving recognition for her role as a cultural pioneer and activist.

5.3 The Creative Turn

Advocating for social change is not a role often associated with the leaders in the world of business or IT, yet current trends in research seek to direct creativity away from the realm of the arts claiming creative values are now central to the fields of science, business and technology.

Current research is being conducted into the nature of creativity through the field of neuroscience. In 2013 a neuroscience research documentary entitled, 'How to be more creative', produced by the BBC, was broadcast in Australia on SBS. Researchers' featured in the documentary claim specific mental processes such as, insight, divergent thinking, and improvisation are part of a neural cortex of creativity in the brain. From this perspective creativity is not a talent, it is a way of operating. Underpinning this research is the claim that for humanity to advance and move towards a prosperous future, creativity and creative design will be necessary in every step forward (*How to be more creative* 2013).

The traditional aesthetic view of creativity as a gift stemming from visitations of the muse, given to an elite few, and taking years of dedicated practise to master is being replaced with a view which seeks to commodify creativity as a core cognitive skill. Harris states:

In proliferating discourses of the commodification of creativity, most experts agree: creativity is undefinable, possibly unteachable, largely un-assessable, and becoming the most valuable commodity in 21st-century markets (Harris 2014, pp. 2-3).

I put forward that attempting to demystify creativity by relegating it merely to the cognitive process of the brain does not take into account artists' relationship with mystery or the drive in many artists to engage with the process, not the product. If there were no inner relationship with mystery, poets would give up striving for perfection and write copy, musicians would cease to compose, and instead write commercial jingles, and visual artists would no

longer seek self expression but instead create only commercially acceptable images for the market place(Csikszentmihalyi 1996).

Like Harris(2014) and Csikszentmihalyi(1996) I support the view that creativity is not just about producing something novel and useful in the market place. Some of the most magnificent works of art created in the history of humanity would not necessarily be deemed useful. It can also be argued that an act of creative expression is not necessarily something that is produced.

Creativity, like the concepts previously discussed in this exegesis is an elusive subject which cannot be exactly explained. Research shows Rogers(1954), deBotton(2013), Harris(2014))however that art has the ability to expand human awareness and raise consciousness by changing the way we view things and shifting our perspective, and that engaging in a creative artistic process can enable us to make connections and greater sense of our lives:

The ultimate result and worth of a work of art lies not in the immediate pleasure it gives, but in the far deeper feeling of fulfilment. For this in turn arises out of the divine stillness, which was momentarily and unwittingly touched(Brunton 2013).

When creativity is viewed from this perspective its primary value is seen not as a specific mental process, but as a vehicle which has the potential to move us beyond the constraints of self.

As stated by Mackay:

`Creative work, especially writing, can sometimes benefit us in ways that go beyond entertainment or distraction: many people say their lives have been transformed through the reading of particular books'(Mackay 2013, p.153).

My own life has been transformed through the works of musicians, writers and artists:

At the age of nineteen I settled into the life of a bohemian. Sleeping in a loft, in a small garret in Melbourne's inner suburbs; studying creative writing and philosophy and hanging out with other writers, poets and painters. Inspired by intellectual curiosity and hedonism I followed the beat manifesto... Looking back, I wonder how different my life may have been if the primary counterculture influences had been women. Female

contemporaries of the male Beat writers were part of the creation of Beat philosophy and literature, but absent from the public eye (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.7-8).

Creativity has the capacity to transform lives both through a creative practice and through meaningful encounters with great creative works. It can reveal to us many dimensions of the self, the other, and mystery, act as a vehicle for transition, serve as a place of refuge and, engage people in a spirit of community.

5.4 Broken Places

Research into the nature of creativity, outside of the fields of science, business, and technology, is also taking place. Author, speaker, and radio producer, Julie Burstein has spent her working life interviewing and researching highly creative people. To uncover some of the coordinates and dimensions of creativity, Burstein(2012) claimed 'the tragic dimension of life is a spark for creativity to occur' and states creativity grows out of everyday life experiences, in particular, from the 'broken places'. Her research revealed four aspects of life we need to embrace, in order for creativity to flow:

- The world around us – being open to experiences which change us.
- Those parts of life which are most difficult.
- Limitations, and
- Loss – the oldest and most constant of human experiences(Burstein 2012).

Burstein notes that although we may enjoy the fruits of creativity through music, poetry, painting, film and various other forms of expression, we are rarely privy to the artist's creative process or their source of inspiration. Burstein claims:

In order to create we have to stand in that space between what we see in the world and what we hope for. Looking squarely at rejection, at heartbreak, at war, and at death, and that's a hard space to stand in-what Palmer (2013) calls the 'tragic gap' – tragic not because it is sad but because it's inevitable (Burstein *Four Lessons in Creativity* 2012).

Having engaged in creative practice for the past thirty years I have no hesitation in arguing for the validity of this claim – the primary impetus necessary for me to write the creative component of this study, *Kissed by a Deer* was to stand in, and squarely face, the `tragic gap`:

My friends, although caring, no longer lived in the same world as me. The veil of death hung between us, separating their lives from mine. They hadn't encountered major loss, their families were still intact. While I was busy burying mine, they were busy creating their own. Except for my brother, who I love dearly, but with whom I'd become distant through the grief process, I was completely alone. I had to keep moving. I couldn't afford to sink into a well of grief (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.6).

Creativity offers us the opportunity to tell the story. To make deeper connections with the cycle of creation and destruction [life and death], let go, pick up the pieces from the broken places, make something new, and move on (Burstein 2012).

Like Burnstein(2012), Palmer(2013), and Brown(2010), I would argue that it is not just creative design that will advance humanity it is creative knowledge which stems from uncertainty and risk. Moreover Brown claimed, 'If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path'(Brown 2010, p. 34). Burstein made no specific reference to vulnerability in relation to creativity, which I view as an oversight in her work.

My own experience and understanding has led me to the realisation that vulnerability is a central feature of creativity and deeply imbedded in the whole process. Not only are you vulnerable expressing your creativity, you are vulnerable in how this is received.

5.5 Vulnerability

Brown (2012) spent twelve years researching vulnerability which led her to reach several conclusions. In her 2010 Ted Talk `The Power of Vulnerability' Brown states that:

- Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.

- Vulnerability is the path back to each other.
- Vulnerability is our most accurate measurement of courage.
- Vulnerability is not weakness.
- Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the centre, of meaningful human experiences.
- And, to be vulnerable is to let ourselves be seen to be honest (Brown 2010)

In a moment of intense vulnerability I received the insight which later led me to write *Kissed by a Deer*. In recognising and touching my own mortality, I found the strength, courage and willingness, to embrace loss, limitations, and difficulties: to celebrate the diversity of lived experience:

Memories of moments I'd experienced enjoying full health, laughing with friends, travelling, revelling in the beauty of nature, caught up in the rapture of creativity, sat in the forefront of my mind like sparkling jewels. I'd thought this would be mine forever. Now, I saw the reality that it could finish at any given moment. None of it was in my control. I'd tasted the magnificence of being alive, the endless possibilities, the diversity, the mystery. Trying to make peace with powerlessness, I desperately wanted to transform. To live and enjoy my life to the best of my ability, regardless of who I was, who I wasn't, what I had, or what I didn't have. I was undergoing spiritual shock treatment: waking up from the dream. Life was the gift – everything else was a bonus (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.208).

The creative act is intrinsically vulnerable. It implies uncertainty, risk, emotional exposure, and the possibility of rejection. In writing *Kissed by a Deer*, I acknowledged and embraced my own vulnerability. [At this stage of the process I am still vulnerable as to what the outcome may be].

For a creative person there is no guarantee their art form, whether it is visual art, poetry, music, photography, writing or any other creative medium will find acceptance or appreciation. Sharing your creative work immediately puts you in a place of vulnerability, according to Brown:

You've knowingly or unknowingly attached your self-worth to how your product or art is received. In simple terms, if they love it, you're worthy; if they don't, you're worthless (Brown 2012, p. 63).

Exposing our identity in this way places the creative person in a position where they are vulnerable to having their work, expectations and dreams meet with either a luke warm reception or a straight out rejection – this can lead to the creative person feeling crushed, shamed and defeated. On the other hand, if met with the opposite experience and people love what you do, you are still caught. Although you may experience pleasure and raised self-esteem, you are still bound up in the trap of what other people think' (Brown 2012, p. 63), this concluded Brown, places us at risk of feeling disconnected and shamed. Brown's primary contention is that, it is connection which gives our lives a sense of meaning and purpose 'without it there is suffering' (Brown 2012, p. 8).

Through the process of conducting her research, Brown (2010) was led to confront her own sense of identity and vulnerability and experienced a 'spiritual breakdown/ breakthrough' (Brown 2010). As a result she claimed to have developed a greater ability to form and experience meaningful connections, emphasising that connection is crucial to living a full and purposeful life. The acting out of my own spiritual quest through various creative forms, initially through the mandala, song writing/music, and now through my writing, has at heart essentially been a subtle interplay between vulnerability, acceptance and connection.

In 2010, Brown gave a TED talk entitled 'The Power of Vulnerability'. As of June 1st 2014, fifteen million, three hundred and seventy nine thousand, seven hundred and eighty nine people have viewed the talk. This number represents video views on TED.com and in the TED embedded player. Across all platforms (YouTube, downloads, etc), total views typically double that number. This suggests that in just over two years close to twenty million people have accessed her research in response to their own needs.

I contend the reason so many people have accessed this work is the validity of her claim that of prime importance to human happiness is the relationship between being vulnerable and living an authentic, connected, and

whole hearted life: being willing to let go of who you think you should be in order to become who you are(Brown 2010).

At the heart of Jung`s theory of individuation, and central to the theme of this exegesis, is the claim that creativity for many people, is the vehicle with which they can achieve authenticity in this process.

To broaden the framework of this inquiry, three artists who have practised their profession for at least twenty years, were asked to participate in a conversational interview:

- ❖ Jennyfer Stratman – sculptress
- ❖ Alan Browne- jazz musician/poet
- ❖ Kavisha Mazzella-singer/songwriter/painter

Themes which emerged in the data collected in the interviews have been used to inform the following sections in the exegesis. *[Each artist stated they were comfortable to be a part of this study and have their name printed in the exegesis. See Appendix A for Artist Profiles].

5.6 Connection

Brown claimed `Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel see, heard, and valued: when they can give and receive without judgement'(Brown 2012, p. 145). Stratman (2013) stated connection and interconnection are central to her work. In the interview she claimed:

My life and my work aren`t very separate-there isn`t a separation at all. My art is like a metaphor for my life and helps me to connect in with what`s been going on and how I`ve been processing it (Stratman 2013).

She also expresses this beautifully through her artist statement maintaining:

All of us have a primordial knowledge of the universe locked inside our bodies that is manifest in our varied ways of viewing our world and beyond.... I know when I have my exhibitions and people buy the work

they've got their own connection to the work, which is not necessarily what I intended when I was making it – actually what I intend I sometimes question because my work is about those universal themes. I can look into a piece and think it's about this whole collective consciousness stemming from universal things or it could be about my connection to another person or what's going on in my life. I can look at my own work in so many different ways and see how it could be interpreted... for a lot of artists, the ideas stem from somewhere, and it might be their whole life that they're doing kind of the same thing- virtually the same idea- that's pretty prevalent with artists- and so to me my work might look quite different to other people over the years but it's stemmed from the universal interconnection of everything (Stratman 2010).

Alain de Botton claimed (2013) to foster creativity, no matter what the individual does, it is important to make them feel worthy. When we do not validate the expression, we devalue the person and they become disconnected. Mazzella recalled an incident in her formative years when she felt shamed, devalued and subsequently disconnected. This incident was powerful enough to change the course of her life:

When I was at art school I entered a drawing prize – the University Guild of Undergraduates – it was at a West Australian university – I was about to go and do my third year. One of the art teachers who we all revered and wanted to be in his class came in very drunk and threw wine on my work- I had won the prize and he threw wine on it – he said it was a pile of shit – I was totally shocked – it was traumatic enough to make me feel like I didn't want to belong and go into an art world ...It was such a shock it really shattered my self confidence – I loved it so much I had to finish the course but I didn't turn up to classes very much – I just spent a lot of time by myself painting after that happened (Mazzella 2013).

As cited by McLeod(2007) ,Roger's(1954)stressed, the creative impulse is self actualizing, arising out of a personal need for the individual to express their self in a way that satisfies, and that in fostering creativity it is important to make the individual feel worthy no matter what they do. To self actualise the creative person must have complete freedom to give symbolic expression to their creative process. For it is through connecting our spiritual self, with others, and the world around us that we create a sense of belonging. Research (e.g., Butterworth et al.,(2001); Golden et al.,(2009)) proposes a sense of belonging, connection and community, is important to overall health and wellbeing, not only for the individual but the social structure of society.

5.7 Belonging

Brown stated that, 'The two most powerful forms of connection are love and belonging...Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us'(Brown 2012, p. 145). Because of this innate desire to belong, it is not uncommon for us to reject elements of the self that may be met with disapproval and instead to substitute with characteristics we believe help us to fit – consider for example the testimonies of many from the gay communities. The most recent example (July 2014) being Australian Olympic swimmer, Ian Thorpe. Paradoxically a lack of authenticity in favour of social acceptability creates barriers to that which we are seeking: belonging. Brown asserts 'true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world; our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance'(Brown 2012, pp. 145-6).

Two of the artists commented on feeling they didn't belong when they were young. Mazzella said:

I felt a bit odd because I felt like I couldn't fit in. I felt I was blighted by my creativity... in the sense that I was very obsessed with it and I really felt a bit abnormal because I wasn't following the path that my school friends had followed (Mazzella 2013).

Browne (2013) commented:

When I was 16 I didn't fit in anywhere – I had no spirituality - no life of practice- I wasn't creative- I wasn't any good at school -I wasn't any good at talking to girls-I wasn't any good at anything. And I went to this dance and a jazz band was playing and I thought I'd like to do that with my friends...we all agreed that this music was great and that young women would be more interested in us if we were doing that, rather than flying model aeroplanes(Browne 2013).

He went on to say that significantly the first night he heard jazz music was also the night he had his first drink of alcohol:

I felt great; we all know the story. I thought there's two things I've learnt tonight-I went home high-I'm going to drink and I'll feel better and I'm going to play music and more people will be interested in me`. Several years later he joined AA. `At that point I started to look at my overall life- what was I going to do-I realised that I really wanted to keep playing music...as soon as I got sober I started practising(Browne 2013).

For many people a sense of belonging comes from their affiliation with a creative genre and the artists associated with it. This is particularly evident in contemporary society in relation to popular music, and the many subcultures and tribes which have formed in response. For example – jazz, blues, reggae, rap, indie, world, folk, country, bluegrass, rock and pop. A sense of belonging and connection previously offered by aligning with traditions of faith or heritage has been replaced for many by a strong identification with genre.

This is not a phenomena just related to music, but arguably with the emergence of technology, this has manifested most strongly in this arena. As noted by deBotton(2013) in a secularised world, art has in many aspects replaced religion as a measure of reverence and loyalty. It is not uncommon to hear people say 'museums of art are our new churches', places we visit to find,

sanctuary, meaning connection, wonder, mystery consolation, and a sense of redemption:

Engaging with an inspired work of art can encourage us to become better versions of ourselves by elevating our consciousness to comprehend a life that is more accomplished, beautiful, intelligent and wise than we manage to be day to day(deBotton 2013Q+A).

By transforming materials from their familiar contexts, and reshaping them into works of art, artists, frequently change assumptions about the way we look at things. This in turn can change the way we see ourselves and the world. How we engage with an inspired work of art be it a painting, a poem, or a song for example, will depend on the degree of our relationship with creativity and practice: whether we are passive or active in this realm.

5.8 Creative Practice

‘Yes, that could be a good practice` (Palmo 2005). This statement was said to me in a chance meeting, [what Jung would describe as a moment of synchronicity], by Venerable Tenzin Palmo. It was this statement that ultimately led me to contemplate the nature of creative practise and subsequently, the current study. The moment is documented as a moment of relevance in *Kissed by a Deer*:

She paused, thought for a moment and said, ‘Yes, that could be a good practice.’ I didn’t really understand what she meant, but her words were so infused with power, wisdom, and clarity that instantly seeds of contemplation were planted in my mind (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.38).

After many years of contemplating her words I realised a large section of my life involved practice.

I was invited to participate in a multi-faith arts festival. The theme was to ‘create sanctuary’. Half a dozen artists from different faiths and traditions had been asked to exhibit. I accepted and began creating a new series of mandalas. I called my exhibition ‘Practice’. I hadn’t stopped thinking about what Tenzin Plamo had said to me in Dharamasla: a seed had been planted in my mind when she’d said, ‘Yes that could be a good

practice.' I'd since realised that although I didn't identify myself as a Buddhist, a great deal of my life had been spent in practice. I wrote, played guitar, sang and created mandalas – every aspect of my creative expression required practise (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.124).

I have practiced the art and science of yoga for close to twenty years and, have practiced some form of creativity for thirty years. My creative practices have served me as the primary form of meditation and contemplation throughout my life so far. Practising my creativity has allowed me to process my life experiences, furnished me with an intuitive sense of knowing, developed my powers of concentration and insight, and helped me traverse difficult inner landscapes and achieve integration.

In the interview when reflecting on the nature of her practice Stratman stated:

sometimes I sit back and question what I am actually doing-what drives me to do this-what's going on...I can look into a piece and think it's about this whole collective consciousness stemming from universal things or it could be about my connection to another person or what's going on in my life (Stratman 2013).

Mazzella described her relationship to practise stating that:

... practise made me feel at peace, and that was the guideline that I was doing something right – that I would feel at peace – if I was in an environment where I didn't feel at peace then I shouldn't be there- that was my guideline-it was like an internal thing- an internal sense I guess(Mazzella 2013).

Each artist claimed practising their art form not only created opportunities for them to create connection and gain a sense of belonging, but as well, brought them a sense of wellbeing. Mazzella added:

I remember when I was a child the feelings of peace that came over me when I was making something...the earliest memory I have of making something, is that it made me happy (Mazzella 2013).

When talking about creativity it is important to acknowledge the hundreds of hours of solitude a creative practitioner must engage in – writing, painting, practising an instrument, composing – before the few hours they have with an audience. During this time they may feel very vulnerable, experience self doubt and uncertainty, and question what they are doing, asking ‘am I good enough– is this acceptable – is it ok’?

In the interview I asked Browne if he thought this also applied to people who were not employed in the creative arts He answered:

No – I don’t think so – I’m convinced there’s so many jobs where to be that involved you’d go mad – because no one else would be, so you know it would be heavy – but painting, and music and theatre and things like this, they are those sort of jobs (Browne 2013).

I showed Browne the diagram: Mandala 1, and asked him if he knew much about Jung, and his theory of individuation. He replied:

I don’t understand it. I wrote a few songs about Jung sending it up... I thought it was just crap... It’s so complex, its intellectual stuff, which goes against art (Browne 2013).

Ironically, as cited by Cameron, this is substantiated by Jung, who stated ‘the creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but from the play instinct acting from inner necessity’ (Cameron 1993, p. 19).

Although highly accomplished and well regarded, Browne recalls:

I was very insecure all the time until the last two or three years. I have felt insecure, I guess, because I don’t have knowledge of music, I’m not a

good reader and I've always put myself down-even though I play instinctively very well (Browne 2013).

Browne has now played music for over fifty years and claims:

The longer I go on the journey, the more whole I am (Browne 2013).

I can relate to this claim, as for me the drive to continue to practise my creativity is not acclaim or fame – it is a desire to achieve wholeness, authenticity and peace. Creative practise nourishes me spiritually. Practising gives me the space to let go and be fully engaged in the present moment. From my own experience it is the practise component of the creative life that helps to develop a sense of wellbeing: doing the same thing, over and over again, brings with it an element of security and a feeling of being grounded and still. When I first started working with my hands by creating mandalas, my mind became still enough for me to listen to and connect in with, my inner being. The meditative nature of creating a mandala, and the practise component of my creativity helped to create balance in my life. Stratman supports this statement claiming:

I think a lot of artists would say that – it's some sort of necessity they need to do (Stratman 2013).

Often in creative practise the artists is compelled to push on with the creative work until they have manifested that which demands presence.

Mazzella states in her own process she:

has to continue painting until the image inside her has been given visual representation (Mazzella 2013)

Responding to this demand for expression often requires the willingness to spend many hours alone in a creative space. The artist has to let go of the distractions of the outside world and become self disciplined, sober, organised and focussed. Through endless hours of repetition the mind is brought to a

highly concentrated state and turns to focus inward. At the same time the person must be consciously engaged, paying attention to detail, while honing skills, technique, knowledge, and understanding of the methodology. Often it is like entering into a self imposed retreat – themes consistent with those which arise in a spiritual retreat come into play:

- Inspiration
- Motivation
- Preparation
- Place
- Conduct
- Commitment
- Challenges
- Continuity

Things fall away and there is a sense of calmness in the rhythm of the process.

Buddhist nun and teacher Robina Courtin(2008) claimed the aim of practice in Buddhism is not to make the thoughts go away, nor is it to pay attention to them, rather what is required in a meditation practice is to step back and led your mind to a single pointed place of concentration. This state of being in Buddhist terminology is called mindfulness: a place of neutrality, neither positive nor negative. I contend the nature of creative practice is not dissimilar. In the interview Browne confirmed this stating:

You're totally focussed (Browne 2013).

Creative expression can help us to let go and respond to the subtleties and the nuances of the moment, allowing us to get in touch with deeper aspects of our being and generate understanding in relation to another person's experiences and emotions as well as our own.

5.9 Empathy

Brown claims, 'Empathy is connecting with the emotion that someone is experiencing, not the event or the circumstance' (Brown 2012, p. 81) and, argues that at the core, creativity is an expression of our desire and ability to empathise and to connect.

In the interviews Mazzella discussed an encounter with another artist in which the empathy generated through their creative connection led her to reconnect with her relationship to painting:

I started painting these paintings about three years ago when I meet this artist in 2009. I told her my story –about how the teacher had thrown wine on my work and how I just felt so upset by that. I thought I can't bear it and she started crying with me – we were both sitting there crying together –she was the first person that I felt had really listened to what had happened and she started crying. She didn't even say anything about what a bastard she just cried. We were crying and crying and crying in this world that she had created... her theme was nest- soft wool and rope. She was very empathic towards me and then forgiveness came in the sense that I accepted it, through telling it (Mazzella 2013).

This verifies Tacey's claim that 'when we restore ego boundaries in personal rituals, psychotherapy, art or meditation we return to the ocean of being and are restored' (Tacey 2011, p. 222).

Although Mazzella has enjoyed a successful career as a musician, her identification with her visual art is still very strong. It was only in mid life, seeking a greater sense of authenticity, that she returned to her painting to address the sense of fragmentation. This supports the claim for individuation being a life-long process continually driving us to seek wholeness.

Brown(2012) defines wholeness (wholeheartedness) as engaging with the world from a place of courage, compassion, connection, and worthiness

and, being willing to face uncertainty, exposure and emotional risks. Stein (2006) noted, in Jungian psychology, the individuation process is not confined to a basic description of how identity takes shape in childhood and youth, forming a personality to be lived out in adult hood, instead:

Individuation pushes consciousness and self realization beyond where the normal developmental processes governed by genes, psyche, and society leave off...it is a psychological discipline that requires the full participation of the conscious person to take it forward(Stein 2006, p. XIII).

To achieve this, it is necessary to become vulnerable and let go.

In the interview with Browne he emphasized that empathy is at the heart of his creativity, particularly in relation to improvisation. Stating:

I will play relentlessly these days sometimes for no money- because we`re learning from each other -getting the empathy going ... I decide what we`re going to play and its usually very similar ,because I`m trying to get that empathy flowing- I have to get that empathy going – so I have to be prepared technically ,I have to be prepared physically...I try to feel comfortable and ok -so I don't feel bad about any part of me if I can help it(Browne 2013).

Improvising requires empathy, responsiveness, letting go and being wholeheartedly in the moment to create an intimate connection with the other. All that we can ever become we already are when we are in the present moment. When we are in the present moment there is no goal, nothing to attain, nothing can get better than it is right now. What is necessary is to detach from the creation of the persona and uncover our deeper Self. In the podcast with Simon(2013) Palmer states `I think living into true self – overcoming the divided life, having the courage to step out from behind the wall, all of that requires self acceptance' (Palmer 2013)The power of an empathetic way of being resides in our capacity to listen, to be willing acknowledge that our assumptions and perspective alone are insufficient to create a meaningful sustainable life. When

we open to the way life is experienced by another person and become willing to see life in his or her way, we also open to the possibility of being changed. It takes humility and courage to put aside our assumptions and recognise that we might be trying to fit a new idea into an old context that doesn't fit.

To learn something new you have to let go of control and certainty, and take a risk. This is at the heart of improvisation; at the heart of the creative moment. Creative expression can allow for movement and an opportunity to circumnavigate intense emotions and dignify experiences. It can expand horizons, help us to better understand ourselves, find equilibrium and, come to a place of acceptance and stillness. As Mackay stated, some artists 'have turned to the creative life as a way of retaining their sanity in what they see as a crazy world' (Mackay 2013, p.153).

5.10 Stillness

Letting go is at the base of all spiritual and creative practice, and in letting go there is stillness: the absence of self as one becomes totally immersed in the moment. 'Within you there is stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself' (Hesse 1922, p. 58).

I sat by the banks of the river embracing the stillness. Surrounded by stillness, it was difficult to hold on to thoughts, they served no purpose. I exhaled allowing my mind to empty. Everything slowed down, images became bathed in an intense clear light, and sound became no more than an empty vibration. The world of politics, power and people seemed centuries removed. There was only the eternal present to navigate and behold (Kissed by a Deer, 2012, p.65).

Creativity is not the only avenue to access stillness: it is however one way. The musician lost in improvisation uninhibited, wholeheartedly participating in the present moment, connected and empathetic, internally becomes still. Stillness is not in the past, or in the future, it can only exist in the now. Like a perfectly centred top, spinning so fast it appears motionless stillness is dynamic, unconflicted, unified movement – life in harmony, skill in action (Schiffmann 1996).

I was intuitively drawn to find stillness through creativity following the death of my father:

Workings with circles made me feel good and helped to still my mind (Kissed by a Deer, 2012, p.7).

I also describe experiencing stillness while visiting a Tibetan monastery in Ladakh:

Tibetan monasteries are beautiful places. They vibrate with longevity, stillness, mystery, colour, and the sacred. I walked into the main hall. It was lined with low rows of meditation platforms, cushions, thangkas, tapestries, statues of the Buddha and sacred texts. The room was dark, with only a few splinters of sunlight penetrating here and there – the air hung thick, with the smell of butter lamps and Tibetan incense. The atmosphere felt heavy and pregnant with the remnants of prayer. The vibrations were so strong I couldn't help but enter into a state of meditation. The whole room demanded it. My body was compelled to sit in the timeless world inside the room; the world outside didn't exist. There was nothing but stillness, darkness and peace. I sat dissolving into a million tiny atoms, grateful for every soul who had sat chanting, praying and meditating before me – generating an energy field that was pulling me deeply into the present moment. I felt so at home, so peaceful, so still (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p. 72).

As stated by McKay:

If you're looking for reliable, well-trodden pathways on which to take that inward journey, many people find meditation classes helpful, but almost everyone who ever tries some form of creative self-expression-writing, painting, singing, dancing, acting, photography, gardening-reports that this is where you most reliably find yourself (Mackay 2013, p. 98).

My own experience supports Mackay's claim. At a time when I was very vulnerable my creativity allowed me the opportunity to find moments of stillness and take refuge from the intensity of life. This has been my experience engaging in a spiritual and creative life:

You do not need to do anything; you do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. You do not even need to listen; just wait. You do not even need to wait; just become still, quiet and solitary and the world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked. It has no choice. It will roll in ecstasy at your feet(Kafka 1918, p. 109)

The rewards in the outer world have not always been forthcoming, but the joy of belonging and connecting with others has been its own reward, as has the experience of stillness. It is these rewards in my inner life which give me greatest satisfaction and continue to motivate me to create.

6.Conclusion

The process of using autoethnography in the creative component of this study gave me the opportunity to not only re-enact my experience, but to change and transform my perspective. This required being willing to let go of parts of my self- concept/ my world, which no longer served me well – to continue in the process of individuation and draw closer to the present moment. In writing *Kissed by a Deer* there were many moments when letting this happen, I became still.

In this exegesis I have argued that individuation is an ongoing process of connecting the inner and the outer world. In the ongoing search for self, individuation is a process of constantly becoming and changing – a process that is not simple, clean, tidy or linear. In analysing the relationship between individuation and creative practice it has become apparent that engaging in the creative act, not only allows the opportunity to explore, acknowledge, and unify aspects of our being, but as well, for possibilities of a numinous, transforming experience. As well I have put forth the claim that a creative and/or spiritual life begins when we can accept our vulnerability and embrace brokenness. In turn this can lead to place of empathy, where we find and experience a sense of connection and belonging.

I have shown individuating in the current climate of uncertainty and change is challenging and confronting and argued that a creative practice can provide us sanctuary, and the space to safely negotiate psyche conflict and find a place of stillness. I am not saying this is the only way, or that creativity is

parallel to the life of a contemplative but I have suggested that creative practice has similar elements to a spiritual practice, especially Buddhist.

The illustration of individuation from the perspective of both the inward and outward journey, argues that individuation demands moving forward and letting go. I have also illustrated Dowrick`s claim that `spiritual seeking is a social and historical journey as much as it is a personal one. Time, place and culture all indelibly shape us` (Dowrick 2010, p. 167). Finally I have put forth the argument that creativity helps inform this process and is a means of finding connection, creating belonging and expressing empathy.

The artist, the musician, or the writer who uses art as a spiritual path must, like every spiritual seeker, find moments of stillness, exaltation, connection and dissolution entirely within themselves. This was a lesson I began to comprehend when I was living overseas separated from my creative life:

The artist in me was dying a painful death in China...This was the first time in over 20 years I didn't create, didn't paint, didn't write, didn't play my guitar, and didn't sing` (Kissed by a Deer 2012, p.136).

It is only in hindsight I now recognise had I not gone through this experience, had I not let go of all that I`d known and experienced up until that point, I would not have been able to write *Kissed by a Deer*. Campbell (1972) argued the seat of the soul is there where the inner and the outer world meet, and the function of the artist is to create a bridge between these worlds. To connect with a sense of knowing so we can recognise the continuity of our own inner life – this claims Campbell , `is the world constant to the human race` (Campbell, Joseph 2012).

At the root of Jung`s theory of individuation is the concept of the person as a holistic being. If we only emphasis one aspect of a person their persona, their dark side, their sexuality, or the archetype they embody and their place in history, we can lose sight of this reality. To focus on a single dimension of one`s totality cannot only distort the reality but can also change it, by reducing the whole person to just that dimension. In turn this can reduce how the person defines themselves. This exegesis has elaborated themes in an analytical way.

This is the expectation of an exegesis. However I have chosen to close this exegesis by returning to my creative voice as I do not wish to be defined by just one dimension.

6.1 I am not an artist

I am not,
an artist.
I know.
I've looked.
Deep down,
inside myself.

I've searched,
immersed in an ocean of music.
Submerged, in melodies of love,
sorrow and loss,
I drifted on rhythms,
in the current of life.

I kept looking.
Opening endless doors,
Rummaging,
amongst hundreds of images,
Sublime, bleak, radiant and,
dark.
But,
I could not find,
an artist.

I continue to look.
Deeper, higher,
ploughing through hundreds of thousands of words.
Stories – data for the soul.
I find books, and,
the odd poem or two.
But I cannot find,
an artist.

All I have found,
is a bottomless well
of creativity;
a flowing river of life.
And I.
I am not an artist.
I am,
a tiny drop in the river(Gibb 2013).

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Interview Methodology and Data Analysis

As stated in the preamble the research explores, develops and subtly demonstrates an example of the lived experiences in the search for self, and the struggle to develop a coherent identity within the context of the 'post modern landscape' (Tacey 2003, p. 42). The exegesis elaborates and contextualises the creative work and seeks to analyse the importance of creativity in the search for identity through an arts based practice. The study was situated within the field of naturalistic enquiry, where context is seen as holding the key to all meaning (Green 2002). This allowed for the observation and exploration of phenomena: a snapshot in time of the interplay between the inner and outer worlds, in the historical context of a life lived in a time of great social change.

To explore the themes that arose through reflection and analysis in the creative component of the work three artists were asked to participate in informal conversational interviews. For as stated by Patton, 'Each person you question can take you into a new part of the world' (Patton 2002, p. 340).

Conversational interviewing was chosen as the methodology for interviewing as this form of questioning allows for the greatest flexibility and the most open ended response. As themes for the research were revealed through an organic process, I reasoned that the other artists participating in the study should also be afforded the opportunity to participate in a way that allowed for the free flow of information and for creative responses to emerge.

Utilising Patton's (2002) conversational interviewing techniques allowed an organic direction to unfold and for me as an interviewer to go with the flow and provide unscripted feedback, ask further questions and for 'previous responses to be revisited and deepened' (Patton 2002, p. 342).

The interviews were not entirely unstructured and unfocussed however. An interview guide was created to set the context for the interviews. Respondents were asked to read a preamble on creative practice [Appendix A] and to look at and discuss the diagram which had been created to represent the nature of the relationship between self, individuation and spirituality [Mandala1].

This introduced them to the nature of the study and provided the context and scope for the conversations. Patton states 'the strength of the informal conversation method resides in the opportunities it offers for flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences and situational change'(Patton 2002, p. 343).

In applying the same creative principle (used in the creative component of the study) of letting go and letting things happen, interestingly I discovered a duality of process, in that rather than the diagram informing the interviews, the interviews instead informed the diagram. This became most apparent in the process of analysing the data. As qualitative content analysis is mainly inductive, and in keeping in accordance with a naturalistic approach, 'Pattern, Theme, and Content Analysis' was utilised to interpret and critically analyse the data. As cited by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), Hsieh & Shannon, (2005) define qualitative content analysis as 'a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009, p. 1). Patton simplifies this somewhat by stating that qualitative content analysis is 'any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings'(Patton 2002, p. 453).Using this method to analyse the data allows for patterns or themes to be found which in turn uncovers core meanings embedded in the data.

The first step in the process of analysis was to fully transcribe the audio interviews. The transcripts then served as the primary sources of data for content analysis. Each transcript was read and reread a number of times to determine and define the unit of analysis: 'the unit of analysis refers to the basic unit of text to be classified during content analysis'(Zhang & Wildemuth 2009, p. 3). The emergence of themes, as they were expressed in the text through a single word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph that had relevance to the research question were then colour coded for analysis. The next step in analysing the data involved making sense of the themes identified 'important to a social reality' (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009, p. 5).The information was then refined and

placed into categories in which the content could be explored, relationships identified and, from which constructs of meanings could be inferred.

This process generated a constant interplay with, and reconstruction of the text in the diagram, ultimately deepening my theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study. This supports Patton`s claim that findings emerge out of the data through the analysts interactions with the data` (Patton 2002, p. 453). In inductive qualitative analysis both the researcher and the respondents make sense out of the field in a `personally socially constructed way` (Suter 2012, p. 343). Credibility of the research then must assess the soundness of the researchers` reconstruction of a personal/social reality. For `if there were only one truth, you couldn`t paint a hundred canvases on the same theme` (Picasso 1966)

Appendix A: Interview Preamble

Sometimes people ask me what I gained from living for so many years in a cave. I say, it's not what I gained, it's what I lost. Tenzin Palamo (2005)

Several years ago when I was living in India (Dharamasla) I had the wonderful good fortune to have a chance meeting and subsequent chat with the Venerable Tenzin Palamo. In 1943 at the age of 20, Tenzin Palmo (then Diane Perry) left the East End of London and travelled to India to study Buddhism; she was only the second Western woman to be ordained in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. She received the name Drubgyu Tenzin Palmo, or 'Glorious Lady Who Upholds the Doctrine of the Practice Succession'. She made a vow to attain enlightenment in the female form and spent 12 years living in retreat alone in a cave in the Himalayas engaged in spiritual practice.

Through the course of our conversation she asked me what I was doing in Dharamasla. I told her as well as teaching English to the women weavers, I had set up a music program and was teaching guitar to the young refugees living there in exile. She paused and thought for a moment and then said, *Yes that could be a good practice.*

A seed was planted in my mind and since then I have spent many years contemplating her words, and realised that a large section of my life was about practice. My creative practice has served me as the primary form of meditation and contemplation throughout my life so far. It has taught me so much, developed my powers of concentration and insight, helped me travel through many inner landscapes and allowed me the space and time to heal many of life's hurts and bruises as well as celebrate many of life's victories

We've all got to make our own journey towards the reality of putting it into practice, whatever it is – as opposed to just thinking or talking about doing it. Apart from the visible outcomes of creative practice i.e. the book, the painting, the song, the performance, etc there is much more that is gained and lost in the creative process. This interview seeks to explore this phenomenon.

Appendix B:Artist Profiles

Jennyfer Stratman

Jennyfer Stratman is an awarding winning sculptress with works currently exhibited in private collections and public galleries throughout Australia, North America, Asia and the United Kingdom. Her sculptures often incorporate genderless, faceless figures, turning the primary focus to the interplay between human and nature. Phoenix born and Melbourne based, she has established studios in both Melbourne and Phoenix. Regular journeys between her studios in the US and Australia reflect core themes throughout her works of universal issues such as belonging, and connectedness to one's environment. Stratman's interest in quantum theory, contribute to her success in depicting subject matter at both the universal and subatomic level. She has developed a visual language that intimately communicates a unique perspective on common human experiences.



Nexus (Stratman 2005)

Stratman's work has been shown in a number of exhibitions in the United States and Internationally. She graduated from Arizona State University in 1997 where she studied visual arts and art education since then she has exhibited widely and featured in many publications. She lives in Melbourne(Stratman 2010).

Allan Browne

Allan Browne is an Australia jazz drummer and composer first known for his work in the 1960s establishing the Red Onion Jazz Band. He led this group through three extended European tours including appearances at the Polish and Hungarian Jazz Festivals. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, after studying percussion with Graham Morgan, Allan worked extensively with Peter Gaudion, Geoff Kitchen, Ken Shroeder, Vince Jones, Barney McAll, Steve Grant and Paul Grabowsky's Trio and Quintet. Simultaneously he led the contemporary jazz group Onaje, which was selected to represent Australia at the prestigious Montreal Jazz Festival in 1992. Allan has worked with over 35 International Jazz icons and been awarded five grants by the Australia Council to tour nationally; three for recording. His discography totals over 70 CDs. The last five were short-listed for Aria awards.

Allan has also been involved in many films scores, the ABC Arts Programs and a number of variety appearances. He lectured in Jazz history and appreciation, worked as a visiting artist at the Victorian College of the Arts and, taught privately and at Geelong Grammar School. A full member of APRA, he served three years on the Music Committee of the Australia Council and was chairman of the Melbourne Jazz Co-op and Victorian representative on the National Jazz Coordinator's Advisory Committee. In 2000 he received the prestigious Don Banks Award for his contribution to Australian music. Browne is also a keen writer. He has published a number of articles and poems including 'Conjuror' (2012) an anthology of poems and essays from the perspective of a forty-year career as a jazz musician. He lives in Melbourne (Blackman 2011).

Jazz

i write in public

(with others)

our tangled arcs

threaded on grammar, are screeching chalks

or a sea of question marks (Browne 2012)

Kavisha Mazzella

Kavisha Mazzella is an award winning singer songwriter who sings and plays guitar, mandolin and piano accordion. Kavisha`s music crosses boundaries as she links east with west. Other influences that have made an impression on Kavisha's music are her interest in meditation and mysticism through the teachings of Osho, Sufi, Tibetan Buddhist Masters and Advaita teachings. Kavisha came to National attention in 1993 with her appearance in the Franco Di Chiera documentary `Joys of the Women`. She been a guest vocal tutor at Victorian College of The Arts, Swinburne, and was the founder and choir conductor of Melbourne's vivacious Italian Women's choir `La Voce Della Luna` (The Voice of the Moon). The Victorian Women's trust commissioned Kavisha to write a women`s Anthem "Love and Justice "to celebrate 100 years of the Suffrage in Victoria.



Sewing Girls (K Mazzella 2014)

She has recorded numerous albums and is a winner of various awards including the 1998 ARIA for her album "Fisherman`s Daughter", the Italia Nel Mondo Award in 2000 for her contribution to the sharing of Italian Culture in Australia through setting up of Italian Women's choirs, and West Australia Music Industry awards for song writing. In 2004 she was awarded Port Fairy Artist of the Year. In 2008 Kavisha was awarded Multicultural Commission Excellence award. Kavisha is also a visual artist who has paintings in several galleries in Europe. She is currently based in Melbourne, Australia (Mazzella 2013).