

RITUAL THEATRE IN A FEMININE WAY

Ritual Theatre as a Tool for Re-Awakening the Sacred Perception

by

Romana Ercegovic

Evaluation Team:

John Aram, Ph.D

Morwen Two Feathers, MA

Sally Sweitzer, MA

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Thank you, Earth.
Thanks to your tenderness.
It has told me that I can be fragile, vulnerable, just as I am.
That just as I am, I can be yours,
safe in your shelter.

Thanks to the deepness of yours, your heavy profoundness,
It has allowed me to be deep and heavy myself,
to cry out my pain,
And made me know that the heaviness is a part of me,
just as the lightness.
One can not exist without the other.

Thank you for you've shown me that it is possible to live simply,
Though it seems hard at the beginning.
It does work without cynicism, without proving of myself, without pretending.
It is possible to be what I am,
to respect the way of every being,
and to take the responsibility for life
on this abused planet.

Thank you, Earth that you've ordered me to be myself.
For whatever I need, I carry in me.
And that whenever I don't believe you, you hug me patiently,
until the trust comes back again.
Thank you that you love me,
even when I'm rude and cold to you, to people, to myself.
That you support my resolution.
when there's a need to resist.
When the pure simple-hearted child in me has to be protected.

Thank you for teaching me how to wait, wait long, in silence,
and not to make a step before
I feel it's the right one.
Thank you for giving me the time
to understand.
For reminding me, again and again, I have the right
to take the time just for myself,
to take all my life.

Thank you, Earth.
You've revealed your wisdom to me.
The truth of your simplicity has convinced me.
The beauty of your sincerity has enchanted me.
The power of yours has poured into me.
I bow before your eternal laws,
mother Earth
For I can feel we are one.
For I carry you in my hands,
in my eyes, in my chest, in my womb.
Everywhere.

Romana Ercegovic
(poem from the performance Prayer to the Earth, 2000)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores characteristics of ritual theatre approaching the topic through the lens of the feminine. The author has been researching ritual through creation of ritual performances during the last four years. In this paper the author describes her intuitive method of creating the performances of *Electra* and *White Buffalo Woman*. Through these examples she explains her view of understanding the theatre art as a healing and empowering tool, which contributes to the process of creating a more harmonious society.

The paper is presented in four major sections. The first speaks about the original purpose of the theatre art in its ritual form, explains the concept of the ancient mythic (sacred, holistic) perception of reality, which is a condition for understanding the ritual and opens the possibility of perceiving reality in a mythic way in our times. The second part explores the creative process of *Electra*, discusses the feminine role within patriarchal myth, and the need to create new myths inspired by ancient pre-patriarchal feminine mythology. In part three through description of the creative process of *White Buffalo Woman* the author explains the characteristics of her intuitive method of creating a performance. This section explores the significance of understanding the duality of women's archetypes, the light and dark aspects, in order to redeem the forgotten and denied aspects of the feminine, which are, in author's opinion, fundamental for harmonious existence within a society. The work concludes by offering options for re-awakening the sacred (holistic) perception of reality in modern times, and also presents a view of theatre through this perspective, supporting the theory with practical examples of author's artistic work.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. THE PURPOSE OF THE THEATRE ART IN ITS BEGINNINGS

According to the first theorist of drama, Aristotle's famous definition of the tragedy in his work, Poetics, the main purpose (*telos*) of the Greek tragedy was purification (*catharsis*). "Tragedy arouses feelings of empathy (*eleos*) and horror (*phobos*), and in this way the purification (*catharsis*) of those feelings is achieved." (Aristotle. 1982, p.1449, my translation from Slovene translation by Kajetan Gantar)

Aristotle offers also another formulation about *catharsis* in his work, Politics. Here he speaks about the art of music, the scenic music, which is one of important elements of the tragedy, and explains the term *catharsis* more precisely:

"Music brings not only one, but many benefits. It is, first of all, purification of feelings. Feelings, such as empathy, fear, ravishment, are present in every soul and in some souls they are particularly intense. Some are more sensitive and we can notice the melodies, which have brought them out of themselves afterwards bring them back to the primary state of consciousness, as they would receive purification and a healing. This is how compassionately, timidly and emotionally people in general experience music, and also others, if they can feel in that way, however everybody experiences purification associated with pleasure and satisfaction. Those melodies, which purify the soul, at the same time offer joy to the people and cause no damage. For that reason it is important to direct the artists, who perform scenic music to those kinds of harmonies and rhythms." (Aristotle, 1970, p.45, my translation)

Besides those two explanations of *catharsis* Aristotle mentions this term only once more, in 17th chapter of Poetics, in which he explains the proper use of episodes in a tragedy (Aristotle, 1982, 1455 b). Here he speaks about a purification ritual as a part of a tragedy. In this tragedy the purification enables salvation of a character.¹ Thus in this case Aristotle uses

¹ He speaks about the tragedy written by Euripides, *Ifigenia on Tavrdes*

the term purification in connection to ritual. Rudi Seligo, recognized Slovene teatrologist in his work Identifikacija in Katarza (On Identification and Catharsis) considers this mentioning of catharsis as very important, particularly because of its association to ritual purification. (Seligo, 1989, p. 23) He cites another significant work of a Slovene theatre theory scholar Kajetan Gantar, Anticna Poetika (Attic Poetic), where he acknowledges the etymology of the term *purification ritual* is not completely clear, and that most probably we need to search for its roots in ancient, pre-Hellenic terminology. (Gantar, 1985, pg. 86)

It is also important to mention that the ritual of purification was included in two most important Greek social events: the famous Eleusinian mysteries and in the performance of tragedies devoted to the religious festival Great Dionysia. According to many theatre historians those two are considered the very beginning of tragedy, which indicates Western theatre is derived from ritual. Genetic theory explaining the ritual origins of drama is supported by various recognized drama theory experts, particularly the Cambridge School of Classical Anthropology, represented by J. A. Harrison, J.G. Frazer, G. Murray, F. Cornford, F. Fergusson, etc. Cambridge ritualists held “ that Greek drama must have sprung from a highly developed ritual, itself complex enough for it to prefigure the complexity of drama.” (Friedrich, 1983, pg.163)

The problem of exactly understanding and translating the Greek terms such as *eleos*, *phobos* and particularly *katharsis* is well known and widespread over the theory of theatre. There have been many interpretations offered by scholars and theatre artists since then, but all we can be sure about is, nobody knows exactly what kind of purification Aristotle had in mind and what it meant for ancient Greeks. So much attention paid to this question indicates the profound importance of this issue for the theory and practice of art. If a kind of purification was the purpose of the tragedy, which was for centuries considered as the ideal of perfection to writers of European drama and also every artistic work, as Aristotle explains in Politics, it

follows that the highest purpose of every artistic creation is supposed to be hidden in revealing the meaning of this mysterious term *catharsis*.

What about the possibility of experiencing catharsis in our modern conception of the world? In the last century in the theory of drama, as well as in the philosophy of art in general, a conviction prevailed that the possibility of profound experience of purification is lost for modern humans as a result of the loss of our mythic perception of the world. One of the most influential defenders of this philosophical stream is Friedrich Nietzsche. For him the modern era is the age of *twilight of idols (gods)*. There is nothing left sacred to a modern human. According to his notorious saying, “god is dead”.²

2. HOLISTIC PERCEPTION OF REALITY - THE MYTH OF ETERNAL RETURN

One of the extremely important scholars of the history of religions, in his essay, Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return (Eliade, 1992), Mircea Eliade explores the notion that traditional archaic community life reveals models of human existence and activities, which function regardless of whether a certain society is aware of them. According to Eliade the very basic human need is the connection to the place of absolute reality, the place of sacredness within one’s self. This archetypal pattern of human soul is presented by the myth of *eternal return*.

The principal theme of The Myth of the Eternal Return is the self-perception of so-called “archaic” people, who belong(ed) to archaic societies, and their perception of the role, which they carried in the cosmos. The first difference between an archaic woman/man and modern woman/man, which Eliade points out, is the perception of time, deriving from the fact that the first feels her/himself firmly connected to the cyclic time of cosmos and the cosmic rhythms, while the other insists to be connected only to the linear time of history. Of course also to the archaic woman/man cosmos means “history”, but this history of cosmos and human society is

² See particularly his works *The Birth of the Tragedy* and *Twilight of Idols*

“sacred”, preserved and mediated by myths. “Myths preserve and mediate paradigms, sampling models of all pretentious human activities.” (Eliade, 1992, pg. 8) According to that, Eliade distinguishes between two perceptions of reality: *sacred* (mythic, cyclic, eternal, absolute, universal, archetypal...) and *profane* (linear, historic). (p. 11)

Archaic woman/man perceived life as an absolute reality – and as such it was sacred. For that reason the archaic societies resisted the profane perception of time and longed for the temporary return of sacred time, “original time” - *illud tempus*. This tendency for rejection of history and repetition of archetypal actions testifies about their longing for the absolute, meaningful reality and fear of “getting lost” – to become overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of profane existence. (p. 97)

Eliade ascertains that “rejection of profane perception of reality indicates peculiar metaphysic 'valorization' of human existence.” (pg.11) Neither objects of the outer world nor human activities have real, autonomous value. They get value only when they enter the “greater” reality. (p.16) The archaic world did not know profane activities. Every activity was a ritual. Each had an entirely specific significance. The processes of producing food, giving birth, hunting, sexuality, playing games, etc. in a certain way participate in the sacred, which means each has its own superhuman pattern. The activity is repetition of *illud tempus*, “original times”, thus a re-actualization of sacred reality. (p. 17)

The purpose of the basic cosmological myth of *eternal return* is returning from chaos to harmony, returning to the center of the world– *axis mundi* (the axle of the world). *Axis mundi* is the symbol of wholeness, which connects heavens, earth and underworld. The center is above all a place of sacredness, a place of absolute reality. (pg. 29) It can be found in symbolism in cultures all over the world, in different variants (symbolism of cross, tree of life, sacred pillar, flower of life, holy grail, golden fleece, golden apples, centre of labyrinth....). It

is represented as well as in sacred places of the world such as Meka, Hardwar, Jeruzalem and many others. Every sacred temple represents the *axis mundi*. (p. 24)³

The *axis mundi* symbolizes also the center of human being. Let's look at the symbol of the cross as a symbol of the human body. The vertical line runs vertically through our body, and the horizontal through our extended hands. Where do those two meet? Exactly in the middle of our chests, at the heart. This could be an explanation of what the center is: the heart. The metaphor of coming to the center is what is poetically often called "coming home". In myths all over the world the search towards one's self is a laborious one. (Eliade, pg. 30) "The path is hard, dangerous, for in truth it is a ritual passage from the profane towards the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusionary to reality and eternity, from death to life, from human to divine. To come to the center is a blessing, an initiation; the old, profane existence is replaced by new life, real, permanent, successful." (p. 30)

3. WHAT IS RITUAL

According to Eliade, ritual was the act, which enabled the archaic human to enter the sacred, eternal reality, to connect to her/his center, which can also be viewed as a center of the world. The essential definition of ritual in every religion is the confrontation of human consciousness with the autonomous, "eternal" happenings. The traditional form of the act is precisely appointed. Typical elements, which follow in certain order, create the process, the goal of which is to transform the human consciousness. As described above, the essence is the death of old consciousness in order to be born in the new one. In the process human consciousness gets not only *purified*, but also regenerated. (p. 62)

Here we meet again with the term *purification - catharsis*. The purpose of the tragedy, as Aristotle formulated it, seemed to be closely connected to the purpose of ritual. If we remember his second statement in *Politic*, we notice that when he speaks about the

³ For more examples from different cultures of the world see *ibid*, p. 24-29, and also another Eliade's work, *History of religious ideas and beliefs*

purification he also adds the term healing: “the melodies, which brought them out of themselves afterwards bring them back to the primary state of consciousness, as they would receive purification and healing.” Purification in both cases, Aristotle’s and Eliade’s, seems to be a preparatory phase of a larger transformative process of consciousness, the goal of which seems to be regeneration or healing. Regeneration is connected to coming to the center, while the root of word *healing* derives from *whole* – so we can understand healing as *becoming whole*, which is closely connected to the Eliade’s above cited description of coming to the center. (There is also another explanation of term *healing*, which I will speak about later.) This premise indicates not just that theatre is derived from ritual, but also that a theatre performance doesn’t serve its original purpose unless it strives to attend the function of purification and healing.

According to Eliade purification and regeneration are phases of seasonal ritual, which represents the new creation of the world – the myth of eternal return. This ritual repetition of cosmogony happens every year. The cosmos and human beings regenerate all over again. It follows that in addition to the beginnings of the natural cycles, also every ritual of marriage, birth, etc, was understood as the beginning of a new period. This is exactly where drama theory experts such as already mentioned Cambridge ritualists found one of the main comparisons between ritual and drama. They sought the ritual antecedent of drama in the vegetation ritual based on the rhythm of the annual cycle of the seasons. (Frazer, 1912)

The vegetation ritual pattern is based on the seasonal rhythm, which can ultimately be reduced to the alternation of kenosis (emptying) and plerosis (filling): the evacuation of life in fall and winter, and its replenishment in spring and summer. (Gaster, 1950, p.6) This irreducible seasonal pattern may translate itself into various other forms of alternation and thus give rise to a great variety of rituals: death and rebirth, destruction and renovation, and many more. From the seasonal pattern Gaster derives the basic ritual pattern:

mortification – purgation – invigoration – jubilation (p.6)

The phases of this pattern could easily be compared to the process described by Eliade and Aristotle: purgation (=purification) and invigoration (=regeneration, renewal, healing).

4. CONDITIONS FOR MYTHIC PERCEPTION

According to my observation there seem to be three basic conditions for mythic perception of reality, which are:

- a) presumption of a sacred realm
- b) honouring reality as a sacred whole – holistic
- c) connectedness to the cyclic rhythms – seasonal patterns of the natural world

a) Presumption of a sacred realm

One of the basic conditions to perceive reality in a mythic – magical way, is the belief in the existence of a numinous realm, in whatever manner certain cultures understand, experience and name the connection to the sacred realm, absolute, metaphysical, superhuman order of the cosmos. For archaic people it was essential to presume that the human being is part of this “greater” reality, the totality, the wholeness. The wholeness also includes the existence of other realities and “the invisible” beings. The numinous “co-existence” is represented by various archetypes, personifications of numinous force (Gods, Goddesses, fairies, spirits of nature, different kinds of divine forces). Their existence and role within the cosmic order was explicit with not only allowing the possibility of great cosmic intelligence exceeding human awareness, but presuming it and entering beyond the veils of the profane concept of reality to this “all knowing” sacred dimension.

b) Honouring reality as a sacred whole – holistic

“According to magical belief everything is connected with everything else by virtue of the omnipotence of Life.” (Friedrich, 1983,162) If we examine different ancient cultures we can

establish that *harmonic connectedness* is the basic characteristic, which can be found all over the world. It can be noticed on many levels:

- harmony among all beings, humans, animals, plants, as well as the “invisible” deities and beings
- harmony among aspects of life, female and male, light and dark, etc
- spiritual and material (earthly life, human body...) - all forms of life are considered sacred: the immanent reality as well as the transcendental reality

To live in harmony for many ancient people meant to live in happiness, peace and beauty. In Navaho language, for example, the word *hozho* means harmony. Its meaning contains blended concepts of beauty, peace, happiness and righteousness. Perfect balance is called *sacredness*. In Native American culture, everything is seen as being alive. “Each living thing has a specific role as a teacher and family member. Everything on Earth, whether stone, tree, creature, cloud, sun, moon, or human being is one of our relatives, a part of Planetary Family.” (Sams, 1990, p. v) “In Tribal Traditions, we don’t consider Grandfather Sun as a deity. We do not worship trees or rocks. We do, however, see the Eternal Flame of Love, which Great Mystery placed in all of Creation, and we honour that spiritual essence. (...) This is the spiritual essence of creative principle called the Eternal Flame of Love and found inside all life-forms. There is only one Original Source and we call that Creative Source the Great Mystery.” (Sams, p.vi)

The African shaman Malidoma Some explains that in the Dagara culture they don’t have a word for supernatural. (Some, 1994, p.17) Dagara people do not divide spiritual and material reality. ”As for many other native cultures, for us the supernatural is part of our everyday life. For a Dagara man or woman the material is one of the forms of the spiritual.” (p. 17) Hunbaz Men in his work, Secrets of Mayan Science and Religion, reveals that the basic characteristic of indigenous Mayan culture was, and continues to be, life as integral, holistic, and completely dynamic. The task is to practice the culture of the spirit and its

transcendence within the cosmic continuum, which includes all nature, human beings, and the cosmos. (Men, 1990, p.13) Also the pre-Hellenic myths tell of harmonious bonds among humans, animals, and nature. They express “respect for and celebration of the mysteries of body and spirit.” (Spretnak, 1992, p.25) In traditional Aboriginal culture the existence of a harmonious relationship between humanity and the entire natural world is essential. Their social order encourages, from infancy, empathetic concern and compassion toward all creatures of nature and the earth, as well as deep loyalties and responsibilities to their kin and the group as a whole. (Lambert&Parker, 1993, p. 3)

In matriarchal Neolithic cultures in Old Europe, pre-Hellenic Greece, England, Middle East, Malta, and other places, the Great Mother Goddess was the main religious symbol. It was regarded as a “potent metaphor for both the immanence of the divine and the transcendence that is larger reality, the sacred whole.” (Spretnak, 1992, xii) “To say the people who worshiped the Goddess were deeply religious would be to understate, and largely miss, the point. For here there was no separation between the secular and sacred. As religious historians point out, in prehistoric and, to a large extent, well into historic times, religion was life, and life was religion.” (Eisler, 1990, p. 23)

Furthermore, the societies which honoured all life forms as equally sacred, also reflected this concept in relationships among people, which means that they had egalitarian social regulation as well as regarding the harmony between feminine and masculine principles as the basis of a harmonic society. Diane Eisler ascertains that the archaeological data we now have indicates that in its general structure pre-patriarchal society was, by any contemporary standard, remarkably equalitarian. (Eisler, p.25)

c) Connectedness to the cyclic rhythms – seasonal patterns of the natural world

Following the cyclic rhythms of celestial bodies (Earth, Moon, Sun and other planetary constellations⁴) and honoring them as natural cycles of human body and human psyche is characteristic for nature oriented cultures. The Sun in relation to Earth was perceived as a one-year cycle within which the cycle of all the vegetation is completed. It begins on Winter Solstice (December the 21st), when the length of the day is shortest and all the vegetation world is in its death phase. It reaches its highest point on Summer Solstice (June the 21st), when the day is the longest, when all the vegetation is in its most abundant growth. After the Solstice the length of the day shortens again, it's the time for harvest, for enjoying the fruits of our work, and finally to give thanks for all the prosperity the Earth gave to the people on Fall Equinox. The time preceding the Winter Solstice is devoted to going within the dark phase of the year as well as going within one's self. It's time to prepare to a new cycle, to do rituals of cleansing and purification (the community, home, oneself), to regenerate. The ritual of New Year is known in all cultures of the world and has this very purpose of purification and regeneration (see the seasonal pattern described above).

The Moon's cycle in relation to Earth is important particularly for women. It is connected to woman's cycle of menstruation, birth and menopause, and the life and birth cycles of the universe. The female body is viewed as a direct expression or incarnation of waxing and waning because of the connection between the 28-day cycles of menstruation and 28-day cycles of the moon.

6. THE END OF MYTHIC - HOLISTIC PERCEPTION

Eliade concludes his essay with a statement that Christianity “is incontestably a religion of a down-fallen human”: the reason for it is that contemporary humans identify with history

and progress, which both represent the downfall, because they signify the final loss of paradise of archetypes and cyclic returning. (Eliade, 1992, p.156) Scholars of modern times almost as a rule connect the perception of reality as a sacred whole to the archaic people of traditional cultures, but does it mean we, contemporary humans of our culture, need to accept the limitation of existence within the profane perception? Has the ability to experience the sacred reality really been lost?

As I said before, the root of the term healing derives from *whole*, so we can understand healing as the function of becoming whole, coming to the center of our being. To go further, the root of healing – *whole* – can be interpreted also in this way: Being healthy is a state of consciousness, when one can perceive the *whole* reality as sacred. As we can see one of most essential characteristics for holistic perception is that all forms of life are considered sacred: the immanent reality as well as transcendental reality. If we observe the development of human perception regarding the relation towards the sacred, in our culture we can notice two main kinds of perceptions that have replaced the holistic perception. In this text I will call them Patriarchal Religious Perception and Scientific Atheistic Perception.

a) Patriarchal Religious Perception

Within the patriarchal religious perception there is still partial mythic perception, for there is presumption of numinous presence, but it is limited only to the transcendental realm. There is no more harmony between female and male principles: the spiritual is identified exclusively with the male principle, the God Father, who lifts up, high above the earthly existence. Goddess principally disappears; there is usually present only adapted form of feminine.⁵ In

⁴ Being in connection also with other planetary constellations is very obvious from the symbols or drawings of particular constellations found on pottery, on the walls of temples. Particularly often the seven stars of Pleiades and Sirius are depicted.

⁵ Let's look at the example from Catholic religion, where Mother Mary presents the feminine principle. Although Mary seems to be highly important in some variations of Catholicism, she is not included in Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Another problematical point in worshiping Mary is emphasizing her immaculate conception. In that way sexuality is not considered a sacred act and no other woman can feel holy giving birth to a child who was conceived in the earthly way, through a sexual union. An even more problematical feminine figure is Mary Magdalena, who is according to some apocryphal texts, such as Nagg Hammadi, considered as a holy woman, who was in love and sexual union with Jesus Christ, his equal partner, while in later interpretations of the Catholic Church she was proclaimed simply as a prostitute.

The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth, Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor speak about forms of feminine principle in Christian religion: “The Christian religion has co-opted female existence, taking the victory and raw energy out of it, leaving us only an insipid view of our female selves.” (Sjoo&Mor, 1987, p. 353) Instead of considering the material (human body, earthly life, sexuality, life processes, such as birth-giving, etc) as a part of the spiritual, the spirit/flesh dualism takes place. Experiencing the sacred becomes more and more distant to an ordinary human being. It is reserved for priests, the mediators. Heaven and happiness is not here during the earthly life any more, available to live and enjoy. Joy becomes promised after life, and needs to be earned. Nature becomes viewed simply as material for human consumption. “Under patriarchy, there is a literal belief that all life is created for men to *use*.” (Sjoo&Mor, p. 316)

b) Scientific Atheistic Perception

Generally speaking the scientific atheistic perception is totally profane perception. Nothing more is considered sacred. Within this worldview there is no more presumption of a numinous force. Individualism replaces the collective consciousness of archaic peoples. The rational element becomes dominant. Only what is empirically provable is considered to exist. The irrational becomes a synonym for naïve and primitive. Ancient myths are not considered as real any more, but considered as tales, which only children, artists and dreamers can take seriously. The sacred becomes an intellectual idea, which needs to be understood, defined instead of being felt and experienced. Philosophy (science) replaces the wisdom of life.

For the last two thousand years, Western philosophy has tried to explain the absolute through rationality. Many have longed for the answers which obviously cannot be found in this way. Does the mythic world truly not exist any more? This can be easily refuted by the fact there still exist cultures, which have at least partially preserved the mythic perception through their sacred rituals. Isn't it more likely that by gaining the empirical knowledge of natural phenomena and human beings, through excessive rationality on one hand and religious

brain washing on another, we simply lost the ability to perceive life as wholly sacred? Is it possible to cultivate the mythic perception also today in our culture? If it is, how can we re-establish the lost connection? Can we perceive the modern world as sacred? Is the sacred available to be experienced by us? Can we step out of Plato's transcendental concept of the cave and perceive the sacredness also as immanent, always-present reality also within the cave? Can we feel our presence and activity here in this moment as an important contribution to the integrity of the sacred cosmic happening? Can we see ourselves as sacred beings?

I am positive that we can. In fact, this process has been awakening intensively beyond the boundaries of mainstream of religions and science. It's not about the collective return to certain mythological systems, and it is not about trying to copy the old times. As I understand it is more about learning from the fact that harmonious societies truly existed, and if they could exist once, why can't a way be found to integrate harmonious existence also in our present society? Is this a naïve dream? All my work through this very research and the work of many other people whom I have met in my life in one way or another answer that question. I am completely positive we are creators of reality. I believe we begin to change our culture by pursuing the process of discovering within who we truly are and by questing for our truth and the way to harmony.

Artistic expression of any kind is certainly one of the most usable tools to approach the mythic world within. My personal quest has lead me through the creative processes of theatre performances, which were created within my theatre studio, Ritual Theatre Forms Research Studio (established June, 2000, in Slovenia), which eventually became Ritual Theatre *Soul of the Earth* (August, 2003). Within it I created my three last ritual-theatre performances *Prayer to the Earth* (June, 2000), *Electra* (October, 2001) and *White Buffalo Woman* (August, 2003). The last two were the constitutive part of this research, so in this text I will use them as examples of my artistic way of finding answers to the questions stated above.

II. CREATIVE PROCESS OF PERFORMANCE ELECTRA

1. ELECTRA

Script by Romana Ercegovic (2002)

Prologue

NARRATOR'S VOICE (FROM LOUDSPEAKER):

Electra was a young girl, when her father Agamemnon led the Greek army to Troy. During the time he was away from home, Electra's mother, Clytaimnestra, began a love relationship with Aigistos. Because Clytaimnestra knew that her three children would be opposed to her affair, she decided to send Electra and Orestes far away to relatives, each to a different part of the country. She kept with her in the royal palace only the second daughter, Hrisotemides, because of her quiet and accommodating character. When Agamemnon, after ten years of war, triumphantly returned home, Clytaimnestra and Aigistos murdered him.

Electra was growing up with strange people. She missed her family. As she grew older the anger that she felt about her mother was growing more and more. When she first heard the news about her father's death, the thirst for revenge overwhelmed her. She awaited the arrival of her brother Orestes, to plan the revenge of their father's murder together. One day Orestes finally arrives at her door and brings with him a sacred order from the god Apollo: they should kill their mother.

They both knew that the power of Apollo's command compelled them to take action or suffer the wrath of his merciless anger. For a long time Electra had been waiting for this moment to come. But when she received the order to kill her own mother to achieve justice, it seemed too cruel to her. "Isn't matricide the most horrible of all crimes?" she wondered to herself. Electra decides to go to the sanctuary of the goddess Gaia, mother Earth, to listen to

the deepest wisdom in herself. She wants to find an answer. At the source of truth she wants to get a vision of what is the right thing to do.

Part 1

AN ARTICULATION OF THE INTENTION

(A PRAYER OF ELECTRA)

(We see Electra kneeling in front of candles in the sanctuary, and singing an old gentle traditional praying song.)

ELECTRA:

You are telling me to sing my song,

You are awaking dreams at the bottom of the deepest waters of my soul.

The longing for the unknown.

You are calling beauty,

let it become alive in me.

Let my sleeping springs begin to ripple.

Tell me, Goddess,

how can I sing my song?

Tell me, what kind of order is this?

Do I really have to kill my own mother?

Open my eyes to see the truth,

help me to be wise,

show me the way out of darkness.

Music

(She stands up, takes a bag that she had brought with her. During the next speech she unties the bag. First she takes out a knife and then she begins to take out the wheat that she has brought as an offering.)

Part 2

REVEALING THE WOUND (SPEECH TO MOTHER)

ELECTRA:

I wonder why did I come here at all? Do I feel mercy for her? Why am I having these weak sentimental thoughts now? Hasn't this woman ruined all of us? Hasn't she destroyed the whole family? Are you happy now, the Great Clytaimnestra?! You took away my childhood, you took away my father. Have you given me anything at all, besides life which you gave me at my birth? Maybe it would be better, if you hadn't. What should I do with this kind of life?

Why did you leave me behind? Doesn't every child deserve to be loved? You don't even care what I've been doing all these years... how I've been doing without you. You were never able to see, how much I needed you, how much I wanted your love. This little girl... How many times did she try to get your attention. All those little presents that she was bringing to you...stones, flowers...only to make you notice her...

If you couldn't love me, why then did you kill my father, who was the only person, who did love me? And now I am supposed to feel mercy for you? I hate you!

GODDESS GAIA:

She also has her story, Electra. Maybe she had her reasons to do what she has done. Although you are suffering, try to understand her pain also.

ELECTRA:

Her pain? Don't tell me you really think that her heart can feel pain! Do you really believe that she feels sorrow because of all that? She was always good at knowing how to provide for herself. My father had been suffering in the war for our country for ten years. Do you know what she was doing all that time? Taking care of her beauty, seducing her lover and praying that her husband never comes home again. That is her story.

Why am I asking myself if she deserves to die? Of course she does. Justice must prevail. She must be punished for what she has done.

GODDESS GAIA:

Eye for eye, blood for blood, tooth for tooth ... From year to year I listen about the justice, that must prevail. But there is less and less bread in the world and more and more desperate, frightened people, while a clamor for a victory spreads over the earth. But this is not a victory. It is just a little bloody lie and a big sorrow.

ELECTRA:

Be quiet! Why are you telling me all these things? Why are you protecting her?

GODDESS GAIA:

This murder won't bring peace to you, Electra.

ELECTRA:

You don't understand me at all! You don't care for justice! The crime committed on an innocent victim has to be revenged! Orestes wants that and I want that! We want to do that! We have to do that! Because it is the only right thing to do!

GODDESS GAIA:

Eye for eye, blood for blood, tooth for tooth ...

ELECTRA:

What do you want to say by that? What do you want from me? Of course I am right! Justice must prevail. She must be punished for what she has done.

GODDESS GAIA :

Eye for eye, blood for blood, tooth for tooth ...

ELECTRA:

Shut up!

GODDESS GAIA :

Eye for eye, blood for blood, tooth for tooth ...

ELECTRA:

Shut up, shut up, shut up!!!! (silence) Why don't you say anything? Yes! Eye for eye, blood for blood, tooth for tooth! For the word of hatred give back a word of hatred! With a bloody strike pay for a bloody strike! God is an equitable judge.

Why are you keeping silent now? Why don't you give me your consent? Why don't you share this delight with me... Why don't you dance with joy with me that I have finally found the answer that I was looking for? Come on...let's celebrate! *(Electra sings a part of old traditional Slovene song and dance with knife in a very aggressive manner. Then she falls to the floor, with her forehead on the ground.)*

Why are you keeping silent? Hasn't the god Apollo ordered it that way? And Apollo is an equitable judge. But you don't think so, do you? *(Short silence. From kneeling position she*

lies on her back in the middle of the stage.) Do you really think that this murder wouldn't bring peace to my heart? What do you want from me, then?

GODDESS GAIA:

Remember, who you are, Electra. Return to your source. Allow the silence of your heart to speak. There is a memory deep in you, when you knew how to hear the whisper of wind, the gentle ripple of streams. To feel moist soil beneath your feet... Allow yourself to be a child in a safe shelter of mother Earth again. Remember, you are loved. Remember, you are free. Remember the dignity that you have as a human being. Then you will notice the clarity of the sky. You will feel you are one with all life of all creation, connected to all beings of the universe. And for that reason whenever you hurt another being you hurt yourself. People forget this truth when we are injured, when the hatred and fear cover our eyes. We forget to listen, to understand, to love and to forgive.

In each human heart there are dreams of a better world. And in each heart there is a hope, that dreams can come true. Now is the time, to realize that everything you do, say, or think creates the reality of the world. Decide, Electra, what kind of life you want to live: a life of love or a life of fear.

ELECTRA:

A life of love or a life of fear... How can you speak to me about love now? Understanding... Forgiving... Just don't tell me about forgiveness! How can a ruined woman forgive? A woman, who lost everything. You are expecting too much from me.*(She stands up and returns to continue preparing the wheat for offering.)*

Part 3

REVELATION (DISCOVERING THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY)

GODDESS GAIA:

Remember also the other part of the story, Electra. Remember, what your brother Orestes told you, when he came.

ELECTRA:

I don't believe a word of what he said.

GODDESS GAIA:

Because you don't want to believe! But you have to listen to it, because everything he told you is true.

ELECTRA:

No, it can't be!

GODDESS GAIA:

It is, Electra. Listen! Your father and mother had another daughter, your sister Ifigenia. You remember that she died at the time your father was about to leave for the war. Has anyone told you how she died? The Greek army, which was commanded by your father, was waiting in the harbor for a good wind for departure to Troy. But there was no wind at all. Goddess Artemis demanded that your father sacrifice Ifigenia, if he wanted the fleet to sail away. Your mother was resolutely opposed to that. But for an army general and hero, such as your father, it was impossible even to think of being disloyal toward his duty: god Zeus and his personal reputation were ordering him to punish Troy. He gave his consent. The girl was bound and offered as a lamb for sacrifice. Then the mighty fleet of the Greek army could sail away without any hindrance – to the war that brought great fame to the Greek nation.

ELECTRA:

What nonsense! My father would never do such a thing!

GODDESS GAIA:

When after ten years of war Agamemnon came home, he brought with him Cassandra, the daughter of the Trojan king. She was loot from the war. He brought her as a new lover. This is how it looked when your father came back to the embrace of his wife.

ELECTRA:

Shut up! I can't listen to those lies any more!

GODDESS GAIA:

There are many things that you don't want to know. Are you sure that the great general Agamemnon is really an innocent victim? Do you know how many truly innocent victims had to die in Troy, on both sides, so that powerful Greece would show the world who is the ruler of the world and what it means to stir up its pride? You should see what is left of Troy: devastation, misery, and grief, as after every war, destroyed families, desperate people, ruined homes and sanctuaries. Wiped out from the surface of that part of world, everything that people were creating over centuries, their culture, their spirituality. Greek soldiers were taking women of Troy just as they wanted to. Your father wasn't an exception. Cassandra wasn't the only woman that he had used for his pleasure. This is the background of the story of your father's heroism. *(Electra stands with closed eyes. We can see her body slightly shaking with anger, sadness and disappointment as tears fall from her eyes. Suddenly she throws away the rest of the wheat that she was holding in her palms. She takes the knife and kneels again in front of the candles. Then she decisively stands up and begins to speak.)*

Part 4

RECOGNITION (SPEECH TO FATHER)

ELECTRA:

So, then it is true, dad? Everything is true? And all that you've been doing in the name of goodness? In the name of love for your country? You even sacrificed your own daughter for that elevated idea? Because gods and goddesses ordered so!

Why didn't you rather say: "I am the one who wants to revenge! I am the one who wants to show who is the master here! I want authority, fame, new lands, more gold!"

Why didn't you say: "This is my will." How could you dare to refer to the will of gods?

To justice, love to your homeland, to your people... Big words. Big lies. My stomach is getting sick hearing them! Wasn't it the power that you wanted, not justice? How could I be so stupid to believe you! Men like you have always invented those lies to justify their ambitions and greed! Didn't you buy into the rules of this game to prove yourself, to prove your masculinity? And I have naively believed you until this very moment. I believed everything. No matter what anybody would tell me. No matter what I heard from Orestes, when he came. I was so proud of you, dad.

God Zeus said: Agamemnon, take revenge for the reputation of your country! Goddess Artemis said: Kill your child! Did they tell you also to choose a young woman among the captives of the defeated nation and use her as a slave and a lover? And then take her home, to your wife's yard. Is that kind of treatment of women also the will of the gods? What about respect? What about emotions? Do you think those things are not important?

Didn't you get your Clytemnestra with force, too? During one of your conquering marches? Haven't I heard once, how she blamed you for killing her first husband and their little son, and then taking her home to be your wife? But, of course, I couldn't believe that

then. Or I didn't want to believe. Now, maybe I can understand my mother more. I wonder if you have ever loved her at all. Has anybody loved her truly? Her present husband, Aigistos? Does he really love her, or he does he love towns and forests, woods for new ships, new wars...

Is there anybody innocent in this story? You were killing, she killed you, Orestes and I should kill her... Eye for eye, blood for blood, tooth for tooth. What is the way to step out of that cursed circle? Why justice, if it cuts the singing of birds? Why justice, if it leaves behind new wounds, new corpses, new grief? Why? Hatred among humans in the name of love to our own people – isn't that absurd? What kind of world is it? Suffering, fear, desperate people, hungry children ... all that in the name of those generous elevated ideas that came directly from god? Do you know, father, what is the real name for what you call a god? You don't. Let me tell you: an arrogant heartless mind, which doesn't care for a human being, for the beauty of earth, for the silence of sky. That equitable "god" destroys dreams, because he doesn't love people, and doesn't want us to think with our own minds. That kind of "god" is honored in this world. Intelligence without heart, this is an ability, which is worshiped today. Authority and money - only that counts. And in that kind of world you are speaking about love, Goddess? Does anybody listen to you at all? (*With great despair Electra begins to chant a traditional melody.*)

Part 5

TRANSFORMATION (ELECTRA'S DECISION)

ELECTRA:

I have been told: Electra, take a knife and kill your mother. Who should kill whom? Who can judge that? Who of us is pure and who is a sinner? Who is without a sin, let him be the first one to throw a stone at my mother! Whatever they, both of them, my mother and my

father, have been doing in their lives... I don't approve of their behavior.... but can I judge them? Who am I that I could judge anybody? Also my heart was poisoned by hatred, wasn't it? I was also willing to kill, wasn't I? Let each of us respond before our own consciousness. I am not throwing a stone at anybody! (*The knife falls from her hand on to the floor*)

Maybe you are right, Goddess. I can choose freedom. I can choose love. Not to hate, I am here to love. I am a woman. I am here to create, to give life, not to take it away. I am here to be happy. Is anything wrong with that? I am here to walk in beauty. And nobody is going to take that away from me. I don't allow anybody to take it away from me, never again. I don't allow even myself to do that.

I am a daughter of the sky, of sun, of Earth. Wind, that I feel on my skin, is my friend. Trees are my brothers and sisters, and they love me. Waters of ocean and rivers also love me, even little tiny streams bring me joy and love. Why then people should be my enemies? I want to find my place in the circle of life. I just want to be who I am. I want to feel like a human being among other human beings. Just that. This is my dream.

I don't know, Orestes, if you will understand that. You are a man. I know, You will say it is nonsense to listen to my heart. You will say it just it doesn't fit in this world. Because this world just doesn't work that way. But you know, I do believe it is possible to make it different. I don't have another choice but to believe that... Maybe because I am a woman. And women have always known that the greatest power that exists is the power of heart.

Goddess Gaia told me there were times, long, long ago, when the beauty of life was worshiped by people. She said that in those times people all over the world lived in happiness and harmony with all creation. Men and women respected each other. They respected nature, Mother Earth. They didn't have time for killing, because life and peace were more important.

Yes, there were times on the Earth, when people understood that. And we will begin to understand it again. It can not be different.

Part 6

PURIFICATION

(Slowly Electra takes off the upper part of her clothes, so she is now wearing just a light long dress. She takes a dish with water and washes her hands and face.)

Part 7

THANKSGIVING

(Electra goes to the dish with the wheat that she was preparing during the performance and takes it to the sacred place in front of candles. She takes the wheat in her hands and lifts them above her head. Gently and joyfully she releases the wheat down over her head and body. She begins to move to the rhythm of the music. On the back wall of the stage a forest of beautiful trees in sunlight is being projected. She dances in front of it. From the audience it looks like she is dancing among the trees.)

THE END

2. LONGING FOR THE FEMININE -QUEST BEGINS

In summer 2001 I traveled to Greece. This travel intrigued me in many important ways. One event which left a significant impression, was certainly my visit to Mycenae, the ruins of the ancient town, the royal palace where the famous story of Oresteia took place. This visit made me to decide one day I would write my own version of this myth.

While I was walking up to the hill to the ancient town of Mycenae and sitting in the tomb of Agamemnon, which is on the way up to the palace, I could feel a great anger awakening in me. My stomach and throat began to hurt me from all the emotions coming up. Later as I was sitting on the top of the hill in the ruins of old city, watching the vast view opening many miles down the valley all the way to the sea, I could feel how Clytemnestra was looking down there for ten years before finally the troops of her husband's army triumphantly returned, drunk, loaded with stolen goods, in company of slave women. I could feel the misery of the lie about winners of every imperial war, the heroes and the women's role in it. I was getting sick thinking of that.

In that moment I could understand why Clytemnestra killed her husband. I could feel that angry woman inside of me awakening. I could not judge her for being a murderer, could I? And also, on the other hand, I could not approve her violence. After all she took a father away from her children, among them from her daughter Electra, with whom I could identify very strongly as well. Electra was the rejected and angry girl archetype, who was cheated of her loving father and also of her mother's love. She hated her selfish mother. I had felt both of them inside of me, both angry and rejected.

It opened a conflict inside of me between an ethical dilemma on one side, and the great indefinite anger with that patriarchal lie connected to this and many other myths, which has been dominating throughout the last few thousands years, on the other side. I wanted to learn to understand both women, Electra and Clytemnestra. Observing their archetypes through

three different versions of the myth as presented by three most famous authors of the Greek tragedy, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, I realized none of the women had a relationship with herself or with each other. They perceive themselves and each other through the eyes of a man, a husband, a lover, a father, a brother... As many women today they sought happiness through a man and didn't realize it is to be found inside of themselves. They were not simply woman to woman with each other, but competitors.¹ In fact, this image defines the role of women throughout the whole history of Western drama, beginning with Greek tragedy up to the late 1960s, when feminist drama emerged as a distinct theatrical genre in Britain and the United States. According to Helene Keyssar "it was not until late 1960s that playwrights in significant numbers became self-consciously concerned about the presence – or absence – of women on stage". (Keyssar, 1985, p.1) Prior to the feminist movement women's relationship with men and their character was, with rare exceptions, viewed through the eyes of men (which is understandable if we consider that majority of authors were men).²

Thinking of all those characters I had to painfully admit to myself how little I knew about myself in relation to my own self, without regard to my relations to men. How many books written by women did I have a chance to read during my eighteen-year formal education? How many movies did I watch directed by women? How many paintings painted by women did I see? How many female spiritual teachers did I have a chance to learn from... I realized I accepted men's values in general, believing in male-invented ideas about art, literature, spirituality, philosophy, medicine and all other branches of science.

It felt I spent most of my life trying to understand myself through the eyes of men, putting their authority above my own, trying to be liked and admired by them, taking care of them, feeling guilty for taking my freedom, being jealous of other women... I had chosen to

¹ Only in Euripides' version of the myth is the Clytemnestra's character depicted as a complex feminine character. Euripides offers the spectators to see Clytemnestra not only as a senseless selfish woman as Aeschylus and Sophocles do, but also as an emotional human being, who shows care towards her daughter and is willing to ask Electra for understanding and forgiveness. Unfortunately Electra is not willing to accept her offer.

do so, because I didn't know I could do it differently. I thought this is the way it should be. But realizing those facts I felt somehow cheated, angry and drained.

Astonished, I realized that deep inside I, as well as most women in this culture, don't have a normal, healthy relationship with the feminine. Our minds were educated in a patriarchal way. I learned to perceive reality mostly in a rational way. Instead of perceiving life from the heart and relating to people, nature, all beings and things with love and respect, I found myself looking at them from distance, many times even cynically, as if I was not a part of this living miracle all around. I felt completely disconnected from the feminine energy, though at that time I didn't know this as the problem. I didn't even really know what the word "feminine" meant to me. I just painfully felt something very essential was missing.

From my early childhood up to my mid-twenties I was very rebellious, particularly in the question of women's rights, although I was never involved in the feminist movement. Now, in approaching the profound questioning of the feminine one of the most painful recognitions was that I as a woman didn't respect certain ways of the feminine. One of them was the "material", earthly aspect of life, such as my own body, the processes of the woman's body like menstruation, birth giving... I have internalized general patriarchal attitudes to the extent that I wasn't sure how to answer to the question: "What is the feminine I have been fighting for so hard?" Have I been fighting simply because I didn't know any better way of protecting this unknown, vulnerable and disrespected woman within?

As many women do, I have expected my partners to understand me although I didn't understand myself. Now I know men cannot understand a woman's inner processes to the extent we, women would want, even if they do their best. It is simply beyond their experience. It was me, whom I needed to learn to understand - to discover my identity as a woman in a relationship to my own self.

² It is very interesting that the first drama which could be characterized as feminist drama is written by a man. This is Henrik Ibsen's *Nora: A Doll's House*.

The first step towards it seemed to be the confrontation with the wounded and angry woman inside of me. I felt all that dissatisfaction was there for a reason, to make me dig deeper into the problem. What does she want to tell me? What does she try to teach me? I felt the myth of Electra to be a significant piece of archetypal material, which offered the keys of the first door to the mystery I wanted to approach: a chance to begin to understand the feminine power in its destructive way as well as in its healing nutritive way. I felt the path lead me towards the uncovering of the painful truth of where our world stands, the reason for that and the women's position in it, as well as what it used to be in pre-patriarchal times, what happened, why it happened and how the position of female energy could be and should be healed. I became aware that I have the responsibility for changing things for the better as well, and I wanted to discover my part of that process.

I was aware that those questions could not be solved in an easy way. It seemed the same as if one would ask oneself how this world could become a place of harmony, a place of love. As I began to approach my work on the myth of Electra through the feminine perspective, it became clear to me it is exactly about that seemingly impossible thing: bringing love and peace in the world of wars, fear and hatred. I imagine this is a question of many women and men, who, like me, simply can't understand the meaning of so many wars and other social injustices going on in the world right now as well as throughout the history of humankind.

Every world drama begins with individual drama or with a family drama. The first step in my reconstruction of the original story seemed to be making peace between daughter and mother, Electra and Clytemnestra. How can this be done? How can a myth of blood and hatred, a pattern, which goes on as perpetual motion in our world be changed? How could two women create love instead of hatred? How can two people create harmony out of chaos, create healing instead of continuing to seed destruction? How would Electra act in this story if she came in connection to her own wisdom? Would she really kill her mother as she did in all

three versions of the myth I mentioned before as well as in other later versions? What would she do if she could connect to her inner feminine wisdom? What is her true power?

This seems to be the question. What is the *true feminine power*? I have certainly never understood this power as dominance over men. For me it was not simply displacing men on their positions in politics, economy, etc using the tools of patriarchy to overthrow a patriarchal system. My understanding of feminine power hasn't been even restricted to women. I considered feminine power as a quality, which can be nourished within a woman as well as within a man. Although I strongly agree with Clarissa Estes and others who have been exploring feminine psychology, who believe there exist "a woman's issues of soul" - the archetypal, the intuitive, the sexual and cyclical, the ages of women, a woman's way, a woman's knowing, her creative fire -the women's natural psychic forms, which must be retrieved (Estes, 1995, p. 4), but intuitively I felt there must be a common denominator within all people, a feminine part within all, and it seemed to me to be the wisdom of the heart.

As I began to ask myself those questions a whole new perspective was opening in front of me. Suddenly I realized there were so many wise women around that I didn't even notice before. Yet, I also realized that this wisdom was somehow not manifested. If women are wise and if a bigger percent of the population is feminine, why then is the whole society and its values so far from wisdom? Why so many wars, hunger, injustice, violence, why so many unsatisfied, depressed or addicted people? Is it because most people don't respect our wisdom of the heart as a source of our treasure, but neglect it as if it isn't worth anything? Do we still honor false values, false heroes, new Agamemnons, and allow them to lead the world towards chaos instead of towards harmony and the wisdom of the heart? Don't too many people, including many women, accept the role of victim instead of taking responsibility for our own power for changing things for the better?

3. WHY MYTH IS SO IMPORTANT

What is the role of art, or more precisely, the theatre art in this whole issue? Let me return to the question of myth, with which I opened in the first chapter. Myth in its different forms of performing, ritual, storytelling, song and poetry, has always, during the whole history of humanity, given us examples, patterns, values and ethical standards of the world we live in. Myths present ideas that guide perception, conditioning us to think and even perceive in a particular way, especially when we are young and impressionable. From them we learn what is socially acceptable in the society from which they come. They define good and bad, right and wrong, what is natural and what is unnatural among the people who hold the myths as meaningful. I agree with many authors who have devoted to research the significance of myth, who believe myths have an extremely significant role in creating the identity of an individual as well as identity of a society. Let's remember Eliade's statement, that "myths preserve and mediate paradigms, sampling models of all pretentious human activities." (Eliade, 1992, p. 8)

Another important scholar of mythology, Joseph Campbell, who has gathered mythology of all cultures in his work The Masks of God, adds that "It is a fact that the myths of our several cultures work upon us, whether consciously or unconsciously, as energy releasing, life motivating and directing agents." (Campbell, 1985, p. 4) Clarissa Estes, Jungian psychoanalyst, poet, and keeper of the old stories, who has studied myths, fairy tales and folklore, says in her book, Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype, that "stories are embedded with instructions which guide us about the complexity of life." (Estes, 1995, p. 14)

Having such a strong influence, myth has been used through history to create reality, which suited the existent authority. Over time original myths were changed and rewritten according to who was in charge and what purpose was desired. As we could see before in

exploring the ancient cultures, the characteristic element for original myths is the harmonious connectedness on many levels. In the introduction to a collection of original myths, Wise Women of the Dreamtime: Aboriginal Tales of the Ancestral Powers, Johana Lambert speaks of ancient myths which “were rescued from drowning in the dark tide of colonialism and patriarchal progress” (Lambert&Parker, 1993, p. xvi) characterizing them as legends, which “allow us to remember the joy and profundity of life harmonized again within the mysteries of the Universal Feminine and her great dreaming – natural world”. (p.xvi) In myths we know today we can notice the loss of holistic perspective, which reflects in the relation towards “the Universal Feminine”. If we observe the mythology of most influential religions of the world, it is very obvious the patriarchal movement changed our history. Where is the Goddess in the Bible, the Koran, and the Torah?

Today we seem to be so removed from what we call “the Goddess”, that we don’t even have an image or role model to imagine the Goddess. As C. P. Christ has noted in her article, Why Women Need the Goddess, religious symbol systems focused on exclusively male images of divinity are psychologically devastating to women because they create the impression that female power can never be fully legitimate or wholly beneficent. (Christ, 1987, p.8)

Merlin Stone in her book, When God Was a Woman, (1976), which is a result of ten years long research on the archeology and history of the ancient religion of the Goddess and the role this ancient worship played in Judeo-Christian attitudes toward women, discusses the power of myth and the immense influence myth had in developing the self-image of women. By documenting the wholesale rewriting of myths and religious dogmas, Merlin Stone details a most ancient conspiracy: the patriarchal re-imaging of the Goddess as a wanton, depraved figure. This is the portrait that laid the foundation for one of culture’s greatest shams – the myth of Adam and fallen Eve. “As I considered the power of myth, it became increasingly difficult to avoid questioning the influential effects that the myths accompanying the religions

that worship male deities had upon my own image of what it meant to be born as a female, another Eve, progenitress of my childhood faith.” (p.4) Through her research of other myths she discovered that it was apparent “that archetypal woman in ancient religions, as represented by the Goddess, was quite different, in many respects, from the woman Eve.” (p. 8) In her book she says: “It was quite apparent that the myths and legends that grew from a religion in which the deity was female, and revered as wise, valiant, powerful and just, provided very different images of womanhood from those which are offered by male-oriented religions of today.” (p. 5)

Clarissa Estes says that through the centuries, various conquests of nations by other nations, and both peaceful and forced religious conversions “have covered over or altered the original core of the old stories.” (Estes, 1995, p.15) “It is how fairy tales and myths that explicate ancient women’s mysteries have been covered too. Most old collections of fairy tales and mythos existing today have been scoured clean of the scatological, the sexual, the perverse (as in warnings against), the pre-Christian, the feminine, the Goddesses, the initiatory, the medicines for various psychological malaises, and directions for spiritual raptures.” (p.14)

Healing the Myths – Healing the Self Image of Women

“But there is a good news”, Estes continues. “For all the structural tumbledown in existing versions of tales, there is a strong pattern that still shines forth. From the form and shape of the pieces and parts, it can be determined with good accuracy what has been lost from the story and those missing pieces can be redrawn accurately – often revealing amazing understructures which begin to heal woman’s sadness that so much of the old mysteries have been destroyed. It is not quite so. They have not been destroyed. All one might need, all that we might ever need, is still whispering from the bones of story.” (Estes, p.15)

She suggests our contribution in reconstructing the story, which can be achieved through inner exploring, the creative discovering of our soul, what she calls the *soul-work*. “The more whole the stories, the more subtle twists and turns of the psyche are presented to us and the better opportunity we have to apprehend and evoke our soul-work. (Estes, p. 15)

A wonderful example of reconstructing the altered myths, which I call a healing of the original core, is Charlene Spretnak’s collection of pre-Hellenic myths, Lost goddesses of early Greece, (1984). After she gathered “the bones” she did the rest of work through meditation. “My methodology, once the research was completed, was to study all the index cards of information on a particular Goddess, meditate on that material, and then become that Goddess as much as possible before reconstructing her myth.”(Spretnak, 1984, p.24) Like Estes, she also uses a method of discovering the unconscious parts of the soul, entering the deeper levels of consciousness to connect to the archetypal material within and reveals the feminine Goddess archetypes.

Remembering the ancient qualities of female archetypes may be used as a tool for re-establishing the self-image of women. In Spretnak’s words “engagement with the Goddess in symbol, myth, and ritual as participatory fields of relation encourages the expression of one’s unique gifts while evoking a sense of one’s larger self, the fullness of our being.” (p.xii)

I mentioned before, female dramatis personae throughout the history of Western drama have been created through the eyes of men and the same is true with interpretations of the Goddess archetypes. Spretnak explains that the pre-Hellenic Goddesses are powerful and compassionate, yet those whom the Greeks incorporated into the new order were transformed severely. (p.18) She gives an example of Hera, who was made into a disagreeable, jealous wife; Athena who was made into a cold, masculine daughter; Aphrodite who was made into a frivolous sexual creature, Artemis who was made into the quite forgettable sister of Apollo, and others. (p.18) In addition to biblical Eve, who was presented as a misleading temptress, we can observe the palette of female prototypes. These prototypes later evolved into the

wicked witch, the cruel stepmother, the passive princess, etc, and embody the images with which women still identify, rather than experiencing ourselves authentically. What is hidden behind all those false images? Do we know at all?

The ancient memory of original myths lives within us, in our collective consciousness, and can be found there. By allowing our selves to see the myths differently, the universe itself is altered because our relationship to the universe is altered in a very real sense. Reconstructing the old original stories is one of the approaches of healing the myth, which in this case means liberating the feminine role within myths. Consequently it means re-establishing harmony between the female and male principles.

In addition to that, through our soul-work there opens a wide field of possibilities of creating ourselves, as we want to be. We can connect to ancient archetypal images of women in original myths and invoke the existing Goddess symbols as Spretnak did, and we can also build our own interpretations of reality by creating the stories we in which want to live.

In both cases theatre can be used as a healing tool for deep problems of an individual and society. I am going to approach the question about the options for creating a healing model through theatre by explaining the examples of Electra and White Buffalo Woman from that perspective.

Healing the Myth of Electra

Let me return to the myth of Electra and to the questions I stated above: How can a myth of blood and hatred, a pattern which goes on as perpetual motion in our world, be changed? How can two women create love instead of hatred? How can two people create harmony out of chaos, create healing instead of continuing to seed destruction? How would Electra act in this story if she came in connection to her own wisdom?

The answers can be searched through reconstruction of the myth, which can represent a model of the possibility of healing the given situation. Instead of using the *dramatis personae*

of Electra, as she was viewed and presented by writers of patriarchal Greece, a revengeful girl who enforces her will of hatred, another kind of *dramatis personae* can be created. In my case I have chosen to see Electra as a woman who is willing to listen to the true wisdom of her heart and to search for the answer to what is the wisest action for her in this situation. She is willing to go within herself, to confront her feelings of anger, pain and disappointment, to listen also to another side of the story regarding her mother and try to understand her mother's actions without judgment. Instead of being confronted only by the god Apollo, who is in the original version of the myth presented as a judging and demanding deity she chooses to go to the sanctuary of goddess Gaia, the loving and understanding pre-patriarchal Earth deity. In the presence of Gaia she is allowed to be herself, and not just allowed, but is also challenged to find her own truth instead of following the outside authority. As Spretnak asserts, Apollo is one of the representatives of "the invaders" new Gods and Goddesses, the Olympians", who differ from the earlier Goddesses: "The pre-Hellenic Goddesses are enmeshed with people's daily experiencing of the energy forces of life; Olympian Gods are much more distant, removed, "up there". Unlike the flowing, protective love of a Mother-Goddess, the character of the Olympian Gods is judgmental." (p.18) At this point it is also important to add that according to Greek mythology the most famous oracle in the ancient world, Delphi, which is today known as Apollo's sanctuary, was Gaia's long before it was overtaken by the god Apollo. (Monaghan, 2000, p.40) The legend says he achieved his purpose by trickery.

Through this perspective it is even more understandable why the involvement of the Goddess Gaia (Earth Mother archetype) is essential for Electra to recognize herself as a powerful figure – through the sense of power in her heart, as I have described above. As you can see, in my version of the myth Electra comes to the conclusion that she will not kill her mother. In the original story as well as in all dramatic versions Clytemnestra *was* killed by her children. What is known as the "original" myth of Electra's family comes from the Homeric epic Iliad.

If I consider Spartnak's revelation about the religion and culture of pre-Hellenic mythology, which was recorded thousands of years before the classical myths recorded by Hesoid and Homer, suddenly I can doubt the authenticity of Homer's version. Jane Ellen Harrison in the prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion supports my questioning about its reliability: "The habit of viewing Greek religion exclusively through the medium of Greek literature has brought with an initial and fundamental error in method. For literature Homer is the beginning, though every scholar is aware he is nowise primitive... Homer presents, not a starting point, but a culmination, a complete achievement, with scarcely a hint of origins... Beneath this splendid surface lies a stratum... at once more primitive and permanent." (Harrison, 1927, p. vi)

However all three mentioned authors of Greek tragedy who dramatized the myth of Electra's family obviously used Homer's version of the myth and structured it in a patriarchal manner, under the warlike, judgmental Olimpian gods, in this case Apollo. A very interesting fact is that Clytemnestra was accused and punished for her crime without exception by all three Greek authors. It is also true that none of them revealed the whole background of her story, the facts of what her husband Agamemnon had done or what was actually happening in Troy, which offer a completely different perspective.³ The only one who brought up at least a few facts, such as Agamenon's sacrifice of Ifigenia and his bringing home a new lover, was Euripides. He, as I mentioned before, tried to understand Clytemnestra's point of view. It seems he tried to reveal his own opinion as much as the social system allowed him. Namely, the reason why in Greek tragedies Agamemnon is always represented as a hero can be very easily understood by the fact that Greek society at that time was a typical patriarchal culture.

Within my script I wanted to find a balance for that obvious injustice over the feminine. Yes, Clytemnestra did commit a crime, but why is even her own daughter unwilling to listen to why she did that? And there is another point of controversy: why was she strictly accused

³ For more details see my script, which is based on facts, I gathered from many sources

of that act by her children and the society, while on the other side, Agamemnon, who had committed many more crimes, wasn't? He was even honored as a hero! In addition to that, in Aeschylus version of the myth, the dramatic trilogy, Oresteia, (1953), Orestes, Electra's brother, who with Electra's agreement killed his mother, is absolved of any guilt for his act in Athena's trial court. Athena is in this drama represented as an example of the altered figure of a Goddess, completely adjusted to patriarchal interests. "There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth," Athena asserts, adding, " I am always for the male with all my heart, and strongly on my father's side." (Aeschylus, 1953, p.161) Furthermore, at the same trial the god Apollo explains that children are not related to their mothers. She is "only nurse of the new planted seed that grows". (Aeschylus, p. 158)

Discovering all those historical and social facts about the background of story of Electra's family and women's position in Greek society, made me gradually begin to understand why I had felt so angry and sad when I was walking up to the palace in Mycene and in all that years before and after. It was just one of so many examples in human history, which illustrate the painful fact of an attitude towards the feminine which is still resonating today. On the other hand, after confronting the dissatisfaction I realized there is much hope of changing that attitude and bringing forth the balance between female and male. I understood the need of healing the feminine as an essential element in the process of reestablishing the harmony in our society. The first step toward the recovery is that women begin to recognize and value our authentic nature and change the relationship toward us internally. Revaluation of the significance of feminine energy in its different aspects seems to me to be a very important part of that healing process. By changing the sense of identity women have about our-selves, there follows a consecutive cultural influence, which changes archetypal influences of the society. I strongly believe that with that awareness and knowledge, and with the wisdom of our hearts, we have so much power that we can heal the world.

Paying Regard to Contrary Nature of Female Psyche

More detailed consideration of the personality of Clytemnestra reveals she was a very contradictory “dramatis persona”, which can serve as an example of contrariety of the female psyche. I want to emphasize right away that I am not going to analyze that question from a traditional psychological perspective, but will be interested in exploring it through the creative process as a conflict between the role of a woman as seen through eyes of patriarchal society, and her true nature.

Through the Clytemnestra's character we can observe the contradictory nature of women, the inner schism of a woman, who is conflicted between her role of mother and a good wife and her role of an autonomous being. This is a schism that I am sure most women confront during a lifetime. If a woman radically decides for the second option, as Clytemnestra chose to be a lover to Aigistos and to remain in the power of queen of Mycene, this decision sparks not only her personal pain about her family, her children. She is accused if not excluded by her society. Her act is most likely seen as something bad, maybe even evil.

Reclaiming feminine power can be but also doesn't have to be a radical act, such as Clytemnestra's acts of taking a lover or establishing authority over the country. The cause of the inner schism of a woman can be a power awakening from inside, from the ancient memories of every woman, which encourages her to step over the boundaries of the woman she was raised to be and what is expected from her by society, her family or husband. This power from within wants her to take her life in her hands, following her own inner wisdom, to reclaim her self-esteem, her ability of connecting to the healing magical powers of nature. I am convinced it has to do with a basic need of humanity to restore the harmony between a masculine and a feminine energy. In order to achieve balance women must begin to *understand and respect our contradictory personality*. While gaining wisdom and power, a woman doesn't need to deny her domestic part. On the contrary, I think it is not a necessary,

but an important part of the nature of women. However being a family woman, mother to children or a mother in a spiritual way represents just one part of femininity.

So, considering the contrariety of the feminine personality, which is presented by various *archetypes* characterized by oppositions, such as life and death, light and dark, as well as observing the attitude towards them through the history of humankind seems to be one of the steps toward understanding the authentic feminine. Rediscovery of those two complex aspects seemed to me to be one of the ways of reestablishing the self-image of women. Johana Lambert describes, what she calls “the Universal Feminine” as “the holder of balance between life and death.” (Lambert&Parker, 1993, p. 132) The Aboriginal legends reveal a social order and daily ritual life in which women are able to express all of their feminine aspects, both dark and light. She suggests the indigenous cultures to be “a source from which each of us, in our own way, can accelerate our search for the ceremonies, social forms, medicines, stories, and myths that allow us to dive into the darkest depths and unmask our full array of feminine potentials and power. The mother and the witch; the creator and the destroyer; the compassionate, birth-giving joy and bleeding, screaming anger; the familiar and comforting as well as desired and cherished: the feminine must again be fully present and empowered on earth and in human society so that the inevitable healing ritual of humanity’s rebirth can begin.” (p.132)

Observing my performances I can notice that without conscious intention I was attracted to discover the contrariety of “the Universal Feminine”, which is in fact contrariety of my own psyche, its opposite aspects. In the creative process of Electra one of main focuses seemed to be revealing the mother aspect represented by goddess Gaia, the Earth archetype, while in the performance of White Buffalo Woman, the question of oppositions of light and dark deepens with confronting the Dark Goddess, which is in fact, as we will see soon, just another aspect of the Earth, her dark manifestation.

4. DISCOVERING THE MOTHER ARCHETYPE – GAIA, THE EARTH MOTHER

To approach the Gaia (the Earth) archetype I tried to find the answer to the question of why Electra went to find her answer to the sanctuary of the goddess Gaia. Why didn't she choose another goddess's or god's sanctuary?

I began to search for an answer from many different perspectives of the meaning and importance of the Earth goddess. Throughout the world the Earth Mother or Mother Nature archetype is the oldest and most universally acknowledged religious archetype in all of human experience. Sculpted images of her date back to the Cro-Magnon Aurignacian peoples of 30.000 years ago, and are found across the Eurasian continent from Spain to Siberia. (Gimbutas, 1991) In many cultures she is identified with the Great Mother Goddess whom Greeks called Gaia (or Gaea, Ge), Cretans called her Rhea and the Lydians, Cybele. She is Prithivi to the Hindus, Asaya to Yorubans of Nigeria, Kunapipi to Australian tribes, in Peru she is Pachamama. In other parts of the world she is known also as Terra, Nu Kwa, Hertha, Mami Aruru, Papa, Unchi-Maka, etc. The indigenous tribal people consider(ed) the Earth as their mother. The Native Americans call her the Mother Earth. By their understanding "she is a living entity, the mother of all life, our Mother Earth. All her children, everything in nature is alive: the living stone, the great breathing mountains, trees and plants, as well as birds and animals and man. All are united in one harmonious whole." (Waters, 1977, p.57)

Also in contemporary science, there is a theory called Gaia Hypothesis, articulated by James Lovelock, which supposes that the earth – soil, water, atmosphere, and living creatures, all together – is a system so intricate and self regulating that it can be seen as enormous, conscious, living entity. (Monaghan, 2000, p. 40)

Gaia is the name given by the ancient Greeks to primordial planetary goddess worshiped by humanity since the dawn of the Stone Age. Also according to Greek mythology Gaia is the mother of us all. She was a powerful creator goddess, a parthenogenetic mother who created

the entire world without assistance. (Monaghan, 2000, p. 37-38). Although eclipsed during the classical period by Olympian Gods, Gaia's figure is always in background. They might overtake her sanctuary, but the Greeks could not eliminate Gaia nor her worship. Still in classical times Greek citizens swore their public oaths to her. At oracular shrine at Delphi the priestess began her formal ritual address to the Gods thus: "First in my prayer before all other gods. I call on Earth, primeval prophetess." (Harrison, p.68) So they did what conquerors usually do with unconquerable supreme gods and goddesses: they incorporated her into their own mythology, naming her as the most ancient of goddesses. Gaia was thus praised by singer of the Homeric Hymns:

"Of Earth I sing, eldest of all and Mother of the Gods.

Of her I sing the All-Mother,

old and rock-hard and beautiful.(...)

Of her I sing, the nourisher,

She upon whom everything feeds.

Of Gaia I sing. Whoever you are,

wherever you are, she feeds you

from her sacred treasury of life.

(Sargent, 1975, p. 56)

According to pre-Hellenic mythology beside her nourishing mother function, the ancient Earth goddess acquired an oracular function.⁴ Dreams, which often were felt to foreshadow the future, were believed to ascend from the netherworld. (Spretnak, p.45) "Gaia was all-knowing, as her temple at Delphi attests, for she knew the future as well as past." (Monaghan, p. 40) In the myth of Gaia reconstructed by C. Spartnak we can read that "Gaia instructed Her

⁴ Gaia's oracular function appears in records of her worship at Delphi, Athens, and Aegae. She was the earliest possessor of Delphic oracle, before Poseidon, Dionysos, or Apollo. (Harrison, 1927, p. 68)

priestess in the ways of entering a trance and in the interpretation of messages that arose from the darkness of Her earth-womb.”(p. 48)

The Earth Mother in many cultures represents the “nourishing mother principle”, who provides all necessities for life, all the abundance we (people) need: material and emotional. As the all-knowing she as well represents a source of knowledge: her womb is regarded as the source of secrets and mysteries of life, human’s past, present and future. We can understand the way she provides material abundance, but as the people of modern civilization we can hardly understand the meaning of providing *the emotional abundance*, the all-embracing love and oracular power arising from the darkness of her-womb. What does it mean? How can we experience that?

If we turn once more to the Greek mythology, according to Hesoid’s Theogony, Gaia was created by Light and by Love from the primal cosmic Chaos. She represented the basic principle of yet unformed substance, the beginning of the Universe, which gave birth to all forms of life, plants, animals, Titans, gods and goddesses and human race. As creation of Love she herself is regarded as the source of Love. Considering that fact I would risk a supposition that the Earth Mother represents the creating mother energy, which doesn’t judge her creations by any criterion, but loves them (us) all without any conditions. For that reason we could infer that before a human being, who is according to ancient belief is a child of hers, is ready to confront the challenges of the world “outside the safety of mother’s embrace”, she/he needs to learn what does it feel to be unconditionally loved and accepted, otherwise she/he will not feel safe, rooted and loved “out there”.

For a comparison we can think of children who have received love from their mothers and those who haven’t. What is the difference between them? Now let’s compare this difference with the difference between a society of people who lived in the partnership with the Earth as “her children” and the people of modern society. Which profile has created more addicted, depressive, lonely or violent people?

The tribal societies all over the world understood that the Earth represents the source of love, where a human being can always come back to get comfort, rest, peace of heart, before one gets ready to face new challenges in life. In Native American traditional songs we can find chants where Earth is regarded as home. One of them sounds like that: “I am coming back, Mother Earth. The Sun, the wind, the rain on my skin...” To me it sounds like “I am coming back home”, to the place where a human can feel the infinite abundance of being unconditionally loved, accepted and understood. This concept of “home” is where one finds a peace of one’s heart in the silence of the safe shelter of nature; the embrace of mountains, woods, meadows; where one can feel again the sacredness of life. Then one can go “back to the world”.

Wasn’t that exactly what Electra was looking for? She wanted to go to the very essence, to the source of unconditional love to get a warm hug from the loving mother and all-knowing prophetess: to find a safe place to calm her chaotic thoughts and find a peace in her emotions. Maybe later she will need some help or advice from other goddesses or gods, but first she needed to find her lost connection to the warm womb, the ancient source of peace, and get a clear vision what is right. She needed to “put herself in her place”, the place of inner balance. When the rhythm of the heart of the Earth came to the accordance of the rhythm of her being, then the harmony of the whole universe became her own harmony. She learned the truth, the answer she was looking for; she was ready to go back “to the world” to act according to that truth.

At that point I will again risk maintaining that the essence of the illness (the disorder, the disharmony) of our society is the lost connection to the basic principal of mother energy. I will try to prove this hypothesis from shamanic point of view, explaining the shamanic method *soul retrieval* and *shamanic experience*, which are two of many methods of expanding the perception of reality experiencing the reality in more profound way.

Soul-loss

In the very beginning I would like to make clear that when I talk about shamanism in this writing, I will not be speaking about trained or recognized shamans, but about the shamanic point of view and shamanic experience in general, which can be available to every person. As already mentioned before what is called shamanism we can find in the heart of every spiritual tradition connected to the Earth, all over the world. For now let me just briefly indicate the essence of shamanism as accessing the realities beyond the “ordinary reality”, with the intention of higher purpose: healing for the benefit of a community, providing strength in everyday life, and living a joyful existence in harmony with totality of Nature.

From the shamanic point of view the condition of modern society described before (disorders such as addiction, depression, loneliness, etc...), is interpreted as a consequence of a “soul-loss”. The phenomenon of “soul-loss” is very much considered also by some innovative modern psychologists, specially Jungian therapists. One of them is Marie-Louise von Franz, who wrote: “Soul loss can be observed today as a psychological phenomenon in everyday lives of the human beings around us. Loss of soul appears in the form of a sudden onset of apathy; one feels empty, everything seems pointless....” (Franz, 1980, p.12) Jeanne Achterberg, as quoted by S. Ingerman, in her article, The Wounded Healer, describes the soul-loss as “an injury to the inviolate core that is essence of person’s being, which manifest in despair, damage of immunity, cancer, and a host of other very serious disorders.” (Ingerman, 1991, p. 6)

Soul retrieval and a “child within”

As I was considering the similarity of relationships between (Mother) Earth and human beings, and the relationship of the individual human mother and child, I began to wonder, what “being a child of Mother Earth” actually means. I found a very interesting comparison

and explanation of the “child within”, as well as the way to heal the lost connection with this child within and thus the connection to the Earth as a Mother, in psychologist Sandra Ingerman’s book Soul Retrieval,(1991).

Ingerman’s approach lies in the healing of an injury of the essential core self of a person, through the ancient shamanic method *soul retrieval*. From her perspective “the important parts of person’s vital energy, which is temporarily inaccessible, exist in non-ordinary reality, from where they can be recovered only by shamanic means.” (Ingerman, 1991, p. 26) Contemporary psychology and also psychiatry, as well as ancient shamanism, recognize that parts of the self can become separated, leaving the individual estranged from his or her essential self. The way to get to the lost part from Ingerman’s perspective is establishing the lost connection with our forgotten or denied emotional wounds. She interprets that those wounds commenced when our inner child was hurt in different ways and at different periods of our lifetime, mostly in our childhood. Because we couldn’t stand the emotional pain of certain events or longer periods of being under pressure, our self-protecting system removed these emotions to the place of unconsciousness. With the shamanic method of soul retrieval in co-operation with psychological knowledge, those parts which have been removed to unconsciousness can be brought to our consciousness. This is the first step of the healing. The second is taking care of the wounded part, which she calls the wounded inner child archetype. “Once you have contacted the inner wound, you have to begin to listen to the inner child. By speaking to your own lost child you start to establish the lines of communication needed to bring the child home again and to assure it is safe to come home now. (Ingerman, p. 161)

At this point I will explore the question of how the soul-retrieval is used as a healing tool in performance, which I will examine in more detail in one of the following chapters. Theatre performance is one of the possible ways to establish the contact with wounded inner child. Performance can be the mechanism, which “presses the right button” to open the doors to the forgotten painful emotions. It touches the wound in the realm of unconsciousness and brings

it to consciousness, or speaking in shamanic terms: brings back one of the parts of soul of the person which has been lost in non-ordinary reality. As the performer brings out her/his emotions through the words of a character (in our case Electra) and talks of her/his painful feelings, like a mirror she or he reflects her/his own feelings to those who witness the performance (the spectator). Bringing out those feelings in the safe place, where they can be not just acknowledged, but also relieved and healed, is one of the main characteristics of ritual theatre.

In the safe shelter of Mother Earth, Electra found a place where she could speak out her feelings of pain and anger. Her injured, insulted inner child began to speak: to yell, cry and whisper. When we can express our feelings and speak about them to somebody with whom we feel completely unconditionally understood, the healing process begins. In the case of Electra it was the Mother Earth. The Earth gave her a chance to be listened to without judgments. Maybe it could be somebody else, a person, who would know to listen without judgments? It could be an option from the modern psychology and psychiatry point of view, but if we want to receive an essential healing of our being, we need to go deeper, and look for what we are profoundly missing as members of our society. Can we profoundly heal our personal soul-loss if the society we are living it is suffering from it? If we are connected to all, as we are, then the answer would be, that for healing ourselves profoundly we need to search for the roots of the problem of the lost balance of our civilization. When Electra touched her personal emotional wound, she couldn't avoid the need for profound healing, which was reflected in the voice of the Gaia who reminded her: "Remember, who you are, Electra. Return to your source. (...) In each human heart, there are dreams of a better world."⁵ Essential healing can come only from finding the profound answers of our existence; remembering the source of our being, finding the meaning of our life, dreams of the world where we could live harmoniously connected to all around us. In a world of love, peace and

⁵ See pg. 19

justice, not a world of disorder, confusion, hatred, cold-heartedness and despair. Aren't we talking again about the world of harmony, within which all things are considered sacred?

Let's remember Eliade's Myth of the Eternal Return, when he speaks about the sacred and profane perception, and archaic people's need to come back to the sacred in certain cycles over and over again. Experiencing reality as sacred time to time was keeping them away from the pointlessness of existence. The essence of the ritual, which was experiencing the sacred reality, reminded them of the existence of a larger reality and gave the meaning and reason to their lives in "narrowed", ordinary, everyday reality, or so called profane reality.

Wasn't Electra deep inside, without being even aware of it, longing for the very same connection as the archaic people? Wasn't I, through her character, expressing my own profound heart's desire? Isn't this exactly the same archaic longing, which still exists within the human psyche, but has been suppressed and forgotten throughout the centuries? Don't we all deep inside long for "returning home"? Where is that home?

Coming home

"All sickness is homesickness."

Dianne Connelly

This is a prayer, which is used in soul retrievals: "Mother, one of your lost children wants to come home. Help me bring her back to you so that she can take her rightful place on earth". (Ingerman, 1991, p. 47) As we could see, Sandra Ingerman speaks of importance of bringing the child *home again*, and importance of feeling *safety* as a condition to become healthy - "whole again". Brooke Medicine Eagle says in the introduction to one of her songs that "becoming *whole - healing* - is a natural function of life, when people feel safe, loved and nourished". (Medicine Eagle, 1993)

Now we can approach to the question of the relationship between soul-loss and the broken link with Earth of the modern society. While speaking of the meaning of the Earth Mother archetype, I posed the question of how can we, the people of modern civilization, understand the meaning of her providing the emotional abundance, the all-embracing love and her oracular power arising from the darkness of her-womb. What does it mean? How can we experience that? How can we experience that our planet Earth is really a living being and that we can really rely on it to experience the love and safety she is providing to us? My own experience and experiences of many people proves to me that one of the keys to open this door is surely what is called the “shamanic experience”.

What is the essence of shamanic experience

In engaging in shamanic practice, one moves between what Michael Harner terms an Ordinary State of Consciousness (OSC) and Shamanic State of Consciousness (SSC), which is state of expanded consciousness. (Harner, 1990, p. 21).“People who are pursuing their shamanic practice have come to realize that what most people describe as “reality” only barely touches the grandeur, power and mystery of universe. The new shamans often cry tears of ecstasy when undergoing and recounting their experiences. (...) They tend to undergo transformation as they discover the incredible safety and love of the normally hidden universe. The cosmic love they repeatedly encounter in their journeys is increasingly expressed in their daily lives.” (p. xiv) “In this time of worldwide environmental crisis, shamanism provides something largely lacking in the anthropocentric religions: reverence for, and spiritual communication with, the other beings of the Earth and the Planet itself. In shamanism this is not simply Nature worship, but a two way spiritual communication that resurrects the lost connection our human ancestors had with the awesome spiritual power and beauty of our garden Earth.« (Harner, xiii)

Here is a very interesting fact, which was an amazing discovery for me. Experiencing SSC, journeying to realities beyond “ordinary reality”, connects us to the wider reality of the Universe, which is fundamental for understanding the life of the “ordinary reality” in our daily lives! It looks contradictory but it seems to be true: insisting in staying all the time in Ordinary State of Consciousness and not experiencing the “other side” from time to time is the main reason for the wound, the emptiness or soul-loss of our society and us as individual, modern people. If we are always in ordinary reality or “on the earth” as we hear many times people say, we can’t really understand the Earth and our life on and with her. Insisting on permanently existing within OSC, within profane perception, seems to be exactly what is characteristic for the scientific, rational perception of our modern world, which I was talking about in the first chapter. The other typical perception I spoke about, the patriarchal religious perception, restricts the sacred to a transcendental quality, which is on “the other side”. We can pray to “him”, but we can’t go to heaven till we die.

The patriarchal religious point of view is just the opposite of the shamanic point of view, which is characteristic for all ancient tribal cultures all over the world: shamanism is based on real personal experience, and not on religious dogmas. From this point of view, experiencing the sacred is possible in this earthly life. It is allowed and encouraged, even more than that: experiencing the sacred realm of reality was essential for understanding the meaning of life for every individual. As it was mentioned already, in ancient cultures there were many different kinds of rituals, the purpose of which was to expand consciousness to become able to perceive the whole reality as sacred.

But there is a fact which proves to us that no dogma can thwart the essential need of the human soul: the greatest saints of the patriarchal Christian religion were personally experiencing “heaven on Earth”. If we read about the visions and inner experiences described in biographies of some of most famous saints such as St. Frances or St. Therese of Avile, we can see they are talking about incredible power of light of love entering their hearts, which

brings indescribable feeling of blissfulness, joy and happiness. We can see in the paintings of saints, there is very often shaped a shining aura around their heads or hearts. Their experience of the divine can be very obviously compared to the description of shamanic enlightenment as described by an Iglulik Eskimo shaman, quoted by M. Harner: “ I felt a great inexplicable joy, a joy so powerful that I could not restrain it, but had to break into song, a mighty song, with only room for one word: joy, joy, joy! (...) I had gained my enlightenment, the shaman-light of brain and body, and this in such a manner that it was not only I who could see through the darkness of life, but the same light also shone out from me...” (Harner, 1990, p.22) To live in harmony for many ancient people meant to live in happiness. In Navaho language, for example, the word *hozho* means harmony. Its meaning contains blended concepts of happiness, beauty, peace and righteousness.

We can now establish that the connecting essence of all experiences of sacredness from different cultures and times, is the overwhelming feeling of *all-embracing love*, which manifests as pleasant feelings, such as blissfulness, happiness, joy of life, etc. Shamans speak about it, saints speak about it... of the energy of love, which is present as an all-embracing reality always, but only by opening ourselves to it, can we feel its presence.

Mother principle and the Earth

We can see now, that when we are talking about the emotional abundance of love, it is not necessary connected only to Mother Earth. The *mother principle*, as the source of love, seems to be universal. There are different interpretations about the relationship between the Earth and the feminine principle. The Great Cosmic Mother as universal feminine is the archetype in which many mythologies represent the “love principle”. As we saw before, in many cultures it is identified with Earth Mother, but not necessarily. Merlin Stone quotes that nearly all the female deities of Near and Middle East were titled Queen of Heaven, and in Egypt not only was the ancient Goddess Nut known as the heavens, but her brother-husband

Geb was symbolized as the earth. There are numerous accounts of the female Creators of all existence, divinities who were credited with bringing forth not only the first people and the entire earth, but also the heavens above. There were records of such Goddesses in Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, Africa, Australia and China. (Stone, 1976, p.2)

I wouldn't limit myself by choosing any of interpretations as the right one or by saying the mother principle is represented only by Earth Mother. However I would say that from my understanding Earth Mother represents the feminine mother principle. If we consider Earth as a living being, and infer she loves "her children", then she is the source of love for us, human beings, the habitants of the planet Earth. Through her love we can feel universal love, and the shamanic experience proves the love is all-embracing energy. It is everywhere and fulfils the whole universe, however it is named or categorized. Thus, the shamanic experience is one of the answers to my previous question. It is one of the ways for the modern people to experience the emotional abundance of the Earth and learn her secrets. It enables us to re-establish our lost connection to her.

Let's look at the Earth as the point of security, a kind of airport, from where departures to the all kind of other worlds (realities) are possible. If there is no such place, planes get lost and confused in the open space of universe. The shamanic experience is the experience, which opens the senses to feel the energy of her love, rhythm of her heartbeat, which enables us safely to journey to another realities and come safely back.

I believe, as it has been in the history of humankind, also in our modern times our souls want to expand, to fly and experience the all-embracing love. For what is love, if not sacredness itself? It is our ancient longing, the essential need, which makes us depressed if it is not fulfilled. In my opinion the rational perception and religious transcendental perception with their restricted realms of reality are artificial constructions. Our psyche knows what is the natural sacred order of things and tends to try to establish harmony, which our mind has forgotten through the centuries. Because of this disharmony our inner child is more and more

unhappy. We are trying to buy her/him toys and sweets instead of giving love and our attention. Our inner emptiness causes us to search for substitutes in all kind of addictions.

Because in our culture we don't have a chance to experience the fuller and deeper extensions of reality in a socially approved way, we are left to our own ideas of how to fulfill this need of ours. It can be and it is very dangerous. Many people search the possibilities for experiencing these "flights" in self-destructive ways such as drugs and alcohol just because they didn't have an opportunity to experience it in a socially approved ways controlled by shamans, priest/esses and medicine-people, as it used to be in ancient cultures.

Back to the inner child

I can conclude by now that experiencing the reality of "other side" is really essential for healing our wounded inner child and for changing the condition of our society. As we said the child within needs a safe place to be willing to come back to us. If we feel emotionally safe, which means loved unconditionally, we allow the denied or forgotten feelings to come up. We allow ourselves to cry, to feel sadness, anger, guilt, etc. Any kind of emotions can be brought out in front of a mother who really doesn't judge, but accepts us as we are.

The Earth, if seen as a living, breathing, loving being, can give us this shelter. The place on the Earth where we can feel the energy, the spirit of the Earth is thus a place where we are allowed to be who and what we are, and where we can come back always to remember our essence. The essence of human being is the heart. The heart as the physical organ as well as the energetic vortex is the center, through which love can be felt and perceived. As human beings we are miraculously made in the way that the natural pace of our heart beating is harmonized to the heart- beat of this majestic being, the Earth. When we feel these two beating together we are in perfect harmony – one with the vibration of love of Earth, one with the vibration of universal love, one with all that is. Everything comes to the right place.

Within an ecstatic experience we can feel the reality of emotional abundance that Mother Earth is giving to us. When we come back, we know, that this is the safety that we really have; the awareness that The Earth is really alive and that she really is our mother. It is no more a question of mythology, but a living reality. It becomes clear to us, that we are indeed connected to the Earth, more than that, that we are HOME here, wherever we go, this is our safe home and our heaven. We are living in the beautiful garden of Earth, who is providing us, what we need and also, we can create healing for her, because we are responsible for her, for our home.

Through the perspective of expanded consciousness we can see and then understand reality and also the meaning of our own life in a different way. As ancient people we can get the information we search for that arose from her earth-womb. The question that Electra went to search for was: “What is the right thing to do?” The meaning of the word “right” in this case is what can I do in order to become balanced, in order to act according to my true power, the power of the heart; in order to act in tune with the harmony of the sacred laws of Nature. By surrendering to the wisdom of the Earth we consciously accept and see ourselves not just as isolated individuals, but as a part of greater web of life on the Earth and in the universal “oneness”.

From this universal point of view we understand we are here on this planet with a reason, with the responsibility and the competence to change things on this planet for the better. We are here to return to love. With this understanding, we can see all the difficulties, pains and unpleasant experiences of our life as lessons to be learned and we see them as a part of our mission in the greater plan of the mysterious life. After “diving”, dancing or just walking through painful feelings from unconsciousness, there is a great joy awaiting us on the other side – the realization of cosmic love, which has always been here, but we couldn’t feel it, because we weren’t connected to our feelings - to our inner child. Now the lost part is here again, embraced by love, safe and happy again. Home again.

Now we can see the real nature of the inner child. It is not only the wounded part of us, which is crying, feeling anger, sadness, etc, but the part which is able to feel love and joy of life, and knows to be happy. The simple-hearted child archetype in each of us connects us with the simplicity of Nature and hearts of other people. This is the miracle that happens: when we have received enough love to feel emotionally safe, we begin to love... We become able not only to receive, but also to give love!

When we are disconnected from her/him, we can't feel love. Without her/him we are emotional invalids. We are just visitors to Nature, not one with it, not children of the Earth. We are strangers to each other, not human beings in the sacred circle of life. Even in the Bible we find: "Only those who become like a child, will be looking at the glory of God's Kingdom." We can find the similar message in different mythologies. In the myth of Holy Grail Parsifal from Celtic tradition, for example, it is said that only a completely innocent person, a child or a fool, can redeem the kingdom. A person like this is Parsifal, who can save the Fisher King, if he asks the right question. Another example of that innocent person is Frodo in J.R.R. Tolkiens's trilogy, The Lord of the Rings. (Tolkien, 1976)

Thus our inner child is the one who is willing to give up the artificial forms of our existence, all forms of power, in order to surrender to the true power of the innocent heart. Representing the innocence of our being, the inner child brings wholeness and joy to the "kingdom" of our own personality. If the lost part of soul is a wounded child within, then is our society wounded and suffering from soul-loss because our inner children are crying for love? The other reason may be that we are not willing to give up the forms of our existence, which keep us away from the harmonious meaningful living, from being fully alive. To perceive reality as a sacred whole, we need to feel whole ourselves, to feel *wholly alive*. For as S. Ingerman says, we find that the only feeling of wholeness comes from within.(p. 26) Now we can understand better, why retrieving the lost parts of our soul, our vital energy, is so essential.

If we don't give our wounded child a chance to be listened to by us and taken care of, then all our emotions of anger, hatred, unhealthy uses of power, etc, are even more influencing our life unconsciously. They are active in our everyday life, our environment, causing even more negativity in the world, and can make this world an even more chaotic place. In a way they keep us from being who we truly are. For example the inner victimized child, if it is not healed, influences us by persuading us we are victims – of our fate, of our parents, husband, wife, government, political system, patriarchal system, etc. Also the frightened child within blocks our true nature. It keeps us from standing up for our power to be responsible for ourselves and the life around us.

Earth definitely encourages us to be happy. She is certainly a kind of mother who wants the best for her children. Once I could hear her telling me that the best way to serve to her and the world is to keep my happiness alive, for if I am not happy she can feel my pain and I make her suffer that way. Can we imagine her suffering with so many unhappy children? Through that perspective taking care and responsibility for our wounded child is seen as contribution to the peace and harmony of the world. The healing of our emotional wounds is a part of healing of our society. It can be a contribution of every human being to bring back the lost “unloved” part of the soul and gave it a chance to be loved, and with that increase the amount of love on a personal and planetary level.

If we even have found the lost connection to our inner child, it doesn't mean the harmony we've found will stay forever. In modern times we are living in a very chaotic stressful manner. The problem is, that we are “flying” most of the time, without connecting to the sacredness of the Earth to find a balance. Mostly we don't find a time to stop, to find peace, to clear our thoughts, to listen to our emotions, to gather our confused pieces together, back into a harmony. For that reason the soul-loss is happening all the time.

It is important to stop from time to time. To stop means to sound the beat of our heart to the rhythm of the universe. To find the rhythm and fall out again, and to find it... If we want

to keep the balance with our inner child, or our soul, we need to keep coming back home again and again.

Let us remember the archaic people again, who were aware of the importance and necessity of eternal return, of coming “back home” all over again if they wanted to avoid the meaninglessness of their existence. I believe we need to articulate our own ways to remember the meaning of our existence. We need to search for the healing rituals appropriate for us, people of our time, to connect us to sacredness of the Earth, sacredness of life and sacredness of ourselves. We can learn from those indigenous people, who have preserved some of their old traditions, from fragments of ancient myths and from listening the knowledge stored in the Earth womb and within ourselves, waiting to be revealed.

5. RITUAL

The Essence of Ritual

At this point we can approach a more precise understanding of the term *ritual*. Let me repeat once again Eliade’s statement that experiencing the sacred realm from time to time was keeping ancient people from experiencing the pointlessness of their existence. It reminded them of the existence of reality on the “other side” and gave the meaning and reason to their lives on “this side” in ordinary everyday reality. The essence of ritual according to that model is finding the connection to the sacred reality. The result is confirmation of the existence of other realities (sacred, metaphysical, eternal... dimensions) beyond the ordinary (profane) one, which makes us see the sacredness, the beauty, of everyday earthly life, makes us feel alive, fully present here and now and thus makes our existence meaningful.

“Telling the myth is a ritual creation of sacred space. Reading a myth to oneself or hearing it spoken in a ritual setting draws one’s consciousness into a field of relationship that places all participants - the engaged witness, the narrator, the principals of the sacred story – in a deep accord with the life processes of the unfolding universe.” (Spretnak, 1984, pg xiii)

According to Vlado Sav's essay The Ritual and the Theatre, (1999), the essence of ritual is experienced and guided expansion of consciousness to the fields of human existence, which were unknown before. Carl A. Hammerschlag and Howard D. Silverman in Healing Ceremonies,(1999), discern two kinds of ritual activities:

- 1) The ritual activities, which are performed only at certain occasions and are consciously formed in a healing way.
- 2) The everyday activities, which we do intentionally or not, which make us to consciously "enter a moment" and be aware of our existence. (Hammerschlag & Silverman, 1999, p. 4) With this awareness an everyday activity can be seen as a sacred act. If understood as such every activity as for example drinking tea, preparing food, cleaning a house, working in the garden, a sexual act, becomes a ritual. Native American people used to say in the old days that their daily life is a prayer, a constant quest for balance and harmony.

When speaking of a ritual in this text - of a ritual in general or the theatre ritual - I am talking of both described above, about the ritual activities, which are performed only at certain occasions and are consciously formed in a healing way as well as about the everyday activities. What are the characteristics, which makes those activities rituals? While searching the answer to that question I will explain also my view to what elements make a theater performance a ritual.

Characteristics of a Ritual

In the first chapter I listed three basic conditions for mythic (holistic) perception of the reality. Ritual by its definition as an act of connection to the mythic, sacred realm cannot exist outside of mythic perception, thus the listed conditions are as well characteristics of ritual.

They are:

- 1.) Presumption of sacred realm
- 2.) Honouring the reality as a sacred whole – holistic
- 3.) Connectedness to the cyclic rhythms – seasonal patterns of natural world

Besides considering these basic characteristics we need to consider also the personal attitude towards an act of performing a ritual, which is essential condition for effective accomplishment of establishing the connection. I am talking of a need for a total *personal devotion and commitment*, which means certain level of attention and reverence in approach to the activity: understanding that this certain activity is happening right here and now, and in this particular moment is the most important thing among all things this person or community has to do. Personal devotion means an intimate search for the connection, no matter if the ritual is a group one or individual one. We can speak about formal rituals, as many religious institutions perform, but if there is no real intimate devotion, the essence of the ritual, which is the connection with the sacred reality, is missing. Consideration of the ultimate importance of this activity is definitely a condition, but what makes it so important?

Let me explain this with an example of Native American tradition. I have learned from Indian people, that in many Indian tribes they used to do a Morning Ritual and some individuals still do so. They believe that the Morning ritual, which they do every day, enables the Grandfather Sun to rise. So, by their conviction they are interacting with the movements of the Universe in a way, which is fundamental for the movement of great forces of nature, as the rising of the Sun. This is what makes them feel important for the Universe, as important as the Sun.

Within the mythic perception of the world, which in the modern world we have lost with the scientific analytical approach to the reality, the cooperation between natural world and human being is one of the basic conditions for keeping the healthy life and harmony of the community. By scientific conviction this is a naïve thinking. One could say: “Sun would rise

anyway.” But is not only about the act of rising the Sun this particular day. It has a deeper meaning. I believe it is about *making a commitment, being grateful* and *remembering* every single day, that if we as human beings want to live in a good, healthy world, we have to do our part in establishing and preserving the harmony. For this purpose we need to remember all over again each day to live in accordance to the laws of nature and we need to do everything during the day in a manner, which will enable the whole process that is needed for that.

So, if I as a human being understand my existence as a part of the great wholeness of the Universe, which has an importance for keeping the world moving through it’s cycles, my existence gets a greater meaning. I become aware, that my life is not accidental, my presence here on the Earth has significance: it co-creates the life of the Universe. It gives me my own place in the cosmos and gives me responsibility to direct my actions.

Also when we speak about a ritual theatre, we can’t avoid these ultimate conditions, presuming the existence of sacred realm, honoring the reality as a sacred whole and connectedness to the cyclic rhythms – seasonal patterns of natural world. As we could see regarding the seasonal pattern Gaster derived basic ritual pattern (*mortification – purgation – invigoration – jubilation*) - which is, as will be revealed later in my analyses of the narrative structure of scripts *Electra* and *White Buffalo Woman*, a basic narrative structure of a ritual performance.

By understanding the meaning of *personal commitment*, a performer is not “an actor” any more. She/he becomes a human being with her/his own intimate motive to make the connection to the sacred, with her/his personal commitment. Also “a spectator” becomes a human being, which becomes a kind of participant. She/he rather appears as a *witness* of a ritual than as an anonymous part of the audience.

It means that also within theatre performance we are a part of the Universe, we are *in* it. We are not outside, we are not separated from life. We are always *in the sacred web of life*, one with all and everything. Our existence has a meaning every moment, each of our actions

has a meaning: we are completely responsible for everything we do. From the perspective of a ritual theatre, it means that a performance has a purpose to remind “the spectators” that they are not spectators, no matter if they participate in a passive or active way. None of us is a spectator of life. We are all *in* - together in the great ship of humanity, with the same pains, joys, desires, and also with the same responsibility to keep our ship going on in a good way.

In the description of creative process of White Buffalo Woman, which follows, I will try to explain my own approach in understanding and creating the ritual theater.

III. CREATIVE PROCESS OF PERFORMANCE WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN

1. WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN

Script by Romana Ercegovic:

Written: August the 19th 2003

It is happening outside, on a meadow.

Part 1

LEGEND OF THE WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN

There was a meadow, just like this one, only far away, in the land which today is called Dakota. It was long ago, almost a thousand years have passed since the White Buffalo Woman came to the Lakota nation and brought a message from the invisible world.

This is how it was: Lakota people lived their peaceful life. During the day they used to gather and prepare food, and make clothes, dishes, and jewelry. In the evening they sat around the fire, singing and dancing. Elders told stories and spoke about the wisdom of life. Younger people listened carefully. Especially the children opened their ears and eyes wide.

Nature was sacred to them. They called her Mother Earth, because they knew there wouldn't be life without her. They believed that there also existed invisible worlds and beings, which reveal themselves to the people in the right time. They called trees the Standing people. The Moon was the Grandmother for them and the Sun was Grandfather. They believed that all animals, stones, flowers and all plants are human beings as well. They only have another form. That's why they treated them as their relatives. Because they knew that the animals had given their lives so that people could survive, they hunted them with great respect and gratitude.

But that year, they didn't have luck with hunting. Day after day no buffalo or other large game came into view. People went hungry. Little children cried, because they wanted

something to eat. So two young men were chosen to set out to look for buffalo and other animals. One day as they searched, suddenly they noticed in the far distance, an unusual shining movement. "What could it be?" they looked to each other. They hid behind a bush and waited. A mysterious figure was coming directly toward them, and as it was approaching the two men could see that it was a human being surrounded by a bright and beautiful light. They watched in amazement as this person came closer, and when their eyes got used to the shining, they could perceive, in even greater astonishment, it to be a woman.

It was a young, beautiful woman, with long flowing hair. She wore a white tunic and carried a bundle on her back. She was approaching the very bush they were hiding in, and said to them: "Return to your people. Tell them I will come and teach them about wisdom."

Even before she spoke, one of the young men realized he was in the presence of a very powerful holy woman. He noticed not only the beauty of her face and body, but also the inner beauty of her soul. He was listening to her with great honor and was willing to do what she wanted. This man was a true warrior, with a pure heart. His first thought was how happy his people would be when they saw her. The other young man scarcely heard the woman speak. He didn't care much for her wisdom. All he noticed was her beautiful body. He was staring at the sensuous curves beneath her dress, and thought to himself: "Not only is she a woman, and not only is she beautiful, she is alone and undefended. Why wouldn't I take the opportunity?" And he went to approach her, to take advantage of her.

The woman immediately realized what his intention was, but she was not frightened. She didn't try to escape, but completely calmly opened her arms and invited him. The man, surprised, approached her. But as soon as he found himself in her soft embrace, up in the sky dark clouds gathered and it began to thunder and lightening. All at once, a cloud covered the woman and the man, and from the cloud was heard the sound of a thousand rattlesnakes. When the cloud lifted, beneath it was standing the woman alone, completely unharmed. All that remained of the man, were his bones lying in front of her legs.

She looked the other man, who was standing there in amazement, and kindly said to him: “Now go to your people. Tell them to prepare a lodge for me. I will come soon.”

And indeed, they built a lodge in the middle of the camp circle, as she ordered, and were expecting her in great excitement. The next morning the people heard a song coming from the north.

The chief of the tribe, a wise man, greeted her: “All we have is yours, dear sister. Please forgive us. We are so poor that we don’t even have any food to offer you. In its place, please accept a drink of water.” Then the woman slowly looked round at all the people. Women, men and children were sitting in a circle and with great respect waiting for her words.

“My dear brothers and sisters, we are all one great family, and Wakantanka, the Great Mystery, smiles on us today. Because you are good people, I am bringing a gift for you. Let it be as a mark of my respect for each and every one of you. This is a sacred pipe.

"The sacred pipe represents the union between the earth and the sky, the harmony between feminine and masculine. "The lower part of the pipe is the bowl, which opens to the sky and represents the female womb. When I take a pinch of tobacco and give it into the bowl, it means there is place for the people, all people who are walking upon Mother Earth. Then I take another pinch for all animals, for those on the land, and those up at the sky and in the water. And then a pinch for trees and all the plants, and the waters, springs, streams, rivers, seas and oceans. For everything that is on the Earth, and at the end for the Earth herself, and all the other planets, stars and all the galaxies. And when the bowl is full, it will represent the great sacred circle of life to which we all belong. In that way the pipe reminds us that we all, all beings and things, belong together as one big family. And there is enough room for everyone.

“The wooden stem represents the connection between all the visible things in the circle of life and the invisible, the spirit - the Great Spirit, Great Mystery, Great Love, which is everywhere and also inside of each of us. And each can find his or her own connection.

"Let the pipe serve for your prayers: use it when you are hungry, as you are now, and when you are ill, and whenever you need help. If you will ask with a pure heart your prayers will bring you everything you need.

"I bring you this gift, that you can remember over and over again that each of you is one with all things in the sacred circle of life. And for that reason you are holy as well: a sacred woman, a sacred man, now and here, on this sacred land. And every step you take upon her is a sacred step in the beauty of life."

Then she taught them about other ceremonies, sun dance, vision quest, purification ceremonies - sweat lodge and others. At last she spoke about the future:

"This pipe is also a pipe of peace. Remember well what I am going to tell you and carry my words to next generations. There is going to come a time, when all nations of the world will find themselves in big trouble. Many will forget their old sacred ceremonies and some will be rooted out completely. It will be the time of darkness. People will forget to take care of Mother Earth. They will forget they need to listen to their inner wisdom and to nourish their soul and their dreams. They will not share among themselves: some will have too much and some will be hungry. They will forget the simplicity of the heart, the joy and happiness, and will scramble for things, which I can't even explain to you, because you wouldn't understand. Earth will be exhausted, covered with concrete, the air soaked with toxins.

"Yet some will dream of a better world. Only a few, in the beginning, but gradually there will be more and more of them. And after many moons, when it will seem like every hope is nothing but illusion, then the new time will appear, completely different. Peace will flourish among people. They will begin to listen to each other and to learn to live in harmony.

"May this pipe stay among you as a promise, that this time is really going to come. When it begins to approach I will return. I will send you a sign: it will be a birth of a white buffalo calf. When one day after the centuries the white buffalo baby will be born, then know that invisibly I am among you again. Then remember that all people, all beings and things are one

big family in the sacred circle of life and that Wakantanka, the Great Mystery, smiles upon you and calls to enter the new time: to take care of the harmony within yourself, for understanding among each other and for peace upon the Earth.

“Then know, that your simple and pure heart is stronger than everything. And know you are good as you are. Everything is already forgiven to you. Forgive yourself for everything you think you have done wrong. Forgive life for everything you think was unfair to you. Forgive everyone who has ever hurt you. Throw away the old burdens and enter the new life.”

Then she got up and embraced them with her eyes for the last time. She turned around and people watched her walk to the north. In that short time they had taken a great liking to her, because of her teachings and also because of her loving respect, which made each feel precious. While she was walking away, in a moment she changed into a white buffalo and thundered away.

This is what the legend says. The Lakota people don't live as they used to in those times, but they still keep some of their old ceremonies alive. Through generations they have told the story about the White Buffalo Woman, and about keeping the sacred pipe. The chief of the Lakota has the great honor to be a pipe carrier. For almost the whole millennium they were waiting for a sign, which Buffalo Woman had announced to them, the birth of a white buffalo calf, and it really happened – ten years ago in Wyoming a white buffalo baby was born, and soon after few others.

Part 2

LONGING

I was walking upon the land of my ancient ancestors.

I could feel the earth breathing with people.

People, breathing with the earth.

I could feel them living with the beauty of the land.

Living with her sacredness.

I was walking upon the land of my ancient ancestors.

I could feel the earth breathing with me,

but I couldn't breathe with her.

She was inviting me

to touch her,

to feel her skin with my fingertips,

to pour my heart into her heart.

My body into her body.

I know you, she said.

I know your path,

I know your heart's desire.

And I love you, deeply.

Remember who you are, she said,

Return to the ancient sacred path of your soul.

Remember, she said,

Remember the wind,

Remember the white pearls of morning dew,

Remember the fire

Dancing, singing, drumming in the night

Remember the breath of life.

But I couldn't feel her.

I could only hear her voice.

Deep strong voice calling me home.

My ancestors knew the paths to your sanctuaries

They knew your secrets,

your sacred laws.

Why can't I find the way?

Remind me, I asked her.

You, who are the beauty of the green earth,

and the white moon among the stars,

and the mystery of waters,

You, who are the soul of nature,

who gives life.

Let me find you within myself.

Let me be

A flower among flowers,

A tree among trees,

A mountain among mountains,

A bird among birds,

A deer among deer,

A star among stars,

A lioness among lionesses,

A Goddess among Goddesses,

A woman among women.

A child among children.

A human being among people.

The beauty of life is everywhere
waiting for me to perceive it.

I wish I had the eyes to see.

Remind me of my dreams, I asked her.

I'm a dreamer,

looking for something

this world has forgotten ages ago.

What is life without beauty?

What is life without dreams?

Simple happiness is what I am dreaming of.

Simple love is what I am looking for.

May I have everything.

May I know everything.

May I be everything.

But why live

If there is no warmth of love in my heart

If my soul isn't trembling in joy

If I am a desert land

Where everything is as it should be.

Everything in order.

Everything so boring.

Let me break through.

Take me to your flowering gardens,

where life is blooming

in softness and tenderness.

My soul is a restless soul,

searching for beauty in the grief of the world.

Finding the peace in the harmony of the eternal restlessness.

Marked by the depth,

can't live on surface.

The calling hurts me.

I want to return to the sacred path, I said to her.

Help me.

I forgot.

Remind me.

Part 3

THE PATH

Who are you?

I'm the Dark Goddess.

But I didn't call for the Dark Goddess.

Didn't you? Didn't you call the ancient wisdom of the Earth?

Well, yes. But I didn't ask for the darkness.

You can't get to know the light, if you don't know the darkness.

But I don't want to have anything to do with anything what is dark, the black, bad, evil...

Who are you, actually? Dark Goddess... Does it mean you are a goddess of evil?

I'm called Dark, because I'm connected to the earth. The soil is black – does it mean it's evil, it's bad? So, you think you are nothing but good.

No, I don't think so, but I am doing my best.

Let me ask you something: are you happy?

Why are you asking me that?

Because I want to know whether you want to be a good girl, all nice and naive, or you want to become a happy and a wise woman?

What are you saying? Did you come here to insult me? What do you want from me?

You have asked me to remind you of your dreams. Maybe I am not the kindest person you have met, but it's because I want you to hear the truth.

Why should I believe you?

You don't have to. I'm just trying to teach you how to find your own truth. If you want it, of course.

So you really know how to do that?

As I've told you: you can't find the light of your soul, if you don't have the courage to look into the darkness as well.

I'm afraid.

Of what?

I don't know.

To hear what you don't want to hear, right?

Promise, you won't judge me?

Don't worry. You're safe. Nobody's going to judge you or laugh at you, nobody's going to punish you. You can say whatever's holding you down. You are completely safe and loved.

So, can we go?

Are you ready?

I'm ready. We can begin...

Close your eyes. Don't think. Just let it go. Let your body speak. Your body holds the truth. Let it come out. Everything that bothers you. Everything you want to say but you don't dare, because you're afraid you'd hurt somebody or be judged. Things you'd like to shout out loud, but you don't, because you think you're not allowed and that it's not polite. Everything you're ashamed of is hidden in your body. Everything you have said or done and you think you shouldn't have, and now it hurts you somewhere deep inside. Everything you need and wish, but you don't tell, because you think you're not worth it. Everything you do to please others, at cost of betraying your own self... All that is held in your body and doesn't let you breathe freely.

All your hidden thoughts are in there, your rage, your anger with people who have hurt you, humiliated you, taken your pride, who haven't loved you enough, who haven't respected you as you deserve, who've been killing you with contempt, with doubts if you are good enough, forcing you to prove yourself over and over again.

And you keep smiling as if everything is alright and life goes on. And you think you have to see only good in people and in yourself, that you always have to be compassionate, forgiving and loving. But you fail, no matter how hard you try. So you judge yourself bad and start to pretend and to hide your true feelings. You're convincing yourself that it's just small stuff, who cares anyway. Why stir up the unpleasant things, open the old wounds, why bring up the past...

While you were growing up, there were many things you couldn't understand. Why they were forcing their God on you and his rules, dictating the way you had to be to deserve love, to be good enough, humble enough, diligent enough, frightened enough, to be everything but yourself, the way you truly are. So that you wouldn't live the passion of your heart, the passion of your body. Only that you wouldn't begin to believe being happy is good and beautiful.

And you kept asking yourself, what kind of God is this, who doesn't want you to be happy, and always wants from you to satisfy him... And you also couldn't understand when they told you that the sacred place, the heaven, is only up there – what about down here? What about us, people, you were asking. What about this earth, this tree, this body, aren't they sacred, too? All those things down here happening among people...

Once you were standing in front of your church with your boyfriend, kissing tenderly. Remember? You were so in love. It was your meeting place. Every time he was waiting for you and you came running, out of breath, because you were always late, but you were so happy. And once, when you were gently holding each other in front of your little church, an old lady came by. She attacked you, shame on you, she cried, to do such things in front of a church!" Don't you think God is happy to see us loving each other?" you replied with a smile.

The woman waved her fist at you and turned away. And although you knew she was wrong, she left behind a bitter taste, a strange feeling.

Slowly you've learned it is better to hide what is truly beautiful and good from people who don't understand. Maybe it is because they believe that God is up there, always watching when we are going to make a mistake. And maybe that's why they don't dare to be happy.

Also many other things didn't seem fair to you. For example, how did they get the idea that God is only a man. Deep inside you knew it wasn't true. How could God, the father, create our world just by himself, when even for creating a child, two are needed, a father and a mother, a man and a woman, a God and a Goddess? What has happened to the Goddess? Why has she disappeared? Where has the wisdom gone?

It made you angry when you learned how for centuries women were convinced to believe they were second-class beings. You could see traces of it everywhere. Even women ourselves so often fail to acknowledge our own worth, our inner beauty, our wisdom, our holiness. Virgin Mary is considered to be the only holy woman. Only she is worthy of worship because of her immaculate conception. All others are sinners.

As time was passing, more and more you were feeling a stranger among people. Why wouldn't you? How can one feel loved and respected in such world?

Remember how often you were secretly crying of anger, and fighting with men you loved to make them take your emotions seriously, to respect your reflections. How many times did you hid your dissatisfaction because you didn't want to hurt him. You tried to be understanding, knowing how vulnerable he was behind his mask of self-esteem.

And you also needed more understanding, more attention and more affection, but many times he failed to give it to you. Maybe he hadn't tried enough, maybe he didn't know how to do it, and you also didn't know how to explain to him what you really needed because you didn't even know it for yourself. All you did know was that you were getting colder, and you felt

your magic beauty draining away, your attractiveness disappearing, and slowly he could see it too.

And all those things, you think they are not important, and you go on, and every morning you are heavier and further away from yourself. You don't talk about these things, because they are not the things to talk about. You want to show everybody how happy you are, how everything is alright. And you don't allow yourself to cry, you don't allow yourself to admit how vulnerable you are, and that you can't just push on and on, and on...

Slovene traditional song:

What's wrong, my little girl,

why you're crying so,

What's wrong? There's nothing wrong,

just the pain in my heart.

Part 4

DREAMS

Why there is a pain in your heart?

I want to return to my sacred path.

Do you know the legend of the White Buffalo Woman? About the woman who predicted a sad time would come when people would forget the wisdom of their hearts and ignore their dreams?

Please, remind me of my dreams.

Remember when you were in high school and your teacher gave a lecture about weapons. Why didn't you want to listen to him? Do you remember? Why did you ignore him completely? Instead, you read poetry. It drove him crazy. One day he was so angry that he walked to your desk in the last row, took your notebook and tore it apart. Why aren't you listening, he shouted. What did you reply? Do you remember?

Why should I learn how to kill people? Look how much evil those weapons have done already. I don't want to participate.

And what did other people say? What did your Mum say? And your class-teacher? Do you remember?

Wake up, girl! Grow up! What do you think you're going to achieve behaving like this? Sometimes you just have to conform.

And what did your Dad say?

Don't think I like it. But what can we do, that's the way it is. And as long as it is so, we do need arms to defend ourselves. Don't be naive! If you think you can change anything, you're fooling yourself.

And what did your classmates say?

Some of them were silent. Some agreed with me but didn't want to expose themselves. Others asked me: Why do you take these things so seriously? Is it really so important to you?

It let you down. Because to you it was important. You really did believe it can make a difference. This was your dream! Not for yourself only but for everybody, for all living beings... You really did believe in love and peace, and you believed that if more people shared this dream, a new, better time would come. This was your faith. Your silent protest was your prayer, one of many fights you fought. Maybe it seemed small and insignificant, but for you then it was just as important as your grandfather's fight, who for freedom during the second world war. Just as important as demonstrations on the Tianemen Square were to Chinese students, who were dying under wheels of tanks those very days, defending their truth. Or Jesus Christ who let himself be crucified to show people the power of love.

If you were so sure you were right, why did other people's reactions let you down so much? Tell me! Because you started to doubt yourself. Because you let them convince you that your dream was indeed just an illusion. It seemed to you that life was proving them right, and

you wrong. You started to believe that the world was not the way you wanted it to be and never would be. That your dream is impossible, unreachable, a foolish fantasy for naive dreamers, not for sober people.

And again that bitter taste, that strange feeling of watching your soul slowly being killed. Just like when you didn't want to learn about weapons, or in front of that church, and a thousand times more - the more honest you were, the more love you had for others, the more their rejection hurt - a thousand seemingly meaningless events and after each you felt more trapped, like a tiger in a cage. In this cage you began to feel lonely, because you hadn't realized you were not alone in there, that other people, too, had their dreams shattered, just like you. More and more you were losing faith in yourself. You ceased to believe, you gave up fighting. But somewhere deep, deep inside you preserved a tiny seed of hope. You hid it in the remotest part of your heart, crushed it, crushed it so much, that only a tiny grain of pain remained.

All these years you held it inside. And then you started meeting more and more people who had the same visions, the same dreams, who believed in love, like you once did, and not only believe but live it. You began to think to yourself, what if I was right after all?

Didn't White Buffalo Woman promise that a different time is going to come? Didn't she make a prophecy of a birth of a white buffalo calf, which has really happened? Well, it may be only a legend, but didn't also others speak the same? You have heard about the calendars of the ancient Mayan and Aztec people. And for ancient astronomic discoveries of the Anasazi nation, and about the Hopi prophecy, and for Tibetan legend about Shambala, and the ancient Celtic legend of Avalon, and many other records of the ancient civilizations. And they all speak of the same thing: of the great transformation of the world, which is, according to their stone carvings and astronomic calculations, supposed to be happening exactly in this time. They all speak about an age of peace, which is supposed to come upon the Earth, about a different awareness of the people, about a time of harmony and love. Is it possible that all that

would be made up? How then would it be possible that exactly the same prophecies appear in different parts of the world?

Why you are silent, my dear? Yes, allow yourself to cry. Those are the healing tears. Because, I tell you, those were not illusions, but visions about the world as is it is being born. You had your dreams, the purity of your heart and the strength of the warrior, but you were a naive little girl, and you didn't know what to do with all that. Now you know. Now you can remember your dreams, and carry them in your hands.

Part 5

RECOGNITION

Song (written by Pura Fe): MAHK JCHI (singing and dancing):

Earth I'm coming back to you,

I'm coming back to your embrace

Give me strength,

Give me hope, oh, give me gentleness

Like an eagle

On my wings of freedom let me fly

Can you see? The White Buffalo Woman is here.

I can't see her. Where is she?

You can't see?

No, I can't see anybody. Neither you nor her.

Can you hear what she is saying to you?

I can't hear anything.

She is saying you are also a holy woman.

Me?

Yes, you!

Me?

You are back to your sacred path. Welcome home, dear sister.

But... I am not perfect.

You don't need to be. Can you see all that beauty around you? Breathe it in. You are that beauty. Also your pain is beautiful. Also your darkness deserves to be loved. Love it. It's yours. Light and darkness are sacred. Sacredness is up there and down here.

Also down here... among people? I knew it was so. In this body. In this hair, these lips, these breasts. In my womb. In the earth. In the trees. In the stars. I knew it was so.

Song:

Earth I'm coming back to you,

I'm coming back to your embrace

Give me strength,

Give me hope, oh, give me gentleness

Like an eagle

On my wings of freedom let me fly

THE END

2. CREATIVE PROCESS AS A BIRTHING PROCESS

As many artists and writers I have been developing my own way of “giving birth” to a new creation. For me every creative process is indeed like a birthing process. It has stages of “conceiving”, which I understand as a point of *beginning* of the cycle of the new process. The second phase is “bearing”, which I understand as a phase of *preparation* – a receptive state of absorbing the knowledge, experiences and vibration. It is a kind of research. The third, last phase is “giving birth”, the *creation*, manifestation of idea in material, physical form. All that is accompanied by beauty, love, excitement, as well as by pain and different kinds of complications.

3. FIRST PHASE – THE BEGINNING

I love the land of New Mexico. During my second visit there, in June 2001, I felt a strong desire to come back one day and spend time alone in the desert. This desire wouldn't leave me when I returned home. On the contrary, the calling I felt was becoming stronger and stronger. It's far away though. That same year in November I had engagements at my university in Cambridge, so it seemed to me a good opportunity to use. I asked my friend from Albuquerque to help me with finding a place in the desert, where I could stay. He asked his friend if I could come to have a retreat in nature near her house. She agreed, saying: “She is welcome, if I don't need to entertain her.” I liked her open answer. I didn't want to entertain anybody either. I wanted to be in silence, with the land and myself only.

The owner of the house, whose name was Susan, picked me up at the airport. She was very kind, but still a bit reserved to me in the beginning. While we were driving to the house she told me that near her house the archaeological ruins of an ancient settlement of Anasazi people had been found and also a Spanish one from later times. She mysteriously mentioned some spirits who guard the land. Maybe I will meet some, she said.

I spent the next four days fasting in solitude and silence, sitting with my thoughts and emotions and walking around the land and up the near hill. My intention was to make another step on my path toward the truth I seek and to give myself a chance to get deeper into the vastness of my soul.

One day while I was lying on the land, suddenly I felt a friendly presence of something or somebody near me. Then I saw an indefinite figure of a man standing in front of me. Although I hadn't had many similar experiences before I realized right away it was a spirit. He was a native man, not tall, with dark red skin. He was wearing only a kind of skirt around his waist and a head covering made of fur or leather. "Welcome," I could hear him saying. "This land is sacred. She knows you. She has called you here to remind you about the sacredness. Listen to her."

I could feel warm light of the ground very slowly begin entering my upper back, spreading over my chest and throat. This is what I understood this energy saying to me: "There is a sacred place on this land, near here. In ancient times people used to gather in circle. Like in many other tribes, there was a woman who taught them about the wisdom of life; how to connect to the sacred spirit through rituals. In those times people respected the sacred laws of the nature and lived in harmony with all beings."

I felt the warmth of her caring embrace while she was speaking with her loving voice. I began to weep. "A long time ago," she continued, "in some of your past lives, you also used to teach people about the sacredness of life. Here and at other places of the Earth. This is why you are so eager to learn about the old sacred ways. You are and will be taken places to learn more. You need to listen to the Earth and to learn to respect and trust your inner wisdom. When the time comes you will teach the sacred knowledge again. You will help many people entering the spiritual worlds and finding the sacred source inside of them."

As the soft light of gracefulness was entering and spreading in my chest and throat I could feel the pain increasing. It was my buried wound revealing itself, the longing from the depth of

my soul, the calling of the unknown inner lands, which I desired to find but didn't know how.

"I don't believe," I burst out crying. "Nobody will want to listen."

"It is not easy to speak about these things nowadays, for people have forgotten," she comforted me with understanding: "You are afraid because in the past some didn't show respect for what you said or felt, some have even been laughing at you and telling you, you are a dreamer, believing in those things. So you learned to hide your truth. You began to think people don't need it and don't want to listen. So your throat has closed and a great pain covers it. You need to begin to speak your truth again."

"But don't be afraid," she went on. "You will see there are many more than you think, who have the same longing buried in their hearts as you have. Your next performance will be about the legend of a sacred woman, the White Buffalo Woman. It will be a bridge between cultures. It is also going to be a deep healing for you, for you will realize there are many who want to listen. Through it you will remind people they are sacred beings. First you need to realize this yourself. Allow the sacred, the deep strong love, to enter your heart and your body, and heal your old wounds."

As she was speaking I could see myself sitting in circle of people telling the story. They were respectfully listening. I could see beauty awakening in many people's hearts as they were opening. "Come tomorrow again. I will show you where the place is."

The next day as I was approaching the place where I was lying the day before, I felt as if somebody was very softly holding my hand. I tried not to think but to surrender, to listen and watch, where I needed to go. As I arrived at a certain place the grip released. I knew this was the one. I could feel it. Although at first glance there was nothing there, as I looked more carefully it was quite obviously it shaped in the form of a circle. I lay down on my back in the middle, with my arms extended and my eyes closed.

Again I felt a light energy, this time even stronger, entering the top of the head and filling my whole body. It was if the light of the earth and light from heaven would unite in my body. I

could feel the divine force of the heavens making a cross out of my surrendering body, one line of light from the top of the head down through the legs and another flowing through my extended arms. They met in my heart. As I was lying for a while and feeling pain again in the same places as the previous day, suddenly a book appeared in my inner sight. The title was *The Earth was speaking to me*. “This is the book you are going to write,” I heard a voice telling me. “You need to come back to the land soon and begin to write the first part of it.”

“What do you mean by that,” I argued. “I would love to, but I am not sure if I will be able to come. Besides I would need a laptop for writing here, which I don’t have.”

“Don’t worry about any of those things. It’s very important for you to come. If something is meant to be you will get all the help you need and it will happen. Just follow your visions.”

“Alright, if you say so. Let’s wait and see,” I happily surrendered. “And what is the book going to be about?”

“Speak your truth. Write about the wisdom the Earth teaches and reveals to you. Talk about what you experience when you visit different sacred places around the world. Speak from inmost recesses of your soul. Speak, even if you don’t believe it completely yourself yet. One day you will put together all the puzzles and you will understand.”

When the days of solitude were finished, I told Susan about the spirit of the man and about my vision. “Yes, that’s exactly how he looks,” she joyfully exclaimed. “He is an ancient spirit of a native Anasazi man. I have been seeing him since childhood on this land. He advised me while I was planning the building of the house and around the land.”

Afterwards I talked about this experience also to my other friend, who used to work as an archaeologist at Anasazi settlements and is also a Native American medicine man. He has built a sweat lodge on this very land. He said: “So, you have met him. I thought you might. He told me, where I need to build the sweat lodge.” He knew also about the sacred place. “I think there used to be a kiva there,” he said: “Kiva is a typical Anasazi culture building, where usually sacred ceremonies culture were held. It is constructed in a circular shape.”

The following March I returned to begin writing. Susan was happy to welcome me again. Soon we became great friends. Since then I have come to visit her family and the land several times.

I didn't know what I would write until I began. Part of those writings is presented in this text in front of you. Another part I would like to present in another book, which I have been preparing piece by piece since then.

In August 2003 I performed *White Buffalo Woman* for the first time, in a beautiful Natural Park near my birth town in Slovenia. People sat in circle and listened to the sacred story. Many told me they could feel the inner beauty awakening, the simple wisdom of heart.

Hopefully in a year or two the vision is going to be completed.

In the case of the performance of *White Buffalo Woman*, I consider the experience I have just described as an act of conceiving. It happened between me and a larger field of consciousness. I could call this larger field by many names, as it has been called in different cultures: the sacred realm, the mythic realm, the collective unconsciousness, God, Goddess, the Great Mystery, the Tao, the Dreamtime, etc. From the point of my understanding at that time, this experience was a conceiving act between me and the sacred realm, which connected with me through the consciousness of the Earth. As I have explained in one of previous chapters, I understand Earth as a living being with her own consciousness. In shamanic terms it was an ecstatic experience, "which reveals the link that bridges the worlds of sacred and mundane, allowing the psychological journey between the two: the union and communion with the sacred realm." (Berggren, 1998, p.xiii) As I will explain later, this is one of the main characteristics of my creative processes: to create circumstances which allow the communion with the greater consciousness, the sacred realm, and to keep this connection throughout the process. The intensity of this contact is in certain moments very strong; in some periods I feel it as an

awareness of a presence of a supportive force, and there are also times when I feel disconnected, left on my own to find a way out.

The second phase, the phase of preparation of White Buffalo Woman, took me a year and a half. The last phase, “giving birth,” the manifestation, which means writing the script and forming the performance itself in cooperation with another artists and a supporting team or better to say, supporting family, and finally sharing it, took four months.

4. SECOND PHASE - PREPARATION

Since my early childhood I have felt an intense connection toward Native North American wisdom. I have heard about the myth of White Buffalo Woman, the most important legend of the Lakota people, and the prophecy about her reappearance before the described vision I had in New Mexico. After that experience I had lots of work and other activities, which made me gradually begin to wonder if this message I got was maybe only a fruit of my imagination. But every time I heard anything connected to or have found a book speaking of the legend a strong excitement deep within overflowed me like a wave of gentle light, which felt like an invitation to approach this story more profoundly. It was a kind of approaching to a mystery, which is not willing to reveal itself to me right away, but wants me to wait by the door very patiently and follow the call which will lead me to the unknown. During that time, very slowly the path was opening in front of me, showing me and teaching me piece by piece what I needed to learn in order to create the performance.

I gathered all written versions of the legend I could find, many songs and teachings about the ceremonies, but somehow I couldn't begin to study them. I could only listen to the music. If I tried to read it suddenly I felt an unpleasant pressure in my head. I felt before I would be ready to begin with reading I just needed to come in tune with the deeper knowledge, to awaken the inner source, the archetypal material hidden within me, which was calling to be revealed. I knew it was not only about the legend of the sacred White Buffalo Woman. It was

about me. As in all my artworks, this performance was going to be the presentation of the reality as it is seen through my eyes. As the Earth “told” me, first I would need to realize I was a sacred being and connect to my own source of sacredness. But the basic frame for the performance was the Native American legend and I felt the first step I needed to take was to connect deeply with the roots of what the sacredness means through the perception of ancient Native American ways. As I have described in the creative process of *Electra*, I needed to visit Greece to feel the land and the memories of the historical place, which I could sense while I was there. As well, before even hearing about the White Buffalo Woman or knowing I would do a performance I felt a strong wish to travel to North America, particularly to Southwest, Arizona and New Mexico, *to listen* to the land and the ancient memories. During the time after that experience I had also been given many opportunities to spend time with Native American people, to learn about their culture and about the sacred ceremonies. Rather than approaching that knowledge rationally I wanted to just be with people, to be present at the ceremonies and experience them as they are without knowing much about them and their meaning. I intuitively knew I needed *to feel* what they mean, *to perceive* them wholly, how they affect me, what happens with my heart, with my body, with my whole being in order to understand their true meaning.

At the theatre academy from where I graduated¹, the usual method of approaching a new performance was the so-called *conceptual method*. It is a rather rational approach to the creative process, which usually begins with studying all the available resources from different fields (historical, sociological, psychological, etc.) connected to the theme one chooses to focus on in a creative process. The concept of the final creation has to be done before the director and dramaturg of the performance even begin to work together with the actors. Observing my method, I realized my approach is just the opposite. It is based on following the intuition. I needed months of allowing my own inner process to guide me. It included spending lots of

¹ Academy for theatre, radio, film and television in Ljubljana

time in solitude, being in silence, listening and observing nature and people, doing shamanic journeys, meditations, dancing... On the other hand I felt attracted to read some other books, which seemingly didn't have anything to do with my performance, but as it turned out later, they were connected. For example, a strong interest in discovery of the Dark Goddess archetype had been overwhelming me. During that time I had some unexpected encounters with that archetype on my inner journeys and had done some writings connected to the Dark Goddess as a part of this very research, which are included in this thesis, without knowing that by doing so I had been preparing for this performance.

Usually in my creative processes, only when I come to a certain level of certainty about my inner vision of what I want to express, can I allow information from outside to enter. I feel too fragile before. It is like the expression, which is slowly getting a form, wants me to keep it protected from all outside influences in order to be able to stay connected to my inner source, united with the sacred realm, and form in its own original and natural way. It wasn't me who chose to use that kind of approach. It was the inner creative process which directed my steps, and opposing it felt like losing the path. From my prior experiences with other performances, I was persuaded that I knew I could trust the inner feeling to guide me to the unknown, and decided to follow the inner flow, no matter if I understood why in advance. I must admit it wasn't always easy, for my rational mind wanted rational arguments and explanations all the time.

Throughout the process, particularly in the last, most intense phase of writing the script and forming the performance, I was devoted to it fully and wanted to do everything in "a good way", as I heard Native American people like to say. It means to approach to anything we do in a ritual way, without rush, in a conscious going with the flow of the natural process, allowing the process of my creating to be in tune with the creation of the Earth, with respect to her, and with paying attention respectfully to every detail and to everyone involved in any way. There were many people who supported the performance with their work, love and also financially

enabling it to happen. And of course with respect to those who are going to come to attend the performance, or better to say, to be present at the ritual, I wanted this ritual to be prepared and born in beauty.

This creative process was for me another opportunity to recognize the infinite perfection in natural order of life, the inner creative intelligence of a human being, which from our perspective is unconsciousness, but when letting it lead the way in a proper way, with respect and love, its omnipotence embraces together every single detail into an all-including integrity. Also the timing of whole process turned out to be perfect. It seemed as if every day was planned, even when I thought I had gotten completely off track. My intuitive feeling told me when I had to work a lot and when I had to not work. Sometimes I felt I needed to leave all the work concerning the performance script for few days, or even longer, which seemed completely illogical, since it seemed I was running out of time. However I had no other choice but to listen to my feeling, although I got terribly panicked sometimes. Eventually I realized everything has a certain purpose and meaning for the process. Times of being passive turned out to be important as well as times of working intensely. Once all was finished and I was looking back I couldn't but admire in awe that perfect plan and to feel deep gratitude.

It felt like the whole process was a lesson of trust. Slowly I have been realizing there really exists that inner self, "my wise woman," who knows my path, my destiny up to the tiniest detail, who knows what is best for me, what are my talents, my weaknesses, who knows why I meet certain people and what I need to experience. This wise me knows what I need because she can see beyond into all-connected web of realities and knows my place there and according to that, directs my actions, my energy and my awareness in a way which is more and more in tune to the harmony within me, and reflects also as harmony in my life.

Native American Sacred Ceremonies

I realized if I wanted to understand the culture from where the legend originates, I needed to enter a different perception than I was used to in our culture. Yet, rather than feeling as if I were entering another, unknown perception, I felt in certain ways it was more familiar to me than the culture I was raised in. It felt more natural to me. Although the Native Americans have mostly lost the archaic tribal way of life, and we can not speak about the sacred perception as Eliade defines it, still through their ceremonies can be felt the original holistic perception of all-relatedness, of seeing reality as sacred whole.

White Buffalo Woman has brought a sacred pipe to Lakota people and taught them the sacred ceremonies.² One of them, the Sacred Pipe ceremony, is described also in my version of the legend. The next two I am going to speak about are the Sun Dance and the Sweat Lodge. Sweat Lodge ceremony is a wonderful example of a purification ritual, which is used before many other more complex ceremonies, such as Sun Dance or Vision Quest, to purify a person before entering the ceremony or to purify during a larger ceremony.³ In observing many of those ceremonies we can notice they have a typical ritual seasonal pattern, which I discussed in the first chapter. We can find Sweat Lodge ceremonies in a very similar form also in other native traditions. Some have been preserved and practiced until today.⁴

At the very beginning of speaking about sacred ceremonies of Native American culture I have to explain certain issues, which come forth with confrontation of cultural differences between Native American and Western culture. As I noticed in many situations while among native people, they don't speak about certain things as openly as we western people are used to, particularly about sacred ceremonies. When they talk about them they use certain

² According to different versions, there are listed different ceremonies, which she was supposed to teach, but not always the same. Most often we can find among them the Sun Dance, Sweat Lodge, Vision Quest, Sacred Pipe Ceremony, etc.

³ During the four days of Sun Dance, dancers purify themselves every morning and evening. Besides that they purify themselves in Sweat Lodge every day during for four days before the dancing to the Sun begins, which are called *purification days*.

⁴ It can be found in Mongolian tradition, Celtic, etc.

circumstances, a certain respectful manner, and do so with the awareness that we are a part of life in the Universe, connected to all creations of Mother Earth and one with them. Also when they are observing things they don't behave as they are separated from them. Everything is alive and has a spirit. Within their understanding the Great Spirit lives in all things, enlivens all forms, and gives energy to all things in all realms of creation – including earthly life. While speaking they carefully try to respect the spirit of the thing they are discussing. Also the everyday actions such as cutting a tree, hunting an animal, praying for rain, all those are by ancient teachings sacred ceremonies. Paying attention to the *whole* is called *holiness*.

Here we touch an even deeper understanding of the term *healing*. As we can see its root doesn't only have a connection to *whole*, but also to *holy*. Does it suggest that feeling healthy has a connection to feeling one's own holiness and the holiness of life around?

As also discussed before, within the modern western perception, generally we have been taught to approach knowledge rationally. "Real" is what is empirically provable as if things around us are be only objects to research and to use. Scientists try to anatomize the Universe, and to adjust it for people's needs as if we were the only living things on the planet. Psychologists have for many decades, and most of them still do, tried to treat even human beings as if we don't have souls. Philosophers from Socrates on have tried to analyze everything, even God. Within scientific perception we want to understand, but sometimes it is done to the extent that we damage or even destroy life around us. We take an object of observation to pieces even to that point where we sacrifice the perception of wholeness. For being receptive to *wholeness* is a condition for comprehending *holiness*.

I have been given a lot of knowledge about the rituals, and opportunities to participate or witness some of them, by Indian people who were willing to share from their hearts their traditions, beliefs, stories, and even their most intimate experiences from rituals. I consider it as a great trust. This is another reason to feel responsible in which way to use and present the received teachings. On the other hand I must say also that as a non-native woman I was

sometimes received with distrust. So I am even more thankful to those individuals who stepped over the skin color prejudices and painful experiences from history and to look upon our connection as human being to human being.

For those reasons, before I begin to speak about the sacred rituals I need to say that it is very difficult to explain them, and even harder to do it in few words, as I would need to do right now. Furthermore I would say it is impossible to understand the deep meaning of this magnificent and extremely complex ceremony such as the Sun Dance, without witnessing it. I could say the same for the Sweat Lodge and some other ceremonies. With all these reservations I will try to speak about the mentioned rituals.

We also need to keep in mind that many things have changed from the times the seven sacred ceremonies were originally brought to the people from White Buffalo Woman, as the famous Lakota legend says. A lot of things have changed for native people on this land and people themselves have changed as a result of the historical and political reasons we all know, but in spite of that the soul of their ceremonies is still alive.

To avoid idealizing one culture over another I will also mention also some aspects with which I don't identify. As a woman raised in western culture which has, despite its weaknesses, developed a certain level of independence for women, I must say that during my travels I have met certain patterns within the Native way of thinking which are far from being characterized as holistic, but are rather strongly patriarchal. Besides, like in every religious tradition, also in the Indian ceremonies there are certain rules which have become dogmatic, sometimes even fundamental. Fortunately they don't prevail. If I think of the history and the circumstances of today, I can only admire those of them, who with so much care, love and faith took care that the ceremonies stayed alive, who follow the old sacred ways, and kept trying to insure that the spirit of the Indian Nations doesn't die in spite of difficult circumstances and pressures.

Sweat Lodge Ceremony

The Sweat Lodge (*inipi*), called also Stone People Lodge or Purification Lodge, was in ancient American Indian tradition a ceremony of purification and renewal. It is a very basic rite, often done for ritual cleansing and purification at the beginning of more complex rituals (also every morning and evening of four days during the Sun Dance).

To prepare for a new cycle, there is traditionally a four-day purification ceremony held before the New Year. It contains four Sweat Lodge ceremonies in a row, one each day, and it is usually, as Sun Dance and Vision Quest, accompanied by fasting.

The Lodge is constructed from branches of trees to form its circular framework and covered with blankets, rugs or skins (originally with animal hides) that block out all sources of light. "This evokes a feeling of returning to the womb of our Mother Earth. (...) The door may be placed at the East, so illumination and spirit can enter and join the ceremony, or door may be placed in the West so healing and female receptive energy can enter." (Sams, 1990, p.52)

Participants sit around a pit in which stones are placed, which have been baked in a bonfire. According to the Indian perception of reality, which is not empirical but as in all ancient cultures has magical connection to all life-forms, all beings in nature are alive and have their own personalities. While there are philosophical differences between different ancient cultures, and even Indian tribes, regarding specific ritual matters and traditions unique to each of them, all ancient cultures share this reverence for the spirit world of nature, animals, plants, and elements, which they believe coexists, unseen, with the physical world. So the stones, water, fire, and also plants used in the ceremony of the sweat lodge are not seen as only objects. Stones are addressed as the *Grandfathers* or the *Stone People*, which are much older than people and carry the vibration of ancient memory stored within their energy. During the ceremony they share the ancient wisdom of the Earth. The person who leads the ceremony, usually this is a medicine man or a medicine woman, pours cold water over them to produce steam and heat. The water is called the *Water of life*. Also the fire, which warmed up the

Grandfathers, has the deeper meaning in whole cycle of bringing all four elements of nature (fire, water, earth and air) in the ceremony.

The ceremony may continue for an hour or several hours. After each of four rounds of prayers, which honor the Four Directions East, South, West and North, more hot stones are carried and more water is poured over them. Each round addresses different segments and allows the participants to reconnect with All Our Relations through prayer. The prayers and songs are a way of connecting to the Great Spirit (Holy Spirit, *Wakan-Tanka*) and to Mother Earth.

The term Sweat Lodge doesn't truly express the purpose of this ceremony. Sweating is one of the things that you do in the lodge but it is not the reason that you enter the ceremony of the Lodge. The participants are not merely cleansed physically but purified emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Here again we meet the principle of wholeness, which is, as we noticed already in previous parts of this writing, the essential principle for Native American people, as it was for all ancient civilizations. Spiritual and material are not separated, but are two aspects of the great wholeness. The ritual of Sweat Lodge (as well as many others, Sun Dance, Vision Quest...) treats all aspects of a human being, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, with the same significance. They are all essential in the wholeness of our being, and none of them is more or less important. The concept of wholeness is present also in other aspects of the ceremony. One of the natural ways to practice wholeness is also sitting in circle, in which all participants are equally important and responsible.

The ceremony honors the Earth. By praying in a humble way, singing and listening the stories, the vibration of the hearts of participants slows down and become in tune with the heartbeat of Mother Earth. It makes us not only know, but feel the connection we have with her, and reminds us about the responsibility we have as caretakers of the Earth, our Mother. We are not here to ruin her, but to heal her and to heal ourselves into warm-hearted human

beings, who are able to live in healthy and vital partnership with other humans, other spaces on the Earth and the Earth herself.

We could say that the main purpose of the purification ceremony is remembering our hearts and our real value as human beings. The darkness of “the womb” provides a safe space, where we feel oneness with the Earth, our Mother. When feeling this basic connection, we recognize our humanness.

The Sweat lodge is one of the ceremonies "that bring teachings of compassion and help healing unresolved pain and suffering in consciousness, and that helps Mother Earth to heal, and all the people." as says Sequoyah Trueblood, a devoted follower of Indian tradition and leader of Sweat Lodge ceremonies.(Trueblood, 2000, p.170)

According to Jamie Sams this ceremony is “our reminder of the cleansing love necessary for the growth to occur.” (Sams, p.54) The door to the lodge is built low so we need to enter on our knees, a reminder for us to be humble and to understand that we are no greater or lesser than other life-forms. “Since sacrifice originally meant ‘to make sacred,’ approaching every act of life in a sacred manner is the Indian way. The circular form of the Purification Lodge reminds us not to assign blame to others if they have falter or fall but rather to gently teach in loving kindness so that the circle of the Sacred Hoop may remain whole.”(p.54)

Often two Lodges are built in one place: one for women and one for men. This separation is characteristic for many ancient cultures. It is important for women to learn about their specific, feminine way of practicing spiritual connection, to experience the sisterhood and the womanhood. The same is important for men, to practice their ways of spirituality and experience manhood. While having the separated lodges going on at the same time, there is a respect shown for participants of the other lodge. Women speak respectfully about their “brothers” and among other things devote a prayer also for them, and the same is happening in men’s lodge.

According to the difference in the characters of masculine and feminine, there is also difference in approach to this particular ceremony. Since I haven't been to a men's Lodge, I can only generally say that men usually put more emphasis on conquering the physical effort and entering the connection with Spirit through overcoming the suffering in a strong heat. Women usually do it in their (our) own feminine way: through sincere opening in an emotional way. It is a place where women remember our true power, the power of love; and to remember to respect and use our talents and wisdom, which we many times may neglect.

Behind our everyday tempo, duties, and errands, each of us has a story of the heart, which comes up only on certain occasions. When women come together in circle like this, in an emotionally safe place, the "womb of Mother Earth," it is certainly one of those opportunities. Allowing ourselves to cry out our pains, worries, and anxieties helps us to go on lighter, with less burden on our backs. It feels so good to hear from others sometimes, so that we don't feel alone any more. To share our stories and prayers with each other and with the higher force, however each of us names the force of Divine, feels like remembering that other people are not just other people – we, people are indeed sisters and brothers to each other, brought together on this beautiful planet to discover the sacred mystery of life, to respect each other and to share in good and in bad times.

It is impossible for me to stay rational while speaking about those things. While I was participating in one of my first women's lodges I was crying, because the gathering of women and praying in such a natural and emotional way was for my culture something completely unknown.

Often the ceremony of Women's Lodge makes me feel a mighty power of sisterhood between all women. I feel deep reverence for every woman in the world, for feminine force, this so many times anonymous one, which stands behind, nourishes and holds a power of life. We, as human beings are here to love, to create life, to give life. And if we, women, would

carry this truth courageously out to the world, to our families, our communities, each of us on our unique way, the world would become a different place.

Many times at the very end of the ceremony it is said: “Now we are ready to go out as a new born child.” Indeed, I often feel like this. I feel lightness, gratefulness and harmony with all people and life around me. My perception is sharpened and my vitality is restored. I feel love and respect for everything and everybody. I feel my simple-hearted child within is happy.

Sun Dance Ceremony

The Sun Dance is a traditional Native American sacred ritual, which is usually held once a year by each Tribe. I visited two reservations in Arizona at the time where the Sun Dance was held. The first one was Gila River reservation in April 2002. I was invited there by Ms. Sybil K. Cochram, a Native American woman originally from Montana. She has been a Sun Dancer for many years. I met her at the Native American Wellness Conference, which was held in March the same year in San Diego. She was leading a Sweat Lodge ceremony for women at the conference. The second Sun Dance I attended was in Pinion, Arizona in Navaho reservation, in July 2002 and August 2004. My friend Manson, a Navaho Indian, who is also a Sun Dancer, invited me to this one. The ceremonies in Pinion were led by the spiritual leader of Lakota Nation, A. Looking Horse, who is also the White Buffalo Woman’s pipe carrier.

Jamie Sams, in her book, Sacred Path Cards: The Discovery of Self Through Native Teachings, describes Native American ceremonies, explains their meaning, comparing them to customs of some other native cultures; and she supplements descriptions with practical applications of meaning for personal growth. According to Jamie Sams, the Sun Dance is called by its name because Grandfather Sun is honored as the source of love and warmth on the Mother Earth. The male aspect of Grandfather Sun demonstrates how Sun Dancers, whom she calls Warriors, can be the protective and loving force that allow all members of the Tribe to grow and flourish under their protection. As Grandfather Sun gives light to all green and

growing things on the Mother Earth and protects us from darkness of thought, heart or total night, so must the Warriors protect their people from enemies, loss of courage, and the dark night of soul when fear takes over. This ritual gives the Warriors the opportunity to prove their worthiness to be protectors of the people and allows them the right to give of their pain, of their blood, of their prayers, and of themselves, sacrificing for their families, their children, friends, their tribe or community, and also as a sacrifice for humanity, for people of all colors, all Nations. (Sams, 1990, p.75)

According to Sams, Sun Dance is “traditionally a ceremony only for men” (p.76), although we can see in present time Sun Dances there are many women dancing. Each Sun Dancer looks for a vision in order to know his/her place in the further growth of the tribe as well as in the tribe’s destiny. Traditionally, “each Sun Dancer must be sponsored by a person who has danced the Sun before him.” (p.76) This person vouches for dancer’s worthiness and strength of character. The sponsor teaches him about the proper preparation for the Sun Dance. Months of preparation before Dancing the Sun include fasting, Vision Questing, purification ceremonies such as Sweat Lodges and much personal prayer.

The area for the Sun Dance is a circular arena that has been prepared in a sacred manner. An arbor of brush is built around the center where the Sacred Tree will be placed. Dancers must prepare for three days prior to the dance with praying in *inipi* (Sweat Lodges) and instruction from the male Elders. Those days are called *purification days*. One day before the dancing begins, all participants of the Sun Dance, dancers, the Sun Dance chief, the medicine man, helpers and supporters go together to cut the chosen and blessed Sun Dance Tree. This Standing Person (tree) is carried from the site where it was cut to the center of the circle where it is planted into the earth. The Sun Dance Tree represents the Tree of Life.⁵

⁵ Compare to the symbolism of Axis Mundi, center of the world and in the same time the center of human being, described in first chapter, p.....

The next day dancing begins. Dancers dance for four days without food and water. Every morning before sunrise and every evening after sunset they pray in a Sweat Lodge. It is said that during the dance Sun Dancers are in the Spirit world.

On the third and fourth day, the ones who choose to be pierced are pierced. They are pierced through the connective tissue at the pectoral muscles, first with an awl, then with a sharpened wood stick. The wood spike must be ripped from the skin as each Warrior pulls against the Tree of Life to which he is connected. The purpose of piercing is to allow Warriors to share the blood of their bodies with the Earth Mother. In so doing, each man is giving of his pain so that people may continue to flourish. Many people that I have met explained that with the piercing men feel the pain which can be compared to the pain that women have in childbirth and in this way they learn to respect the role that women carry in Great Mystery.

Piercing is the most astonishing part of the ritual. From the perspective of somebody who is not familiar with Native American philosophy or some other native traditions where body piercing is performed, this part can be very hard to understand. Many early agents for the United States government saw the Sun Dance as self-torture because they did not know the purpose of the ceremony.

During the last two days when the piercing ceremony and final dance take place, also women Sun Dancers at some Sun Dances (not everywhere) have an opportunity to make small cuts on their forearms or pierce their biceps or wrists. Sams explains that “they allow their blood to drip and touch the body of our Mother Earth to show respect for the dancers and to once again recommit their lives to the guardianship and preservation of all living things. This is an act of self-sacrifice for the women is compatible to the Warrior dancers’ piercing of the flesh in the chest. (...) The lessons learned are a beautiful way to understand the balance between male and female, courage and pain, vision and stubbornness, loyalty and love.” (p.77)

However the form of a ritual is fixed in a way, each particular ceremony is unique. I was personally at two Sun Dances, and heard or read about some others, but every one was

different. One of the reasons is surely that the ritual went through certain differentiation over the centuries. The other is that every Sun Dance Chief, who together with the Medicine man and a council of Elders, makes decisions about the protocol of particular Sun Dance, and re-creates certain elements according to the vision he gets about how to lead this particular Sun Dance. This is even more obvious at the Sweat Lodge ceremony. By now I had participated in twelve Sweat Lodges and each one was different, each was unique.

There are certain traditional protocols for running the Sweat Lodge ceremony, but most “depend on character”, as my Navaho Indian friend Manson, likes to say and the guidance of the spirit. Although there are so many things around the Sun Dance ceremony one could understand as rules, in a way everyone experiences each ceremony on her/his own way. Each Sun Dancer understands it a little bit differently. Within the understanding that the Sun Dancer sacrifices him/herself for good of the people, there is also a strong personal meaning of his/her sacrifice. Everyone has his/her own reason why he/she has chosen to dance and own way of experiencing the connection to the “Spirit world.” According to conversations I had with some Sun Dancers there is a strong emphasis on understanding a sacrifice as personal transformation or renewal, which happens throughout the ritual. Many speak about being re-born through the process, about the “old self” being “washed away” by the heat of the Sun and new life entering the body from Mother Earth through the roots of the Sacred Tree. Jamie Sams beautifully explains the meaning of a sacrifice as sacrificing what needs to be sacrificed so that the sacredness of our lives may be restored. It could be doubt or fear which need to be sacrificed so that our dreams may live. “You are being asked to give up something. (...) Self-sacrifice is not denying your needs, but rather the Self’s decision to willingly sacrifice limitation through action. (...) This ancient ritual is considered as a strong act of love. It teaches us how to Walk in Balance and let go of the parts of ourselves that do not serve our sacred path.” (p.79)

5. THIRD PHASE - CREATING

I had exactly four months in front of me. A place was chosen and all the agreements with people who collaborated in the process were done. Everything was ready for the beginning of writing. I temporarily moved to my little house in the mountains of Slovenia. I felt like I was standing in front of the great void. There was nothing else but trust I was called to do it, so I prayed to connect to the creative force within me to guide me and show me the way. My inner feeling encouraged me to begin to work with joy and lightness. Instead of being encouraged to begin to work in discipline, I was supported to do what I like most, to go places that are dear to my heart and to constantly question myself about what makes me truly happy. I just needed to open and to trust that everything would happen in the right time.

The first lesson was teaching about Beauty. White Buffalo Woman is known for teaching people about the Beauty Way. The sacred path in her understanding is a Beauty path. In my meditations she was speaking to me and leading my steps. It was not that she would dictate to me the whole script, as I secretly wished, but I needed to feel the archetype she represented inside of me and become more and more connected to that gentle and subtle vibration of energy. She wanted me to realize how beautiful and sacred I am and how every human being is like that. I had to go through certain experiences to learn first and slowly gather the pieces, which would eventually come to their right places in the mosaic.

At one point the Dark Goddess appeared in my inner experience. I was greatly surprised when she wanted me to speak in my performance also about her. What does she have to do with this story? It seemed like something that doesn't fit in the teachings of sacredness or beauty. But I was wrong. The information I received revealed to me that they are both, White Buffalo Woman as well as the Dark Goddess, archetypes important for humanity in this period. Both bring the healing power. There have been so many misconceptions and fears about the archetypal power represented by Dark Goddess and she would like the truth about her to be more and more revealed to the people. Her darkness is not evil, but protective. As with White

Buffalo Woman, she also wanted me to feel my own Dark Goddess archetype inside of me, my own connection to the power arising from the Earth, her fierce force, which demands transformation. She wanted me to face the darkness inside, the painful truths within me and offered me to show me the way. As you can see in my script, I accepted and went through a process of transformation.

The process of transformation, the renewal, is a natural process and, as already discussed in the first chapter, has been ritually practiced in the cultures all over the world. As we could see the first phase in the seasonal pattern, from which basic ritual pattern derives, is mortification, the death. Something needs to be removed, a part of us needs to die in order that something new can emerge; a new life energy, joy, creativity, etc. I guess we all prefer beauty to confronting the darkness within us, and for that reason the archetype of Dark Goddess, which represents the principle of transformation, the need for changing things, is not one of the most accepted or liked archetypes. Indeed, also to me it would be more pleasant to speak only about beauty, but the unpleasant truths are also part of the sacred whole.

DISCOVERING THE DARK GODDESS ARCHETYPE

The Dark Goddess archetype is known in different religions under different names, such as Kali in India, Nemesis in Greece, Black Madonna in Europe, Black Dakini in Tibet, etc. Unfortunately this aspect of archetypal feminine through history was often misunderstood, feared of or deliberately characterized as demonic. It is one of most misleading conceptions connected to women invented by patriarchal authority structures, from which modern women try to liberate themselves.

“I'm called Dark, because I'm connected to the earth. The soil is black – does it mean it's evil, it's bad?” explains the Dark Goddess in my script *White Buffalo Woman*. There always used to be a deep connection between woman and the mysteries of the natural world, the healing energy of Earth: her beauty as well as her dark and hidden powers, as Lambert says in

Wise Women of the Dreamtime (Lambert, 1993, p. x). In other words, Dark Goddess could be characterized as another, the dark or so-called chthonic, underground aspect of the Earth Mother. As Eisler establishes, even in her chthonic aspects, the Goddess in Neolithic's shrines is portrayed as part of the natural order. (Eisler, 1990, p.20) Many shrines were underground, in caves, which represented the "womb of Earth Mother."⁶ In many cultures in ancient times women had their own rituals, their own initiation processes and secrets shared only between women. As said before, beside the motherly function, an important role of women was also to be in connection to her darker aspects, to keep balance between life and death, light and dark. As healers, priestesses, shamans or simply being a part of women's rituals, they had an important role for the community, which was tightly connected to specific talents characteristic to the nature of woman. In Eisler's words "in the same way that life was celebrated in religious imagery and rituals, the destructive processes of nature were also recognized and respected. But with all of this, the many images of Goddess in her dual aspect of life and death seem to express a view of the world in which primary purpose of life was not to conquer, pillage and loot but to cultivate the earth and provide material and spiritual wherewithal for a satisfying life." (Eisler, p. 20)

Entering the unconsciousness, into different kinds of "non-ordinary realities", the so called ecstatic state, shamanic state, trance, etc, and healing in that way, was in many ancient cultures considered as a domain of the feminine. Navaho Indians, for example, call the Peyote ceremony and Sweat Lodge, which both have to do with the "entering the darkness", the feminine rituals, no matter if a man is performing them. Vicky Noble says in her book of the new female shamanism, Shakti Woman, that: "Western observers rarely notice that shamanism has anything to do with Feminine, and yet all shamans - no matter what part of the world they are from - always work in the realm of the Feminine. They either pray to the Mother of the Animals, the Mother of All things, the Dark Mother, Grandmother Growth, The Death

⁶ We can compare them to the shape of the Sweat Lodge, which also represents the womb of Mother Earth. The darkness of »the womb« provides an emotionally safe place, where the oneness to the Earth can be felt.

Goddess, or some manifestation of the Divine Feminine in her dark, magical, healing power.”
(Noble, 1991, p.13)

When the patriarchal institutions took over the social and spiritual authority, as did the Christian Church, in the case of our civilization, the ability of healing in this way was characterized as "evil." The consequence of that is that with an exception of the realm of art, we, as a civilization, have lost our connection with inner or mythic realities, as well as with our magical connection with the four elements of fire, earth, water and air, and our connection with our inner guides, animal totems, spirit of the Earth...

Religious institutions managed to confuse our perception of right and wrong, what is "good" and what is "evil," and unfortunately the natural world and our connection with it was regarded as "evil." Particularly women were marked as "unclean" because of their (our) abilities of natural ways of healing, knowing the healing powers of herbs, knowledge of birth control, because of performing rituals devoted to changing cycles of the Earth, the Moon and the Sun, etc. The menses was also a large part of seeing women as unclean.

We must know that this was not an innocent thing at all. The most sacred truth can be interpreted by the ignorant people as a bad one and gradually it becomes the generally accepted rule of a society. This manipulation was used by the institution of the Catholic Church through its whole history with a great benefit of keeping itself in authority. It began with destroying of sanctuaries of old, pre-Christian, Goddess religions throughout Europe, destroying the initiation centers, as for example in Eleusis in Greece. This period many historians call the beginning of the fall of the European spirituality. On the ruins of temples they built the new Christian churches, or the ancient sacred place was marked with demonic names, such as Devil Stones (in Slovenia), Devil's Tower (Wyoming, Black Hills), etc. It is obviously connected to the historical connection between “woman” and “evil” throughout the patriarchal history of humankind last few thousand years.

In the time of inquisition in the Middle Ages many of those who were "different" were burned at the stake because of their knowledge and their abilities. In large numbers trials for witchcraft were held. Most of those witches were women. The same thing happened to the scientists who didn't want to deny their discoveries. The phenomenon of witchcraft, which in its roots is a sacred spiritual practice deeply connected with the wisdom, power and magic of women, and as well as the wisdom, power and magic of Earth, was in that time in the name of "God" proclaimed as something evil. All those practices, which are connected with the power of Earth, including what is today called shamanism, were accused as dealing with "dark" forces. "Dark" is everything that is unknown, and the easiest thing to do is to deny existence of the unknown, to push it deep in a cellar and label with a sign: "Prohibited to be touched." And the fact is that the Christian Church did that. It proclaimed as evil everything that is unknown, which comes from the depths of unconsciousness.

Through the next centuries in the process of Christianization and also imperialism, which was always performed hand in hand with the institution of the Church, many people were killed, many spiritual traditions of the world were erased from the surface of the Earth or pushed to the edge of survival. Massacres of Native American tribes, or assimilations of other spiritually highly evolved tribes in Africa and all other continents (which were later characterized as "savages" or "primitive," as many Americans and Europeans still believe) are only the last few centuries' episode of the tragedy, which began a long time ago.

The consequences of patriarchal mythology based on that model of good and evil, significantly influence our thinking. Those patterns are still present in our environment, in our collective consciousness or unconsciousness, and among other influences on our society have a fundamental impact on the sense of identity of a contemporary woman.

Altering the Myth – Redeeming the Identity of a Woman

In collective consciousness we still carry fear of being punished because of our truth and because of our knowledge, if those contradict with the general socially approved truths. Women still carry this conflict deep inside, which bursts out especially when our inner power, our nature and our need for seeking our own way of spirituality begin to awaken. When from our unconscious mind our chthonic nature arises, or a need for more intimate connection toward nature, ancient memories, abilities for healing, maybe even experiences with different kinds of spiritual beings or spirits, in a word when we begin to open to the energies of so called “non-ordinary reality,” many times we don’t know whether this is “alright” or whether we better hide it and hush it up.

The next of the fatal consequences of the repression of the Church for the relation of a woman toward herself is a torn or deformed connection with our instinctive nature. Everything “down from the navel” was considered “lower,” if not “impure.” Christian religion has taught us that the only holy woman is The Virgin Mary, because she has conceived and given birth immaculately, without a sexual act. So, if “immaculately” means without sexual act – then sexuality is something “with a macula.” If not our mothers, then our grandmothers for sure believed that they were “impure” because they gave birth upon the act “with a macula.” So, because of sacred acts of sexuality and giving birth, they considered themselves as “impure.” Not to mention their attitude toward their menstruation, about which very often they didn’t speak openly even with their daughters. I wonder, how many of us today know that the time of menstruation is actually the time when women are most sensitive, vulnerable and at the same time most open to subtle energies and visions? This is the time of renewing our energy. Women from many native traditions had been devoting special attention to that time, which men have also respected.

For all of those, and maybe some other reasons, many women feel uncertainty about our identity. Not only do we often feel disregarded by the environment, but we ourselves, have an

indefinite feeling of somehow “not being good enough”. With that is indirectly affected our Inner child archetype, the Inner girl, because we don’t give her as much reverence as she deserves. How could we honor the Inner child, if we ourselves are not sure if we deserve it, with all our “maculas”? This wound still lives in our collective unconsciousness. Our inner beauty and power were marked as something bad, and because of that we don’t know whether we are allowed to take it. In fact, the disconnection came so far, that many women even don’t know we have beauty and power and what to do with it.

This historical deception of methodically designating *sacred* as *demonic*, raised a foundation of a civilization of fear and restriction. Intimidation is a very effective method of manipulating people, and often it is practiced by those who themselves are afraid. Already the big effort that the institution of the Christian Church and other religious and tribal systems have made to eliminate women’s spirituality and respect for the feminine out of the social life of the world, tells us that there was a good deal of fear of the power of women involved. This fact reveals to us another essential cognition: women’s influence on society can be very strong, if only we are aware of our power. Let us imagine what a place the world could become, if we would direct our hidden potentials into the greatest good.

Women of the last century have done a great work towards equality for women. In my opinion, there comes a time when that way of fighting will be no longer needed. Being equal in relation to men seems no longer to be the point. What we really need is each of us, women of the Earth, to become aware of who she is, and what she knows, feels and thinks about herself. If we want to create a harmony of this world, we must learn what our mission is in accordance with the natural laws. We need to remember what we knew millennia ago, and what we still carry in our ancient collective memory: that we carry in our bodies and our ancient hearts the wisdom of the Earth. We are connected to her power and her magic. No, there is nothing “evil” or “dirty” about that, as some managed to convince us: it is sacred. Also nature is sacred, and every human being is a holy being. As well each of us is a holy woman, and included with that

our whole body, our sexuality, our menstruation... Each of us is a Goddess, a beautiful, precious, majestic divine being.

In times past, it was a task of elder women to initiate girls into womanhood, through the initiation rituals and other ways of teachings of the mysteries, knowledge, and wisdom of being a woman. The feminine mystery teachings have been lost to several generations of women in many native cultures, and to many more generations in most European traditions. “Now this women’s wisdom is coming back into our consciousness from a few remaining elders who carry it, from our inner questing, and from our practice of the teachings themselves. It has tremendous import for not only our spiritual practice, but also for our general health and physical well-being,” says one of most highly respected Native American teachers of the modern era, Brooke Medicine Eagle in her book Buffalo Woman Comes Singing. (Medicine Eagle, 1991, p. 327)

More and more women are becoming aware of the importance of searching within for the mysterious feminine, which holds a key to recognizing our identity. My deep conviction is that we, women of the whole world should learn about our roots, our emotions, our sensibility, our vulnerability, our gentleness, our sensuality, our intuition, our wisdom. This is where our power comes from. We should learn to act from inside – become our own authorities. Many times we tend to believe others, different values of the environment, mother, father, partners, science, religious leaders, spiritual teachers, different kinds of ideas, and allow ourselves to be led and confused, instead of taking responsibility for our own convictions and decisions. Many times we think that to stand up for ourselves and to create the world with regard to our visions and desires is selfish. Many times we even think we are not worth that. With that attitude we even more oppress the frightened girl inside of us and confirm her conviction she is not good enough the way she is, anyway.

To really get to know the true source of our wisdom, our inner voice, and gradually put all pieces of ourselves into an integrated being, we need to comfort our crying girl and learn to

give consideration to her needs. The intention of this healing process therefore is to become aware of the responsibility we have for our girl inside. We must realize, that deep inside, no matter what we have been through in our lives, what we have done, despite all our losses, our mistakes, and our pains, and despite the hardness of the world we are living in, we are as beautiful, pure, gentle, and worthy of love and reverence as this divine child's soul. We need our power to protect this vulnerable being inside of us, to take care of her as a treasure, because that's what she is.⁷ We can achieve that by allowing love to enter our hearts and guide us, with finding the source of our wisdom, nourishing it and pursuing it. Particularly we, the women of our western civilization, who have lost the connection with our ways of spirituality so long ago, need to cultivate the ancient values welling out of the warmth of the heart, which in our world became secondary, and to teach our society and men to respect them. This is where the task of the women reveals what we carry for the future. With allowing ourselves to be who we are, we allow also others to do the same. With doing so we also teach men to allow themselves to learn about their true nature, which because of the patriarchal upbringing and saving their social image, very often they tend to suppress.

From that perspective I consider the awakening and liberation of the female principle as the way of transformation of the world. What we call female shamanism helps us to recognize our true role in life and the responsibility that goes with that. Its nature is not exclusive or competitive in the relation toward men or the male principle, but reveals the female energy in all of us, finding the balance that we as a human race seek. Female shamanism teaches us cooperation and partnership on the basis of the wisdom of the ancient heart that beats in each of us - women and men. It teaches us the ability to live together respecting the uniqueness of everyone, in harmony on this beautiful planet.

The Dark Goddess archetype is the part of us that helps us with that liberation process. According to Noble, her wrathful appearance doesn't represent the anger in some small ego-

⁷ In the appendix see for an example of how this can be done through a ritual theatre and shamanic methods.

centered way, like a personal grievance or reactive explosion, but rather the luminous wrath of the conscience witnessing and refusing to accept injustice. (Noble, 1991) “Maybe I am not the kindest person you have met, but it's because I want you to hear the truth,” we can hear her saying in the script of *White Buffalo Woman*. Eventually she is the one who enables the main character of the play to find her way back to her dreams.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. RETURNING TO HARMONIOUS MEANINGFUL EXISTENCE

As White Buffalo Woman said, “the time will come, when people will forget they need to listen to their inner wisdom and to nourish their soul and their dreams.” In our culture indeed we have forgotten the importance of the connection to our inner wisdom, our soul and our dreams. Usually we are too busy, too many more important things need to be done. It is very easy to begin to believe that caring for our soul is something that does not fit in the modern world. We have gotten used to believing that what we wish is not important. Often it is even considered selfish. Taking time for thinking about what is in other cultures, for example Native American or Aboriginal, called daydreaming, is in contemporary Western culture often considered as laziness or an unnecessary luxury. Sitting by the fire in the night and sharing stories, as happened in many archaic cultures, is a rare event nowadays. Taking time for wandering around without a reason, observing nature, listening to the language of the wind, the trees, the birds, or just lying in grass surrendering to the inner silence and observing our feelings, inner visions and voices, is usually not encouraged. Already from a young age children are expected to be active all the time, to learn as much they can, to attend as many activities as they possibly can, to use the time efficiently, because this world demands that you adjust to its vigorous standards, if you want to be successful.

As many youths, I have also been hearing over and over again that I need to think of survival, earning money, success... Doing useful things was much more approved than doing the “useless” things which made me happy. I agree we need to be responsible for our life but what is the meaning of all of the things I listed above if we have lost our deepest desire? There are so many people who have achieved by the socially recognized standards, yet many of them have forgotten about the true happiness of their hearts along the way. On the other hand, when we,

modern people, go to visit some less developed parts of the world we are surprised to realize that people are usually much happier despite the poverty and other circumstances of life, which are unacceptable in our eyes.

I believe for fulfilling the meaning of our life we need to find the connection to our personal heart desire and follow the path it shows us, although it is scary and we think we can not do it. Furthermore I am convinced it is not just that we are allowed to do that, and not just we can do that, but also we are responsible for fulfilling the mission that has been put in our hearts before we were even born in the form of a heart desire. The dreams of the soul were given to us to accomplish. Those dreams are as simple as obtaining happiness for one's self and others. This is where the harmony of a human being and society begins. It is so simple it is easily overlooked.

Yet, it is sometimes very difficult to discover what one's true heart desire is. My way of following it is to pursue the longing, the deep sweet pain inside, which gets stronger and stronger the more we ignore it. The more it hurts the more we are afraid of it. But in truth there is no reason to be afraid. This pain is just a call of our soul. It has been given to us, so we can find the way back home – to the peace and happiness of our heart. It hurts so we can remember the deepest reason why we came to this life. If we do not want to hear or do not recognize the call the pain becomes illness, depression or some other state of imbalance.

Allowing ourselves to take time out for doing nothing “important” but dreaming, laying in the grass, being in silence in nature, walking or dancing, enables us to activate another vibration of the brain, which opens more subtle levels of perception and possibility to enter the parts of ourselves we haven't been aware of before. It opens the possibility of experiencing reality in its deeper level and also of understanding our existence more profoundly. In that state of mind we can receive insights, visions, ideas. My experience shows me it is important not to force anything, but just allow myself to feel whatever comes and carefully listen, observe and discern.

One of the ways to approach the hidden heart desire is also the shamanic method of soul retrieval, which I explained in one of the previous chapters. The basic principle is that the deepest happiness of the heart, which is our vital life energy, part of our soul, lies under the energy of all the sadness, disappointments, anger, memories of being victimized, incapable, convinced you don't have right to use your power, etc, which we have experienced in our life. Figuratively said, there is no other way of rediscovering the precious "jewels" of our soul but to release the painful feelings lying on them. It is not expected to happen all at once. It is a process of coming home over and over again, and the soul is gradually, part by part, retrieved and our life more and more harmonized in its different spheres.

2. RITUAL NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN PERFORMANCES ELECTRA AND WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN

Both performances are examples of using this method in an artistic way, without doing so deliberately. As I have explained before my method of creating performances is intuitive – allowing my inner feeling to guide me. This proves that soul retrieval is a natural method, a natural process of healing, which exists in our unconsciousness and furthermore it is in fact very obviously connected to the process of renewal, which is a basic model of ritual pattern, as stated before, deriving from the seasonal pattern. The narrative structure of performances, which was created by following inner intuitive intelligence, turns out to be in accordance with the basic ritual pattern of mortification (death) – purgation (purification) – invigoration (renewal) – jubilation.

Finding herself in a difficult situation (in *Electra*) and finding herself in the meaningless of existence, longing for the connection to beauty (in *White Buffalo Woman*), both main characters of the plays are called to go through the process of facing painful emotions, to surrender their wounded parts inside through transformation. This process eventually brings both women to find

the deeper meaning of their lives. They also got a vision of how to begin to live harmoniously. Electra decides she will give up her intention of revenge. She becomes willing to forgive her parents and try to find a way to become happy and to live in beauty, for, as she realizes, this is her right and this is what she truly desires. As well, the woman in *White Buffalo Woman* realizes she is a sacred being, as all other people, things and beings “down here.” She decides she will follow her retrieved dreams about the better world, which she once used to have, but had been lost along the path of her life. She has gained back her faith and she is willing to live her dreams again as a happy child of the Earth, to whom she wants to return with love and respect.

3. RITUAL THEATRE AS A HEALING TOOL FOR THE AUDIENCE AND THE PERFORMERS

According to Eliade, the essential human pattern is the need of eternal return. In my interpretation this need of returning towards the center of our being manifests itself through the heart-desire, the deep longing of the soul. In my understanding the original purpose of ritual is returning to the center - to the heart. If we do not follow this call of our archetypal reality, if we do not give attention to it, we feel this call as a pain, which gradually can become sickness and leads to depression, addiction, etc....

In my performances I understand ritual in its original function, which is according to many discussed authors a regenerating, transforming function. Its purpose is to create harmony within an individual, among all the people, who are present, the audience and the performers, and as well the harmony with people and nature; to enable the experience of returning home – to feel the center of one’s self, which means our heart, to experience what we as human beings long for – the unity of all life, unity with ourselves – feeling the vibration of love. This is what I call a healing function of ritual theatre. This is also how I understand the original purpose of the theatre art, the catharsis, the way Aristotle articulated it.

As I said, if we want myths to be healing – to reawaken the perception of wholeness – we need to heal them first – to recreate the altered versions into the more authentic ones which honor immanent life as well as transcendental realities. It means what is below, here, is as sacred as what is above. Human being is sacred, body, life processes, animals, plants... We are holy.

What does it mean to be healed? In a shamanic soul-retrieval treatment, the process of healing is completed when a person gets back the lost, wounded part of soul. Within shamanic terminology being healed thus means “to get together” with the lost part (or parts) of the soul – to live with a soul instead without it. I discussed before the connection between words healing – whole – holy. All that leads to a very simple conclusion:

living with the soul = being healed = becoming whole = being holy

and also becoming whole = coming home = coming to the center our being, the heart

Truly realizing you are a beautiful being, respected for what you are, worthy of true happiness, sacred and pure inside regardless of what you have done or not done, achieved or not achieved, deserved or not deserved, this is a great deep healing for every human being. Theatre performances can be a wonderful tool by giving supportive, liberating, nutritive examples of a reality, which shows it is possible to choose to live a harmonious happy existence also within the limited conditions of the world we live in. These positive examples can prove to us we have the strength for creating a better reality for us and others and that we can use our true power of heart to achieve that.

I can't say that all my performances achieve this effect at the same level of efficiency. It depends on many factors. I will mention just a few. First is my ability of expression, which is not always the same. Second is the openness of the audience: the individual's and group's ability and

willingness to open emotionally and become participants rather than observers. Efficiency depends also on the place of the performance: it is much better if it is possible to protect the place from disturbing elements coming from the environment (such as noise, insects, uncomfortable seats, etc.).

The feedback I have been receiving from people shows that there are many individuals who profoundly experience the effects I described above, particularly in the performances, in which the connection happens very strongly. After the performances we often stay together in the circle talking, exchanging the impressions, singing or dancing.

4. THE FEMININE WAY

In previous chapters I have discussed the need of altering the patriarchal myths in order to heal the self-image of women, which in a larger context would bring balance between feminine and masculine on our planet. In addition to all suggestions I have offered within this text I would conclude my quest with one of the many possible options of a positive self-image of a woman.

A powerful woman is powerful because she knows she is ultimately free. Her relation to anybody is based on her own perception of herself and independent of men or social rules. She loves and respects herself, all her parts, also those which were neglected or not respected during the past. Her love for others is true because she loves from the place of “standing on her own,” connected to her own source of happiness, fulfillment and creative power. She does not need to be admired. She respects her inner wisdom and relies on it. She lives the opposites within her nature, her light and her darkness. She is aware she has the ability to be gentle and loving but she is not afraid of her irrational, magical part. She is always different, because she allows her self to be what she feels in certain moment. She can perceive reality as a sacred whole, within her and around her. And she can use a great advantage, which the patriarchal system despite all its weaknesses brought to society, the development of the rational side of a human being. She can

blend the power of her heart and use her rational ability towards the highest good for all. She has a power to change this world and she trusts her inner resources. It's a new time coming. If she only chooses to believe it and act as if it is already here, she can make her dreams true.

As the White Buffalo Woman said, the old times are over. However the world outside looks, we are not victims of patriarchal limitations any more, but can create a harmonious world, respectful to all forms, peaceful and loving - a world within which women and man are allowed to be what we truly are. Who can allow us to do so, if not we ourselves. What about beginning right now...

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VI. APPENDIX

WORKSHOP "HEALING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE FEMININE AND THE INNER CHILD"

An experimental workshop for women, with using the theatre ritual and shamanic methods (shamanic journey)

Facilitated by Romana Ercegovic

With assistance of Tanja Bocinskaja

Time: January 17-19, 2003

Place: Smolnik , Slovenia

Number of participants: 10

STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOP

The structure of the workshop itself was a ritual structure, containing very basic elements usually found in a ritual: An Opening Circle, Purification, Offering, Connection to the Mythic Realm, Journeying Within, Thanksgiving and Celebration, Closing Circle.

1. part

We began with the Opening circle, which was followed by Women's Sweat Lodge ritual purification and setting the intention (asking for healing, recognition, teachings through the process, or whatever of each participant wanted).

(Saturday)

2. part

Hiking in the nature: Offering

3. part

Going Within:

I. Initiation ceremony: Meeting the Goddess Inside (Guided visualization and theatre part of the ritual)

Connection to the Mythic Realm and experiencing “being a Goddess”

II. Shamanic journey: Meeting the Inner Child (based on shamanic method of soul retrieval)

4. part

Giving Thanks and Celebration: Singing and drumming by the fire.

(Sunday)

5. part

Closing circle

Also preparing the food and enjoying our meals were considered as a part of the whole process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS

I will try to describe the method I was using in this workshop, which is a method I have been developing for last few years in a few different workshops. First I will describe each part of the workshop, which will be followed by short explanations of the goals of each part and its meaning for the wholeness of the process. Afterwards I will speak about the effects experienced and noticed by participants. This workshop was meant as a research, which all participants agreed to enter with their own responsibility and willingness to co-operate with the process and to share some of their experiences. So, I asked them to answer quite a detailed questionnaire, and send it to me about ten days after the workshop.

I would like to add also, that participants of this workshop were mostly women of our women's circle, who already knew each other (only few were with us for the first time). As a circle, we have had a few meetings by now. We come from different places in Slovenia, and are different ages. They (we) are all more or less familiar with the principle of inner realities of the mythic world and with the term of "Goddess," which we generally understand as a feminine force of life inside and outside of us, but rather than trying to define it we tend to focus our attention on exploration of what does "she" mean for each of us individually and how to consciously integrate "her" into our reality and relive it in our world. Within our women's circle we honour the individuality and spiritual orientations of each of us, which are quite different. As a group we don't have any kind of religious or ideological tendencies. What we are all interested in is inner growth and inner exploring, desire to find the connection with our own nature, honoring the cycles of natural world (such as following the cycles of Moon, Earth and the Sun), and we all find it important for women to gather and to experience our womanhood and femininity together in the form of circle, where we try to practice encouraging the assertion of individual will in cooperation with natural energies and energies created by the wills of others.

The inspiration for this workshop was our experiment, which as well was lead by me in November last year (2002), when we went to the top of a local mountain to a shamanic journey with an intention to meet our archetype of a *wise woman* inside. Because each of us experienced her individual archetype very clearly, we had a desire to continue our work.¹ (Let me just briefly mention an interesting fact that later we found out, that that the same mountain was in the Middle Ages a plac where women were gathering for equinoxes, solstices, Midsummer Eve, full Moons, etc and was later considered as a “place of witches, which one is supposed to be afraid of.”)

I think this is important information to add, because the starting point was different as would be in a case that we wouldn't know each other at all or had completely different interests.

Women's Sweat Lodge ritual

We began with opening circle followed by the Sweat Lodge ceremony.² One of most important purposes of our Lodge was to prepare an emotionally safe place where participants, in our case a group of women, could begin to feel closeness between each other. Another purpose of the Lodge was to give a chance to every participant individually to articulate her personal motivation of being at this workshop, her expectation of this process, or to speak about the intention she had (such as asking for healing, insight, teachings through the process,

¹ Let me mention an interesting fact that later we found out, that that the same mountain was in middle Age a place, where women were gathering for equinoxes, solstices, Midsummer Eve, full Moons, etc and was later considered as a “place of witches, which is supposed to be afraid of”.

² As I described in earlier chapters devoted to this sacred ceremony, the Sweat Lodge ceremony was practiced in different ancient traditions, Native Americans, Celtic, Mongolian, etc. So, our ancestors on this very land had very similar way of purification and connection to the Earth. I was participating in many different Sweat Lodges of Native American culture and noticed they all were different. For this occasion I have chosen a way of running the ceremony, which doesn't use any particular symbols of any tradition. My intention was to accept the teachings from the Indian people with respect and to use it in the way, which feels right for us in our time and space. According to the legend, this ceremony was one of the seven rituals given to Lakota people from The White Buffalo Woman, and she gave it to share with all nations.

etc). I have described the cleansing effect of a Sweat Lodge ceremony, so another important purpose was the purification before entering the process.

In Women's lodges particularly there is stronger emphasis on emotional healing and recognizing the sisterhood among women. Although I have written about it already, I would like to say again, that one of its purposes is in remembering our connection with the Earth – by means of its dark, womblike structure. It often opens to the left (the feminine, receptive, intuitive) side. As I said above, for this workshop I had chosen the element of creating an emotionally safe place to be essential intention of the ceremony, where all participants could release tensions from the "outer stressful everyday reality" and slowly begin to open to the sacredness of approaching the deeper places of the soul.

The Offering

We began the second day very early, when there was still dark outside, and went out into nature. We were on a mountain, where there was no noise and no people around. After hiking up the snow hill in silence, first we gave our offering to nature in the form of food for birds and other animals. Then each found her place by a tree or on a meadow, feeling and observing the awakening of the day. Each spent some time on her own in silence, and returned back to the house when she felt so. The purpose of that part was to experience the silence, beauty, serenity and innocence of morning in nature, which awakens the silent, beautiful and innocent part of our soul.

With our offering we also made a connection to the natural world. The act of offering is in accordance to the universal law of giving and receiving and was always an important part of traditional rituals. It shows the respect, care and gratitude toward the many gifts we receive from nature, from the Earth, every single day. In the Lodge each of us revealed our intention, and asked for what she wanted to receive during this process. If we wanted to receive, we had

to give, to offer something. An important part of offering was also making an effort to overcome a comfort, which in our case was waking up early in the morning and hiking up the snowy hill.

INITIATION CEREMONY: MEETING THE GODDESS INSIDE

1.Guided visualization and

2.Theatre part of the ritual

Introduction to the ceremony

The initiation ceremony was the most complex part of the workshop. It was a ritual performance of the *initiation into the womanhood*. I will devote a most of my attention in this paper to explain it, because I consider this part of the workshop, the idea and the realization of it, as my original creation (other parts, such as Sweat Lodge, Shamanic Journey, are adjusted from existing forms).

An Initiation ritual into womanhood was in many cultures connected with the time of the first menstruation. It is a sign that a girl's body is ready to become a woman's body. It is a great significant event for every woman, because our bodies at that point become attuned with the cycles of nature: as Earth we can give birth and our monthly cycle of menstruation connects us with Moon cycle. Carol P. Christ speaks about the importance of affirmation of the female body saying that female body is "viewed as a direct expression or incarnation of waxing and waning, life and birth cycles in the universe, because of the connection between the 28 day cycles of menstruation and 28 day cycles of the moon. How amazing is for a modern woman to learn that many of the ancient Goddess figures were painted with red ochre between her legs out in the open, a symbol of female power." (Christ, 1987, p.11) "In earlier times Mother Earth, Goddess and all aspects of feminine, were honored as primary. During

this time, a bowl containing women's Moon blood was often central upon the altars in shrines. It represented the power of renewal and the mystery of giving birth to new life." (Brooke Medicine Eagle, 1991, pg. 332) So we can understand that also a girl's transition into a woman with the getting her first period was greatly respected by whole community or tribe. It meant also that girl got a different role in society, connected to greater responsibilities and a different attitude toward her. Unfortunately, women today don't learn about our menstruation and our blood in that way. The collective amnesia of the importance of this phenomena in our culture which has gradually taken place during last five thousand years, besides all the other manipulations of patriarchy, such as rewriting the myths and the history, has enormous consequences for the world as was discussed earlier. In The Great Cosmic Mother: The Ancient Religion of the Goddess Rediscovered, Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor argue that the menstrual taboo was a "pre-eminently political move" on the part of men and society, "one of the most successful methods devised by men to undermine self-acceptance, self-understanding, and self-confidence in women." (Sjoo& Mor, 1987, pg. 196)

Women today generally don't have a chance to experience the event of getting the first period as such a remarkable transition in our life, and don't have a chance to learn about its deep meaning. Another important thing we miss is to "experience a role of a Goddess," to feel as a *incarnated Goddess*, as women in ancient societies did during the initiation ceremony, and to integrate that role into the awareness of everyday life which follows, its challenges, difficulties, responsibilities and also its beauty.

As I said earlier, theatre enables us to heal the myth, and thus to recreate the reality. It gives us a chance *to be* characters of our inner mythic reality. If it was taken away from us, we can take it back and restore our power, our self-esteem as women, our self-understanding and self-confidence. Women ourselves can do that. We don't need men's approval for that,

although I think that their understanding of the process of reclaiming femininity on different levels can make this step easier for women.

As an inspiration to create this initiation ceremony of re-experiencing our first menstruation in a healing way, I took a ritual from the North American tribe Navaho (Dine): “Today in North America, The Navaho celebrate female initiation for four days when a girls get her period. They isolate and fuss over the girl, while she fasts and prepares cornbread for the community. The cornbread is mixed and stirred by the girl in a particularly focused ceremony, then baked in underground ovens overnight, and served by the initiate to the entire community. She doesn’t eat the bread herself but simply doles it out to the others, while representing the Goddess incarnate to her people. They understand her to partake of the Goddess Changing Woman and to be forever transformed through the experience of having her blood cycle.” (Noble, 1991, pg.23) Also Gerald Hausman writes about that rite as a basic rite and as one of very important parts of spirituality of Navaho people: “Changing Woman is also called Earth Woman. She is the source of life, the giver of sustenance and destiny to all beings. (...) Navaho girls, in their puberty rites, are symbolically turned into Changing Woman, and are therefore wellsprings of beauty and abundance.” (Hausman, 1987, pg.14)

With creating this ceremony I wanted to create a chance for us, women in our group, to heal our story of experiencing our first menstruation, which is for many women not pleasant, into a happy story, a myth of celebration of life. Our ceremony had three basic purposes: First, to re-experience our first menstruation, heal our negative attitudes toward it, taboos about it and begin to look at it as something that needs be honoured and celebrated rather than neglected. Secondly, to learn about aspects of the Goddess, connected to that transition, to experience their real existence in our lives, and realize what they are offering to us. And thirdly, for each of us to feel as a Goddess: truly and deeply honoured as a woman, loved and

accepted by “her tribe” and supported on her path of new life, which (in our case) symbolically begins with this transition.

Before the ceremony each of us prepared few fists of wheat grains wrapped in a white cotton kerchief, which symbolically represented bread. In addition, each woman had been asked before the workshop to choose a song, a poem or a short text which is very important to her soul, and which she is ready to share with us. It could be her creation, but not necessarily. Before we began, we had prepared a central part, which was a shrine, with an altar and prepared musical instruments (drums and others). As costumes we used our favourite dresses or skirts. We sat down in a circle. I explained the course of the happening before, so we didn't need to stop and explain during the “performance.”

1. Guided visualization

The ceremony had two basic parts. It began with guided meditation and passed over to “performing” part. The meditation led women to the time of their first menstruation. They met themselves as teenagers and connected with feelings and relation toward themselves, they had at that time. Then they were led to an isolated place, where they were supposed to meet three aspects of feminine energy of the universe. Here I have chosen three aspects of the Goddess: Gaia (Mother Earth), the Moon Goddess and the Goddess of Wisdom (Sophia).

The purpose of this part was to remind us we are Goddesses ourselves. Remembering the strengths we possess as women, and to recall those powers, abilities and possibilities, will also serve, as we will see later, to enable us to prepare a place in our psyche where we could welcome our wounded child. The basic principle here thus was to acknowledge the strong part of our psyche, the inner woman (adult) so that we could accept the weak, wounded, vulnerable part of it, the inner child, and deal with it properly. In that shelter of our stability, strength and motherly love, the child, when retrieved, could find a safe place for further

healing. Only if we are aware we are incarnated Goddesses, holy women ourselves, can we hold a sacred place for our holy child, a safe place, where the subtle child can be joyful, happy and creative.

In the meditation I was speaking in a form of storytelling, but here I will briefly explain what I have chosen to point out for each of the feminine aspects. When a girl got her first menstruation, she was sent to an isolated place, where she fasted for three days. Each day one of the Goddesses visited her. Each Goddess appeared in a form of a woman, who brought the girl gifts and teachings about her.

Gaia (Mother Earth)

Gifts: The art of understanding the motherly Love and giving from the inner place of eternal abundance, and the art of feeling and honouring our womb, which is our connection to the womb of the Mother Earth. Gaia brought the awareness of her unconditional love, which is always available to us, and told us her love is our love, and her strength is ours, if only we open to it. She taught us that we have an limitless source of abundance, of life force and love in ourselves and it is our right to choose to whom and when we want to give out of that.

Explanation: According to the knowledge and experience I had in that moment, and according to the work I have done with healing my inner child and working with groups, or conversation on that theme I have had with people, and even according to the learning I have received through the process of creating Electra, I could notice that there is a strong connection between healing the inner child and feminine motherly energy, which in mythic terminology is presented as Great Mother, or Mother Earth, or simply the Goddess. So, I can assert that every individual, who wants to work seriously with healing the child within needs to re-establish the relation toward the mother aspect of the feminine. The motherly principle is needed for a child, whether it is a real child or the inner archetype. So, if we really want to

heal the part of our psyche which we call the Inner child we must be willing to recognize also another part of our psyche, archetypal Woman, in this case the Mother. Every child, a real or our inner child, needs a strong woman: an earthly loving mother, who is able to deal with the challenges and difficulties of the world and provide an emotionally abundant and safe childhood for her vulnerable child.

It doesn't relate only to women. Also men have that feminine part, the Goddess within themselves. Unfortunately in our culture, where other archetypes are more respected by the society, men don't have much support in developing this part. And if we go even further to comprehend the whole inner family: they both, mother and a child need a man, to protect them and to provide for them, so that mother could feel safe and happy and could devote herself to the child. I am talking about inner archetypes. A happy mother is important for a child to be happy, and the relationships inside the trinity mother-father-child need to be established inside. And as the universal law says, as inside so outside; this inner harmony can reflect in outer life, and create nourishing relationships between women, men, and children, which gradually can lead to a more nourishing society.

So, I come to the conclusion that for healing our inner child we need to heal our inner Mother and our inner Father, and the relation between them. But, as this workshop was focused on exploring the feminine, we stayed focused on the Mother. In next steps maybe we will search for inner harmony between feminine and masculine.

The Moon Goddess

Gift: The art of beneficially using energy, the art of respecting the body, knowing when to take a rest, respecting the receptive, passive side of us, which enables us to receive visions (Moon time Lodge traditionally was a time for women to pray, meditate and call for visions in their Moon Lodges). Teachings about the emotions, dealing with unconscious desires, gaining

deeper understanding about dream-work. Learning about the magic of being a woman. The Moon Goddess invited the girl to learn about the cycles of the Moon and to observe, how those cycles are reflected in her body through the cycles of menstruation. With gradual entering into the mysteries of those processes and respecting her own body, she can gain greater efficiency of using her energy and her creativity, and it will also help her to keep her physical health and vitality. With realizing the true importance of those processes she will be more and more open to the subtle voice of her inner being and with her wisdom she can benefit herself and her community.

Explanation: see above, in the introduction of the ceremony, when I speak about the Moon cycles and the menstruation.

Goddess of Wisdom

Gift: Learning about two faces of the Wisdom: light (Sophia as the Divine Mother) and dark (Sophia as the Dark Goddess, in Europe we can find her by the name Black Madonna, in India Kali, etc); about overcoming the naivete of a girl and understanding also our darkness, embracing it and respecting it; becoming responsible for creating our reality. Sophia came to teach us we must face our woman inside, the Goddess with her light and dark aspects. They are both parts of our wholeness (our holiness). She comprehends life as whole, and teaches us to live without fear of our lightness or our darkness. She tells us that our instinctive nature is a part of divine duality and is not “evil” as we were told. She speaks about the importance of exploring both sides of our nature and to learn the art of the balance between them.

Explanation: (see the chapter of the Dark Goddess)

2. Theatre part of the initiation ritual

At the end of the guided meditation the women were asked to visualize that they are baking bread for their people and taking it to the village, where all people, who are important in her life, are expecting her, with joy and great reverence. Each of those people says to her: "I support you on your path." Then she doles bread out to the people. Here the visualization ends and the performative part begins: each of us was supposed to have her own initiation part, which looked like this: when her turn came, each stood up, and slowly walked around the circle. Our circle represented the people of her village, her "tribe". With an eye contact she offered to each of women her "bread". Then she put it on the altar, and sung us the song, read or told us the poem or text, the piece of art she has prepared as a gift to share with us. Beside the altar there was standing a woman, who was taking the role of the woman-elder, a kind of a wise woman or sacred woman of our "tribe." When each woman finished with her art piece, she turned to the elder woman, who spoke to the young initiate a few sentences of love, acceptance and blessings, which were to follow her on her "new path." At the end she hugged her. I must say here that the Elder, who was Tanja Bocinskaja, did her job excellently. She made many of us cry with her sincerity and deep love.

Then we, all the other women, began to play instruments and sing a song, which went something like that:

"Hey, Reka (every time different name)

We honor you, Reka!

We are singing with an open, happy hearts to you.

Hey, Reka,

We honor you Reka,

We are singing with joy to you!"

Each woman had her own time and space of complete attention of the group. Each had a chance to give her gift to us, “a bread” and a piece of art, and each was completely accepted, revered and loved. In “her” moment she was looked at as a Goddess and she felt that way in her individual way of being a Goddess.

It is very difficult to describe the atmosphere, which was created by that protocol. It was very emotional and beautiful. Some of women were crying (including me). At the end, some women spontaneously began to drum and dance, and others joined them (including me, of course!).

Shamanic journey: Meeting the Inner Child (based on shamanic method *soul retrieval*)

Before entering into the realms to search for the Wounded child, we did a preparation exercise to connect with the child within by observing a chosen photograph from childhood, in which we look a happy child. We tried to communicate with this child: listening to it through drawing, writing or just observing our feelings while watching the photograph.

The Shamanic journey was based on the classic mode of uninterrupted drumming in a rhythm of the heartbeat, for approximately a half –hour’s time, while people lie on the floor with eyes closed. The task was to remember the strength we acknowledged in the initiation ritual and with this knowledge to go on the journey to find our wounded child within and retrieve it out of the “unconsciousness,” so that it can begin to heal in the safe shelter of our heart.

Celebration in the evening was the relaxing and joyful part, after the deep process we had been through. The Closing Circle was the council of our Woman’s circle and was a chance to speak about the reactions and also our internal issues, problems and plans for future.

REACTIONS, FEEDBACKS, EFFECTS

According to the reactions and results of the healing procedure of the workshop, I can consider it effective. In the questionnaire many women expressed about positive impacts and influences it had on their lives.

About the Woman's Sweat Lodge:

They describe their experience of the Sweat Lodge as a very powerful and beautiful experience, very special, new (for some of them it was the first experience of the Sweat Lodge). Some of them opened emotionally quite soon, so that they were surprised themselves how they have been talking from their hearts without embarrassment.

About the Morning hike:

Some of women found this part very important, because they had experienced a new insight of the relationship between a human being and natural world. They said they could comprehend or remember that the natural world is alive and that it is important to seek for the connection to it. Some considered it very important to experience overcoming their dependence on everyday comforts, which led them to the surprising experience of themselves in the nature.

About the Initiation ceremony:

From the spoken and written feedback from the participants I noticed that without exception they all liked the initiation ritual as a whole and enjoyed it. The first part (guided meditation: meeting the aspects of Goddesses) was experienced in very different ways. At this point I will not analyse the reasons, abilities, etc, which results that variety, I would just state that I can notice that the deepness and strength of efficiency depends on many aspects, and the

perception of the same experience, led under the same circumstances, was accepted on different levels. Some women felt very strong connection and transforming effect, which had an essential effect on their perception of themselves. Some said they liked the idea, but could comprehend it only on a rational level. While some of them were very satisfied with the guidance, for two it was too fast: they would need more time to prepare to it and to experience the meditation fully.

The most powerful part of the meditation seemed to be the meeting with the duality of the Goddess of Wisdom. Most of women describe her teachings as a great relief. For some it brought up the question of dealing with aggression, of facing it inside of our-selves and learning to accept it, so that we can transform and direct this energy into the positive, healing way. This enables our life force, our power to come out without a fear there is something wrong with it and also without a fear of misusing it. Some noticed that discovering this concept, not only as a part of this workshop, but also as a part of their long-lasting personal process, opened the way to compassion, because when discovering one's own darkness one begins to understand other people more.

One of the women trusted me, how she changed the attitude toward the womb. Before, because of her painful menstruation, she treated her womb as a disgusting part of her body, and now she turned her attitude into loving and gentle. Sharing the art piece meant a lot to many of participants. It was like sharing the deep soul-print with others. Many of the women said how accepted and important they felt when they were sharing something beautiful and also when they were sharing their pain with other women. They said that now they are more aware of their beauty, gentleness and worth. "Now I look also upon other women differently. I am more aware of the inner beauty, their vulnerability, and wisdom, which they possess and are not even aware of it," wrote one of them: "And I also realized, that the way I am, I am good enough – also in the eyes of others. I feel more self-confidence and feel the way I am I

am the best.” The other wrote: “I was completely enchanted with the beauty of Women and with all the Love which was fulfilling the space. During the ceremony I had such beautiful feelings, as if I really was among my spiritual sisters from the same village or tribe, it was as an ancient memory.”

The most general effect of the workshop and one of the very often mentioned impacts on everyday life was feeling more loving toward oneself and also feeling deeper respect for other women, other people and toward nature. It doesn't mean they suddenly begin to love themselves at this workshop, it just mean this workshop added another piece in the mosaic of their own growing and learning process.

About the connection with the Inner child:

All women found the connection with the emotions of the inner child. Some realized that they already have a relationship with the little girl, but didn't know that. Many were surprised upon the appearance of the child, because it was different from what they expected, or were surprised about the memories that emerged. Some found out that the little girl is not as people usually expect a child to be, joyful and vivid, but is rather peaceful, trustful, “engrossed with the miracles of the world,” etc. A few realized that their childhood was not so happy as they thought. They were faced with certain situations of their early childhood or long-lasting states of deep fear, sadness, feelings of being abandoned, lonely, not loved enough, needing to hide from people, losing trust in people... One woman connected with a pre-birth memory of feeling suffocated and came out of that state.

In the questionnaire I asked them about the influences a few weeks after the workshop, and some of them said they kept the connection and value it very deeply. It is different for each, what this little girl brought to her. The connection shows in considering the will of the child in everyday life, in being more sensitive, less critical toward herself, noticing things she

wouldn't before about herself, her behavior patterns, and about life around her, being more conscious of a need to respect the boundaries in relationships with people to protect the vulnerability and holiness of her inner child and also her feminine self, feeling more grounded and more clear with expressing herself, feeling the need to spend more time in nature and in silence, finding more time for joy, for dancing, remembering the forgotten simplicity, spontaneity, curiosity, feeling free from worry, having more energy, etc. It doesn't mean their (our) life becomes easier because of that, because they must consider the needs of the inner Girl and the Woman they (we) were neglected before, but it is for sure we all are more who we truly are.

One of the women told me, she was afraid of the word "shamanism" and didn't know what to expect from the workshop. After the workshop, she lost the fear toward the inner journey. She says it opened a completely new attitude toward the meaning of ritual, which took her on her own way of researching what she calls a "gentle way of shamanism" and seeking her path toward the inner, mythic worlds. Another wrote a poem for us when we finished, and said she wants and feels ready to begin again with writing poetry, as she did before in her life.

I myself, by witnessing the effects and getting lots of encouragement from participants for my further work, am now even more convinced that these methods really work and can awaken hidden potentials of our souls and of our life force. I received also some suggestions, ideas and well-intentioned criticism, which stimulate me to learn, to grow, and to do it even better next time. I am happy that this group has expressed a great interest in continuing our experimental workshops and some of them are also ready to participate as a supportive team at my workshops for "new" people, once we establish what works for us. For this year I don't think I will have time for that, but in the future I have plans to facilitate that kind of workshop, and support from my friends will be very welcomed and needed.

What is most important for me at this point, I received confirmation that this kind of communication between women, between people, in connection with inner realities and the reality of the natural world, is something that really feels good and healing and what people find very important once we experience. All those realities meet in the heart and I believe this is what all is about: to remember we are here to love.