

REINTEGRATING FRACTURED MEMORY:
An Artistic Installation Synthesizing
Contemporary Psychology and Shamanic Healing Practices

by

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Abstract

Creating art therapeutically can help cope with stress, work through traumatic experiences, facilitate memory recollection, and increase self-awareness. The thesis installation presented in this paper represents the use of clay as a medium to document my path towards healing as a survivor of early childhood abuse. By working with both contemporary and shamanic approaches concerning triggers, flashbacks, and dissociation, I explored the individuation process by utilizing both psychological and spiritual approaches to healing from trauma.

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An Artistic Installation Synthesizing
Contemporary Psychology and Shamanic Healing Practices

A Thesis

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by

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THESIS STATEMENT

In my early twenties, I began to experience waking flashbacks and night terrors as fragmented memories from early childhood dissociated traumas surfaced. Conventional therapies had little to no effect on these overwhelming symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (see glossary). I was recommended to the Wasiwaska Research Center in Brazil. Through a combination of Conventional and Shamanic therapeutic techniques, I began experiencing breakthroughs in my healing process. These experiences drew me to this topic for my thesis research where I explored the use of art to organize, process, and reintegrate traumatic memories to present visually what Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology, calls the Individuation Process. In this installation, I utilized clay to document previously dissociated memories of the personal unconscious, process memories connected to my conscious recollections, and explored archetypal imagery tied to the collective unconscious.

INTRODUCTION

Dissociation

Dissociation is a protective response during and after trauma. It allows people to function and go about their day-to-day lives by blocking trauma-related emotions and memories that could otherwise be overwhelming. The effects of the abuse may not become apparent until adulthood: “It is not uncommon for children to experience distress and trauma later in life as they develop an adult awareness of their experience of abuse” (Ballantine, 2012). Survivors who dissociate at the time of the trauma often later develop PTSD: “Survivors of childhood abuse may experience feelings of confusion, disorientation, nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty experiencing feelings. In some extreme cases, causes amnesia concerning parts of their childhood” (Ratican, 1992). Some survivors may develop dissociative seizures if the trauma is persistent and long-lasting. Even years after the traumatic abuse had stopped, this once necessary automatic coping mechanism may continue, hindering the survivor’s quality of life (See Appendix A).

When experiencing a traumatic event, our brains don’t record memory the same way. Unlike explicit memory, implicit memory is a form of long-term memory that doesn’t require any conscious retrieval (See Appendix B). A traumatic event will often be recorded as highly charged emotions and sensations that are not accessible by our conscious mind: “When the images and sensations of an experience have not been integrated by the hippocampus they remain in implicit-only form. Implicit-only memories are an unassembled neural disarray, remaining as though frozen in time, never integrating into the life narrative. When an implicit-only memory surfaces, it is experienced in full consciousness, but without the sensation that something from the past is being recalled” (Siegel, 2010).

Traditional Shamanic practitioners believe that the soul can fracture when the mind dissociates during a traumatic event. If a person’s soul is fragmented, it can become lost in the spiritual realms, trapped within the trauma (See Appendix C- E). When this happens, the person could become plagued

with what contemporary psychologists call a Dissociative Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, or severe Anxiety (See Glossary). Ancient Finnish Shamans would try to locate the missing part of the soul by purposefully separating a part of their soul called the Itse (See Glossary) from their body to travel through the other worlds in search of these lost and fragmented parts of the soul, heal it, and coax it back to make the person's soul whole: "Once the soul parts have been reclaimed and reintegrated, as can be done through Shamanic soul retrieval, the traumatized person has an easier time working through the remaining mental and emotional anguish by utilizing contemporary psychological therapies" (Simington, 2010).

Ayahuasca- Shamanic Soul Retrieval

For the indigenous people of South America, Shamans utilize a medicinal brew called Ayahuasca to travel to the spiritual realms. (See Appendix D) This medicinal tea is used for healing ailments and connecting with one's soul. Ayahuasca is currently being researched as a potential therapeutic tool to support the treatment of individuals that have experienced multiple or chronic adverse childhood experiences, specifically those who suffer from depression, anxiety, addictive disorders, and possible therapeutic neurobiological effects (Frecka et al. 2016). Ayahuasca brew is an alternative therapy for those suffering with PTSD who have had little to no success with conventional treatment. This medicine gave me profound psychological insight into early life events and enhanced my self-awareness. I was able to uncover full pictures of my previously forgotten, but at that time, fragmented memory of traumatic childhood events. I revisited these traumas with a level of distance and perspective which assisted in processing these emotions. In that trance-like state, I began to feel everything I had previously been numb to. It helped me create a deeper understanding of my early childhood trauma, allowing me to resolve some of the trauma.

While in the trance-like state, I directly communicated with otherworldly entities or beings who acted as guides as I explored the multiple realms of spiritual existence. I incorporated these archetypal

entities into the sculptural aspect of this installation. Not only did they help me find fragmented parts of my soul, but they also assisted my healing process as I reintegrated these fragmented soul parts. By examining myself I grew on a deep and personal level, empowering me to break the cycles of abuse.

Shamanic Soul Retrieval coincides with Jungian psychology (See Appendix C), “Jung believed it was of paramount importance for everyone to confront and integrate the contents of their unconscious mind and thought the failure to do so would result in a fragmented individual” (Hunt, 2010). Jung’s research describes how we become who we are as we grow into adulthood, there are parts of ourselves that get neglected, repressed, or forgotten, which he describes as cast into the shadows. For Jung, our wholeness depends on realizing the shadow or darkness as a Force. Our consciousness expands only when we integrate information from the unconscious. To Jung, the dark side of the self is equivalent to unconsciousness; it represents all the places we are terrified of going to. According to Jung, if we find the courage to confront our darkness or unconscious self, we can heal and become whole: “Filling the conscious mind with ideal conceptions is a characteristic feature of Western theosophy, but not the confrontation with the shadow and the world of darkness. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular.” (Jung, 2014). It is this individuation process through which an unconscious image emerges and develops into something the conscious mind can integrate.

REINTEGRATING FRACTURED MEMORY

The Installation

The thesis installation *Reintegrating Fractured Memory* (See Plate 1) represents my continuing struggle to heal. It consists of six ceramic sculptural pieces placed throughout the gallery space. The central form, *Three Souls*, is tethered by colored handmade rag rope to the



Plate 1: The Installation

Memory Map of the Psyche, which is made of multiple clay fragments that are suspended from the ceiling (See Plate 1- 2, 7- 8, & 10). These clay fragments roughly form two circles that move out towards the other sculptures. The sculptural forms *Metamorphosis* (See Plate 19) and *Sielulintu (Soul Bird)* (See Plate 14- 15) flank the entrance to the installation space. Hung on the wall are *Gáccit (Helper Spirit)* (See

Plate 16- 17), eight large hexagon tiles, and five pentagon tiles organized in a zigzag pattern that begins at the entrance and ends at the rear of the installation. *Nesting* occupies the opposite wall. Additional clay journal fragments are suspended between the sculptural forms, *Heltija* and *Luonto* (See Plate 11-13), at the back of the space.

Description of Pieces

As I researched the traditions of my Finnish ancestry (See Appendix E), I began to understand the archetypal imagery I experienced while in ayahuasca therapy. The three faces of *Three Souls* (See Plate 2) describe the ancient Finnish belief that we each possess multiple souls are composed of three different parts (see plate), the *henki* (the physical manifestation of life - breath and beating of the heart), itsa (personality), and the *luonto* (nature and family spirits). The tree bark patterned texture (See Plate 3) on the body alludes to the tree of life imagery, another ancient archetype that acts as an axis mundi connecting all three spiritual realms of existence (The upper world - home of the gods, the middle world - home of men, and the underworld - home of dead).

The symbol of the world tree is found in the spiritual imagery of ancient cultures worldwide. Carl Jung believed “the human psyche is essentially the same all over the world. Out of this common ground or collective unconscious come the various archetypes which can be observed in cultures all over the world regardless of time and place” (1968). The world tree is the central point of existence, around which all else revolves. I combined the imagery of the three realms of existence with the three spheres of the psyche (Personal Unconscious, Consciousness, and Collective Unconscious). *Three Souls* connects all three spiritual realms; the branch pattern carved into the upper body reaches to the upper sky realm, the trunk through the middle or the land of men (which is also inhabited by spirits), and the rag rope emulates roots which spread deep into the underworld or the land of the dead.



Plate 2: Three Souls



Plate 3: Tree Branch Texture Detail

I incorporated handmade rag rope as a continuation of the Tree of life imagery (see plate 4 - 5) connecting *Three Souls* to *Memory map of the Psyche* (see plate 7). This handmade rope was dyed and installed to symbolize the world tree's branches, vines, and roots. I wanted to create an environment that immerses the viewer in a space that describes multiple levels of the spiritual realms of existence superimposed with Jung's Map of the Psyche.



Plate 4: Rag Rope displaying three realms of spiritual existence.



Plate 5: Rag Rope detail

While journaling traumatic memories onto clay fragments, I separated them into two groups, implicit memory, or previously Dissociated fragments (Jung's Personal Unconscious- See Glossary), and explicit memory (Jung's Conscious- See Glossary), I never forgot but didn't understand their meaning till I saw them all together. Prior to this thesis research, I had only focused on individual traumas separately. I thought organizing these traumatic experiences might help me further process my traumas by creating a timeline. Since we moved around a lot during my early years, I did this by dissecting these early memories, focusing on the details of the location so I could estimate how old I was in each incident. This organization helped me process the abuse and assisted me in healing.

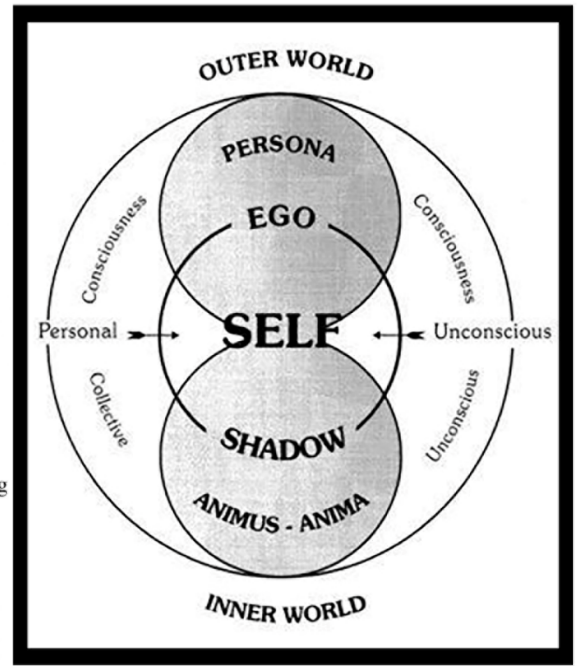
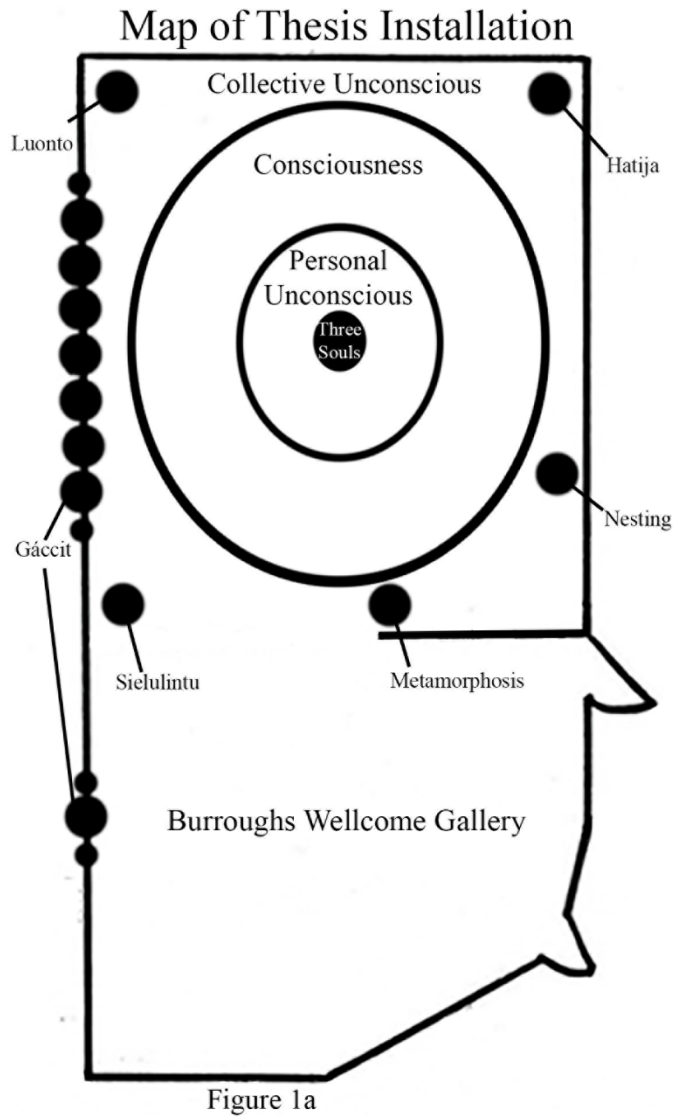


Figure 1a: left - Diagram of the Thesis Installation, Figure 1b: right – Carl Jung's Map of the Psyche

In *Memory Map of the Psyche* (See Figure 1a), I separated sections of the ceiling to mimic two sections of Carl Jung's Map of the Psyche (See Figure 1b), the Personal Unconscious (region of the psyche that contains everything subliminal, forgotten, and repressed in an individual's life) and the Conscious (region of the psyche that contains thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in a person's awareness). The sculptures represent the third sphere of Carl Jung's Map, the Collective Unconscious (a form of the unconscious common to mankind as a whole). The inner circle represents the Personal

Unconscious which contains journalled memory fragments from previously dissociated traumatic memories. The outer circle represents the Consciousness which contains traumatic memory fragments that were never forgotten.



Plate 6: Personal Unconscious Memory Fragments

For the Personal Unconscious section of *Memory Map of the Psyche*, I used a previously sculpted portrait of my face. I created a mold that enabled me to make multiple copies and fragments of my face (See Plate 2). On the backside of these fragments, I carved (wrote) my journal of dissociated traumatic memories (See plate 6 - 7). These journals represent traumatic events that I had previously repressed because they were too distressing, but later regained fragmented memories while I was pregnant. The traumas had never disappeared entirely from my psyche but instead occupied what Carl Jung would call my personal unconscious and continued to influence my personality. These fragmented journals were installed in the inner circle surrounding *Three Souls* located at the center of my memory map.



Plate 7: Personal Unconscious Memory Fragments detail



Plate 8: Mnemonic Knots

I attached dyed Jute twine from the fingers of *Three Souls* to the personal unconscious memory fragments hanging from above. The connected twine mimics branch-like forms of the rag rope, continuing the imagery of the world tree. The knots on the fingers (See Plate 8) of *Three Souls* connecting the fragmented journals of the personal unconscious sphere of *Memory Map of the Psyche* are based on mnemonic knots, an ancient technique used to recollect memory. Folk traditions of Europe describe knotting a handkerchief or tying a string around the finger used as a mnemonic device. “Before writing was invented, primitive man used knots to supplement his fallible human memory...He tied knots every day of his life, not only to secure and join material things—fishlines and fishhooks, for example—but also, in his

magic rites, to bind and control intangible, immaterial things, like the demons of disease and the spirits of the dead” (Day 1967). I felt it was important to weave folk traditions into the installation. Utilizing these beliefs and traditions is symbolic of the importance of remembering previously dissociated memories.



Plate 9: Consciousness – Hanging Memory Fragments

The outer ring in *Memory Map of the Psyche* (See Plate 9) represents Jung’s consciousness sphere of the psyche, which is one’s field of awareness. These memories in these journals were never dissociated, I just didn’t understand their importance until after I began researching mental abuse and saw my traumatic experiences altogether as a whole instead of focusing on individual traumas. For this section of clay journals, I ripped slabs of clay into fragments and covered one side with snake and eye textures. On the other side of these fragments, I began by journaling my reflections of mental abuse that happened after my disclosure of early child physical and sexual abuse. I later added memories from early childhood grooming and mental abuse.



Plate 10: Luonto and Haltija

The ceramic sculptures within this installation all represent aspects of Carl Jung's collective unconscious. These sculptures are all based on imagery or entities I saw and engaged with as a participant in Shamanic healing ceremonies. Some are aspects of my soul; some were spirits of nature, and all assisted me in my healing process. Jung explains the interaction with archetypes (see glossary) as an individual experience of each person that leads to the formation of their unique personality. "As generation after generation experienced similar phenomena, archetypal images were formed. Despite cultural differences, the human experience has been similar in many ways throughout history." (Kelland, 2010). They are passed down through the generations of a culture; Jung considered them to be inherited, not learned.



Plate 11: Luonto

Working through traumatic memories triggered flashbacks, which brought on bouts of depression. I have learned that ignoring the issues does not make them go away. The only way



Plate 12: Haltija

out is to access implicit traumatic memories, process the emotions, and allow them to become explicit memories. During this processing period, I began to feel the debilitating effects of Depression. To counteract those emotional responses, I began creating work that is silly and ridiculous. The purpose was

to balance my depressive emotional state with joy and laughter, while mimicking my imagery from Ayahuasca therapy. In these two works *Luonto* and *Haltija* (see plate 10- 12), I tried to capture the quirkiness of my two dogs Qilin and Ruishi as an archetypal part of my soul, Luonto (guardian spirits or protectors connected to our fate and destiny). These sculptures represent the protective aspect of my soul that gave me the ability to self-soothe rather than lose myself to the debilitating symptoms of PTSD.

Since I have Finnish heritage, I am what is called *sukulaiset*, or a member of the family. Finnish roots are steeped in the animistic and considered an ancestor cult. When a family member dies, their *itse* (an aspect of the Finnish soul - see glossary and appendix E) can either travel to the land of the dead or become a part of the *Luonto/haltija* (an aspect of the Finnish soul- see glossary and appendix E) in a following generation of their family. Since my ancestors make up a part of my soul, they will always be a resource and continue to relate to me through my soul. After a person dies, their soul can visit living relatives either as a spirit or in the form of an animal, typically a bird. *Sielulintu* (See Plates 13 -14), or soul-carrying bird, was believed to bring children their souls when they were born and carry them away to the spirit realm when they died. Shortly after my grandma passed, I had a vision of a beautifully bright and colorful small bird that morphed into my grandmother, who had recently passed away. I made this funerary urn for my grandmother's ashes and personal objects (See Appendix F).



Plate 13: Sielulintu (Soul Bird) detail



Plate 14: Sielulintu (Soul Bird)



Plate 15: Gáccit (Spirit Helpers)

Much of the imagery I witnessed during Ayahuasca therapy was associated with serpents and spiraling vortexes (See Appendix G). *Gáccit* (See Plate 15 -16), or Spirit Helpers represents the portals that acted as gateways I used to shift from one realm of Spiritual existence to another. I used the slab hand-building technique to create two main forms which I then carved the design onto. I made plaster molds of both forms, which I then pressed oversized slabs into the molds. Many of these pieces split after glaze firing along the sides. Cracks and fractures are an inherent part of the ceramic process. These fractures fit into my conceptual theme: the fragility of clay is like the fragility of the psyche. I used a two-part epoxy putty to fill in the imperfections to strengthen the pieces and prevent further damage, but I embraced the flaws allowing them to remain visible (See Plate 16).



Plate 16: mended cracks and splits

Nesting (See Plate 17) was created by laying a slab over a belly cast mold I made while I was pregnant with my child. I hand carved seed-like shapes into a flower pattern over the center of the belly. *Nesting* represents the beginning of my healing process. *Nesting* happens when a pregnant woman has an overwhelming urge to ready her home for the coming child. It was during my pregnancy that traumatic dissociated memories began to resurface: “Dissociation is a normal response to overwhelming experiences that can cause victims and survivors to compartmentalize and underplay the impact. The harm may not become apparent until they leave

the family environment and seek to establish their own adult intimate relationships” (Carlson, 2011; Carlson et al, 2006).



Plate 17: Nesting



Plate 18: Metamorphosis

I created imagery from Ayahuasca therapy which represents otherworldly entities who helped me navigate through the spirit world. *Metamorphosis* (See Plate 18) describes the experience of healing a fractured part of my soul to reintegrate it back into my consciousness and the entities that assisted me in the spiritual realm. *Metamorphosis* was based on one of my ayahuasca visions, where I was able to ultimately resolve one specific trauma.

CONCLUSION

Through the process of my graduate thesis, I educated myself about abuse and trauma, to enable a calm logical and/or rational conversation with family members to reconnect with them. Through a combination of a deep understanding of psychology through research and the creation of art as therapy, I am now able to talk about my experiences without the burden of visibly intense emotional responses to being triggered.

In the process of making and installing my thesis exhibition, I journaled and organized traumatic memories giving me the ability to see the whole picture instead of just focusing on individual traumas. The process of creating this body of work helped me to uncover more memories. I found a web-like pattern of mental abuse that began in my early years of life. As I continued to write journal entries into clay, more memories began to surface which helped me to see unhealthy patterns of behavior.

The theme of fragmentation was incorporated into many facets of my work since it symbolizes my life experiences. Like a survivor of early childhood trauma, the clay body must go through multiple trials by fire, and has the potential to become fractured, cracked, or broken in the bisque and later the glaze fire. Through the process of building and firing large scale ceramic work, I embraced fractures, flaws, and imperfections. I incorporated rag rope into the installation for the same purpose by tearing sheets and clothing from my childhood into strips and twisted them together with strips of new fabric; symbolized piecing together remnants or fragments as part of my healing process. By binding them together into rope strengthened the material, just as the process of carving or writing fractured memory journals onto clay empowered my healing process through those traumas. I wanted the material to resonate with my own human experience.

My thesis installation is driven by my desire to help others through the visual representation of my personal journey of healing. Survivors often feel isolated and internalize the blame. Connecting with

other survivors strengthened my resolve to continue working with this subject matter and has given me a sense of community, which has assisted my healing through mutual support.

GLOSSARY

Archetypes: in the psychology of Carl Jung, any one of a set of symbols representing aspects of the psyche that derive from the accumulated experience of humankind. These inherited symbols are held in the collective unconscious and serve as a frame of reference with which individuals view the world and as one of the foundations on which the structure of personality is built.

Collective Unconscious: the part of the unconscious that, according to Carl Jung, is common to all humankind and contains the inherited accumulation of primitive human experiences in the form of ideas and images called archetypes and manifested in myths as well as other cultural phenomena and in dreams. It is the deepest and least accessible part of the unconscious mind.

Conscious: the region of the psyche that contains thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and other aspects of mental life currently present in awareness.

Denial: a defense mechanism in which an individual refuses to recognize or acknowledge objective facts or experiences. It's an unconscious process that serves to protect the person from discomfort or anxiety.

Depersonalization/Derealization Disorder involves significant ongoing or recurring experiences of unreality or detachment from one's mind, self or body. People may feel as if they are outside their bodies and watching events happening to them. Or detachment from one's surroundings. People may feel as if things and people in the world around them are not real. During these altered experiences the person is aware of reality and that their experience is unusual.

Dissociation: a disconnection between a person's thoughts, memories, feelings, actions, or sense of who he or she is. A Dissociative Disorder involves significant ongoing or recurring experiences that are out of a person's locus of control.

Dissociative Amnesia: involves not being able to recall information about oneself, an event, or a period of time. This memory loss is usually related to a traumatic or stressful event. It is associated with having experiences of childhood trauma, and particularly with experiences of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

Dissociative Seizures: Often wrongly diagnosed as epilepsy, known as non-epileptic attack disorder (NEAD). It can be hard to tell the difference between a dissociative and epileptic seizure. Dissociative seizures happen for psychological reasons not physical reasons.

Ego: is the conscious sense of self. The ego acts as a gatekeeper by influencing which memories are reflected in my consciousness, and decides which memories are eliminated, repressed, or ignored. It is the organizer of our thoughts and intuitions, feelings, and sensations, and has access to memories which are not repressed.

Explicit Memory: memory that a person can consciously recall pertaining to a specific event or piece of information.

Flashbacks: A flashback is when memories of a past trauma feel as if they are taking place in the current moment. A flashback is more than a memory, the survivor involuntarily relives the trauma by seeing the same sights, smelling the same smells, and feeling the full range of emotions that took place at the time of the original trauma.

Gaslighting psychological manipulation of a person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator. which is a process that works by convincing victims that what they are experiencing is not real or important, then they are blamed for their experience.

Gáccit/gazzi/gadze: Sami helper spirits that act as guides for Shamans through the other realms of reality which usually manifest themselves as an animal.

Henki: also referred to as löyly; Ancient Finnish belief that there are three aspects which make up one person's soul. Henki is one aspect, it is our life-force spirit and is received while we are still in the womb, departing at the moment of death. In a way it is the physical manifestation of our being, and can be seen in a person's breath, the beating of our hearts, and the warmth of our bodies.

Individuation Process: Carl Jung's transformation process where the personal and collective unconscious are brought into consciousness to be assimilated into the whole personality. It is a process necessary for the integration of the psyche.

Implicit Memory: also known as unconscious or automatic memory, refers to the information that we do not store purposely and is unintentionally memorized; we cannot consciously bring that memory into awareness.

Itsa: Ancient Finnish belief that there are three aspects which make up one person's soul. Itsa is the part of our soul that defines our personality. It can leave a person's body during sleep or in a trance state. Like Luonto, Itse can leave a person's body without the person dying, but it could easily become lost. If the Luonto or Itsa is fragmented and lost in the spiritual realms, a person could become plagued with what contemporary psychologists would call a dissociative disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, or severe Anxiety.

Luonto: also referred to as haltija; Ancient Finnish belief that there are three aspects which make up one person's soul. This aspect is our guardian spirit or protectors and is connected to our fate or destiny. Composed of both the spirits of nature and souls of our ancestors. For the ancient Finnish and Saami, the most influential spirits were those of the dead. This part of the soul can leave the body before death and be lost in the spiritual realms if a person experiences a significant trauma.

Minimization: a form of a manipulative technique which is used by abusers and manipulators to downplay their misdemeanors when confronted with irrefutable facts or to downplay positive attributes of

their victims. The abuser lacks accountability and uses minimization to reduce any negative fall back on themselves. When someone minimizes abusive behaviors, they tend to insist the other person is to blame.

Nesting: Nesting happens when a pregnant woman has an overwhelming urge to ready her home for the coming child.

Personal Unconscious: The personal unconscious consists of everything subliminal, forgotten, and repressed in an individual's life. It contains complexes based on the individual's personal experience. In Jung's view, the personal unconscious must be integrated into the conscious ego for individuation to occur.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event, series of events or set of circumstances. People with PTSD have intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings related to their experience that last long after the traumatic event has ended. They may relive the event through flashbacks or nightmares; they may feel sadness, fear or anger; and they may feel detached or estranged from other people. People with PTSD may avoid situations or people that remind them of the traumatic event, and they may have strong negative reactions to something as ordinary as a loud noise or an accidental touch.

Sielulintu: the 'soul bird' is a manifestation of the soul of the deceased, which visits grieving family members."

Sukulaiset: An element of ancient Finnish belief consisted of ancestor worship. They believed their ancestors would always be a resource to them, relating through their soul. When a family member dies, their Itse can either travel to the land of the dead or become a part of the Luonto/haltija in a following generation of their family, essentially merging souls.

Triangulation: a manipulative tactic to avoid a direct conversation involving three parties. It can be used by someone narcissistic or manipulative to control the narrative and confuse the truth. This behavior

occurs when one person attempts to create an alliance between two other people against a common enemy or target. It usually involves someone lying or distorting the truth to get others on their side. This often happens when a conflict between two people and one party doesn't want to address it directly. Instead of talking things out with the other person now, they will try to manipulate them into believing their false version of events using triangulation tactics.

Triggers: A trigger is a person, place, thing, or situation that elicits an intense or unexpected emotional response. Any sensory stimulus can be a potential trigger. Triggers are unique from threats. Essentially, a non-threatening stimulus is triggering an autonomic (fight-or-flight) response.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Trauma and Dissociation

Trauma is “an event involving actual or imagined threat of death or serious injury to self or others, or a response to intense fear, helplessness or horror, in reaction to a traumatic event” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Any traumatic experience can trigger a fight-flight response. If that emotional terror is severe enough, the autonomic nervous system can become overwhelmed, resulting in a freeze response (Gallup & Maser, 1977). If or when this happens, the physical body loses its ability to respond, dulling the senses while the mind dissociates from the body, in an effort to reduce physical and emotional distress. Dissociation at the time of the trauma often later develops into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1989).

When a traumatic past event invades a person’s present life, it is a major symptom of PTSD (Herman, 1997). Sight, sounds, smells, and taste, can trigger intrusive subconscious experiences, reminding the traumatized person of the trauma (Rothschild, 2000). Significant triggers can bring on a flashback, which is more than a memory; it is a re-experiencing of some portion of the original trauma (Siegel, 2010). During a flashback, a person involuntarily relives the trauma; seeing the same sights, smelling the same smells, and feeling the full range of emotions that took place at the time of the original trauma (Siegel, 2010). While using magnetic resonance imaging to measure brain activity, Lanius (Lanius, Williamson, Densmore, Boksman, Neufeld, 2004) saw that persons who experience a traumatic event and are suffering from posttraumatic stress replay their traumatic memories through the sensory and imaging storage area of the brain’s right hemisphere. Herman states, “flashbacks are distressing because the traumatized person has no ability to control them, nor stop the reliving of the frightening events, thus adding to the feelings of disempowerment”.

Survivors often experience guilt, shame, and self-blame, frequently taking personal responsibility for the abuse (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Because sexual abuse often is initiated by someone the child loves and trusts, the child will often come to believe people they love will hurt them (Strean, 1988 as cited in Pearson, 1994). Leading them to have difficulties with trust, fear of intimacy, and difficulty establishing interpersonal boundaries. Often, they will establish passive behaviors and get involved in abusive relationships in their adulthood (Ratican, 1992).

Yates discusses how families react to abuse disclosure. Families sometimes feel like they must choose between the offender and the victim, which creates a family breakdown. Some family members may go into denial that the abuse ever took place. The victim is blamed because of these divided loyalties and disbelief. If the abuser is another child within the family, the seriousness of the abuse is often underplayed and regarded as relatively harmless. Even if the abuse is done by an adult within the family, family members often pressure survivors to retract their disclosure of abuse. Many families have a desire to reconcile the offender with the victim, creating situations where the victim of the abuse is forced to stay in contact with the person who abused them. (Yates, 2021)

Survivors of early childhood abuse often suffer a second wave of trauma after divulging the abuse. When a survivor does not retract their disclosure, family members may employ effective dark manipulations such as gaslighting. Some examples of classic narratives used against survivors, accuse the survivor of “overreacting,” calling the survivor “crazy,” It was “just innocent play,” and “they were just playing doctor.” The purpose of gaslighting is to sow seeds of doubt in survivors, making them question their perception of reality, memory, and ability to interpret events. These verbal attacks are often repeated throughout the family while also contextually based on lies of omission, misinformation, or blatant fabrications. Which leads me to a divide and conquer strategy often used called Triangulation; after the spread of misinformation, family members may try to convince other family members to attack the survivor on their behalf. If done effectively, that person can get other people to do their dirty work while

looking as if their hands are clean. These manipulation techniques are used to control the narrative and isolate the survivor.

Survivors of abuse may have dissociated to protect themselves from experiencing the trauma. As adults they may still use this coping mechanism when they feel unsafe or threatened (King, 2009). Dissociation for survivors of childhood abuse may include feelings of confusion, disorientation, nightmares, flashbacks, and difficulty experiencing feelings. Symptoms may also include experiencing amnesia concerning parts of their childhood, negating the effects and impact of sexual abuse (Ratican, 1992). Those who actively dissociate at the time of a traumatic event have a greater potential to dissociate after subsequent exposure to traumatic stimuli (Kolb, 1987 & Scaer, 2001). Through dissociation, contact with reality is broken as the mind separates from the body. When this happens there is also a separation from the emotional and mental distress caused by the flashback (Simington). Dissociative reactions vary from mild to extreme. A mild dissociative reaction can include a temporary “zoning out.” If the dissociative reaction intensifies, the senses and body numb, the eyes look glazed and the person’s ability to see, hear, focus or respond dulls. If the dissociation becomes severe, the traumatized person may collapse physically. (Simington)

A Dissociative Disorder is a disconnection between a person’s memories, feelings, behaviors, perceptions, and/or sense of self. This disconnection is automatic and completely out of the person’s control. It’s often described as an “out of body” experience. Dissociation exists on a spectrum that ranges from mild everyday experiences to disorders that interfere with daily functioning. Nearly everyone experiences mild dissociation from time to time. In fact, daydreaming is a common example of mild dissociation. But if you have a dissociative disorder, you might experience these symptoms for months, even years. Dissociative disorders are often a direct reaction to significant trauma, affecting people who have experienced physical or sexual abuse, kidnapping, a life-threatening car accident, or a natural disaster. Most researchers view dissociation as a protective response after trauma. It allows people to function and go about their day-to-day lives by blocking trauma-related emotions and memories that

could otherwise be overwhelming. Once a survivor has left the abuse, their mind may continue to dissociate, this once necessary coping mechanism no longer serves a protective purpose and now hinders the quality of life.

Appendix B: Implicit and Explicit Memory Storage

Implicit memory is a form of long-term memory that doesn't require any conscious retrieval. Implicit memory encompasses all unconscious memories, as well as certain abilities or skills. There are four types of implicit memory: procedural, associative, non-associative, and priming. Explicit memory is a type of long-term memory that's concerned with recollection of facts and events. You may also see explicit memory referred to as declarative memory. Explicit memory requires you to consciously recall information.

“The amygdala and hippocampus, both parts of the limbic system, have major functions in the processing and sequencing of the life narrative. The amygdala appears to be the limbic structure through which sensory information travels on its way to the right hemisphere. The hippocampus is much more closely associated with functions of the left cerebral hemisphere (Rothschild, 2000). During the normal course of life, together the amygdala and hippocampus process both the event and the emotions attached to the event. The amygdala registers emotions and bodily sensations. After the amygdala has registered the emotion and bodily sensations, they are accessed by the hippocampus. The role of the hippocampus is to add cognitive meaning and place the information into the appropriate context” (Scaer, 2005). “Once the hippocampus has registered the context, the information can be permanently stored in the cortex as explicit memory” (Siegel, 2010).

“During trauma this often does not happen. The amygdala records the highly charged emotions and sensations; but if the trauma is severe enough the hippocampus can become overcharged and shut down. The traumatic event is then not recorded as explicit memory but is instead only recorded as implicit memory, and in the form of highly charged emotions and sensations” (Siegel, 2010).

“When the images and sensations of an experience have not been integrated by the hippocampus they remain in implicit-only form. Implicit-only memories are unassembled neural disarray, remaining as

though frozen in time, never integrating into the life narrative. When an implicit-only memory surfaces, it is experienced in full consciousness, but without the sensation that something from the past is being recalled” (Siegel, 2010). Lanius et al. confirmed that persons who experience a traumatic event and are suffering from posttraumatic stress replay their traumatic memories through the sensory and imaging storage area of the brain’s right hemisphere (Lanius, Williamson, Densmore, Boksman, Neufeld, 2004).

“Neuroscience has determined the roles played by the amygdala and hippocampus in creating memories and the differences between explicit and implicit memories it seems plausible that flashback may be the activation of an implicit-only memory” (Siegel, 2010). If the flashback causes intense fear the person may dissociate from the experience in a way similar to that which occurred at the time of the original trauma, creating more implicit only memories. Rothschild noted that once implicit-only memories are released and made explicit, left-brain friendly strategies can be more effectively employed to process and integrate those memories as part of the life narrative. (Rothschild, 2010)

Appendix C: A Spiritual Perspective of Triggers, Flashbacks and Dissociation

Trauma has been referred to as spiritual disconnection (Straker, Watson, & Robinson, 2002). It is well recognized that crises, such as those experienced during and following trauma, can drive a traumatized person inward, there to experience the “dark night of the soul” (Campbell, 1989). In shamanic cultures, illness is viewed as a disharmony between the ill person’s body, mind, emotion, and spirit and between the ill person and the larger environment. “Healing requires a restoration of the harmonies of body, mind, emotion and spirit and includes a rebuilding of relationships with the Creator, the ancestors, other human beings and with all aspects of the environment” (Ingerman, 1991). Shamanic healing practices are based on the premise that all illness is rooted in spiritual distress (Kharitidi, 1997). Traditional Shamanic healers and some present-day therapists trained in similar spiritual practices believe that all healing begins first at the soul level. Once the soul parts have been reclaimed and reintegrated, the traumatized person has an easier time working through the remaining mental and emotional anguish.

After a traumatic event, many survivors experience dreams of searching and longing which can also contain messages of spiritual brokenness. One such dream, common to those who have been traumatized, is for the dreamer to be moving through a house, searching from room to room, to empty room. A Jungian interpretation of such a dream is that the house is symbolic of where the soul lives while in consciousness (Jung & McGuire, 1984). In searching through the rooms, the soul may be looking for the soul parts that cannot be located (Simington, 2013). Questions of meaning and purpose, symbolic expressions of soul brokenness, and dreams of searching, are of an existential nature, begging for a spiritual exploration. Yet numerous approaches to trauma care in use today do not address the spiritual aspects of trauma.

In Shamanic belief, when the mind separates from the body, as happens during dissociation, the human soul can fracture. When this happens, a part or parts of the soul can remain at the scene of the trauma, as though frozen there in that space and time (Ingerman, 1991). “From within this perspective, a

trigger is viewed as a signal to the person to pay attention to an unhealed soul wound. A flashback is acknowledged as a step on the healing journey, for it takes the traumatized person back to the traumatic scene where the fractured-off soul parts remain. Dissociation is viewed as an opportunity for the traumatized person to reclaim the soul parts and to experience a tremendous feeling of healing and wholeness. In Shamanic cultures, it is believed that during dissociation the spirit helpers place the traumatized person in an altered state. In this trance-like state, the person witnesses the soul part or parts in their frozen state. With the assistance of spiritual guides and helpers, the soul parts are removed from the trauma scene, taken to a safe place, offered a healing, and then reintegrated back into the larger and now more complete and whole soul". (Simington, 2013)

Appendix D: Ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is an Amazonian psychoactive plant brew (typically made from *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria veridis*) and contains dimethyltryptamine (DMT), along with harmala alkaloids.

Ayahuasca is currently being researched as a potential therapeutic tool to support the treatment of individuals that have experienced multiple or chronic adverse childhood experiences, specifically those who suffer from depression, anxiety, addictive disorders, and possible therapeutic neurobiological effects (Frecska et al. 2016).

The features of ayahuasca consumption that may be particularly useful for survivors include profound psychological insights often relating to early life events, as well as an enhanced self-awareness. Research has found ayahuasca drinkers connect with or uncover previously forgotten traumatic childhood events with a level of distance or perspective that facilitates reconceptualization and new understandings, leading to catharsis, healing, and new levels of empathy and acceptance for themselves and others (Cavnar 2011; Fernandez and Fabregas 2014).

Rather than traumatic childhood experiences being seen in isolation, they are often understood as part of a process, in which the individual becomes aware and empowered to change (Fotiou 2012). This reprocessing is facilitated during the ayahuasca experience by the activation of neural systems associated with emotional processing and memory, which enable access to deeply stored emotional trauma, while higher cortical areas are stimulated allowing for the reprocessing and reconceptualizing of such events (Nielsen and Megler 2014).

Appendix E: Ancestor Worship and Finnish Soul Duality

Ancient Finnish people believed soul parts can be lost after a traumatizing event. If that happened, a Shaman would try to locate the missing part of the soul, heal it, and coax it back. The Shaman would purposefully separate their own Itse from their body to travel through the other worlds in search of these lost and fragmented parts of the soul.

Henki or löyly is our life-force spirit and is received while we are still in the womb, which departs at the moment of death. In a way it is the physical manifestation of our being, and can be seen in our breath, the beating of our hearts, and the warmth of our bodies.

The Luonto or Haltija is our guardian spirit or protectors and are connected to our fate or destiny. These spirits are typically of nature. Nature spirits were seen as guardians of the household, the forest, water, death, fire, mountains, and other important settings. All nature was seen as alive and sentient, imbued with its own spirit or väki. The Luonto was also composed of our ancestors. For the ancient Finnish and Saami, the most influential spirits were those of the dead. The spiritual practices of ancient Finnish were that of ancestor worship and based on a strong animistic sense of the cycles of nature. This part of the soul can leave the body before death and be lost in the spiritual realms if a person experiences a significant trauma.

The Itse is the part of our soul that defines our personality. This soul part can leave a person's body during sleep or in a trance state. Like Luonto, Itse can leave a person's body without the person dying, but it could easily become lost. If the Luonto or Itsa is fragmented and lost in the spiritual realms, a person could become plagued with what contemporary psychologists would call a dissociative disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, or severe Anxiety.

Since I have Finnish heritage, I am what is called sukulaiset, or a member of the family. Because Finnish roots are steeped in the animistic and considered to be an ancestor cult. When a family member

dies, their Itse can either travel to the land of the dead or become a part of the Luonto/haltija in a following generation of their family. Because my ancestors make up a part of my soul, they will always be a resource to me and continue to relate to me through my soul.

Appendix F: Finnish Soul Bird

There is a Finnish creation myth that describes the universe as being created from eggs, which is probably why birds play a major role in their folk traditions. After a person dies their soul stays during a transitional period while it searches for the land of the dead. During this period, the soul can visit living relatives either as a spirit or in the form of an animal, typically a bird.

The Sielulintu, or soul carrying bird, was believed to bring children their souls when they were born and carry it away to the spirit realm when they died. Sielulintu did more than deliver souls, it also protected them throughout their lives. According Maija Butters, “there is a Finnish tradition where the ‘death bird’ called kalmalintu foretells one’s approaching death, and the ‘soul bird’ sielulintu is a manifestation of the soul of the deceased, which visits grieving family members” (Butters, 2023). It was common for Ancient Finns to carve a wooden bird on or near their beds. This folk tradition to keep close the image of a Sielulintu carved in wood is still around today and is based on the belief that the soul bird protects our souls, especially during sleep, a particularly risky time, when the soul is in danger of separating from the body without being able to return. After a person passes away, that carved artifact-bird which protects the living soul from getting lost on the path of dreams is often inserted to sit on the cross at the person's grave. This old folk tradition is still alive and is one example of how Christian and ancient Shamanistic beliefs still exist side by side, hundreds of years after the Christianization of the Finnish people.

Appendix G: Helpers Spirits and Guides

Much of the imagery I witnessed in the Amazon jungle was associated with serpents. Luis Eduardo Luna explained this by showing me a well-known *vegetalista* Pablo Amaringo's painting, which consisted of two plants, ayahuasca and chacruna intertwined, as two snakes. This image symbolically indicated how the two plants must be combined to be psychoactive. "The purpose of taking this beverage is the diagnosing and/or curing of illness, and the performing of other shamanic tasks such as communicating with the spirits of plants, animals and human beings (dead or alive), or of traveling to distant places, and also divination, prophecy, etc." (Luna, 1984).

Another important kind of imagery was the spiraling vortexes. This one is a little more difficult to explain because I saw them all around me when I was physically in my body. But when I was entering into a vision, I would drop off my body and travel through the different realms. The spirals acted as a gateway or vehicle used to shift from one realm to another. A few times these spirals presented themselves in the mouth of a serpent who then carried me to other levels inside the spiritual realm. Another time, I was assisted by a massive spider who showed me how to use tubular shaped webs as portals. There were various ways in which I entered different realms, but all involved spirals.

Helper spirits are viewed similarly, through the lens of Finnish and Sami Shamanism. Just like South America, they guide Shamans through the other realms of reality. The Sami call these helper spirits *gáccit/gazzi/gadze*, which usually manifest themselves as an animal. "The shamanic complex in common across the sub-arctic forest zone included a soul which can move freely outside the body, the alliance of shamans with helper-spirits, the ability to shape-shift, and the journey to the Otherworld while in a trance state" (Siikala, 2002b).

Birds often accompanied Shamans into the sky realms, four legged animals assisted them in the middle world, while serpents, lizards, and fish guided them through the lower worlds such as underwater

or underground. Lauren Meyer described the Sami belief that “the Shaman’s free soul could morph into the shape of the gáccit, while others believed that the free soul could shrink to the size of a small bug and ride on the animal gáccit’s back or ear during travel through the spirit realms” (Meyer, 2023).

