"A Multitude of Little Luminosities": Dissociative Multiplicity as an Image of and Invitation to Psyche, through a Case of Dissociative Identity Disorder

Camille O'Connor

Follow this and additional works at: https://dsc.duq.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
“A MULTITUDE OF LITTLE LUMINOSITIES”: DISSOCIATIVE MULTIPLICITY
AS AN IMAGE OF AND INVITATION TO PSYCHE, THROUGH A CASE OF
DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Camille Joan O’Connor

December 2016
“A MULTITUDE OF LITTLE LUMINOSITIES”: DISSOCIATIVE MULTIPlicity
AS AN IMAGE OF AND INVITATION TO PSYCHE, THROUGH A CASE OF
DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

By
Camille Joan O’Connor

Approved October 21, 2016

Roger Brooke, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
(Committee Chair)

Will Adams, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
(Committee Member)

Russell Walsh, P.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
(Committee Member)

Will Adams, Ph.D.
Chair, Psychology Department
Associate Professor of Psychology

James C. Swindal, Ph.D.
Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate
School of Liberal Arts
ABSTRACT

“A MULTITUDE OF LITTLE LUMINOSITIES”: DISSOCIATIVE MULTIPLICITY
AS AN IMAGE OF AND INVITATION TO PSYCHE, THROUGH A CASE OF
DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

By
Camille Joan O’Connor

December 2016

Dissertation supervised by Roger Brooke, Ph.D.

This project sought to narrate a process of working with and learning from DID, through the researcher’s case study description of her work with a patient experiencing dissociative identity disorder (DID). The researcher focused on unique ways in which dissociation and multiplicity impacted the therapy relationship and impacted work on the patient’s experience of self, including healing traumatic wounds, developing richer intra- and interpersonal relationships, and moving toward increased self-integrity. The researcher additionally worked with psychoanalytic theory, particularly Jungian, post-Jungian, archetypal, and relational approaches, to consider the ways in which DID provides an opportunity to conceptualize broader human experience, not only the most radically unintegrated, in terms of dissociation and multiplicity. This argument was presented as a counter to tendencies to privilege unity—more specifically, the personal
ego—within much of psychotherapy and broader Western culture, which both has shaped and been shaped by psychotherapy. The project ultimately presented and argued that a relational and archetypal approach to DID both provides a means of processing and healing trauma through new relationship and opens therapeutic work to ways of approaching psyche that transcend singular and personal visions of subjectivity, identity, development, health, creativity, agency, etc. In order to invite the project itself to realize its argument, the researcher augmented the case study method with imaginal methods. The researcher engaged in active imagination, informed by Romanyszyn’s “transference dialogues,” and treated writing as a method of discovery rather than merely a passive recording. These methodological augmentations were intended to invite integration of what we might call dissociated and/or unconscious imaginative material—personal, interpersonal, cultural, and archetypal—that was not necessarily a part of the researcher’s own initial conscious awareness of or intentions for the project.
DEDICATION

For Lirael.
And for all those who have trusted me to be their therapist and shared with me such profound gifts.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to my family and ancestors for making my being possible, particularly my parents, Joan O’Connor and Gary Mosso, and my sister, Olivia O’Connor. Thank you to my parents for providing examples of working with human suffering and wellbeing, loving one’s job, and living with work-life balance. Thank you to Liv for our years of friendship and for her curious, courageous, and loving support. Liv has one of the most remarkable conceptual and creative minds I know. It was a gift to grow up in conversation with such a sister.

Thank you to all of my teachers, who since I was a little girl believed in me and told me that I had something to say.

Thank you to my dissertation committee: to Roger Brooke, for initiating me into love of the psychoanalytic tradition, especially through providing my introduction to Jung; to Russ Walsh, for his encouraging collaboration in the development of this project; and to Will Adams, for his recognition through the years of what was most precious and in need of gentleness in me, and for his support of my spiritual development. Their trust in my voice has been touching and empowering. Thank you more broadly to the Duquesne University Psychology Department, a place of uncommon shelter as I found my authentic way into this work. I always will be grateful for this remarkable education.

Thank you to the members of my graduate school cohort: José Arroyo, Rachel Gottlieb, Will Hasek, Ariel Larson, Katie Wagner, and Jonathan Yahalom, each of whom influenced my intellectual, therapeutic, and personal development. Particular thanks to Ariel, my friend and colleague now in my new home in the Pacific Northwest, for the warmth, ferocity, and forging that her fire has offered to my life. Thank you to all my other fellow travelers and friends from Duquesne’s graduate program with whom I have connected in ways large and small, especially Rebecca Gimeno, Nisha Gupta, Amanda Lowe, Denise Mahone, Jake Rusczek, and Seth Young.

Thank you to my dear friends from throughout my life, too many to name here, even those far across distance and time. Particular thanks to my oldest friend Valerie Bundy, whose capacity for being joyfully, unreservedly nonjudgmental always moves me.

Thank you to the men with whom I’ve loved and lost during these tempestuous years of study and personal development. For their offerings of confrontations with Aphrodite and Persephone, and their gifts of intimacy and soul-work as I was coming into my own being, this lover of love could not be more grateful.

Thank you to my supervisors, colleagues, and friends at Western Washington University Counseling Center, who helped make my internship year such a grounding and nourishing culminating experience. Thanks especially to Eric Denson, whose dry wit and semi-secret soft heart were some of the first things that made me feel at home on a new coast. And to Phil Burns, anam cara, whose magic taught me so much more about my own.
Special thanks once more go to Rebecca Gimeno, my closest friend, in whose generous love and profound femininity I find all of the goddesses, and much of my own strength, creativity, and delight. Rebecca, my work and love and life all make deeper sense with your companionship.

And finally: my whole-hearted gratitude goes to Stanton Marlan, whose analytic inspiration and love awakened my soul and changed my life. I have found myself fortunate on my path so far to have met others with the capacity to restore my hope in exactly the moments when I had run out of it. Stan, to have arrived at your door at the perfect moment: that was the blessing of blessings.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Orienting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Introduction to Lirael</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 General Discussion of DID in the Literature</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 A More Detailed Discussion of Dissociation and Multiplicity within</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoanalysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early history of psychoanalysis’s interest in dissociation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung, Post-Jungians, and a Relational Consideration</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 A Social Constructionist Context</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Method</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Overview</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Reflexive Case Study</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Embracing Dissociation and Multiplicity as Entwined with Method...</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with Multiplicity</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Lenses and Description of Procedure for Work with Notes and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogues</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Writing as a Method</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“I approach the role of the humanities in psychological education as not only critically necessary, but also as one that is increasingly ignored, marginalized, forgotten, repressed and condemned to linger in the shadows that haunt our discipline”—Robert Romanyshyn (2012, p. 234)

1.1 Orienting

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly Multiple Personality Disorder, is a diagnosis that pushes psychology, and contemporary common Western assumptions about psychological experience, to the edges of familiar and comfortable ways of knowing. DID is characterized by “discontinuity in sense of self and sense of agency,” an experience “accompanied by related alterations in affect, behavior, consciousness, memory, perception, cognition, and/or sensory-motor functioning” (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is unique in our descriptions of psychological experience and suffering in that it is explicitly distinguished by an experience of dissociative multiplicity: “alters,” other personalities whom the person feels to be within but distinct from herself, and memory disturbances brought on by time dissociatively “lost” when experience is controlled by alters (Putnam, 1989; Ross, 1996; Kluft & Fine, 1993). The distinct fragmentation of DID is recognized to be profoundly related to trauma, especially chronic trauma beginning in childhood (Herman, 1992).

While DID has some past of sensationalization and suspectediatrogenesis and for this reason merits at least some healthy diagnostic skepticism (Kluft, 1995; McWilliams, 2011; Gillig, 2006), it increasingly has been legitimated as a meaningful, highly adaptive
human response to overwhelming experience. Nancy McWilliams (2011) suggests that we might understand the social reluctance to believe in DID as a kind of “pervasive social countertransference to a condition that can be unbearable to imagine,” and particularly to the trauma that shapes it (p. 334) … perhaps also, we might add, to what DID, as an experience of the “other,” might illuminate about “our” own experiences.

While DID may be recognized and accepted as a diagnosis, however striking, in our therapeutic and broader sociocultural situation, we often assume that a psychological structure like DID is far from the “norm,” instead presuming a fundamental unity to “typical” self-experience and behavior. And yet upon reflection, for many of us our lives do not fit such presumptions of unity: we often feel quite divided and conflicted, we may experience ourselves differently in different contexts, and we strongly may believe that we are no longer the same people we were at various points in our pasts. Thus, DID, with its disunited and discontinuous description of experience, can help us to notice many of the more subtle forms of dissociation and multiplicity that color our commonplace human lives. DID pushes even further an idea that in fact lies at the heart of the origins of psychotherapy: that we often are unaware of the full range of perception, memory, and desire that is our total being.

---

1 We also could consider that whether or not DID is “real” may be beside the point, based on what a critical perspective can see about psyche and history: for example, are our current “epidemics” of “depression” and “anxiety” any more or less real than the “hysteria” in the late nineteenth century consulting rooms? I would argue that, as with any psychological experience, to attempt to pin down DID as “real” or “not real” is to view it through a scientistic fallacy about the nature of psychological life and human context and meaning. Perhaps better simply to explore and seek understanding of DID as a patient’s self-reported experience.
In the late spring of 2012, I began working with a young female patient whose experiences were well-described by a DID diagnosis. While I was fortunate to have the initial guidance of this young woman’s previous therapist, who had to end their work due to an impending move, encountering DID nevertheless profoundly destabilized me. As I committed to fully meeting my new patient in the richness of her experience, a kind of experience which I apparently never had met before, my assumptions about the nature of psyche, the psychotherapy relationship, psychological work, and self-understanding and development were thrown into question. The foundations of my then two years of broadly psychodynamic clinical training seemed to be crumbling, and I increasingly felt like I was wandering alone in an unfamiliar land, beginning to speak a strange and captivating language. My time with Lirael, which amounted to one year of twice per week work and a termination for relocation reasons (in this instance hers), thus set me on a new course: I began to let my relationship to and with Lirael reshape my understandings of selfhood, psychological development, and therapeutic relationships and work. Ultimately, I found that much was torn apart (or shown to have been fragmented in the first place) in my understanding of psyche and my practice as a therapist. I then found that my understanding and practice (of course always in process) opened into new possibilities out of the theoretical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal revelations that Lirael’s remarkable story and presence offered me. I believe that my work with Lirael has shaped a story

---

2 While in my work and speech, I tend to use the terms “patient” and “client” interchangeably depending on context, I have opted to use the term “patient” in this project, partly as a nod to psychoanalytic tradition and history. Additionally, like Jonathan Shedler (2006), while I appreciate that a “medical metaphor” problematically can invoke disempowerment, to me the depth of suffering and compassion that it also can invoke often feels preferable to the “mercantile metaphor” offered by “client.”

3 Lirael is the name of the main character in one of my patient’s favorite fantasy books, about a young orphaned woman seeking her power and destiny. It is her requested pseudonym.
worth telling. Beyond the particularities of the story, it is a shared human story of a student in training to work with the soul, and the heart of the struggle toward richer understanding for her patient and for herself. It is a story of appreciating not only what it is like to work with severe trauma, dissociation, and multiplicity, but also of appreciating the ways in which these experiences and structures have a spectrum like-quality that can illuminate all of our psychological lives and relationships.

Inspired by my work with Lirael and my interest in the psychoanalytic conversation surrounding dissociation and multiplicity, I have structured this dissertation as a case study primarily in dialogue with a few perspectives within psychoanalytic theory. I worked with Lirael’s case as an illustration of the challenges that DID, a deconstruction of unified notions of subjectivity, poses to conventional understandings of the self and the therapy relationship. At the same time, I see Jung and post-Jungian, archetypal, and relational theorists as able to articulate how the analytic tradition actually always has had, and continues to have, much to offer for understanding subjectivity in light of dissociation and multiplicity. This project has allowed me to explore my curiosity about the possibilities of describing the human person as dissociative and multiple, and the implications for understanding selfhood and therapy as dissociative and multiple within a relational, soulful psychoanalytic container. This is an exploration that I believe can invite us into greater theoretical and clinical flexibility.

While this dissertation thus is a case study combined with theoretical illustration and dialogue, I also have been aware that I needed to make methodological considerations in light of my theoretical commitments to dissociation and multiplicity. What confuses, frightens, and fascinates many about DID is that it presents multiplicity
to a literalized extreme; perhaps most striking of all, though, is the way in which we can think of DID as not uniquely dissociatively multiple, but rather as uniquely able to render common multiplicities explicit and unavoidable. DID’s dissociative multiplicity challenges us to see a variety of multiplicities of which we often are unaware: in ourselves, in others, in our work, in the world. A part of how I have been challenged by these realizations is being called to see the multiplicity of this dissertation. Thus seeing, I cannot ignore that the content of this project is inseparable from its method, the way in which it proceeds and speaks. This is a project that concerns multiplicity; this is a project that has needed to develop and to express itself multiply, including as an expression of the complexity of my own engagement with psyche as an active participant in the therapy with Lirael and an active reader and writer of that experience. I engaged in methodological practices to address these concerns: active imagination and inquiring and evocative writing, discussed further in my “Method” chapter.

While in this later chapter, I specifically will describe these ways in which I approached and crafted this project, here it is worth clarifying that from these first words, I am inviting you on a journey with me that may not be quite what you expect of a psychology dissertation. In many ways, this project shares more qualities with creative forms of storytelling and memoir, relying on the evocative, the poetic, and the flowing and at times circuitous threads of memory, relationship, and self-creation. As I introduce you to this project’s unique qualities, I recall the wake of my last session with Lirael, during which I carried back to my office the scarf that she had knitted for me as a parting gift. I remember my conversation in those moments with one of my cohort members, during which he commented appreciatively on the gift of a scarf to a therapist: he shared
the reasons for Freud’s choice of the word “analysis” (from the Greek, “to unravel,” “to loosen”), reasons connected to the story of Penelope waiting for Odysseus’s return and holding off suitors, weaving a shroud by day and unravelling her work each night. One might see this project as its own kind of purposeful weaving and unravelling, weaving and unravelling: less concerned with linearity or a finished product than with seeking to capture glimmers of an experience, and to evoke my readers’ own memories and inspiration.

I invite you to make of this project what only you will. I thank you for the grace of your trust, the gift of your reading.

1.2 Introduction to Lirael

Lirael, a white woman in her early twenties, arrived reluctantly at therapy for the first time at the psychology clinic where I worked, with her concerned friend’s support. This arrival occurred one year before I would meet Lirael, and she met with another training clinician, whom I’ll call Laura, with whom she would work for one year.

Lirael grew up in rural Pennsylvania and was the oldest of two daughters of married parents, one who worked in the sciences and the other who worked with an advanced degree in the humanities. Lirael was pursuing her own degree in science. She had been thriving academically and experiencing exciting new developments personally and socially, but she also was on the edge of needing to radically change her historical way of being. Lirael was deep in the experience of DID: for years, she had undergone periods of “going away,” after which she would return to her “I” consciousness with no memory of what she had been doing. Lirael also was beginning to experience the emergence of distinct alters, whom she called “the others.” Lirael grew better acquainted
with them as the weeks and months passed and as Lirael and Laura developed a trusting and collaborative relationship. Laura told me that in those early sessions, she and Lirael were able to make sense of the alters’ complete arrival because finally, away from her family of origin, with increased social support and independence, Lirael was able to begin naming the truths of her traumatic life experiences for the first time.

Lirael had a significant trauma history—emotional and physical abuse from her father throughout her life, emotional and physical bullying throughout her school years, and multiple sexual traumas in her teen years. Five alters—a little girl, a little boy, a teenage girl, a middle-aged woman, and a nonverbal male figure whom Lirael characterized as a “Caveman”—made themselves known. As is common in DID presentation, each alter carried particular meanings for Lirael’s life that she felt unable to hold within her conscious personality (Putnam, 1989): the little girl carried her joyful, trusting innocence; the little boy the sadness and terror associated with her childhood experiences of cruelty, particularly her father’s; the teenage girl anger at her father and other men who had harmed her and the wish to rebel and assert her own desires; the middle-aged woman calm and confident authority and negotiating abilities; and Caveman a diffuse, potent rage that, even up until the end of our work together, Lirael did not feel ready to face. Lirael is well-described by Kluft’s (1984) four factors that contribute to dissociative experience: she was talented at self-hypnosis, she was severely traumatized, she found dissociative escape to be adaptive to her family life, and she experienced little

---

4 I use the word “abuse” because it provides a common language with which to communicate about how Lirael was treated. At the same time, I am sensitive to Lirael’s personal reluctance about this word, due to her ambivalence about labelling a complex relationship with one loaded term. I nonetheless have chosen to use the word “abuse” in this project, as I believe that it most adequately conveys what Lirael described to me for my purposes here, appreciating that the label comes from my own perspective.
comfort after episodes of trauma. It was not until she began working in therapy that Lirael felt that the horrors she had experienced were truly acknowledged, or even conceptualized as horrors.

Lirael’s journey in therapy matches well with descriptions of and recommendations for therapy for patients experiencing severe dissociation (Brand et al., 2012; Ringrose, 2011; Moline, 2013; Sinason, 2011). In particular, her work fits with Chu’s (1998) description of the three phases of therapy for dissociative patients: an initial focus on self-care and symptom control, a middle stage devoted to emotional remembering and reconstruction, and a final stage devoted to consolidation and further development of life skills. With Laura, Lirael began with working on becoming more consistently aware as her conscious self: Lirael cultivated the capacity to remain sensorily and mentally alert when she felt herself becoming what she called “drifty”—foggy and distanced from present moment reality, a state that frequently preceded complete dissociation (Laura often used DBT workbooks during this time). Lirael also worked on developing relationships with her alters and between her alters so that when she did dissociate, she could obtain information about the time she had been away. As Lirael struggled with self-harm, often as a way both to punish and soothe herself in states of extreme distress, she also made a commitment to not cutting herself, or at the very least to cutting safely, and she developed alternative strategies for managing overwhelming experience, such as making art. By the time I began working with Lirael, her episodes of amnesic dissociation were far fewer (when she did dissociate, the time was not “lost” in the sense that she was able to learn from alters what had happened during it), and she had
not self-harmed in six months. She had attached powerfully to Laura, and she had begun some of the work on processing her trauma history and its ongoing impact on her life.

As Lirael and I worked together, she continued to strengthen and differentiate these gains in self-care, trauma work, and in a greater capacity to relate to the complexity of her experience, particularly the multiple and sometimes conflicting memories and feelings within the range of her being. We also worked to develop a relationship between us that felt genuine and secure to her, and as she gradually introduced me to the stories and personalities of her world, she was able to challenge herself to relate to her own otherness with greater daring and flexibility. Eventually, Lirael’s life with her alters had been transformed into a communicative, negotiating, life-enhancing system: if she needed to “go away,” she now could almost always plan how to do it most safely and how to learn about what happened when she returned. She also increasingly became able to dialogue with her alters as not just utterly separate people, but as parts of herself and to consider how she might be able to work with and co-own their most difficult, personally alien feelings. More and more, Lirael was able to consider potently self- and relationship-threatening experiences, like anger or fear, as within her own repertoire of human response. Thus, while Lirael did not leave our therapy with a totally consolidated, singular personality, her sense of the complexity of her personal “I” had expanded dramatically. She was coming to appreciate more and more that perhaps even that with which she could not comfortably or immediately identify deserved to exist. She was quite articulate about her gratitude about and preference for preserving this complexity.

In terms of thematic content, when Lirael and I first began working together, her major focus was mourning the loss of Laura and adjusting to working with me. She also
was considering attending graduate school in another location, which led to our work on questions of self-confidence and autonomy. Lirael also was continuing to build her life at her current school, including strengthening her primary friendship, with a young man her age, whom I’ll call Jason; this strengthening also involved differentiating from him and sometimes even learning to disagree. Lirael also was considering how to form friendships with new people, and if or how to reveal her personal story to others (Jason, as well as his long-distance girlfriend, who also was Lirael’s friend who had brought her to the clinic, had known about Lirael’s DID from the beginning, when she herself still was trying to put things together). Lirael also was continuing to integrate her trauma history, including for the first time telling and owning her stories of sexual assault as a part of her history (previously her others exclusively had held the memories). Symptomatically, Lirael was beginning to experiment with eating disorder symptoms, the complex meanings of which (both self-harming and self-asserting) she and I worked with via her teenage alter. Lirael also continued to gain confidence in her capacity to face life’s challenges without cutting as a strategy. As Lirael and my work went on, its themes evolved, and we focused a great deal on questions of intimacy (whether or not Lirael wanted to be in a romantic relationship and what she felt her sexual orientation was, in light of a difference of opinion among alters; how Lirael could develop greater intimacy in her friendships and reach out to others) and differentiation (particularly helping Lirael to separate herself from and stand up against family of origin dynamics and from/against value systems such as patriarchy and oppressive forms of Christianity that had become restrictive for her). We worked to engage with Lirael’s increasingly present, vital, and communicative system of alters to help us to address these themes in a whole and complex way. At the
end of our work, we focused on helping Lirael transition through a move to another state for her graduate study and to a new therapist. Throughout, Lirael and my primary way of working was relational and psyche-oriented conversation supplemented by visual that Lirael made by arranging images on her computer. Lirael found this art to be helpful for self-expression, and it helped me to see her in vivid and fresh ways. While dialoguing with multiplicity was a core part of our work, in actual conversation, I primarily focused on talking to Lirael herself, as that is the contemporary conventional wisdom on how one works with DID while respecting the autonomy of the person who has sought therapy (Ringrose, 2011). And yet at times when Lirael’s alters were present in session, I did develop personal relationships with them, often with Lirael’s knowledge and agreement. Personally relating to the alters felt particularly necessary when they had something important to communicate that Lirael in her “I” identity could not.

Lirael herself, her own “I,” was already a rich and multifaceted person. For one, she enjoyed and was intelligent and highly competent in her field of study, often achieving remarkable feats in light of her history, such as working with dead bodies at the medical examiner’s office, or with semen in the lab. As McWilliams (2011) notes of many DID patients, Lirael’s DID had allowed her to compartmentalize and become remarkably successful in certain parts of her life. Lirael also had a bright, warm presence and an eagerness to connect and to work. She enthusiastically brought her art to most of our sessions and always was ready to engage in exploration, with a strong intuitive knack for when it was time to touch traumatic memories and when it was time to back off and focus in other places. She had an ebullient energy, a big smile, and a heart-warming and contagious laugh. She wore brightly colored glasses and clothing, loved animals and
playfulness, and often seemed disarmingly younger than her years. She was hopeful, grateful, more daring than she realized, and deeply committed to human decency. She treated me with great decency as well, and I always felt respected as another human being in the room with her. While a compassionately suspicious part of me was aware that Lirael in ways did a good job of taking care of me as her therapist, I also affirm Lirael’s interest in my humanity as a part of her open and thoughtful heart. I will help her to show herself beyond this self, in all her rich colors, as I write of her here.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 General Discussion of DID Conceptualization in the Literature

As I have noted, in the current literature DID fundamentally is understood as an adaptation to trauma. Indeed, Kluft (2005) refers to DID as “a complex chronic post-traumatic dissociative disorder” (p. 633). While dissociative multiplicity may allow for survival and a way to continue development through severe trauma, at its most destructive, it also can mean that self-harm and suicidality are high among such survivors, often due to internalization of and identification with abusive figures (Ferenczi, 1933), or due to competing perspectives among parts of the self (Ringrose, 2011). As clinicians and researchers have come to affirm the legitimacy of DID as a response to trauma, they also have come to appreciate it as on a spectrum of broader human dissociation and multiplicity as traumatized responses: Howell (2005) proposes: “DID is simply an extreme version of the dissociative structure of the psyche that characterizes us all” (p. ix). This spectrum approach allows us to appreciate the subtle traumas that impact every person’s consciousness: those experiences of intrusion and invalidation that shape us as we develop in our early relationships, relegating certain possibilities for selfhood and self-experience into the shadows, where they develop separately, or gather dust (“I put the feelings,” Lirael once told me, “in a box. And then someone else had to take the box.”).

In contrast to this contemporary spectrum understanding, historically, dissociation has been understood as a seriously primitive and rarely utilized defense.⁵ More recently,

---

⁵ Though at the origins of psychotherapy—hypnotic work with hysteria and Freud’s early cases—dissociation in response to trauma was taken as a commonplace and fundamental part of psychopathology, as I will discuss.
affective neuroscience, trauma-informed work, and the psychoanalytic relational turn have begun to offer more nuanced views of dissociation. The general wisdom is that we begin life within a sea of diverse states of experience and behavior that require the developmental achievement of integration in order for us to experience, name, and describe a consolidated sense of a single self (Putnam, 1997). While we all inevitably experience some disruption to this consolidation, it can be severely disrupted in traumatic experiences of abuse and terror, as high arousal, with its hormonal flooding, impacts the integration of experience and prevents us from assimilating events as we usually do, into autobiographical, narrative memory and a comfortable sense of existential realness and wholeness (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1995; Siegel, 2010; Howell, 2014).

The shift in thinking, from severity to spectrum, is well-illustrated by the evolution of McWilliams’s (2011) work, specifically in the publication of her second edition of *Psychoanalytic Diagnosis*. In her chapter on “Primary Defensive Processes,” where she still includes “Extreme Dissociation,” she adds that she has “become increasingly sensitized to the range of dissociative reactions and the inadvisability of restricting our use of the term ‘dissociation’ to the overwhelming, shock-trauma versions of the defense,” when a person may feel utterly absent from his or her body during certain events, and ultimately have no narrative memories of the events at all (p. 123). McWilliams differentiates this position from that of her earlier work (in the 1994 edition of *Psychoanalytic Diagnosis*), wherein she considered dissociation to be a rare defense and “clearly a response to severe trauma, from which many of us are thankfully spared” (p. 123). Describing her revised opinion, she aligns it with contemporary relational analysts who believe “that it is a matter of degree that separates one person’s pain from
another’s trauma, and that dissociation exists on a continuum from normal and minor to aberrant and devastating” (p.123-124). She adds that recent research has highlighted that “people who use dissociation as their primary defense” are far more common than once suspected, and that we all experience shifting attention and awareness as we manage daily experience (p. 124). Current ideas about why some people can make “better”—more full and pervasive—use of dissociation than others centers upon the idea that some people are more constitutionally hypnotizable than are others and more able to make adaptive use of self-hypnosis (Kluft, 2005): these people are “virtuosos in self-hypnosis” (McWilliams, p. 338). For those still critical of iatrogenic induction of DID in patients by therapists using hypnotic suggestion, I will mention that Lirael grew up in a sheltered environment and described never having even known about DID until she came to the clinic already displaying symptoms that anyone trained in diagnosis would characterize as DID. (Interestingly, Lirael also reported having had the same experience with cutting, always believing that she was the “only person” who had thought of such a coping strategy.)

In terms of working therapeutically with DID, the International Society for the Study of Dissociation emphasizes that “flexibility and creativity” on the part of the therapist are key to working well with such patients (2004, p. 122). As I have described, the course of Lirael and my work had such qualities and is reminiscent of McWilliams’s (2011) description of treatment for DID as “family therapy” on a patient’s “internal family system” (p. 346), and Bromberg’s (1998) similar description that working with multiple self-states is “sort of like treating a couple (or sometimes a family) in a single body” (p. 290). Indeed, Ringrose (2011) asserts that “individual therapy is inappropriate”
due to these patients’ multiplicity (p. 297). While the traditional wisdom in DID treatment was that the alters must be “integrated” into the host personality (Putnam, 1989), in recent years understandings of integration have become less singular and literal: many authors currently describe the ways in which we might consider movement in therapy for DID as not from dissociation to an integration that lets go of the alters entirely, but rather from dissociation to negotiation between multiple self-states, with the appreciation that they are many within one (Schwartz, 1994; Rothschild, 2009; Hegeman, 2009; Sinason, 2009; Perlman, 2009; Baker, 2010; Bromberg, 1998). Humphreys et al. (2005) describe an “assimilation” model, in which the goal is not erasure of difference, but “a well-functioning community … comprised of interlinked voices that can communicate smoothly with one another” (p. 122).

Descriptions of countertransference/transference and relational dynamics in DID therapies also fit well with my experiences with Lirael (Chefetz, 1997; Howell, 2011). McWilliams (2011), as I mentioned, describes how lovable and in ways “high functioning” DID patients often are: how powerful and moving is their capacity to attach despite histories of trauma (p. 357). Many DID patients have at least a few meaningful attachments, including to their therapists, who often find these patients eager to relate and appreciative of care (p. 343). McWilliams speculates that this capacity to attach may be related to a DID patient’s ongoing attempts to work out unresolved attachment issues, leading to connecting “powerfully and with hope,” rather than interacting in a style of “‘please help me but don’t come near me’” common in many other psychological structures (p. 344). Lirael and my experience of her are no exception. As I have described, at college, Lirael made a couple of close friends who knew her story and by
whom she felt supported (and who probably even saved her life), and in her relationship with me, Lirael proved inspiringly open to hope and love against all odds, a capacity that touched me and evoked my own openness in the service of our work and her development.

While DID is an experience of multiplicity, paradoxically, currently “mainstream” theoretical perspectives on it thus are fairly well-integrated in terms of collaborating within a cohesive and fruitful conversation, perhaps because DID requires a whole-person perspective that values experience, identity, complexity, and collaborative relationship: to seriously consider DID requires that one take a rich orienting stance. Thus, my own work with psychoanalytic theory in this dissertation is not quite to offer an alternative that stands against other wisdom, but rather to go more deeply into the unique richness of relational and archetypal perspectives, highlighting how seriously considering dissociation and multiplicity leads to a nuanced, mutually-stirring personal relationship and a natural end point of archetypal polytheism, as described by James Hillman (1975), and to an understanding that there is a vibrant process of psyche/self that exceeds ego control. Perhaps what is unique about this perspective is that it particularly values respecting the integrity and autonomy of parts in themselves, without privileging goals of “unity,” both for DID people and for everyone. Lirael impressed upon me that therapy with DID involves an appreciation of the otherness within a “single” person, and an appreciation that a confrontation with such otherness, without needing totally to tame it,

---

6 I will unpack Hillman’s archetypal, polytheistic understanding of psyche in a later section. For now, it is pertinent to note that by “polytheistic,” and even by using the language of gods and goddesses, Hillman is not speaking religiously or literally. Rather, he is adopting a particular collection of Western culture’s stories, images, and metaphors as a way of envisioning psychological life.
seems to be at the heart of complex, whole-person development and psychological sophistication and maturity.

2.2 A More Detailed Discussion of Dissociation and Multiplicity within Psychoanalysis

While DID specifically was largely shut out of psychoanalytic discussion for much of its history (as I will describe), conversations about how to understand the self, as primarily singular or primarily multiple, always have been central to psychoanalytic work. Mitchell (1993) notes a major psychoanalytic tension between “a view of self as layered, with a singular inner core” which the subject reveals or conceals, and “a view of self as multiple and embedded in relational contexts” (p. 96): “continuous” vs. “discontinuous” and “spatial” vs. “temporal” (p. 101). Mitchell describes how more recent analysts—he cites theorists as diverse as Klein, Fairbairn, Jacobson, Loewald, Lacan, and Kernberg—heighten notions of discontinuity in psychoanalytic theorizing by making the unconscious less diffuse and formless, and more like “a person or collection of persons in passionate relationships to other persons or parts of persons” (p. 104): in short, when psychoanalytic theorizing became more relational, intra- and interpersonally, and the self was understood not primarily as drive-inspired, but crystallized around the traumas of relationships, whether actual or in fantasy, the postmodern, multiple, discontinuous psychoanalytic subject was born. In general, psychoanalytic discussions of conflict have moved from issues with drives to issues with relationships between parts of oneself and with others. At the same time, some analysts, most notably for Mitchell, Kohut, have continued to theorize about the importance of a unified sense of self. Mitchell himself disrupts the dichotomy between these ways of seeing, noting that analysis seems to have the richest outcomes when there is a “perpetual dialectic” between singularity and
multiplicity, as too much continuity leads to frozen stasis, while too much multiplicity leads to terrifying fragmentation (p. 117).

**Early History of Psychoanalysis’s Interest in Dissociation**

With the ultimate goal of thinking of dissociative multiplicity in relational and archetypal terms, one can trace a fascinating and illustrative history through how dissociation and multiplicity have been understood in psychoanalytic traditions since the inception of psychoanalysis, with the assistance of revisionary texts such as Ellenberger’s (1970) *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, Howell’s (2005) *The Dissociative Mind*, and Herman’s (1992) *Trauma and Recovery.* In varying ways, all of these texts take a related perspective: they consider psychoanalytic traditions as forming something like a living psyche in themselves, subject to sociocultural trends and defensive processes that both facilitate and hinder certain ways of seeing and describing psychological phenomena.

More clearly differentiating how psychoanalysts use the terms “dissociation” and “repression,” though there is some diversity and overlap among definitions, may be helpful to start as we explore this history. Howell (2005) provides a list of usual distinctions. She characterizes repression as “both motivated and defensive,” while dissociation can be but does not have to be motivated or defensive. For example, she cites how dissociation can occur “automatically in the moment of trauma,” when one somehow vacates one’s full experience (trance states such as feeling outside one’s body and witnessing the trauma from a distance, or becoming intensely absorbed in some detail, such as focusing on the pattern in a carpet during a trauma at the exclusion of all other awareness). Or dissociation can occur nondefensively, as when one is hypnotized.

---

7 Of course, this story is only one story among many possible stories about psychoanalytic history and its view of the self: one self-state among the multitude that make up the analytic tradition!
Howell also notes, crediting Donnel Stern's work, that “repression refers to formulated experience, dissociation generally refers to unformulated experience.” She additionally describes how “[r]epression usually refers to a piece of information that was accessible at one time but not at another, whereas dissociation usually refers to divisions of experience in which the parts are side by side, contrasting, and may be concurrent in time.” This description illustrates the oft-made vertical vs. horizontal distinction between repression and dissociation: repression is understood as holding experience and memory vertically (distressing material that once was known is formulated and could be known again, but is buried beneath the level of consciousness), whereas dissociation is understood as a way of holding experience horizontally (a variety of states exist side by side, but they are mutually exclusive and inaccessible to one another—while in one state, the nearby knowledge of another may be unformulated: unknowable and as if it were never known, though we could slip into its own exclusive universe at any moment). Finally, Howell also describes how dissociated memories are particularly “context-dependent.” PTSD flashbacks illustrate this point: when confronted with a situation the same as or evocative of the context of a prior trauma, a person may suddenly find him or herself flooded with traumatic memories that may not be consciously accessible in other contexts (p. 198).

The major shift in this early psychoanalytic history that I am tracing here, from the early work with hysteria to Freud’s ultimate psychoanalytic method, was a shift from understanding human experience in terms of dissociation to understanding it in terms of repression.

Herman (1992) argues that psychoanalysis initially considered and ultimately abandoned the possibility of understanding human experience in dissociative and
multiple terms—in other words, in terms of trauma. Herman more broadly describes the trajectory of our cultural and professional understandings of trauma through the twentieth century, tracking the changes in perception through major trauma “landmarks” such as Freud and other’s work with hysteria, World Wars I and II and the Vietnam War, and renewed attention to domestic violence (the context in which DID was first described in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s). She describes how the history of trauma confronts us with an “episodic amnesia” captured in “[p]eriods of active investigation . . . alternated with periods of oblivion” (p. 7). When we recognize trauma, Herman believes the recognition comes out of larger social contexts that give recognition a supportive ground: for hysteria, the support came through “the republican, anticlerical political movement of the late nineteenth century in France”; for “shell shock,” the support came through a burgeoning anti-war spirit that began after World War I and reached its apex during the Vietnam War (a spirit that recognized that a part of the war experience involved confrontation with catastrophic and unjustifiable brutality and a critique of traditional gender roles); for domestic violence, the context was the feminist movement and a renewed commitment to the legitimacy of women’s voices and the necessity of gender equity (p. 9).

In describing this trajectory, Herman also highlights the important similarities between hysteria, combat trauma, and contemporary understandings of the traumatized at home (most often women). Herman argues that “[o]ur contemporary understanding of psychological trauma is built upon a synthesis of these three separate lines of investigation” (p. 9). All of these psychological torments share at their core an affirmation of “human vulnerability in the natural world” and “the capacity for evil in
human nature” (p. 7). Implied in Herman’s argument is that it is only when we consider
the macho soldier as able to succumb to an attack usually reserved for the “feminine,”
and it is only when we consider the young woman with DID as a combatant in a domestic
war fueled by the same toxic gender roles that break the solder, that we fully have
appreciated the scope and interconnected web of human suffering. For Herman, “the
hysteria of women and the combat neurosis of men are one” (p. 32).

In his own landmark book The Discovery of the Unconscious, Ellenberger (1970)
provides a more specific description of psychoanalysis’s part in modern mental health
history, seeking to describe a context for what he calls “dynamic psychiatry” and
challenging early Freudian fantasies of psychoanalysis as a new and independent science.
Ellenberger contrastingly argues for the contextual and relational foundations of
psychoanalytic knowledge, saying, “It is impossible to distinguish in a man’s thought
what is truly his and what has been suggested by those around him or what he has read”
(p. 894). Ellenberger notes that “[n]o branch of knowledge [as much as psychotherapy
(broadly speaking)] has undergone so many metamorphoses … from primitive healing to
magnetism, magnetism to hypnotism, hypnotism to psychoanalysis, and the newer
dynamic schools,” all of which are trends that “have gone through repeated waves of
rejection and acceptance” (p. v). Ellenberger also argues that “a continuous chain can be
demonstrated between exorcism and magnetism, magnetism and hypnotism, hypnotism
and the great modern dynamic systems” (p. vi). Rather than a “revolution” when
contemporary psychotherapy was “invented,” according to Ellenberger, if we look at the
history, we see a “gradual evolution”—ideas that have built upon each other, even when
the more recent ideas claim that they no longer have anything to do with the earlier ones (p. x).

In terms of dissociation and multiplicity, it is meaningful to consider Ellenberger’s arguments that Freudian psychoanalysis, though Freud sought to develop a technique that limited the doctor’s influence, shares an “unmistakable affinity” with those indigenous practices which Ellenberger calls primitive healing (p. 48)—practices such as restoration of a lost soul, extraction of a diseased object, exorcism, confession of a breach of taboo, and counter-magic to combat sorcery (p. 5). These practices were heavily attuned to the significance of the healer-patient relationship and to the healer’s personality and influence. Ellenberger proposes that psychoanalytic practitioners (whether they fully acknowledge it or not) share this basic structure with primitive healers: roles as “prominent members of the community”; use of “personality” as the “major therapeutic tool”; long personal effort (i.e., an analysis) that addresses the person’s own “emotional problems”; attention to “psychosomatic” issues; and membership in a school within a variety of schools, “each with its own doctrine, its own teaching, its own training” (p. 48). Ellenberger thus disrupts psychoanalysis’s early scientistic fantasies. For him, there is a tradition of magic at the core of psychoanalysis, an interpersonal and psyche magic that could perhaps unsettle the practice’s later fondness for neutrality and personal, singular notions of the self.

Ellenberger situates the beginning of dynamic psychotherapy as we would recognize it today at the end of the nineteenth century, when Janet, Freud, and others studied with the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, the period’s well-known expert on “nervous” disorders, at the Salpêtrière in Paris. There they worked hypnotically with
women experiencing hysteria, apparently inexplicable physical and emotional symptoms that at first were considered the result of the nervous system, later consider psychological. Herman admiringly calls this period “the heroic age of hysteria” (p. 10), noting that “[f]or a brief decade men of science listened to women with a devotion and a respect unparalleled before or since” (p. 11). Indeed, at the best of the time, women were trusted and empowered, with their reports of traumatic experiences taken as the foundation of a trauma-informed, dissociative, and multiple vision of psychopathology (though others also have noted the fetishistic, performative, and exploitative quality that these early investigations also took, and the dance of desire and power between doctors and female patients). Janet was one of the major figures of this period, and a figure recently “rediscovered” as a kind of father of dissociation and multiplicity. He worked extensively in the Salpêtrière beginning around 1890, work that led him to his ideas about hypnosis, amnesia, and unconscious fixed ideas. In a collection of lectures he gave at Harvard University, Janet (1907) offers a depiction of the body-mind’s response to trauma that resonates with contemporary understandings: somnambulisms, motor

---

8 While Janet’s ideas about hysteria seem to anticipate Freud’s, it was Freud who ended up controlling how the psyche, psychopathology, and psychotherapy were crystallized at the beginning of the twentieth century and beyond, and for a while the concept of dissociation was mostly lost to history. While Freud shifted to an understanding of psychological disturbance as primarily the result of distressing fantasies, Janet maintained throughout his career that dissociative responses to distressing actual experience are primary. Bromberg (1998), aptly and humorously, comments that if psychoanalytic literature were a “Gothic romance,” Janet, “banished from the castle,” would be haunting Freud’s psychoanalytic descendants (p. 189)! Bromberg also makes the valuable point, though, that we cannot dismiss the value of Freud’s revision: Janet, faced with the limits of his theory, could only explain splits in personality after trauma as a result of hereditary weakness, a position that Freud was able to move beyond precisely with the concept of repression: the understanding “that the alternation of states of consciousness could best be understood dynamically, that is, as reflecting an interplay of motives and countermotives” (p. 203). While a trauma model is immensely useful, it thus does not have much to say about the motivated and actively interpreting fantasy life of the survivor, which interacts with each and every life experience, traumatic ones included. This fantasy life gives trauma unique meanings, and so trauma can only ever be integrated into the experience of a survivor through work on its unique place in her psychodynamic life. One also can see the ways in which this dynamic understanding can be an empowering one, emphasizing as it does to a survivor the crucial nature of her particular meaning-making.
agitations, paralyses, troubles with senses, double personalities, etc. that appear through a “contraction” of consciousness in the face of an upsetting experience and “subconscious” remembering that is distressing. In another work on hysteria, a case study, Janet similarly wrote, “the illness consists in two things simultaneously: (1) The patient’s inability to consciously and voluntarily evoke certain memories; (2) the automatic, irresistible and inopportune revival of these same memories” (p. 371, quoted in Ellenberger). Janet additionally believed that people could have “double” or “successive existences” (p. 360), and he wrote about patients who would meet our contemporary criteria for DID (“dissociation, not only of an idea, not only of a feeling, but of one [or many, as he also writes] state of mental activity”) (Janet, p. 92).

Freud’s (1895) first major psychological work (with Josef Breuer), Studies on Hysteria, both falls into this age of ideas and, as the work progresses, begins anticipating the transformation that is to come, in which psychoanalytic work, at least explicitly, differentiated itself for a long time from theories of trauma and dissociation and from so-called treatments of suggestion. Howell (2005) refers to the Freud of the early cases in Studies as “‘preanalytic’ Freud” (p. 2). Initially, Freud worked with his patients hypnotically, as he had been trained, and he believed that the cause of their symptoms were actual traumatic events. Then Freud moved to practicing a more subtle form of hypnotism involving laying his hands on patients and making suggestions. And finally he was encouraging his patients in a free-associative process without attempting to manipulate deliberately their state of consciousness. Freud’s conceptualization of their symptoms also underwent a concomitant shift: rather than understanding dissociated traumatic memories as the origin of symptoms, he began to privilege repressed fantasies
and desires (to be accessed via the new technique of free association, as we see in the culminating case, Fraulein Elisabeth von R., whom he perceives to be suffering from repressed love for her brother-in-law). While Freud had the idea that he was moving closer to the “truth” about the reasons behind hysterical phenomena and the best approach to treatment, perhaps it is more accurate to consider that he was gaining certain truths—allowing the patient to have more control over the states of mind she experiences and makes use of in the treatment; creating room for transference phenomena to be worked through as transformative data—but losing others: when he ceased to hypnotize patients and make use of self-states, to deliberately use suggestion, and to treat the relationship with a healer as healing in itself (rather than requiring transferential content projected from other relationships), Freud ceased to explore the potential healing power of all of these aspects of possible therapeutic engagement. At the same time, perhaps Freud did not quite abandon all aspects of his early treatment: perhaps they have remained underground in psychoanalytic practice. After all, what isn’t hypnotic about lying on a couch in a dimly lit office before someone whom you believe to be an expert healer?

Despite this shift in perspective, Studies on Hysteria still has a great deal to say about an understanding of psychopathology as dissociative. Indeed, in these early conceptualizations, the hysteric is dissociative. Anna O., for example, is described as dissociative (she goes through periods of time during which another, rebellious personality takes over, and she experiences this time as “lost.” She also has a sense of a

---

9 Bromberg (1998) also does note that Freud maintained some interest in the idea that contradictions in the ego could lead to splits and multiplicity: in The Ego and the Id (1923), Freud acknowledges incompatibilities in the ego, which lead to multiple identifications taking hold of consciousness and resulting in multiple personalities (p. 132).
different, wise being within her who observes the chaos—much like Lirael’s wise woman alter, Carolyn (p. 24). In fact, in general, all of these early cases of hysteria are most basically understood in dissociative terms: Freud and Breuer write, “[w]e have become convinced that the splitting of consciousness which is so striking in the well-known classical cases under the form of ‘double conscience’ is present to a rudimentary degree in every hysteria, and that a tendency to such a dissociation, and with it the emergence of normal states of consciousness (which we shall bring together under the term ‘hypnoid’) is the basic phenomenon of this neurosis” (p. 12). This splitting of consciousness refers to the fact that the hysteric’s symptomatic attacks and remembering of painful experiences put her in different states of consciousness than the one that she usually occupies in her day to day life; this argument is much like those of Janet. Freud and Breuer also acknowledge that hypnoid states are extremes of normal day-to-day dissociation (as when someone is absorbed in needlework), and so they anticipate later relational psychoanalytic understandings about dissociation as a continuum: all people moving between self-states and utilizing self-hypnosis for coping with the shifts of life experience.

“Dora” (1905) is a later case history, written after Freud had begun to articulate more of his psychoanalytic method. He moves from the early Studies focus on trauma, hypnotic states of consciousness, and rapport to a focus on unconscious fantasy and transference. He writes, “I have abandoned . . . the emphasis laid upon the ‘hypnoid state,’ which was supposed to be occasioned in the patient by the trauma, and to be the foundation for all the psychologically abnormal events which followed” (p. 20). It is not difficult to understand why some people, particularly feminists, have read this case and
become angry at Freud. Some aspects of his approach are undeniably cringe-worthy from contemporary standards, as when he reasons that there is something “completely hysterical” going on for Dora because she reported being “disgusted” after being propositioned and kissed by her father’s older male friend, Herr K., a man to whom her father basically has abandoned her so that he can continue his affair with Herr K.’s wife—Freud proposes that such a moment is in fact “just the situation to call up a distinct feeling of sexual excitement in a girl of fourteen” who is “healthy.” While one can appreciate Freud’s (culturally radical) awareness that a young woman entering sexual maturity likely would have a complex reaction to such sexual attention, his certainty that he knows how Dora should feel—that she should want what she says she does not want—implies a troubling denial of a woman’s capacity to make her own sexual choices and a lack of awareness of his own masculine power over Dora (p. 21-22).

The analysis ended prematurely by Dora’s leaving, and Freud himself acknowledges his failures in the case. He blames himself that he "did not succeed in mastering the transference in good time"; he proposes that he neglected to draw Dora's attention to those ways in which she was perceiving him to be like Herr K., and thus unconsciously was motivated to leave the treatment in order to take revenge upon him, in the way she unconsciously wanted to take revenge upon Herr K., for his deserting her when she was sexually excited by him (p. 108-109). But what Freud fails to notice seems to require the movement of relational analysis: not only considering the ways in which Dora was enacting, but also considering how Freud himself participated in the enactment and contributed to her leaving before unconscious material could be formulated into consciousness between them.
A significant part of the transition that Freud makes between *Studies* and “Dora” is onto the idea that it is the “method,” and not the therapist’s person, that heals the patient (p. 108). Freud seems to be saying that, by letting go of himself and assuming a method, he is respectfully letting Dora be his guide by attending to her unconscious communications (“I respect . . . the patient’s own will and understanding” (p. 101)). But by the very nature of this pursuit of what is unconscious, he has to give himself privileged access to Dora’s unconscious (her “no’s” are literally taken to mean “yes”) while simultaneously saying that he is not controlling the situation—the method is. So Freud ends up saying things like, “I informed her of this conclusion” (p. 30); or, that was “a fact which I did not neglect to use against her” (when she expresses something that he sees as unconsciously dynamic) (p. 52); or, “I will explain that to you later” (when he thinks he knows something she doesn’t) (p.61); or, “I am accordingly driven to conclude . . . ” (p. 64); or “I came to the conclusion that . . . ” (p. 66) or “I informed Dora of the conclusions I had reached” (p. 91). Sometimes it feels like he is forcing Dora to submit with lengthy, complex interpretations that undermine her own accounts (“—And Dora disputed the fact no longer” (p. 95)). Considering Freud’s assumption of this kind of authority, it is no wonder that Freud failed to see his own participation in an enactment, and it is not surprising that Dora chose to leave as an exertion of her will.

Nonetheless, in many ways, Freud remains an ally seeking to help Dora to liberate herself: he refuses to see her merely as a victim or an innocent, instead relentlessly pursuing and explicating her own agency, desire, and creativity; upon reading “Dora” after some time of disenchantment with Freud and a classical analytic perspective, what stirs me most of all is Freud's insistence that Dora is a sexual person. Perhaps still
problematic, however, is the extent to which Freud explains her situation to Dora (or at least, this is how he characterizes their work; in his description, we find little of Dora herself, and little specific discussion of the back and forth of their conversation). While this doctor-patient position is partly a product of his time period, one might also see it as Freud's failure (though a failure for which we can feel empathy): gone remarkably far into a certain feminist position (that women are sexual beings like men), Freud cannot quite seem to take the further step, which would be engaging with Dora in a way that gives her more faith and time to be a full participant with him in the treatment, as fully engaged with him as an intellectual and interpersonal partner as he is beginning to imagine she could be in her sexual life. Perhaps both of their socialized repression and gender assumptions may have been so profound that such a conversation would not have been possible. I imagine them in session together: her, an ill and largely powerless young woman, used and discarded by the major figures of her social life; him, a professional man her father's age, talking about sexuality frankly and compassionately with her, perhaps for the first time in her life. I think of the potential for excitement, mutuality, and healing in that relationship, and the potential for terror, disgust, and harm. I feel for both of them.

Indeed, it seems that in our current conversations about sexual assault, particularly in university settings, we still struggle with how to balance a more psychoanalytic perspective (which gives room to repression and to exploring the complex meaning-making we do with our traumatic experience) with a trauma-informed perspective (which gives room to appreciate the impact of nervous system arousal; the dissociative fragmentation of consciousness, identity, and memory; and the interplay of
structures of power, fear, and shame). Perhaps Freud’s greatest contribution to this predicament is a reminder that any holistic position must hold the sensibility that trauma is rarely clear-cut, and that even when the utter victimization of a person is indisputable, traumatic events interact with our histories and meaning structures. We cannot quite “shake off” and leave behind our traumas in the same way that some other animals have been noted to do. While an understanding of dissociation shows that there is a strong bodily component to our holding of traumatic memory, and there is great power in working directly with the body and/or integrating body awareness practices into psychotherapy in order for us to access and work with trauma, we are uniquely psychological beings: the multiplicity of human meanings and motives cannot be discharged as simply as nervous energy. It seems to me that where a Freudian vision of sexuality illuminates our complex fantasies, and a trauma-informed perspective illuminates our woundedness, a polytheistic perspective, appreciative of dissociation and multiplicity, can be further enriching and healing toward any splitting in our understanding.

\textit{Jung, Post-Jungians, and a Relational Consideration}

Freud may have turned away from dissociative, multiple response to traumatic experience. But through the freedom offered by their diverging from mainstream analysis, Jung and post-Jungians long have conceptualized psyche as dissociative and multiple. Jung himself was a figure whom some have characterized as dissociated from psychoanalysis proper after his break with Freud. His work, which could not toe the party line with Freud’s psychosexual model, offers rich description of dissociative structures and experiences. Jung helps us to consider that dissociation exists on a continuum, that it
is a common response to overwhelming experience, and that it is a common structural form for psyche. I will touch on the nature of dissociative multiplicity as described by Jung, and then I will focus on post-Jungian articulations of psychic multiplicity, specifically through archetypal, polytheistic psychology. I also will share some comments on the dissociative and multiple self from a relational perspective, which Jungian approaches always fundamentally have been.

Jung’s thinking ultimately is distinct from Freud’s most basically because Jung consistently appreciated a vision of psychic life that is broader than repression of sexual and aggressive drives. In his book Possession: Jung’s Comparative Anatomy of the Psyche, Stephenson (2009) explores Jung’s understanding of the dissociative nature of psychological experience, and his lack of pathologizing of that experience, through the idea of possession, “a linchpin of Jung’s analytical psychology” (p. 2). By possession, Stephenson means “the ubiquitous concept with which he [Jung] formulates ideas about the dynamic between an ego consciousness and an autonomous unconscious,” and also the potency, beyond merely being pathology to be excised, of psychological symptoms. Stephenson considers that Jung’s emphasis on archetypes, complexes, etc. offers images of being overtaken and entranced with forces with which we must grapple and negotiate, as in the language of spirits and demons, in a way that Western psychology has tended to ignore in favor of literal and personalistic notions of psychopathology. Stephenson notes that the “concept of possession … critique[s] theories of personhood that characterize it as firmly and singularly defined by consciousness; it enables us to posit a much more fluid, pluralistic, and embodied notion of the self” (p. 3). He emphasizes how Jungian theory sees the ego as only one form of consciousness, a form that tends to see “other
autonomous complexes as either complementary or contradictory”—and of course, such views are partial, limited by the ego’s perspective and motive toward maintaining its own interests (p. 91)

Even as far back as Jung’s 1903 dissertation, *On the Psychology and Pathology of the So-Called Occult Phenomena*, in which he writes of his adolescent cousin who is a medium, Jung is working with dissociative/possessed psychological experience and its power. Jung ultimately understands her communication with spirits through the lens of dissociation: he perceives a hysterical crisis involving somnambulic states and expression of various self-states, conceiving of the spirits as “unconscious personalities” and as products of “split off” unconscious ideas (p. 60). He also sees a telos in her choice of symptoms: the multiple consciousnesses of somnambulic states (so common at puberty, he notes) are perhaps “character-formations for the future personality, or their attempts to burst forth” (p. 65); this strategy “gives the individual, who might otherwise be defeated, the means of victory” (p. 66). This understanding of the functional purpose of dissociative multiplicity—a psyche solution that empowers a developing person who might otherwise be obliterated under the burden of trauma and/or sociocultural restrictions—resonates strongly with the way in which I describe my coming to understand Lirael.

Jung’s later theories about the psyche’s structure also offer ample appreciative understanding of dissociation as an organizing (even if simultaneously fragmenting) function that facilitates a person’s development. Indeed, central to the Jungian tradition, and to post-Jungian extensions and revisions, is consideration of dissociation and multiplicity as ways of understanding human development in general. Ellenberger (1970)
writes that Jung’s model of psyche and archetypes in itself is one in which “[a]round our ego gravitate a number of subpersonalities whose relationship to the ego are modified throughout the course of life. Such are the persona, the shadow, the anima or animus, the archetype of the spirit, and the self” (p. 707). This structure invites us to think about each person as composed of dissociative multiplicity: various more or less integrated parts that hold distinct insights, wisdoms, and keys to our journey and development. Jung (1921) himself, in Psychological Types, noted “personality dissociation as a problem of normal psychology” (p. 98), describing how if we observe people closely, we easily notice that “a change from one milieu to another brings about a striking alteration of personality” (p. 97). He adds, “[T]he possibility of a dissociation of personality must exist, at least in the germ, within the range of the normal” (p. 97).

Toward the end of his career, Jung developed particularly rich descriptions to convey the psyche as dissociative and multiple. In On the Nature of the Psyche, Jung (1946) describes “a plurality of souls in one and the same individual,” an ancient understanding shared among many cultural traditions. In this understanding, unified, integrated consciousness develops out of a plurality. Jung points out that one’s consciousness can split in half, as in the case of Anna O. and other early hysterics, or “smaller fragments” can break off. He emphasizes “that it often takes only a little to shatter the unity of consciousness so laboriously built up in the course of development and to resolve it back into its original elements” (p. 84). The unity of the psyche is an achievement that can be prevented or disturbed.

Jung describes this plurality of the psyche and its development trajectory eloquently in his “archipelago” metaphor:
On the animal and primitive level there is a mere ‘luminosity,’ differing hardly at all from the glancing fragments of a dissociated ego. Here, as on the infantile level, consciousness is not a unity, being as yet un-centred by a firmly-knit ego-complex, and just flickering into life here and there wherever outer or inner events, instincts, and affects happen to call it awake. At this stage it is still like a chain of islands or an archipelago. Nor is it a fully integrated whole even at the higher and highest stages; rather, it is capable of indefinite expansion. Gleaming islands, indeed whole continents, can still add themselves to our modern consciousness—a phenomenon that has become the daily experience of the psychotherapist. Therefore we would do well to think of ego-consciousness as being surrounded by a multitude of little luminosities (p. 99-100).

Jung sees these luminosities, these little sparks, as metaphors for the transpersonal self expressed in philosophical, religious, and alchemical traditions. His ideas about the archetypes also spring forth from these notions of selfhood as plural lights. Recall how Lirael’s alters, as much as they were personal-historical, also seemed to take part in a more universal story: the trusting child; the wounded child; the rebellious, identity-discovering adolescent; the protective wise woman; the wild, aggressive, inarticulate caveman. Indeed, many people’s personal alters seem to fit with such archetypal structures. While Jung does acknowledge that some people suffer from full-blown and problematic dissociative disorders, in fact all of us participate in psyche that is multiple and that can continually expand, and that symbols of the self (i.e., the night sky) express us as being plurality in unity.
Jung additionally sees an ethical calling in listening to the voices of one’s “alters” (however differentiated those might be) and working on integrating them into one’s sense of “I.” This call involves confronting one’s unconscious (not merely memories that were once conscious and repressed, but all of the wide range of experience—sensory, fantasy, personal, interpersonal, historical, existential—of which one is not yet aware) and, especially, one’s shadow. For Jung, a dissociative person (and thus people in general) can never ethically take part in the world if she is not somehow able to see that the personality that, for example, hates her abusive father is a part of her own being. Jung’s theories do not have to make the person feel that she must submit to a tyrannical singularity, however; rather, they call her to own, for herself and her relationships, her rich psychic range, rather than demonizing parts of herself, or demonizing others who themselves embody parts of herself about which she is unaware and uncomfortable.

Jung writes about the unconscious and this form of integration as expanding awareness. He says:

The unconscious is not a demonical monster, but a neutral entity which, as far as moral sense, aesthetic taste, and intellectual judgment go, is completely neutral. It only becomes dangerous when our conscious attitude is hopelessly wrong. To the degree that we repress it, its danger increases. But the moment the patient begins to assimilate contents that were previously unconscious, its danger diminishes. The dissociation of personality, the anxious division of the day-time and the night-time sides of the psyche, cease with progressive assimilation. What my critic feared—the overwhelming of the conscious mind by the unconscious—is far more likely to ensue when the unconscious is excluded from life by being
repressed, falsely interpreted, and depreciated.” (p. 181, “The practical use of dream-analysis”)

Some post-Jungians, however, have noted that despite Jung’s appreciation of multiplicity, he still, through his ultimate developmental vision of a move toward a whole self, privileged singularity in ways that require critique and complication. While this statement reduces the complexity of Jung’s life-long thought, overall Jung tended to favor integrity and wholeness, perhaps influenced by the prevailing monotheistic spiritual imagination of his sociocultural inheritance. For example, Jung (1951) wrote, “Unity and totality stand at the highest point on the scale of objective values because their symbols can no longer be distinguished from the imago Dei” (p. 229). In his work with mandalas, his own and those of patients, Jung similarly explored these ideas, noting that “[t]he self … was like the monad which I am, and which is my world. The mandala represents this monad, and corresponds to the microcosmic nature of the psyche” (p. 234). At the same time, Jung did not mean this big self (sometimes distinctively written “Self”) as the ego, the “myself” of our contemporary parlance: rather, Jung rejects the centrality of this sort of personal self, saying that he “had to abandon the idea of the superordinate position of the ego” (p. 234). (I will explore a distinction between self and ego in more detail in a later section.)

Post-Jungians continue in Jung’s vein of appreciating multiplicity, but they take these ideas further, deconstructing the tendency toward the privileging of unity that often arises even in Jung’s perspective. As Samuels (1985) notes, post-Jungians, particularly those of the archetypal school, “move away from the overvaluation of integrated states” (p. 109). They critique what Hauke (2000) calls “the object relations [and classical
Jungian] bias towards complementarity and towards wholeness” (p. 63). Samuels is critical of any hierarchy of dominance, favoring instead “a more egalitarian relationship between the ‘healthy,’ the neurotic, and the psychotic parts of the psyche” (p. 105). Salman (1999) similarly argues for moving beyond hierarchies of dominance, particularly notions of self as “reified,” as “a concealed pole around which everything revolves,” or as “redemptive” and “deified,” instead proposing that we conceive of the self as “emergent,” or “emerging from moment to moment” (p. 71). Austin (2009) explores related issues in her discussion of centripetal and centrifugal dynamics in Jung’s understanding of the self. Austin sees the centripetal, or “centralizing energies,” as the dominant strain in Jung’s work: “arranged around themes of wholeness and unity and which grant the self an a priori, universal, ahistorical status” (p. 583). In tension, she also identifies centrifugal, or “unraveling” aspects in Jung’s work, which she relates to the dissociability of the psyche. Austin explores how those parts of “inner Otherness” in our patients that feel “unbearable” are often protected by dissociation—kept alive by splits and gaps that must be worked with in the therapy if a fuller range of human experience is to be possible (p. 593). Marlan (2013) similarly describes this decentered self, noting that while ideas of integration and cohesion can be healing and important, especially during times of chaos (as when Jung became preoccupied by the mandala), “it is important to remember that the self is also a destabilizing power that continues to deconstruct the ego’s efforts to represent reality in any kind of static hypostasis that obscures the self’s reality” (p. 51). Redfearn (1985) also writes about the fundamental disruptive plurality of our self-experience, noting that “[t]here is a seemingly endless parade of sub-personalities within our total personality, all ready to take the stage and play their allotted role” (p. xii). He
uses “sub-personality” as a general (and non-diminutive term) and differentiates the wide
variety of categories that psychology has used to speak about human experiences of
multiplicity: archetypes, complexes, introjected objects and part objects, parts of the body
image or bodily functions, part brain functions, and deities and social values and ideals
(p. xiii). For Redfearn, we thus are engaged in a rich matrix of “internal” and “external”
multiplicity. To develop in this multiplicity is to work toward the “I” having “free range
over the repertoire of possible roles,” as otherwise “tension or imbalance may result” (p.
xii).

Thus, for many post-Jungians, a variety of dissociated self-parts are considered
valuable and even celebrated, rather than multiplicity being feared as pathological. And
developing more fully into oneself “means including parts of oneself that have been lost
or neglected not only due to circumstances of personal history—parents, upbringing, and
so on—but have also been lost or neglected due to the collective conditions of the era and
culture” (Hauke, 2000, p. 109). Yet any perfectly smooth integration of that diversity is
deemphasized.

James Hillman’s body of work in particular provides foundational and rich
critiques of the bias toward unity in psychology and culture, including among more
classical Jungian approaches. Hillman’s ideas are my favored theoretical centerpiece in
my understanding of working with multiplicity (though as fate would have it, I had never
read Hillman until after Lirael and I stopped working together). Hillman persuasively
critiques preferences for unity and integration over multiplicity and diversity (even if
maintaining diversity means conflict). He argues that psychology, in its focus on
progress, growth, and height, has neglected the depth and mess and richness of soul, for
Hillman the place where psychology (literally “the study of the soul”) actually is most uniquely suited to speak.

Hillman makes a useful distinction between “soul” and “spirit” in this sense, arguing that modern psychology, while in no way explicitly aligned with religion, has tended to favor a nonetheless spiritual energy. Hillman (1976) describes spirit as that which is “abstract, unified, concentrated” and soul as that which is “concrete, multiple, immanent” (p. 60), though he resists even these definitions, preferring instead that we take note of the images that emerge and that point toward either mode, rather than attempting to reify the concepts. Hillman (1975) notes that spirit is associated with images of “light … fire, wind,” and with verticality and ascent. Soul moves in circles, “preferring labyrinths and corners” and is “close, near, slow, and deep” (pp. 68-69).

While Western culture since the monotheistic religions largely has seen monotheism and spirituality as an advance in perspective over the polytheistic and soulful, Hillman argues that there are unique ways that polytheism helps us to imagine psychological life beyond narratives of unity or abstraction. While, for example, Freud envisioned the person as constituted by intrapsychic conflict and egoic efforts at mastery, and the humanistic traditions imagined a person who must clear space to nurture and express one’s own authenticity, an archetypal perspective challenges these common notions of ego-oriented personhood, and the variety of ways these values tend to sneak into our assumptions about psychological life even when we aren’t noticing it.

---

10 Hillman sees conceptual definitions as following the values of spirit—indeed, Hillman would see this whole enterprise of a dissertation as fairly “spiritual,” though I have worked deeply to make the process and product as soulful as possible!
Hauke (2000) calls Hillman’s work “the initial stirring of a postmodern Jungian psychology” through the ways in which it disrupts narratives of the progress of the individual person (p. 10). He notes that it finds ways of describing human life that are not “monotheistic, ego personal, transcendent, structural, linear, Christian, normal, mediocre, [or] about getting better, balanced” (p. 11). While I believe that there can be deeply healing value and truth to images of wholeness and unity, as I will explore in more detail in later sections, I also am in agreement with Hillman’s argument that psychology, religion, and culture tend to lack generosity toward that which is not linear, united, or harmonious. It seems to me that there is special value in exploring perspectives that appreciate multiplicity, as this exploration is a helpful balancing of the prevailing trends in our more recent cultural and intellectual history—particularly considering that monotheism, at least in its popular or mainstream forms, seems to beget problematic duality (especially between “good” and “evil,” often imagining the evil to be outside the self, or outside the religion—in the Other).  

Hillman thus re-envision psychology by returning to the pagan roots of Western culture, choosing as his metaphors the Greek gods and goddesses. Hillman (1975) values these persons and their stories because he sees them as our archetypal foundation in the West, “the major traditional language of our civilization … a divine background of

---

11 Of course, in a subtle way, one might argue that there are multiple “gods” in the Christian tradition—the holy trinity, Mary, the saints, etc.—perhaps especially in the iconographic and ritualistic aspects of Catholicism. And within mystical voices in Christianity, one finds the kind of radical energy that is present in every mystical tradition: plenty of passion, paradox, and nonduality that may not have been present in the Christianity in which many Westerners were raised. One definitely can argue that Hillman over-simplifies the issues and overlooks more critical and creative aspects of Western culture’s so-called monotheism. In my understanding of Hillman, though, he approaches these themes as he does out of a sense of activism for the marginalized, at times being inflammatory for good reason (Hillman at points directly characterizes his own writing in this way, as well). I read Hillman with an appreciation of the context for and impact of his rhetorical efforts, remembering that he’s not the only “god” to speak on these issues.
personages and powers for each complex” (p. 114). Hillman (1981) argues that in contrast to the more unified psychological images offered by monotheistic religion (such as Mary and Jesus), the Greek Pantheon, with its broad range of moods, moralities, concerns, and behaviors, provides “more adequate psychological backgrounds to the complexity of human nature” (p. 114). Hillman (1975) also emphasizes that psychological life is richly understood in terms of gods and goddesses due to our tendency to possession and “bedazzlement” by the divine power of archetypes, which “hold everything we do, see, and say in the sway of [their] cosmos” (p. xix). In considering this move toward polytheism, it is important to emphasis, as I've mentioned, that Hillman is not referring to a religious attitude or to worship, but to a psychological attitude. The gods and goddesses here are metaphors, “neither believed in nor addressed directly”; they are “adjectival rather than substantive” (1981, p. 129). Hillman argues that psyche is most fully experienced and honored when we “aim less at gathering them into a unity and more at integrating each fragment according to its own principle, giving each god its due over that portion of consciousness, that symptom, complex, fantasy, which calls for an archetypal background” (p.114). Hillman stresses that through this diversity, we are no longer as in the trance of a fantasy of “health” or “wholeness” in which “the one dominat[es] the many” (p. 115), but instead can see such a position as one god, one archetypal position among a variety of possible positions.

Hillman cites various times throughout Western history when the cultural imagination has returned to Greece, including in ancient Rome, the Italian Renaissance, the Romantic period, and among modernist thinkers and artists, including Freud. Hillman (1975) describes his understanding that this return to Greece “offers a way of coping
when our centers cannot hold and things fall apart,” “a model of disintegrated integration” (pp. 26-27). Certainly, cultural mythic heritages reveal how much stories help us to make sense of our multiple and complex lives and our human condition, and Hillman’s perspective, turning to personifying psychological experience rather than to mechanistic or abstract explanations, is rooted in this kind of soulful inheritance we share as human beings. Hillman elaborates that we personify our psychological lives through such stories as a means of accessing our deepest emotional responses in the service of understanding: “imagining things in a personal form so that we can find access to them with our hearts” (p. 14). Hillman adds, “Loving is a way of knowing, and for loving to know, it must personify” (p. 15).

Hillman’s work with personifying psychological life for me has been particularly well-suited to and helpful for working with and writing about DID. Indeed, Hillman says (1975), “[p]olytheistic psychology refers to the inherent dissociability of the psyche and the location of consciousness in multiple figures and centers” (p. 26). And: “the ego is not the whole psyche, only one member of a commune” (p. 31). His work seems especially pertinent considering that DID is a wonderfully literal example of psychic personification and understanding, through relating to the otherness of named persons. While DID can be challenging to our imaginations because we feel disturbed by the idea of “other” figures controlling consciousness and behavior, from an archetypal polytheistic perspective, all selves are under the sway of archetypal energies, whether we understand those energies as alters/autonomous beings or not. This perspective also challenges therapists and researchers to make greater room for otherness, beyond the intentional awareness of therapist, client, researcher. It is not exactly about “healing” in a
conventional sense, though certainly, it is about opening space for more vibrant, rich, flexible ways of living. It is non-teleological, a constellation of perspectives rather than a goal or prescription. It is contextual and relational.

The remarkable rearranging, even upending, that Hillman thus can offer to our assumptions about psychological life has been inspiring for me in destabilizing and enriching my own imagination. Though Hillman destabilized me, I also found a profound sense of companionship and unexpected compassion in his ways of seeing. Particularly, I have appreciated how a polytheistic stance has helped to liberate my own therapeutic and human approach (including in how I treat myself) from ideas about “goodness” and “health,” even while I bring balm to suffering. In my experience, aspirations of healing often are more in the realm of fantasy than that of possibility, informed by value judgments and expectations about changing ourselves, rather than by earnest efforts at empathic understanding and fresh creative engagement. After reading Hillman, I have found myself more aware of and able to work with my own tendencies toward self-criticism and criticism toward others, and much less tolerant of other people’s judgments of me. I have started to wonder: Who is criticizing whom here? By whose standards was this situation “wrong” … and by whose standards was it “right?” Anytime we demand of ourselves that we be a certain way in order to be “good,” we are favoring one part of the story, dismissing some other part that has different standards of “goodness.” By affirming that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a universal set of ethics or morality when it comes to psyche, but instead that each part has its own moral universe, we can dare imagine that perhaps all of the parts of ourselves, and all of the parts of other people, may be be able to find a fitting home in the world … even those parts that are most difficult to
understand or love. While this stance challenges us, embracing that which had seemed impossible can allow for a kind of radical creative kindness and communion.

Of course, these ideas in a way always have been present in the classical Jungian approach to the shadow: facing and even befriending that which feels most other to ourselves as a part of ourselves, rather than hating and fighting against what we have split off from ourselves by only seeing it in other people. In a talk that Alan Watts gave about his own personal encounter with Jung, he comments that what was most remarkable about being in Jung’s presence was the way that Jung clearly had done this work for himself: the way that there was a twinkle in Jung’s eyes that expressed his awareness that he himself was a “villain,” a being of “irreducible rascality.” Watts added that one might consider that within Western religion, Jesus’ message to love one’s neighbor as oneself perhaps might be extended as a calling to love this kind of otherness within ourselves as well. For me an important, even if subtle, difference with Hillman’s perspective is that he particularly emphasizes the transpersonal quality of the gods and goddesses, and the ways in which we are called to serve and do justice to them. Hillman (1975) ultimately holds the paradox of “mine” vs. “not mine,” providing a description of how we might understand the process of psychological development as both deeply intimate to our sense of ourselves and beyond the ego or the personal: “Therapy works through the paradox of admitting that all figures and feelings of the psyche are wholly ‘mine,’ while at the same time recognizing that these figures and feelings are free of my control and identity, not ‘mine’ at all” (p. 31).

Miller’s (1974) work adds to this polytheistic landscape. He also argues that though we are gripped by one story at a time, a polytheistic imagination best helps us to
understand all that we experience as human beings (p. 50). Miller shares Hillman’s sense that each part deserves respect and integration according to its unique principle, affirming that we “… identify the many orders as each containing a coherence of its own” (p. 26). He adds: “We enact many myths in the course of our lives. We feel deeply the configuration of many stories. We are the playground of a veritable theater full of Gods and Goddesses” (p. 73). Like Hillman, Miller argues for the necessity of heartfelt stories if we are to understand our human lives: that “[o]ne way to get the feeling back into thinking is to remythologize it, repeople it with Gods and Goddesses, so that the abstractions take on aesthetic concretion and the ideas may be reinvested with passion” (p. 53).

Ultimately, much of what I appreciate about a polytheistic perspective as a foundation for therapy work generally, and for working with a DID-experiencing client in particular, is this non-hierarchical and passionate spirit. We can take creative delight in exploring what Hillman (1981) would call “the non-growth, non-upward, and non-ordered components of the psyche” (p. 115), and what Romanyshyn (2000) would gratefully call psychology’s being “useless.” After all, our cultural obsession with certain fantasies of self-improvement does not seem to have done us much good. As Hillman (1992) would say, “We’ve had a hundred years of psychotherapy—and the world’s getting worse”!

One of the aspects of working with Lirael that I most valued was the way in which this resistance of hierarchy, integration, order, neatness, etc. was an undeniable overarching theme in her own experience, and a theme she treasured as a personal value. For Lirael, her others were profound presences to which she needed to attend and that
made ethical demands on her. They spoke truths of her life experiences: the traumas that she had endured and the desires she felt. While in Lirael’s personal religious experience, she engaged with a monotheistic God, in her relationship to psyche, she never allowed one perspective to dominate. Her others made sure of that, and Lirael made sure of that, finding tremendous generosity even in her own ego position. In the ways that she related to herself, and the ways that we worked together, we were not integrating by a standard of unity: rather, we were “integrating each fragment according to its own principle, giving each God its due” (Hillman, 1981, p. 114). Hillman would say that we were practicing toward a kind of wholeness, but not the wholeness of some seamless unity; rather, it is the wholeness of psychology, which is “everything—all the phenomena as phenomena, things as they present themselves” (p. 115-116). This distinction, a subtle yet crucial one, helps me to understand the terrain that Lirael and I found and cultivated together, work both that seemed to make her more “one” person and that seemed to defy pressures to make her “one.”

While archetypal perspectives thus focus on the transpersonal, at the heart of any Jungian perspective also lies an appreciation of the alchemy of the unique therapist-patient relationship, and an understanding that parallel to addressing the otherness of psyche is the unique ways in which the patient’s complexes react in a mutually profound relationship with those of the analyst. The conversations within contemporary relational psychoanalysis provide related descriptions of transference/countertransference enactments and processing as a central part of the work. While I will describe these Jungian and relational psychoanalytic perspectives in more detail in my later relationship sections, here Bromberg (1998) can help with introducing notions of dissociation,
multiplicity, and therapeutic intra- and interpersonal relationship in psychoanalysis. Of the relational analysts, Bromberg writes the most closely and vividly about dissociation and multiplicity. He makes a powerful statement about the autonomy and needs of individual alters, which he calls self-states (and these need not be fully differentiated personalities: for Bromberg we all are made up of self-states). Much like a polytheistic perspective, Bromberg uses his own language to champion for their receipt of a just due and integration on their own terms. He writes, “Often, a particular self-state of the patient has never before been drawn out in its own terms so that it can, without shame, communicate to another human being its unique sense of self, purpose, personal history, and personal ‘truth’” (p. 287). This perspective honors that if individual states are given a place where they can be heard, sometimes for the first time by not only another person, but by the patient as well, stuck places in the patient’s experience can unfreeze—painful symptoms can transform and unleash creative new developments as the wisdom of self-states is metabolized by the patient and interpersonally for the first time. Bromberg’s descriptions beautifully capture how I began to understand psychological experience through my work with Lirael, and how we understood her movement toward greater flexibility and functionality while still respecting the integrity of her parts. Bromberg writes, “A human being’s ability to live a life with both authenticity and self awareness depends on the presence of an ongoing dialectic between separateness and unity of one’s self-states, allowing each self to function optimally without foreclosing communication and negotiation between them” (p. 272). As we work to “hear in a single context” these multiple voices with their multiples realities, the intensity of our traumatic affective
experiences decreases, and our “opposing realities” do not “automatically try to obliterate each other” (p. 288).

Bromberg argues that “the progress of the work is estimated on the basis of a patient’s movement toward the point where all of his states of mind are explored in detail, and his deepest levels of experience become the reservoir for self-understanding” (p. 301). It was through her explorations with me, and the increasing capacity to experience, interpersonally and with an increasing degree of “I” consciousness, the intensity of certain previously banished and segregated self-states, that Lirael could begin to understand herself through the wisdom and vitality of her most potent experiences. As rawness is not often tolerated in interpersonal relations, especially relationships that are structured around abuse and denial, the therapeutic chance for a patient to experience consistent attention to the shifts, twists, turns, ebs, and flows of psychological experience provides the ground for a self that feels more consistently real, in all its wildness and multiplicity.

I will conclude this psychoanalytic contextualization with some relevant thoughts on these core themes as they were explored by Winnicott, in his 1963 book review of Jung’s autobiography, Memories, Dreams, Reflections. While later psychoanalytic historians and theorists, as I have described, have sought to account for the splitting off of dissociation from mainstream psychoanalytic theory, Winnicott was one of the first in the field to talk in this way by considering why Freud and Jung could not understand each other, and why later psychoanalysts have tended to resonate with either one or the other, often at the expense of ostracizing Jungians. Winnicott emphasizes that “[p]sychoanalysts can choose to line up with Freud, and to measure Jung against him, or they can
look at Jung and Freud and allow the two to meet and to go together and to separate” (p. 482).

Winnicott considers the effect that Jung’s mother’s depression and his parents’ separation had on him. He sees Jung as having managed to use his father’s motherliness and his own resources to heal himself, ultimately developing a False and True self and only later in life going through a more complete healing of these accommodations against breakdown. Winnicott argues that Freud and Jung thus worked from profoundly different experiences: “Freud . . . had a unit personality, with a place in him for his unconscious,” while “Jung was different” since “[i]t is not possible for a split personality to have an unconscious, because there is no place for it to be”—instead of repression, Jung made use of “dissociation” (p. 488); “Freud was struggling to establish a science that could gradually expand, and Jung was starting off ‘knowing,’ but handicapped by his own need to search for a self with which to know” (p. 483). “Jung himself spent his life looking for his own self,” which Winnicott does not think he ever really found (p. 491). For Winnicott, as for the post-Jungians, Jung’s late interest in the mandala did not offer an adequate solution for the complexity of human experience, as Winnicott sees it as a flight from spontaneity, one that is preoccupied with containment and order rather than being able to acknowledge the destructive qualities that Winnicott sees as going hand in hand with the creative, generative, holistic aspects of the self. Winnicott argues that a consideration of Jung on his own terms is overdue and crucial to the wellbeing of psychoanalysis.

*12 \* While I appreciate Winnicott’s call for a healing of the split, I also am not entirely convinced. From Samuels (1985): “Adler . . . objects strongly to Fordham’s statement in his obituary of Jung that Jung’s personal incompatibility with Freud and the resultant separation appears a disaster from which analytical
As I have surveyed here, and will discuss further, both archetypal polytheistic and relational perspectives provide rich nuance to our singularity fantasies. Both also provide a compelling description of psychotherapeutic work that is not about “fixing” or “changing,” but about respecting the fullness of one’s psychological being, within one’s experience of one’s range and within interpersonal relationships. The respect is both the work and the precious prize. As Bromberg (1998) writes: “Because each self-state is a self, and, more, a special self, no part of the person can be ‘cured’ away, no matter how much pain accompanies it. A self-state can be opposed by other parts and keep silent for indefinite periods of time, but its presence will sooner or later be manifested through enactments or symptoms” (p. 301-302).

2.3 A Social Constructionist Context

Social constructionist perspectives can contribute to this discussion about ways of perceiving the self, additionally illuminating psychoanalysis itself as a situated and interpretive process (despite whatever Freud, in his Newtonian and Darwinian sociocultural moment, might have hoped), and highlighting the critical and deconstructive work that polytheistic and relational perspectives provide. Cushman (1995) vividly contextualizes concepts of self and therapy on those selves, noting that rather than a transhistorical and transcultural entity, the self in fact is “the individual as described by the indigenous psychology of a particular cultural group and the shared moral understandings within a particular culture of what it means to be human” (p. 23).

Whereas at many points in human history, an “authentic self” was not perceived as

---

psychology and psychoanalysis both suffer and will continue to suffer until the damage is repaired. Adler feels that one must accept that we have to make a choice and live with the sacrifice involved” (p. 21).
separated from communities and social roles, now we experience selves that are isolated and individualistic, “masterful” and “bounded” (p. 28). And so we have created psychotherapy, a healing technology to deal with the unique illnesses plaguing such a self. Cushman (1990) describes the phenomenon of the “empty self,” who in the post-WWII fallout of community identity, traditions, and values must consume in order to assuage meaninglessness. These appreciations of cultural situatedness further help us to consider how DID is not an aberration of something universally true, but rather a variation on the isolated, singular, masterful Western self of recent decades. Considering how Cushman’s work highlights the extent to which all selves are shaped by experience, we can appreciate that DID is a Western self accommodated to and crystallized around a particular human situation: severe and chronic trauma.

As I have described, the work of Hillman and other post-Jungians helps us to consider Western culture and its impact on the self in a different way, one that illuminates the ways in which a self model more like DID actually may lie deep at our cultural roots. Shedding light on the multiplicity of our Western mythology, in the form of gods and goddesses who exceed ego identity and will, Hillman and others describe the multiplicity in the tradition of the Western self. Cushman (1995) praises Hillman’s “forceful critique of post war psychotherapy practices” (p. 238). He sees Hillman’s “‘pantheism’” as a robust response to the “unified, expressive, deeply unique humanism” of psychodynamic therapy that can dangerously collude with the worst failures of consumer capitalism (p. 238). Indeed, Cushman describes how the self of ancient Greece that inspired Hillman did not experience “intrapsychic conflict” in the way that our contemporary object relations and self psychology psychoanalytic self does; it did not find itself preoccupied
with questions of “individuality, personal autonomy, and freedom” (p. 358). Rather, “[w]hen the gods speak, the humans obey”; “the gods and the Furies embodied and articulated its feelings, were in a way part of the self” (p. 359). It is this self, “communal, nondeep, and horizontal” (p. 359), that archetypal perspectives tap into.

At the same time, and perhaps paradoxically, Cushman (1995) also emphasizes the ways in which the Western self has been encouraged to multiply and compartmentalize: splitting “body and soul, secular and spiritual” and the various social, professional, and personal roles of one’s life (p. 387). In this sense one might consider the Western self as simultaneously bounded by and fragmented by the demands of individualism (certainly, in the age of social media, intense yet fragmenting self-preoccupation is more pervasive than ever). In his more recent work, Cushman (2000) has begun to discuss this shift from an empty to a multiple self. He writes that “[t]his early 21st-century self appears to be marked particularly by a propensity to gather about itself a number of identities that are located around the outside of the self, external to but identified with the individual,” though he adds that those identifications are less “essential” than those associated with the empty “deep” self (p. 16). This self has many exteriors that a shallow interior chooses to present to the world at various times. For Cushman, in our increasingly alienated world, going after multiplicity provides a way to navigate, “deceive and “escape” such a demoralizing environment (p. 20). Cushman sees this self as well-suited to the demands of a managed care culture, in which specific manualized interventions can be applied to shallow, uncomplicated ills by a technician-therapist. Cushman’s conclusion is sobering: that in contemporary American life, it simply is no longer “efficient” to have a deep, complex, singular self (p. 27).
I would argue that DID, though, as we are talking about it through an archetypal lens, offers a different and far richer version of multiplicity, one that can be understood in a complicating and challenging, rather than simplifying and colluding, way. To both a bounded deep and a shallow multiple self, we can see DID as a defiant and potentially generative response: simultaneously refusing both the artificiality of singularity and the artificiality of multiplicity. In the clamor of complex voices seeking both to be honored on their own terms and to be owned, DID demands that both unity and multiplicity, individuality and fate, be navigated. We are neither many nor one, autonomous or destined. We are both.

The implications of this literature review for this project are a context and understanding of DID that frees it from the problematic extreme perspectives that one may take on DID: either as an impossibility to be dismissed or as a Truth to be reified and literalized. When we consider DID in socio-historical context, we see it as both as real as any other form of psychological suffering, and as subject to the fashions and blind spots of inquiry and theory. When we consider an archetypal and social-constructionist view of human psychology across history and culture, we also see DID as a potent embodiment of a mode of consciousness often restricted or pathologized in mainstream contemporary sociohistorical context: multiple, and open to experiences of possession. When we let go of needing to decide if DID “exists” or not, we sidestep the issue, and instead allow ourselves to be curious about what DID, as a form of subjectivity, can illuminate about psychological possibility. This project makes use of both DID as novel (a mode of experiencing that has been ignored and under-theorized for many years in psychoanalysis) and as ordinary (a rich, more explicit phenomenology of many of our
“typical” psychological experiences). The literature review grounds the project in intellectual, clinical, and psychological history and provides a foundation for letting DID expand and enrich our ways of thinking about personal psychology, therapy relationships, and research.
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

"Messes, individually and culturally, arise not because of the complexity of human affairs. They arise, individually and culturally, because of the illusory belief that such complexity is somehow wrong headed and in need of reasonable solutions."—Romanyshyn ("Complex Knowing," 1991, p. 28)

“Method in psychology must not hinder love from working, and we are foolish to decry as inferior the very means by which love understands.”—Hillman (Revisioning Psychology, 1975, p. 15)

“[P]ersonifying is an epistemology of the heart.”—Hillman (Revisioning Psychology, p. 15)

3.1 Overview

My primary data for this project are the process notes I wrote during my work with Lirael. I analyzed these notes in terms of theoretical conversations about dissociative multiplicity and its impact on psyche and psychotherapy. I have sought to present my work with Lirael and with theory as a dialogue. I began my reading and writing having identified a few themes, which I describe below. Through this analysis, and also through my augmenting use of active imagination and the writing process, this project also has taken shape in ways that I could not anticipate. I have made note of these changes.

3.2 Reflexive Case Study

For the case study aspect of this project, I engaged in a qualitative and narrative method of analysis (Hilliard, 1993) about Lirael and our work. While I worked with her, I kept process notes, which included descriptions of what happened in session as well as my reactions, as a part of my record keeping for supervision and to help me in
understanding and planning for our work together.\textsuperscript{13} This record has helped me to dialogue with my memories of the case and illuminate my theoretical material.

Stake (1994) describes case study as research with that which is a “specific, unique, bounded system” (p. 445); he adds that the case study form is unique because it “is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (a tension I will explore later when I discuss my writing process) (p. 444). Case study has a long, rich history in various traditions, such as those of psychoanalysis, anthropology, and neurology. We can recall cases that have been important theoretical breakthroughs in the history of psychology, such as Pavlov’s dog, little Albert, Phineas Gage, and early psychoanalytic cases, like Breuer’s Anna O. and Freud’s Rat Man. Case study’s methodological values are that meaningful knowledge can be explored and established through thorough description and theoretical work with one story. Method for case study is as simple, and as complex, as Stake’s direction: “Place your best intellect into the thick of what is going on” (p. 449). Stake emphasizes that, while case study can offer some possibility of generalization, “[t]he purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case” and invite vicarious experience and individualized conclusions for one’s readers (p. 460).

In recent years, though, with the trend toward randomized controlled trials (RCT) in psychotherapy research and statistical analyses of large groups, case studies have fallen out of favor. Nonetheless, numerous authors alternatively argue for the legitimacy and value of case study as a method to study psychotherapeutic material (Bromley, 1986;)

\textsuperscript{13} While Edwards, Dattilio, and Bromley (2004) argue for audio and video recording as a way to ensure a certain kind of validity in case research, at Lirael’s request for her sense of safety and privacy, neither her previous therapist nor I audio or video recorded sessions, so that kind of material has not been available for analysis and inclusion.
Hilliard, 1993; Stake, 1994, 1995; Romanyshyn, 1991). Edwards, Dattilio, and Bromley (2004) in particular argue for case study as a legitimate form of clinical knowledge creation and communication. They propose that while RCT can address some general questions, case study offers unique, complementary opportunities to illustrate what therapy work actually looks like in intimate, individualized practice. They argue for the rich empirical qualities of case-based methods, as they “preserve the complexity of the real life situation” (p. 4) and allow clinicians to see “how treatment actually unfolds” (p. 13). The case study I have written here fits with what Edwards (1998) terms “hermeneutic case study.” In this form of case research, the writer uses “existing theoretical frames as lenses” (in my case psychoanalytic theory) through which to view a therapy. In this process, the writer is called to “make a case for the relevance” of the frames she chooses and to comment on the ways in which they illuminate practice (p. 13). As I have shown in my description of psychoanalysis in light of DID, my study also is well-described by Edwards’s understanding that case research can serve for “metatheoretical deconstruction” of those applied lenses (p. 16).

Additionally, in that I seek to access a shared story from not only Lirael’s particular psychological and therapeutic experience, but also from my own experience of working with her, in writing the case study, I also have made use of some of the values of autoethnographic methods of research. Such approaches appreciate the subjectivity, reflexivity, and emotional life of the researcher and seek, through personal narrative and storytelling, to connect the social sciences and the humanities (Bochner, 2012; Behar, 1996). While some criticize the use of oneself as the point of access in academic work, arguing that use of self is self-indulgent, I am persuaded by the idea that in fact the only
point of access we ever can have is ourselves, and that our work is best served if we own this truth while seeking to be as reflective as possible, choosing to include that which can help our readers in their understanding (Ellis, 1997). In terms of case study, one might argue that therapists uniquely are suited to address their work autoethnographically: therapists are intensely emotionally implicated and impacted participant observers. And indeed, most psychoanalytic perspectives in some way argue that therapists are called not only to attend to their patients’ worlds, but also to be aware of how they as unique instruments are impacted by their patients—the goal being that therapists then seek to translate their personal reactions in the service of patient self-understanding and transformation (McWilliams, 2004). And yet therapists have a long professional history of writing case studies that focus extensively on biographical details and analyses of patients, attending little to dedicated exploration of the ways in which they as therapy participants co-create patients’ experiences. From this perspective, writing a case history with the assumption that one is writing anything but one’s own personalized account of what occurred (what we might call a kind of autoethnography of doing therapeutic work) is suspect; we can find a vivid example of this phenomenon in Irvin Yalom and Ginny Elkin’s (1974) book Every Day Gets a Little Closer, in which Yalom and his client Ginny each committed to writing about their sessions and found that, while their accounts were interwoven, two distinct therapeutic stories emerged from their perspectives.

---

14 Certainly, this set of values also fits well with the history of psychoanalytic thought and treatment, which always has emphasized the indispensability of one’s personal analysis if one wishes to be a sound therapeutic instrument.

15 It is interesting to appreciate how academic and therapeutic discourses carry with them their own unique parameters of dissociation: that which is supposed to be included, and that which is deemed inexpressible, even unthinkable, sent off to live in another state of consciousness.
For me, these reflections support my intent to approach this dissertation as a case study with the explicit acknowledgement that it is told from my perspective, and I believe that revealing myself as an implicated presence—what in the analytic tradition we might call countertransference exploration, which relational analysts such as Stephen Mitchell (1988) and Karen Maroda (1990) have argued is central to clinical work and understanding—is an alternative to a history in which therapists often have spoken omnisciently. This intention also partly arises from my desire to protect and respect Lirael’s autonomy. Sociologist Carolyn Ellis (1997), in describing her fieldwork, says that she has come to realize and “confront” how “conventional strategies” of research reporting, in which she has avoided dwelling with her personal interactions with and feelings about her participants, “may have disempowered those [she] studied,” as her avoidance of her subjectivity concealed the partial, overdetermined, influential nature of her perspective and leant her undue authority (p. 123). I thus have sought to practice some degree of transparency, both for clinical and theoretical honesty and to remind my readers that Lirael’s humanity inevitably exceeds my telling. While this project, especially with its appreciation of the archetypal, the polytheistic, the dissociated, and the multiple, also certainly transcends being about me personally, nonetheless, I am the necessary means by which this dissertation has come to be, and thus I argue for the value of my seeking vulnerability beyond omniscience.

3.3 Embracing Dissociation and Multiplicity as Entwined with Method

When I first was inspired to write a dissertation about my therapeutic-personal-theoretical relationship to the dissociation and multiplicity embodied in DID, the question that captivated me was “Who is going to write this dissertation?” (I think the way I first
phrased it, scribbled on a notepad when I jolted from sleep, was something like: “Whose voice will speak this dissertation?”) As I remember the genesis of this project, it is not just that this question came up as the obvious one once I already had settled on my dissertation topic: actually, this question came up when I even casually considered what it would mean to try and meaningfully write about DID, as DID challenges our culture’s (and often even psychology’s) most cherished belief: that we are singular and autonomous subjects. It was this question, and all its wild implications of ordinary mystery and otherness, that made me want to write this project. For me this question falls within the category of the “two-horned topics” that Hillman (1975) references, quoting Ortega y Gasset, in his introduction to Re-Visioning Psychology: those “dangerous, agile” topics that we must approach with “bull-fighting risk” if we want our writing to have real point and potency (xvi).

For me this question stands at the heart of this project; so integral that it has influenced every piece. In an archetypal way, it seems that this project has wanted to come to be through me, rather than my willing it into being. In a way larger than my individuality, sometimes it feels as if certain material wants to be addressed, and that in my own life, in this project and beyond, I will devote myself to my own tiny piece in addressing it. I think of psychotherapeutic work, a history of psychology being stalked by the poetry it attempted to excise when it declared itself a science, and recent pressures toward empirical validation and reductive understandings of human suffering and meaning … and the struggle we experience with the truth that there are dimensions of psyche, in her infinitely meaningful mystery, that cannot be explained via hypothesis testing, or even via the usual strictures of academic writing. There are other ways of
knowing, other means of evaluating. Like the language and internal coherency of art. This project has been about considering how a full rich psychological intellect must also be made of the heart and the soul.

I reflect that my question “who will write this dissertation” can suddenly seem so ordinary in the context of truly embracing a certain kind of psychological thinking: after all, it is the question that is at the heart of psychoanalysis! It is at the heart of this way of seeing that says: we are not transparent to ourselves. In dreams, slips of the tongue, bungled actions, so-called object relations, and relational enactments, forces beyond our conscious will intrude upon us, sometimes even wrecking our vision of who we are or what our lives “should” be. The Jungians would call it psyche: that process of autonomous unfolding that exceeds individual will and personal life. Hillman writes of what for him is one of the major errors of Western psychology—that it has neglected to notice that what it considers the center of all, ego, is in fact just another archetypal style: that of the hero, in which we find “feelings of independence, strength, and achievement . . . ideas of decisive action, coping, planning, virtue, conquest” (p. xx). For Hillman, the ego does not have special status: if psychology is about soul, then more must be given space to show itself than only the reflection of our control and striving.

Considering the Jungian, post-Jungian, and relational appreciation of human organization around dissociation and multiplicity, this project also is about thinking about the research process, as a human and psychological endeavor, as dissociatively structured and multiple, with a process that at moments has exceeded my conscious personal intentions. Thus, I have considered dissociation and multiplicity as I wrote about my work with Lirael and the literature. I have methodologically created room through two
approaches: engaging in active communication with multiplicity—my own, and that of the multiple influences on this project—and using the writing process itself as a method of discovery.

*Communicating with Multiplicity*

In Robert Romanyshyn’s (2007) book *The Wounded Researcher*, he explores an attitude to understanding and undertaking research that accounts for the multiplicity of the researcher unconscious, and that resonates strongly with my purposes here. So, in addition to my conceptualizing of this dissertation as a reflexive case study that dialogues with psychoanalytic theory, I have included Romanyshyn’s supplement to conventional scholarship: the engagement that he calls researchers to have with the multiplicity of the influences, “internal” and “external,” that shape their work. Romanyshyn (2012) calls this approach “complex hermeneutics,” meaning that it considers not only the contextual and interpretive dialectic of the human person in relation to his or her world, but also the additional layer of the human person in relation to her psychological depths, and in this case the way in which that relating impacts her scholarship (p. 239).

Much like Lirael’s eventual capacity to dialogue fruitfully with her alters, Romanyshyn proposes that multiplicity can have a rich place in the research process as well. He argues that by opening herself to dialogue with those parts of herself and her project that she does not yet know, but that may know something about the work, and then expanding this dialogue further, to personal and cultural “ancestors,” a researcher’s work is permitted to find its home within a web of relationships (what we may think of as archetypal positions) and given a fuller fruition—personally, interpersonally, communally—than would have been possible if the researcher tried to drive the work to
conclusions single-mindedly. In keeping with my archetypal orientation for this project, Romanyshyn seeks to shift research from “an ego perspective . . . to the soul’s perspective” (p. 82).\textsuperscript{16}

For Romanyshyn, a “transference field” thus exists between the researcher and her work as much as it does between therapist and patient. As with techniques for psychoanalytic therapy, research that seeks to work with this level requires “procedures that attempt to make this unconscious field as conscious as possible” (pp. 135-136). For these procedures, Romanyshyn recommends a particular progression of work to which I have adhered. It goes as follows (pp. 140-141):

**Phase One:** The Ritual Space of Reverie

**Phase Two:** Transference Dialogues

**Step 1:** Setting the Stage

**Step 2:** Invitations

**Step 3:** Waiting with Hospitality

**Step 4:** Engaging the “Others” in the Work

**First Moment:** Giving Form and Being a Witness

**Second Moment:** Critical Regard

(1) The Way of Aesthetics

(2) The Way of Understanding

**Step 5:** Scholarly Amplification

I will elaborate on each of these moves:

\textsuperscript{16}Fine and McClelland (2006) refer to this kind of imaginative access to the unconscious as a “methodological release point,” designed to bring forth material that would not otherwise show itself (p. 463, quoted in Fine, 2007).
In **Phase One**, I sought to enter a space of reverie wherein I allowed myself to “let go” of the work and create space for un forced playfulness, so that the work could reveal itself to me in new ways (p. 137). Romanyshyn refers to reverie as a kind of “abduction,” a being taken over—a surrender that, while we may prepare space for it, is not within our conscious control (p. 142). Reverie is “a pathway into the unconscious depths of the moment”: the moment takes us, more than we take it (p. 143).

When feeling receptive, I would begin the transference dialogues in **Phase Two**. Romanyshyn conceptualizes them as more “intentional” (p. 145). While both reverie and the dialogues seek “to differentiate what the work wants for itself beyond the margins of what the researcher wants from the work,” the particular goal of the dialogues is “to extend the range of the unconscious in the work” (p. 146). In these dialogues, I found myself meeting both my own personal psyche material, and the otherness of the “‘strangers’ who carry the unfinished business of the soul of the work” (both of which I understand as archetypal, shifting between the personal and the transpersonal) (p. 146). Encountering and accounting for this otherness offered an opportunity to deepen the project.

As Romanyshyn recommends, I divided Phase Two into multiple steps that differentiate how to proceed with the dialogues. In **Step 1**, I set the stage, waiting with nonjudgmental openness for otherness to emerge; Romanyshyn says that the “researcher stops thinking and gives himself or herself over to being thought” (p. 149). She expresses a “willingness to be a witness rather than a critic” (p. 152).

In **Step 2**, as Romanyshyn recommends I sought to offer “an invitation to those ‘others’ who have a stake in the work”—those within and beyond myself (p. 152).
Romanyshyn recommends the invocation of speech, which sometimes I would use, though often my process felt more quiet. Romanyshyn additionally identifies several “levels” of the transference field (pp. 152-153):

**Personal Level**: “Who is there in my family, biography, and/or history who has something to say about this work?” “Do my parents have a voice in this work?” “My siblings, etc.?”

**Cultural-Historical Level**: “Who is there from another historical period and/or a different culture who has something to say about this work?” “Is there someone from another race, gender, socio-economic class who has a voice in this work?"

**Collective-Archetypal Level**: “For whom is this work being done?” “Who are the guides or ancestors who are directing this work?” “Whom does this work serve?”

**Eco-Cosmological Level**: “What do the other creatures with whom I share creation have to say about the work?” “Do the animals have a voice in it?” “The plants, the trees, etc.?”

At the same time that we address these levels, Romanyshyn also encourages us to maintain readiness for surprise: we never can anticipate who will speak. As I have reported about myself previously, I continually found myself surprised in this work. In moments of readiness to listen, and even in moments when I was not deliberately attempting Romanyshyn’s process, I would find myself surprised by an insight about Lirael, our work, my own process, and the journey of this writing. I continue to maintain a sense of awe about the process that seems to be holding any work I do, beyond my individual will.
Step 3 entails hospitable waiting, “without desire of any sort” (p. 153), and in Step 4, I sought to actively engage with the others. This period is understood through two moments. In the First Moment, or the moment of “reception,” those who speak are received and given form (p. 157). Romanyshyn recommends drawing, painting, sculpting, or writing the feelings, images, and conversations that emerge. I tended to write, as that way seemed the most natural to me at the time, though throughout the project I found myself in communion with a few images that returned again and again, and that I tended to draw and whose content I tended to seek out in the world around me.

In the Second Moment, or the moment of “reflection,” I sought to ask the presences of the first moment, “‘What do [you] say about the work?’” (p. 159). For the benefit of reflection, Romanyshyn recommends taking a break, even allowing the space of a day or two, between the First and Second Moment. I found that I tended to take such breaks and that they felt natural to the process. The Second Moment is further divided between two modes: (1) The Way of Aesthetics and (2) The Way of Understanding. In (1), Romanyshyn recommends that the researcher attend to artistic value, while in (2), he recommends that the researcher attend to meaning. Romanyshyn recommends a balance between these two perspectives as the researcher reflects, so that the words and images are both taken on their own terms. At last, in Step 5, I returned to my scholarship: “the path to the library has been through the deep subjectivity of the researcher” (p. 161).

While Romanyshyn emphasizes that these transference dialogues do not replace more traditional scholarly modes of inquiry—for example, my primary mode has been with the texts of my case material and psychoanalytic theory—he adds that their role is
special, as they attend to what is often neglected in traditional modes: the influential researcher unconscious.

As I have described, I used Romanyszyn’s dialogues as an experiential aspect of method throughout my work with reading, thinking, and writing, as a way to methodologically account for a theory of dissociation and multiplicity and the dissociated multiplicity of myself and the project. During my preliminary thematic work with process notes, the dialogues offered moments of reflection and deepening. I also continually checked in with where I was as my work progressed: I periodically set aside time to engage in the dialogues. I allowed insights to shape the direction of my reading and writing, and I share central insights with my readers in this final product, to make clear how I have been grappling and negotiating with dissociation and multiplicity all along and following and presenting a conversation between voices. I have engaged in this part of the project as a way to create space for and to access the emergence of both my own complexity and the complexity of the story of the case and its theoretical implications.

I have chosen to incorporate material from the dialogues throughout the document: sometimes they are present in the body of the text; sometimes they stand outside altogether, as footnotes. I designate transference dialogue material with brackets and italics ( [ ... ] ). Of course, the dialogues also implicitly have shaped the writing and are present throughout in a more “integrated” way. My reason for occasionally choosing to include them as more distinct is because those particular reflections seemed to me as if they wanted to remain “unintegrated”; or rather, their just due of integration felt like it required a position of marginalia or interjection, rather than seamlessness.
For example, there are a couple of reflections that arose during transference dialogues that I found myself resonating with at a strongly personal level in relation to my own individual development/work and some life changes that I was going through during the time of the primary writing of this project. The reflections concerned a powerful dream that I had involving archetypal images of multiplicity/wholeness, and then lived experiences of such imagery that then related back to and interacted with my understanding of what I’d begun learning while working with Lirael. While these images and experiences were distinctly my own, they also interacted powerfully with the writing of this project. I have wrestled with what to do with this material, as it in ways feels too much in the realm of unadulterated psyche (I guess what I mean is maybe just too “out there”) for the conventions of academic work. Particularly because Romanyszyn’s dialogues welcome it, though, I have chosen to let it speak in a marginal (i.e., in footnotes) and evocative way, as a reminder of how vast and expansive the imaginal and experiential world is at the margins of formal distillations and presentations of learning. I hope that its position feels aesthetically striking and expanding to my readers’ imaginations, rather than evasive, solipsistic, or overly mystical.

Another example of transference dialogue material that tends to be more marginally included is my own working through of the multiplicity and love of the therapeutic relationship via experiences in my roles as patient, therapist, and researcher. While some of my related transference dialogue material has been fully integrated, that which is more emotionally evocative about love/intimacy tends to be off-set. I simply have decided to notice and respect this tendency. I think that while it reflects my own journey (struggling to work with my relationship to love as it interacts with the bounded
nature of being patient and therapist), considering my observations and conversations with peers and colleagues throughout training, this tendency may reflect larger anxieties with which therapists struggle about how to personally manage the joy, pain, and high stakes of emotional engagement with clients: inevitably we all are wounded people working with wounded people, and with a process that at its core often is about human issues with feeling loved and loving. Thus, as with my comment about the marginalia of the mystical, the marginalia of the intimate also seemed important to preserve. Again, I hope that my presentation of these reflections expands the reader’s imagination and emotional resonance, rather than somehow seeming overly contrived or coy.

Thus, these transference dialogues also have been the primary way that I have created space for my data to surprise me and invite me to reflect on new ways of understanding. While in a shallow way, it may seem that all I have done through them is listen to myself, Romanyshyn makes clear, and I agree with him, that something mysterious happens when we invite otherness to address us: the responses come from places of true difference, and we may not even always agree with or immediately understand what the otherness has to communicate! These reflections remind me of Gendlin’s (1996) “Focusing” method, in which shifts in a practitioner’s bodily sensations are waited for and attended to with the understanding that they arise with an autonomy and an inevitability that are separate from intentions of the witnessing ego. Of course, these reflections also fit with an archetypal and polytheistic perspective, which appreciates that the forces of psyche exceed our egoic will. Marlan (2013) refers to “daimonic reading,” or reading in “twilight” (borrowing this word from Jung), such that “the ego’s brightness is diminished. This reading gives room to the unconscious, to
dreams and visions, and allows the unknown to play an important role” (p. 52); it is both “inflating and deflating” (p. 63). In this sense, I chose this part of my method as a fitting way to keep myself honest within an archetypal universe, and with the task I set up: this project has many voices that exceed the ego. As Hillman (1975) emphasizes, imagination is not necessarily “a wild, fearsome jungle or madhouse” or “a deep irrational mystery”: we need not imagine that in opening ourselves to it, we are surrendering to a nonsensical chaos. Beliefs that the imagination is inherently dangerous, or that it is even possible to submit it to our will or exclude its influence, seem to speak more to cultural and disciplinary prejudices than to any certain reality.

Thematic Lenses and Description of Procedure for Work with Notes and Dialogues

In order to organize and delimit my engagement with my process notes, theory, writing, and dialogues, I have identified several theme areas that I have sought to address. Overall, each theme concerns dissociation and multiplicity. The themes are:

Dissociation and multiplicity’s implications for:

1. The therapeutic relationship
2. The self (specifically in terms of identity and the unconscious)
3. The potential for transformation of experience and suffering, through these fresh perspectives on therapy process and psychological understanding

In terms of working with my process notes, I completed an initial reading without making any notations, and I then followed this first reading with an initial use of the transference dialogues, recording my general impressions and marking the beginning of the project. Then, I made one copy of my notes per theme and did a reading of the notes in light of each theme, noting that which struck me as relevant to or expressive of key
issues. In order to deepen this process of identification and understanding and to check
my own participation, I went through two readings for each, pausing in between to
engage in the transference dialogues, the outcomes of which shaped the second readings.
Following these preliminary process note readings, I began my writing with the first
theme area, guided by my markings. From that point forward, I engaged in the
transference dialogues periodically, as seemed required by occasions in which my
thinking seemed stuck.

Using Writing as a Method

In not permitting a heroic ego to commandeer this project, this dissertation also
has called me to turn to the creative, meaning-making nature of the writing process itself
as a method of engaging with case and theoretical material. In addition to writing in an
academic stylistic voice, as I’ve already shown, I also write in a more emotionally
evocative, creative storytelling voice in order to capture the fullness of therapeutic and
psychological engagement. As Romanyshyn (2012) notes, the “deadly seriousness” of
some so-called “psychological” writing can make us feel “seriously dead” to the richness
of psyche, a deadening that undermines our efforts to learn and communicate about our
psychological lives (p. 239)!

In terms of considering writing to be a method, I find helpful the work of
Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), in their piece “Writing: A Method of Inquiry.” They
argue for writing as a method of discovery in its own right, proposing that the potential of
the writing process has been neglected by an overly narrow understanding of method, and
that “it is important to interrogate whatever limits we have imposed on the concept
method lest we diminish its possibilities in knowledge production” (p. 967). They affirm
that writing itself “is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery” (p. 967). Other authors, including Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Emig (1977), Irmscher (1979), Reither (1985), Tomlinson (1990), and Coylar (2009) make similar arguments about writing as a path of learning and knowing. With particular resonance with Richardson and St. Pierre, Coylar (2009) writes: “Writing is a symbolic system which articulates what we know, but it is also a tool whereby we come to these understandings; in other words, writing is product and process, noun and verb” (p. 422). She humorously notes how most academic writing presents itself “as if sprung fully formed from the head of Zeus” (p. 424), and then she rejects this vision of writing as only product: simply a passive recording of what we already know. Instead, she argues that writing is generative, central in the creation and expression of meaning (p. 430). Coylar captures much of my own sensibility (and aptly characterizes for me the difficulty I encountered with planning this dissertation!) when she says about the relationship of our writing to our projects: “I can’t start until I have already started” (p. 422).

The psychoanalytic tradition also offers helpful voices for appreciating writing as a method of discovery. Ogden (2005) particularly describes the challenge of putting into after-the-fact language the richness of interpersonal therapeutic encounter. He notes the dissociative, unconsciously fertile aspects of the writing process, saying that sentences come to us “as a dream comes unbidden in sleep” (p. 112-113); that “the writing is dreaming me into existence as much as I am dreaming the writing into existence” (p. 118). He further underscores the “utter unpredictability” of writing and says that “it is important not to know the shape of the story from the start, but to allow it to take form in the process of writing it” (p. 113). At the same time, Ogden remains attuned to the
importance of the agency of the writer. He stresses that “writing is hard work,” and that “it is important not to romanticize the process by viewing it as a gift from one’s muse” (p. 117). Thus, Ogden both preserves the autonomy of the writing process and the autonomy of the writer’s conscious will and desire. In my own work and thinking about psyche, this tension-holding has been crucial, and it has helped me to form the backbone of the way I took on this project: both honoring and trusting the wisdom of processes larger than my personal awareness and respecting the necessity of consciously intentioning and structuring. Ogden sums up this experience pithily: writing is “equal parts meditation and the experience of wrestling a beast to the ground” (p. 117).

Relational psychoanalytic perspectives, with their explicit appreciation of dissociation, also are affirming of this discovery-oriented approach to psychological work, and therefore writing. Particularly, I think of Donnel Stern’s (2003) notion of “unformulated experience,” and the idea that therapeutic work is a process of formulation. Like Ogden, Stern references the mysterious “unbidden” nature of much of our perception and understanding, especially that which rings with the most truth (p. 238). He also simultaneously affirms the creative process of giving voice to the inchoate, a voice that is not just lurking fully-formed, waiting to be released, but that we shape and that shapes us. In both analysis and writing, what we seek to create and co-create is at first “unformulated, potentially indeterminate, and actually absent” (p. 240). Stern asserts: “No writer knows deeply what he has written,” just as “no analyst, we can echo, thoroughly understands the course of an analysis” (p. 251).

Even prior to actually beginning this project, I had experienced the ways in which writing serves as a source of knowledge-making in my life. Certainly, it already had
contributed to the idea for this dissertation: in keeping notes about Lirael and my work, I quickly realized how much that writing helped me to re-experience what was happening between us in new ways—to discover insights about our work, and to find new possibilities. Indeed, much of my thinking about the work occurred not “in my head,” but “on the page.” More broadly, as an avid keeper of journals since my early adolescence, I vividly have known from that experience as well what it means for a story to come to be in the words I weave that I did not even know were waiting for me. As I think about writing as method, I have come to realize that part of my fascination with DID, and my commitment to adopting methods that account for dissociation and multiplicity, has come from my lived understanding through my own writing that the ego often does not control the story.

In this vein, I consider my project to fit within what Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) refer to as CAP (creative analytical processes) ethnographies. In these works, they see “the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged. The product cannot be separated from the producer, the mode of production, or the method of knowing” (p. 962). This approach fits well with my appreciation of multiplicity, as it affirms that a final product is best understood as contextual, intimate, and complex. Ellis’s (1997) aforementioned autoethnographic approach also shares much in common with this understanding of writing as creative, exploratory, knowledge-generating, and always incomplete. She says: “I wanted readers to trust that I had started with what I didn’t know and discovered what I did know through the process of writing. I never pretended to have it all worked out, nor to suggest that the finished project disclosed the bare truth” (p. 130). Coylar echoes these themes, speculating that our
academic culture’s pull toward positivism might inhibit conversations around the writing process as knowledge production, as it is easier for us to assert that we know something than to acknowledge that we are always only ever between drafts that change over the course of our lives, “in the process of knowing” (p. 434).

And yet, Coylar notes that though we may be able to argue for and appreciate writing as a method, because it is a subtle individual process, particular to each researcher and often developing outside of her conscious awareness, it is difficult to capture how it functions. In response to this issue, my commitment to Romanysyn’s transference dialogues, and my working through of that process, has helped me to work with and attempt to address how writing functions for me as a path to learning. And yet I must affirm that there is no way to make my process totally transparent: that would be like trying to shine a light on the total self, or the face of God. Personally, I can only offer my conviction that when we are open about our engagement with mystery, a part of what we must acknowledge is that mysteries do not lend themselves well to explanations. Even if I cannot explain, I hope that in this project I illuminate some sense of understanding of the meanings that I have made of my material, and that my effort to grapple with the edges of my own understanding comes across as intellectually honest, rather than evasive: as a kind of active self- and work-portrait that helps some of my colleagues feel less lonely and that invites enriching conversation.

In that this dissertation thus makes explicit writing as a research method, when it comes to the style of my writing itself, I believe that it has been fitting to take my inspiration from hermeneutic approaches that invite a literary style of expression, with the idea that the evocative allows us best to experience and explore the embeddedness
and co-constitution—personally, linguistically, culturally, historically—of knowledge (Geertz, 1983; Sass, 1988). Ellis (1997) describes her “love” for this kind of “evocative storytelling,” born of a conviction that it is worthwhile to produce poetic writing that stirs readers, as it is in the resonant impact of a text that we can find an important part of its truthfulness (p. 120). Richardson (1993) shares her appreciation of this style, further articulating its relevance to my project in the service of multiplicity when she describes how writing that welcomes more than only intellectual identification leaves space “for tension and differences to be acknowledged, celebrated, rather than buried alive” (p. 706).

Hillman (1989) argues similarly for how the psychologist is called to engage with language in pursuit of evoking resonant truths. He calls for “a speech of ambiguities that is evocative and detailed, yet not definitive, not productive of dictionaries, textbooks, or even abstract descriptions” (p. 30-31). This new speech “leads to participation,” so that new “stories” and “insights” come forth (p. 31). Our souls are moved by this speech, for it “has impact because it carries body in it; it is speech alive” (p. 31). For Hillman, “style” thus is hardly shallow, but instead is profoundly substantive and the fulfillment of psyche’s demands upon us (p. 31). It is only this kind of speech that can truly create and sustain our imaginal lives.

Ogden (2005) in his own way also addresses these themes of honoring the aesthetics and artistry of analytic writing. He calls it a “literary genre” that is both “interpretation” and “a work of art,” stressing that while we can never seamlessly capture any experience in language—for him this act is an impossibility, like trying to write the smell of coffee—part of what we do in analytic writing is use it to communicate
impactfully to readers what it was like to be in the encounter (p. 109). For my purposes, it is appropriate and inspiring that Ogden says that the paradox of analytic writing is that in order to convey truths, we must turn experiences into “fiction” (p. 110). He adds, “It is in the feat of sustaining a vital conversation between the lived analytic experience and the life of the written story that the art of psychoanalytic writing resides” (p. 111).

Romanyszyn (1991) similarly describes how the reader of a case history is uniquely

“implicated by the reading, affected by it, moved and transformed by it, touched by it at the level of his or her own complexes. Said in another way, the case history as a text reveals that there is between reader and text the same kind of complex relation of transference and countertransference as exists between therapist and patient. The myth of objectivity which animates empirical and philosophical gnosis is undercut by these texts which close the separation between subject and object and abolish the distance between them. In reading these texts they also read us and we are as much infected or interpreted by them as they are by us.” (p. 17)

I think of Lirael’s various dissociations from her own full humanity and that of others: so scarred by trauma that she fled relationships; so overwhelmed by the diversity of perspectives within herself that rather than relate to them, she had to split them off into isolation; and so conditioned to believe that life was not safe that she struggled to feel connected to, free in, and nourished by the world. Much of the work with Lirael involved the restoration of life within all of these realms, and the softening of the barriers between the forms of otherness in her experience so that creative relationship was possible. These
reflections remind me of a model for working with trauma in DID called BASK (behavior, affect, sensation, and knowledge) (Braun, 1988), which argues that memories and experiences from all of these realms must be addressed in order for transformation to be complete and sustaining. As I have described, Lirael herself sometimes would bring to session art that she made to work with and even begin to make friends with difficult emotions, or she would share from notes that she would write while in alter states that communicated what she could not always say as the self with whom she most identified. Her alters also embodied themselves differently—dressed differently, spoke differently, moved differently—and my own embodied and emotional presence became different with each one: standing at the window admiring the trees and talking about squirrels with a playful, trusting little girl; leaning forward carefully and gently toward a lonely, frightened little boy; sitting around conversationally and candidly with a vibrant, curious teenage girl. While a vital, creative process shaped and continues to shape my understanding of Lirael and myself with Lirael, a similar process seems to have occurred in Lirael herself, and between us. It was in the creative, the emotional, and the sensuous that Lirael and I worked and were multiply alive together. I could not bring that multiple world to life here for others without engaging in writing that welcomes all of it.

3.4 A Note on an Inspiring Case Study

As a case study intended not to shy away from the creative and the human, this project also finds inspiration in Annie Rogers’s psychotherapy case studies/memoirs, *A Shining Affliction* (1995) and *The Unsayable* (2007). Rogers’s genre-crossing writing has encouraged me to speak of psychotherapy as a mutual endeavor. At least in her first
book, for Rogers, so-called “countertransference” and “transference” are not merely impediments to understanding that must be analyzed and put aside, but in fact are central relational responses, allowing patient and therapist to meet and work within each other. “Healing is always two-sided” (p. 143), she writes, and we “play . . . in the place of [our] deepest wounding and loss” (p. 295).

In an afterword, addressed “To My Clinical Colleagues,” Rogers says: “[O]ur language is suffused with an us/them split, so that we, the therapists, appear to have no serious psychological difficulties, while our patients clearly reveal whatever pathology fascinates us at any given time”; and:

“The psychotherapy relationship is two-sided, whether we acknowledge it is or not. Each person brings to that relationship whatever is unrecognized, unknown, and unapproachable in her or his life, and a wish for knowledge of truths and wholeness. Since one cannot thrive on memories, on a relationship with projections, what keeps alive the hope of wholeness is an interchange of love, longing, frustration, and anger in the vicissitudes of a real relationship. Such an interchange is part of the fragility of this relationship; with openness, one is vulnerable to hurt and to loss, on both sides of the relationship. However, the therapist must, of necessity, understand the vulnerability of both persons

---

17 A Shining Affliction is the story of Rogers’s psychotherapy relationship with a young patient whose lovability and traumatization both are profound. Simultaneously, it is the story of what Rogers herself additionally and necessarily brings to their relationship. Rogers explores how it is her confrontation with her own traumatic experiences that allows her to meet her patient in his own wounding, creating space for their mutual transformation. Rogers does move away from this position in her later work, coming to dispute the primary healing power of personal relationship, when she begins identifying as a Lacanian. I find this shift fascinating, especially in similarity and contrast to an archetypal perspective, though these themes and questions are too tangential to explore here.
involved. This necessity is sometimes very frightening. Yet if it is possible to remain open to our fears and make reparations for our mistakes, our vulnerability can be used in the service of healing.” (p. 319)

While Rogers is not naïve about dangers, acknowledging that “creative risks” can become “seductive and false promises” (as happened to her with her own first therapist), she also affirms that with critical thinking and a genuinely engaging (and also mutual!) supervisory relationship, we might see how these risks could be a therapist’s “most courageous work” (p. 318). We might find a way for psychotherapeutic mutuality to be channeled for healing, rather than finding it overwhelming us for harm.

I find in Rogers’s storytelling an archetypal structure for a young therapist’s early training, a structure that has thematic echoes in this project: the narrative includes a mutual transformation through work with a perspective-altering patient, an influential relationship for the therapist with her own healer,18 and a sense of calling on the other

---

18 [I began work with a man I might call my own “Blumenfeld” (the name of Rogers’s psychoanalyst) shortly after I terminated with Lirael. He would be my supervisor for a year, then my analyst for the next. I met him at a time when I felt disillusioned: I was telling myself that I was done with psychoanalysis—disappointed by a first personal analytic therapy, and frustrated by what I saw as a paralyzing neuroticism about intimacy in some psychoanalytic perspectives. The vital curiosity and depth of feeling I found waiting in my work with this man, then, took me welcomingly by surprise. A testament to mutuality, we shared that mysterious palpable kind of chemistry that can transform by virtue of its own being, and we made a fierce vessel in which to work with all of the complex learning—pain, joy, despair, and hope—that I was integrating at the end of my Ph.D.

In ways my analyst is not at all like Rogers’s Blumenfeld. I mean that unlike her Blumenfeld, whom Rogers describes as “ordinary”—“not very magical”—mine was quite magical (or at least he was to me!) (pp. 246-247). And yet there is one major quality my sorcerer-analyst shares with Blumenfeld, the one that ultimately affords him the same place in the story: at times he seemed too good to be true, but he “must be real after all, because he sees with his heart” (p. 157). Watched over by the astute and patient presence that this man channeled through his heart, I rediscovered, or maybe learned for the first time, what it meant to see with my own.

This analyst both opened my mind and provided a container to hold together my truth. I invoke him because I know that in order for me to tell the story of my work with Lirael, he must at least touch these pages: my transference dialogues are full of him. As Donna Orange (1995) writes, “we often treat our patients as our analysts treated us” (p. 129), and for this reason I cannot be more grateful for the depth of engagement and lack of shame that I found in this relationship, to carry into my own work.]
side to express the mutuality of therapeutic transformation. And so, here is a story of Lirael and me working together.

Any writing about psychotherapy is storytelling …

[In my dialogues on method, I find myself grappling with fundamental questions about what it would mean to live by an epistemology of psyche: to love by it, write by it, work by it. As Hillman would call it, “an epistemology of the heart.” As Annie Rogers’s would say: “he sees with his heart.”

Here at the end of this method section, I realize how much of this project has been a perfect alchemy between the professional and the personal. It’s not only that the field has been critical of intuition, though there is some truth to that bias, certainly: it’s also that I have been critical of myself. I have become more aware of the strength of my own ego: the rigidity, sometimes damming, with which I approach my own creativity. In my own pantheon, the gods and goddesses of the beautiful, the intuitive, the mystical, the intimate, the relational—they were spurned for a while. But these days, and in this project, I have been trying to give them their rightful home. I have been trying to find a voice that honors much more of my universe, and so feels much more like “my” voice.

As I look back on how my experience working with and designing a dissertation about Lirael shaped my understanding of the heart center of this work, I realize that the power of this kind of early-in-training therapy relationship gave me so much, professionally and personally. I have talked to peers with similar experiences: the joy and challenge of that fire of those early years, when we have so much at stake, and so many of us are not only trying to help others, but also trying to find the truths we were
searching for in this work ... sometimes, the banished others that Romanyszyn’s
dialogues seek.

This project then, and its unusual and heartfelt efforts to capture something
special about the richness of soul in therapy, I am beginning to see as methodologically
designed to be a love letter to my early training. Now, something consolidates and seals
in my being. My heart still opens to my patients, but it is a heart that already has taken
her formative journey to the underworld. Of such a journey, Hillman writes that “[t]he
ultimate beauty of psyche is that which even Aphrodite does not have and which must
come from Persephone, who is queen over the dead souls and whose name means
'bringer of destruction.'” He describes further,

“The Box of Beauty which Psyche must fetch as her last task refers to an
underworld beauty that can never be seen with the senses. It is the beauty of the
knowledge of death and of the effects of death upon all other beauty that does not
contain this knowledge. Psyche must 'die' herself in order to experience the
reality of this beauty, a death different from her suicidal attempts. This would be
the ultimate task of soul-making and its beauty: the incorporation of destruction
into the flesh and skin, embalmed in life, the visible transfigured by the invisibility
of Hades's kingdom, anointing the psyche by the killing experience of its personal
morality. The Platonic upward movement toward aestheticism is tempered by the
beauty of Persephone. Destruction, death, and Hades are not left out. Moreover,
Aphrodite does not have access to this kind of beauty. She can acquire it only
through Psyche, for the soul mediates the beauty of the invisible inner world to
the world of outer forms.”
So much now is a part of my “flesh and skin.” So much of any naïve hopes for “happiness” or “beauty,” for my clients or myself, whatever on earth those longings meant in the first place, have been irrevocably transfigured: Persephone is under my skin and in my heart and bones. I no longer need to be initiated. I once joked to someone that the truth of why I became a therapist was because I was ravenous to see, hear, and engage with as many possibilities for a human life as was possible. I was being teasing toward my personality, but I also was telling the truth. The idea has stuck with me. Through this work, my sense of the pantheon of possibilities has become quite broad, and I think I listen better to others as a result, and I listen to myself better, too. I still think of my early patients regularly, with a nearness as if I am thinking of my own personal history. It’s because it was my own personal history: in the alchemy, they made me someone new.

The method of this dissertation held me so that I could work my way to seeing with and speaking from the heart about the soulful, depthful, multiple richness of this work. It has reminded me of a kind of faith, a faith that I believe that only the journey of becoming a therapist, of working with a patient like Lirael, could teach me—that for Persephone, for that radical dark beauty beyond beauty: ah, what I would not do, what I have not done.]
CHAPTER FOUR: RELATING TO LIRAELE

“[I]n the realm of soul, the ego is a paltry thing”— Hillman (Revisioning Psychology, 1975, p. xxii)

“I may see visions and hear voices; I may talk with them and they with each other without at all being insane”— Hillman (Revisioning Psychology, 1975, p. 24).

“I felt like because she didn’t give any part of herself to me, I didn’t have to give any part of myself to her.” -- Lirael, reflecting on her relationship with a therapist from her adolescence

4.1 Orienting

Many psychotherapeutic traditions support the notion that fertile psychotherapy is rooted in mutual relationships out of which often bloom, for both parties, new experience, learning, and healing, and, in many cases, deep love—I think of much of the humanistic and existential traditions (Yalom’s “fellow travelers”; Rogers’s “congruence”; the Gestalt “contact boundary”), relational psychoanalytic perspectives, and perhaps most deeply, Jungian and post-Jungian approaches, particularly Jung’s descriptions of therapeutic alchemy, and the notion that it is the chemical reaction of relationship, each party bringing the wound and the balm that the other needs, that leads to transformation. Indeed, the common factors research supports that the major necessity for transformative therapy is a good therapist-patient alliance, and recent research and even popular articles have begun to challenge the period of ascendancy of EST research, and the idea that the deep relational and individual mysteries of human transformation can be quantified or generalized. Certainly, relationship lends itself well to case study work: requiring the unique chemistry of two unique people, it is mysterious, ineffable, not a generally
applicable “technique.” It requires personal development and practice in intimacy, and
thoughtful reflection about and deepening through learning the stories of other human
and therapy relationships. In writing about Lirael, part of my task then has been to
explore this mutuality, particularly in terms of the richness of Lirael’s dissociative and
multiple experience, as it was lived between us and through us. Howell (2005),
describing the position of relational psychoanalysis on dissociative multiplicity, argues
that considering “the internalization of multiple aspects of attachment relationships, plus
the likelihood of some relational trauma, it is clear that a construct of psychic structuring
based on relationships must include dissociation” (p. vii). Of course, the argument also
goes in the other direction: that an understanding of working therapeutically with
dissociative multiplicity, forged as it is in traumatic relationships, must include focus on
relationship in the work. Herman (1992) says that “[r]ecovery [from trauma] can take
place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation” (p. 133). Thus,
I considered my work with Lirael as most deeply about relationship facilitation: between
her and me, including the interactions between the multiple aspects of her and the
multiple aspects of me; between her and the parts of herself, particularly those with
which she has been reluctant to identify or even dialogue; and between her and the (also
multiple and complex) people in her life.

Nonetheless, as I begin this section I also am aware that the flip side of the coin is
that psychotherapy traditions sometimes have been fearful of embracing therapy as a
“real” relationship, with the classic example being Freud’s emphasis (or at least a
collective fantasy of Freud’s emphasis) on the therapist as a screen for the patient’s
projection of past experiences, rather than as a new other for present-moment relating.
While there has been a sea change toward relationally-focused work in recent years, especially in traditions such as existential and humanistic approaches and relational psychoanalytic approaches, in my own experience, I have seen in a variety of training contexts and among a variety of peers and colleagues (and within myself!) anxiety about caring about our patients “too much” or revealing ourselves “too much” in the work or in supervision and consultation, whatever exactly “too much” is or means. While certainly, the maintenance of professional boundaries, particularly around sexual behavior, is crucial, I would argue that the “appropriate” boundaries for what we talk about with patients and with colleagues are not easy to classify and often are open to collaborative negotiation depending on context and personalities (especially because the nature of psychotherapeutic work—and its requirement to talk in professional settings about virtually the entire range of human feeling, including those that may happen in the session themselves and between therapist and patient—challenges many traditional social conceptions of propriety!). I would propose two major reasons for such relational anxieties: both because the healing action of relationships is individual and idiosyncratic (and so virtually impossible to quantify and replicate), and because, as professionals all too aware of the potent power of human attachments and feelings, psychotherapists are terrified of our own capacity to wound—and to be wounded by—our patients.

My work with Lirael well-illustrates the challenges of psychotherapeutic relationships, and ways that I worked both to respect and find ways to address and connect through such challenges. As a patient with a DID experience, Lirael presented particular learning opportunities in terms of relationship. McWilliams (2011) notes that therapists may find themselves deeply caring for DID patients and extending themselves
more than is usual for them in their work. I think, for example, of how I particularly felt myself engaging in this kind of intensive involvement when I was struggling to help Lirael locate a referral in a different state for when she moved after a year of work together: I felt overwhelmingly compelled to help her through her fears about losing our relationship and beginning a new life, and overwhelmingly concerned that on the other side she would meet someone destructive, insensitive … or honestly, even just not up to my standards! While I would be invested in the referral process for any patient who requested my help, particularly one who was uniquely vulnerable, with Lirael, my engagement was above and beyond. I had no contacts in the city to which Lirael was moving, so I scoured the internet, sent emails, made phone calls, asked questions, and pursued various leads, some to dead ends and others to conversations that ranged from bland to stiff to awkward to unsettling to heartbreaking. As the clock ticked, I worried; the exercise was trying for me not only because I worried about Lirael, but also because my own heart was exhausted by the vulnerability of trying to navigate what felt like finding a good home for someone I loved while being terrified that no one would recognize the legitimacy of my love or her need. Notably, when I finally spoke on the phone to the therapist who would become Lirael’s next therapist, a part of what led me to believe that she would be a good and competent fit for Lirael was the compassionate way in which she gently noted that she could hear in my voice how important Lirael was to me. It was a subtle yet courageous move on her part, to risk the intrusion of that observation moments after we’d first said hello; it also was, I believe, so patently obvious
that it was the only thing for an honest and direct person to say. Certainly, it probably goes without saying (but I believe I should say it anyway) that this dissertation in itself speaks volumes of my relationship to working with Lirael and DID: Lirael’s lovability, and my love for her, are laid bare here.

4.2 Psychoanalysis and the Therapy Relationship

Psychoanalytic traditions make meaningful contributions to a conversation about psychotherapy as the engagement of two full persons: a relationship that is potent, necessary, and potentially problematic. Classically, the relationship primarily was seen as a means by which the patient’s unconscious material could come to light and be addressed through transference fantasies about the therapist, but other, particularly more recent, traditions characterize the analytic relationship in more intersubjective, “real” terms. Orange (1995) describes the transference-countertransference field in a way that I find useful in considering the intimacy, mutuality, and uniqueness of every therapeutic relationship, and the centrality of the therapist knowing and exploring his- or herself and contributions to the work. Orange refers to “cotransference,” specifically as an alternative name (rather than countertransference) for the analyst’s involvement, and more “broadly” as reference to “the concurrent and mutual organizing activity of analyst and patient” (p. 63). In this vision of the work, there is no “objective reality to which one party has access and the other does not,” and neither transference nor countertransference is cast in a pejorative light (p. 64). Orange, aligning herself with Lewis Aron’s work, notes that

---

19 When Lirael and I first began working together, Laura, Lirael’s prior therapist, expressed to me a comparable experience of strong relief that she had found a suitable new therapist for Lirael. And when, after she and Lirael had begun working together, I spoke with the therapist to whom I referred Lirael, this woman also shared with me similar personal reactions of wanting to extend herself into Lirael’s life and needs. Around Lirael, compassionately binding the stages of her therapeutic life, there are bonds of love that her own resiliency helped to forge.
psychoanalysis is “a mutual and asymmetrical relationship”: both parties are “fully implicated” in relating and understanding, but one is there “primarily for the sake of the other” (p. 68). Bromberg (1998) additionally notes that focus on relationship is interconnected with an appreciation of trauma, dissociation, and multiplicity: he writes that “there has been remarkable resiliency over time and across diverse schools of analytic thought with regard to the idea that because dissociation is a response to trauma, the quality of the analytic relationship takes on special significance” (he cites Ferenczi, Balint, Sullivan, Fairbairn, Bion, and Kohut as writers who “all saw the etiology of severe dissociation as linked to an early history of psychological trauma and leading to personality development designed to protect against its recall at almost any cost”; he also sees these writers as “struggling … with the question of how dissociation shapes the analytic relationship and its effectiveness”) (p. 136). Mitchell and Black (1995) note Harry Stack Sullivan’s interpersonal theory in particular as an early proponent of a self organized by relational patterns and dissociation of what is “not me” from “good me,” rather than a self organized by repression (p. 69). Identified under the umbrella of recent and contemporary relational psychoanalysts, we find the work of Stephen Mitchell, Lewis Aron, Philip Bromberg, Christopher Bollas, Jessica Benjamin, Karen Maroda, Donnel Stern, Robert Stolorow, and Donna Orange, among many others. In order to narrow my theoretical focus, I will focus on several relationship-oriented writers who had a particularly strong impact on my work with and perspective on Lirael, the first of whom are in the tradition of relational psychoanalysis, and the latter of whom are from the Jungian tradition—while not typically included in the category specifically identified as relational, the Jungian tradition has a long and rich history of exploring and affirming
therapeutic mutuality. I will reference some ideas about the therapeutic relationship in general, and some in particular about the impact of dissociation and multiplicity on the relationship.

Many authors cite the origins of contemporary relational psychoanalytic perspectives in the work of Sándor Ferenczi, stressing in particular Ferenczi as an early theorist about DID in his descriptions of parts of children identifying with their aggressor (Howell, 2014). An early close associate of Freud, Ferenczi eventually split with classical analysis because of his belief that many of his patients had experienced actual traumas (in tension with Freud’s eventual fantasy preference) and his observations that the conventional structure of emotionally distant analyst can be unhelpful or even wounding. Ferenczi (1933) perceived defensiveness built into the structure of analysis itself, a “professional hypocrisy” that puts patients in danger of therapeutic retraumatization (p. 158). He also confronted this defensiveness in his own work, eventually even taking his patients’ challenges to engage in so-called “mutual analysis” with them. This experiment eventually failed—Bromberg (1998) argues that at its worst, it is a mistaken attempt to fully meet a patient, as deep intimacy actually may not require and may even be impeded by so much personal disclosure from the analyst. But Ferenczi’s devoted grappling with his patients’ demands for whole-heartedness remains inspiring in a field that, though in different ways than Freud’s time, often continues to deny the unquantifiable transformative nature of its person to person foundation. Orange (2011) describes Ferenczi as an advocate “against every form of dehumanization in our work” and as someone who encourages us “to reach, as he did, for any possible way to confront the suffering patient” (p. 74).
Ferenczi (1932) vividly describes the problematic defensiveness of analysis in his clinical diary simply by enumerating the flow of a typical psychoanalytic session:

“(Mannered form of greeting, formal request to ‘tell everything,’ so-called free-floating attention, which ultimately amounts to no attention at all, and which is certainly inadequate to the highly emotional character of the analysand’s communications, often brought out only with the greatest difficulty.) This has the following effects: (1) the patient is offended by the lack of interest, or the total absence of interest; (2) since he does not want to think badly of us, or to regard us with disfavor, he looks for the cause of this lack of reaction in himself or in the quality of the material he has communicated to us; (3) finally he doubts the reality of the content, which until now he had felt so acutely.” (p. 1)

When I first read this description, I laughed with its clarity and obviousness. Of course this structure in itself, which encourages preoccupation with and confusion about the person of the analyst, could distress a patient who has lived preoccupied with and confused by inattentive or abusive people, and who has identified with them and disparaged and invalidated herself in an effort to survive with those who also care for her intact! In this sense, Ferenczi’s comments here evoke Lirael’s reasons for craving and asking for a personal and lively engagement from me in light of her personal and therapeutic history.

Responding to his own patients’ traumatized reactions to these conventions, Ferenczi’s (1933) message in his late work is that therapists must unflinchingly attend to the ways in which the structure of psychotherapy and our own resistances keep us from feeling for and with our patients. “I started to listen to my patients,” Ferenczi wrote,
“when, in their attacks, they called me insensitive, cold, even hard and cruel, when they reproached me with being selfish, heartless, conceited, when they shouted at me: ‘Help! Quick! Don’t let me perish helplessly!’ Then I began to test my conscience in order to discover whether, despite all my conscious good intentions, there might after all be some truth in these accusations” (p. 157).

Unfortunately, Ferenczi observed that this kind of open and direct patient “anger and hatred occurred only exceptionally”; more often, the patient accepts the analyst’s interpretations with “almost helpless compliance” (p. 157). At the same time, the therapist’s own history, which often involves her own trauma that leads her to seek the patient’s healing as a surrogate for her own, makes validating such anger difficult indeed. And so the therapist, the person who consciously wants to help, ends up in the role of inflicting the patient’s past trauma upon her once again. Ferenczi writes: “The analytical situation—i.e. the restrained coolness, the professional hypocrisy and—hidden behind it but never revealed—a dislike of the patient which, nevertheless, he felt in all his being—such a situation was not essentially different from that which in his childhood had led to his illness” (p. 159). Indeed, for Ferenczi, *psychotherapy at the structural and relational level often is actually traumatizing*. Ferenczi believes that we can transcend this failure if we “acknowledge our crimes and misdemeanors, as kindly as possible”; if we “admit how little we understand”; if we “confess our exhaustion and frustration” and “accept responsibility for our current contributions to our patients’ suffering” (Orange, p. 100). We affirm the necessity of attending to and working on the relationship as a means of getting to the heart of the matter and pursuing the recognition and healing that is a crucial part of therapeutic practice.
Other more recent analysts rooted in a relational heart of therapeutic work, beyond hierarchy and defensiveness, make similar arguments. Karen Maroda has been of particular inspiration for this project. Her books *The Power of Countertransference* (1990) and *Seduction, Surrender, and Transformation: Emotional Engagement in the Analytic Process* (1998) argue for the necessity of therapists being willing to engage with patients at a personally intimate level. Maroda (1990) writes that therapists inevitably must realize that there is “no place to hide,” and no reason to hide, in our work (p. 5). She adds, alluding to and underscoring the tradition of personal analyses within analytic training, that “if we accept that our patients will inevitably know us as we know them, at the deepest and most primitive levels, then it is incumbent upon us to understand ourselves at these levels, particularly in regard to what we are seeking in making ourselves available as therapists” (p. 37). She argues that “[a]s analytic clinicians, our level of expertise can only be as great as our level of self-awareness and our capacity to bear being seen realistically by others” (p. 65).

Of contemporary relational writers, those who discuss dissociation and multiplicity in the therapy relationship most explicitly are Donnel Stern (2003, 2009) and Philip Bromberg (1998, 2011). Stern describes dissociation as “unconscious unwillingness to experience certain states of being simultaneously” and “as the inability or unconscious unwillingness to articulate certain aspects of one’s experience in verbal language” (p. 63). He further characterizes dissociation as “a constraint on the freedom of thought” and “the freedom to feel,” “a failure to allow one’s imagination free play” (p. 64). Stern’s work considers the “unformulated” in human experience and analytic process, and he argues that we help patients to move from “dissociation to conflict.” As
I’ve described, this understanding is distinct from a more traditional conceptualization of repression, which positions repressed memory and experience as outside of awareness, but complete and waiting for our retrieval. In contrast, for Stern and more dissociatively-minded thinkers, much of our experience remain inchoate and unintelligible, awaiting processing into a form that we can understand and address. The unconscious in this sense is “something more than a container” (p. 240). While some might imagine therapy as a means to alleviate conflict, in many cases, and certainly in Lirael’s case, the heart of the work actually was identifying conflict, and experiencing conflict within relational awareness, rather than dissociated across multiple disconnected states. Stern notes that both analyst and patient participate in the act of formulation, and that dissociation and stuckness can happen not only for the patient, but also for the analyst. He writes, “The analyst unconsciously denies himself access to the context, to the state of his own self—to the other within himself—from within which it would be possible to construct the experience of the analysand. In more familiar terms, the analyst does not understand himself well enough to understand the patient” (p. 45). While conscious conflict may be a therapeutic goal, Stern additionally writes that “the self is not simple and unitary but a more or less cohesive collection of self-states” (p. 48); he adds that “each self-state is defined by the experience that we are capable of creating, feeling, and formulating from within it” (p. 49).

Bromberg similarly explores the person as made up of multiple self-states, with the spaces in between, when unoccupied, as the site of the unconscious, for him largely disintegrated self-knowledge and experience. Bromberg argues that we must learn to stand in those spaces between multiple selves, overcoming dissociative demarcation, for
a fuller experience of psychic integrity. Bromberg helps us to elaborate that analysis consists of “multiple real relationships” rather than ‘a real relationship and transferential relationship’; self-states of the patient interact with self-states of the analyst, and multiple truths seek to find an experiential and interpersonal world in which they can both express themselves and reach a level of creative negotiation (p. 288). Much like Stern, Bromberg writes that analysis is “a complex field of multiple realities ([the analyst’s] own shifting self-states and his patient’s)” (p. 307). Bromberg writes that the patient is not “in need of ‘insight’ that will correct faulty reality,” but rather “someone in need of a relationship with another person through which words can be found for that which has no verbal language” (p. 146).

While the contemporary relational analysts most explicitly have written about analysis as relationship, the mutuality of analytic work has been a central and long-standing part of much of the Jungian tradition. Indeed, while relational analysts have criticized the restrained and even cold nature of the relationship in classical analytic work, historically, the Jungian tradition always has been receptive to the therapeutic relationship as relationship. In a commentary on Mitchell and Greenberg’s foundational 1983 book on relational analysis, David Sedgwick (2014) notes that Jung’s work “not only prefigures but resonates deeply with many important tenets of Relational psychoanalysis.” Theoretical openness, through comparison and integration, are a part of this resonance, as well as is a vision of the person beyond drive theory and a vision of the unconscious beyond repressed content. For Sedgwick, Jung’s and the post-Jungians’ work with archetypal, dissociative, and creative aspects of the unconscious place them near to relational voices.
Sedgwick adds, “Sandor Ferenczi nowadays is thought of as the spiritual forefather of Relational psychoanalysis,” (and in this section, I introduced him in that way), “but Jung in many ways was right there with him—in spirit, technique, and particularly in their emphasis on ‘mutuality’ in the analytic relationship.” Sedgwick additionally comments that though many have noted the ways in which this mutuality was vilified and suppressed by those around Ferenczi within psychoanalysis proper, in fact it was not split off from the divergent Jungian tradition, which for decades has continued to deepen themes of mutually potent whole-person engagement and transformation. Sedgwick notes that Jung outright rejects the transference-focused core of classical technique—“anonymity, abstinence, and neutrality”—instead asking analysts to move beyond a “smoke-screen of fatherly and professional authority” (Jung 1929, p. 71). Sedgwick notes that Jung adds that “[i]t is an ‘open secret’ that patients look ‘into the soul’ of the analyst (1913, p. 198) and that they ‘‘read the analyst’s character intuitively’’ (1914, p. 260). These ideas lead to the conviction that the person of the analyst is the instrument of the work, primary to all theoretical and technical understanding. Such a perspective allows for the irreducible otherness and subjectivity of individual persons, combined with the potency of the intersubjective. This combination—the meeting and simultaneous co-creation of separate beings—leads to the creation of something beyond each individual person.

Samuels (1985) also argues for the relational history and nature of Jungian work. He adds that the idea of mutuality is rooted in Jung’s belief that the analyst can only take a patient psychologically as far as she herself has gone. Because the patient’s development thus “is intimately linked with that of the analyst . . . the analyst must be
emotionally involved in what is happening” (p. 176). Unless the analyst is personally affected by the relationship, the patient cannot develop. Samuels roots his understanding of Jung and the therapy relationship in Jung’s (1946) work in *The Psychology of the Transference*, an essay that draws from the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, a medieval (1550) text on the alchemical process of combining base elements in pursuit of the philosopher’s stone, what Jung came to see as “a metaphor for realisation of the self, the outcome of the process of individuation” (p. 179). Jung believed that in the interest of this realization, the analytic relationship was just such an alchemical process. While part of this alchemical process occurs through the mixing of base and opposing elements that are a part of a patient’s own psyche, Jung also proposed that the “the personalities of analyst and patient are combined like chemical elements,” and that through this intimate interaction, “a new, third substance is produced” (p. 181). The third transforms both analyst and patient. Barbara Sullivan (1989) similarly explores these alchemical themes in her book *Psychotherapy Grounded in the Feminine Principle*. For Sullivan, “the feminine principle” is precisely this chemical marriage and reaction: the necessity of an intermingling between the souls of patient and analyst and, through the vehicle of consciously engaged relationship, profound transformation.

Samuels takes these ideas further when he describes the emphasis in Jungian traditions on “the wounded healer” archetype, an idea first described by Jung, meaning that the analyst’s personal wounds inspire, inform, and ultimately make possible analytic healing. Samuels describes Meier’s (1949) work on ancient healing practices in the temples of Asclepius, under the teaching of Chiron the centaur, who suffers from “an incurable wound” (p. 187). These themes recall my earlier discussion of Rogers’s (1995)
book: for Rogers, her fear of suffering psychic disintegration in the face of her own trauma left her frozen, preventing her from achieving intimacy with her traumatized patient. It was only by going into her wounds that she could find the strength and vulnerability to engage with Ben’s profound abandonment, and this engagement, including her courage to return to him after her psychotic crisis, was the only way their work could fulfill its promise.

It is important to note that these descriptions of the necessity and power of the relationship do not erase its complexity and even messiness: Samuels notes that “[o]nce an analysis is under way unconscious contents will be projected leading to an ‘atmosphere of illusion’ with constant miscommunications. But it is in this atmosphere that both transference and transformation occur” (p. 181). Precisely in the wild, delicate, and imperfect dance of chemistry, therapist and patient attempt again and again to meet each other, engaging with material of the past and of psyche as it comes alive between two unique people, creating new experience.

Stein’s (1984) writing also has been influential in my work with the chemistry and intimacy of the therapy relationship. Stein discusses habitual countertransference positions, including the heroic, the shamanic, and the maeutic. I understand my own orientation to be a blend of the shamanic and maeutic (midwife), as I tend to engage both in efforts to heal through “a kind of alchemical combination of psychic elements” and a mutual sickness and healing within my own psyche (p. 77), and through a positioning of myself as an assistant “to a creative process that is taking place within” my patient: an effort to help him or her give birth to a powerful and beautiful new self (p. 80). Certainly, these modes well-characterize my work with Lirael: Embracing of my own human
woundedness, especially around longing to be loved in my full complexity, provided the sensitivity and inspiration for me to help Lirael metabolize her life story and continue development. At the same time, I clearly also strongly was oriented toward aiding Lirael in an intense birthing process, as she sought her unique unfolding. Stein argues that these basic countertransference attitudes are “the analyst’s ‘face’” (p. 86): that we carry them with us from previous experience and character, and that they cannot be changed anymore than our physical faces can be changed. Thus, we also must be familiar with the shadows of these positions: as shaman I risk over-identifying with my patient and healing only myself; as midwife I risk making my patient “come up with a fetus” that may not yet, or may never, exist (p. 84).

While post-Jungian archetypal perspectives tend to be more interested in transpersonal psyche than personal relationship, Hillman’s (1975) descriptions of the purposes of face to face work, and what we miss when we believe that psychotherapy needs to do something other than foster speaking to each other, also is evocative for me as I reflect on the therapy relationship. Hillman writes that “Freud’s talking cure is the cure of our talk,” and that

“The overwhelming difficulty of communicating soul in talk becomes crushingly real when two persons sit in two chairs, face to face and knee to knee, as in an analysis with Jung. Then we realize what a miracle it is to find the right words, words that carry soul accurately, where thought, image, and feeling interweave. Then we realize that soul can be made on the spot simply through speech. Such talk is the most complex psychic endeavor imaginable—which says something
about why Jung’s psychology was a cultural advance over Freud’s style of talking cure, free autistic associations on the couch.” (pp. 217-218)

For Hillman, then, it is psyche spoken in the presence of another person that is the heart of therapeutic work. While we may have spiritual or physical practices or fantasies of bypassing our suffering, for Hillman, the psychological, including its pathologizing, ultimately is what makes us human, and far from being theoretical or metaphysical, soul “of bulk and substance” is “evoked by words and expressed in words.” It is through making our souls from speech in the presence of others that we embody our humanity, and that we prevent culture from lapsing into the “communication ruins” brought about by “refus[ing] eloquence as a mirror of … soul” (pp. 217-218). This argument for the necessity and preciousness of soulful conversation is for me one of the most convincing that I have encountered for the value of person to person psychological work.

3. Working with Lirael: Self-disclosure and Boundary Negotiation

Shaped by Lirael’s traumatic history and relational needs, questions about how much I would be present in her therapy as my fullest self arose with unique urgency. Even before I met Lirael in person, I was faced with questions about boundaries and self-disclosure that challenged how I unreflectively tended to orient myself in my work. A psychoanalytic type by first love, I tended rarely to self-disclose to my patients (when I first started working I did not even affectively self-disclose very much), following along with what I understood as a basic value from a therapy tradition with which I felt resonant. But in my initial conversations with Laura, she told me that in light of Lirael’s trauma history (including what I would learn to be a traumatic history with a therapist from her adolescence, by whom Lirael felt avoided and betrayed), Lirael established her
sense of therapeutic safety through learning more personal details about her therapist than what may be the “typical” needs of many clients… or than what may be “typical” in my own/our own fantasy of psychoanalytic work. This kind of need is supported in general clinical wisdom about working with DID: Kluft (1991) notes that therapists working with DID patients “can anticipate that technical neutrality will be interpreted as uncaring and rejecting”; he adds that therapists are called to take “a warmer stance that allows for a latitude of affective expression” (quoted in McWilliams, 2011, p. 349). McWilliams (2011) adds that “working with dissociative clients requires some flexibility” in terms of boundaries (p. 351). In keeping with these perspectives, Laura told me that Lirael frequently asked her questions about her personal life, her academic work, etc. Laura described this process in terms of Lirael’s female child alter, Sophie: she explained that I could expect to experience the kind of curiosity that one sometimes receives from six-year-olds, and that there was both an innocence and a possible discomfort in being related to in this way by a young adult in the therapy situation. Laura said that how much she shared with Lirael was individual to her personal comfort and negotiated with Lirael. Laura recommended that I realize Lirael’s needs going into the work, and that I take care of myself as necessary while relating collaboratively with Lirael.

As Laura gave me advice about building a more open relationship with Lirael, in particular, she said that if I felt comfortable, Lirael would appreciate knowing about my pets, as knowing some about Laura’s cat had been helpful for Lirael: Lirael had had a beloved pet bunny in her childhood, and Laura said that knowing that I had an animal I loved would help to facilitate Lirael’s trust in me. Laura wrote in an email: “She calls for an honesty that may be different than other clients.” Thus I chose to tell Lirael about my
own cat in the service of establishing rapport, including sharing pictures and stories about his personality and how he was doing. Initially this cat frequently served as a touchstone between us, a warm topic to which Lirael would return in moments of distress or transition as we built our relationship. As we worked together, Lirael’s openness, curiosity, and capacity for attachment, combined with my own efforts to meet her with similar presence, led us to have conversations about other parts of my life. She learned mainly about my personal interests and important people to me, notably my then-boyfriend, who by a strange, though fitting, coincidence had previously been Lirael’s psychology instructor.

I have to confess that I nonetheless did (and to some extent still do) feel a degree of shame about the fact that Lirael knows personal things about me, even though many psychotherapists don’t see an inherent problem with self-disclosure, and indeed even much of the contemporary psychoanalytic tradition argues for flexibility in personal boundaries. While I know that my embarrassment is related to my personal dynamics, I also recognize and affirm that there remains a larger therapeutic ethos that discourages thinking of the therapy relationship as a personal one and that colors therapist self-disclosure as self-indulgent or harmful, regardless of content or context, and even that silences therapists who might wish to talk about their reasons for sometimes adopting a more whole-person presence in their work. In my experience, this attitude is in the therapeutic air to greater and lesser degrees in various circles, and we all can end up frozen by it, as sometimes I have felt in supervisions and group consultations—unable to work on what’s actually happening, the ethically responsible thing to do, out of fear that
Ironically, of course nothing is more likely to lead to poorly thought-through decisions than an environment in which people feel like they cannot talk about what’s actually happening! Baur (1997) makes similar points in her discussion of love, specifically the erotic, in therapy, arguing that the ways in which love in all its forms has been so therapeutically demonized and split off have made professionally talking about love unthinkable, and therefore more dangerous of being enacted by therapists in needy, destructive, and/or physically sexualized ways. The person who does not know her shadow intimately is the one most at risk of acting it out.

In retrospect, I remain glad that I made the self-disclosure choices that I did with Lirael, and I am continuing to seek out complex conversations about the realities of therapeutic intimacy: all those ways in which our hearts may be stirred by patients, and their hearts may be stirred by us. Lirael’s connection to details of my personal life proved to be a containing force and a continuous thread that built trust through developing her sense of my human wholeness and credibility. It also gave us something to hold onto and retreat into during painful times, sustaining a nourishing foundation of personal intimacy between us that made hard work bearable. Lirael herself also told me that my occasional use of self-disclosure was a good thing for her, and the most empowering position, I felt then and feel now, is to take her at her word.

My conversations with Lirael about this dissertation also presented a unique self-disclosure challenge to our relationship. While I believed that my work with Lirael could make a powerful and fruitful dissertation, I also wanted to be sensitive about the ways in

---

20 [I reflect now on my analyst, and in fact also a supervisor at my internship site, who always would ask me what would happen if I stopped letting my shame get in the way of me: if I just let myself work on what I wanted and needed to work on and what my patient was calling for from me, instead of adding that crippling layer of self-criticism.]
which I approached this desire with Lirael. I thought that it would be unethical for me to hold onto the knowledge that I wanted to write about her for months without sharing, going through the therapy knowing that writing about her was my intention without being transparent with her. At the same time, I wanted to be sensitive to not make our relationship primarily about my needs: I wanted to remember that sometimes it is most ethical to contain something in the service of a patient, rather than to share it for our own comfort. I wondered: what was truly in Lirael’s best interest?

In my own observations and reflection, I have noticed how writing about patients and telling them about that writing seems to run the risk of fostering a kind of “special patient” positioning that can impede that patient’s development: it seems that it can produce a false self experience in which the patient feels that she must meet the therapist’s fantasies about her, and it can co-opt or even exploit the patient’s story for the therapist’s needs and work. At the same time, I think that being written about as a patient can have an empowering and healing dimension: knowing that you meant so much (intellectually and personally) to a therapist that he or she decided to write about you, and also knowing that your story may touch and help other patients in similar situations. Of course, a background issue that additionally complicates therapists using patient stories is related to consent, and the challenges of giving it in a relationship that is asymmetrical (even if mutual). Certainly, DID complicates consent issues even further, as while many patients are likely to have an ambivalent response to giving consent, in cases of DID, that ambivalence may literally be embodied by alters, whose “No!” seems to carry a more undeniable weight than the hesitancy a person expresses from within her “I” consciousness.
It was about halfway through our year of work when I first became aware of my conflict around writing about Lirael. “I am in conflict,” I wrote in my notes. “I am so her champion. How can I write about her?” For me this was an important recognition and subsequent question. Though in my work generally I rarely am identified with Stein’s (1984) “hero” countertransference position, I did at times feel a heroic pull with Lirael. I felt protective of her: even careful of how I spoke about her in supervision and consultation contexts. There were memories that Lirael shared with me, and ways that she put words and feelings, gesture and expression to those communications, that I have never spoken to another human being. While I think I ultimately could say the same about my work with all of my patients, something about my relationship to Lirael and her dissociative, multiple experience in the face of trauma uniquely impressed me with the intensity of therapeutic ethics. Thus, considering myself as a kind of hero for her, in my collegial world and in our battles with her own experience, wouldn’t it be disingenuous for me to write about her? I think again of Baur’s (1997) work, and her comments about a psychiatrist who falls in romantic love with a patient and then finds applying diagnostic criteria to him to be unhelpful and demeaning. While Baur opens up reflection on the boundary-protective nature of clinical/academic language (preserving professional distance), she also notes that if deep love makes our professional language unpalatable to us, then perhaps there is something wrong with our professional language.

The way I came to peace with this predicament was to consider, as I have described, the ways in which this dissertation is fundamentally about my therapeutic perspective and about dissociation and multiplicity as a rich way of understanding human experience … not fundamentally about intimate details of Lirael’s life and our work. And
I shared my hope to write about Lirael with her in this way. I also took seriously that Lirael might say, “No, I don’t want you to write about me or our work.” Fortunately for this project, Lirael was receptive to my wishes and the nature of my request. As the conversation unfolded between us, she openly expressed appreciation of knowing the impact that she had had on me: even being surprised by, and then moved by, this knowledge.\textsuperscript{21} If we can think of the usefulness of this form of “self-disclosure,” I think that in ways a therapist writing about a patient is a potent affirmation of a client’s power. It also is a beautiful example of modeling object constancy.\textsuperscript{22}

My request to Lirael for her consent that I write about her did change, and deepen, our relationship. After the session in which I described to Lirael my plans for the dissertation, I noted that we lingered for a while by the door. The session had been an intimate one: Lirael had been moved to learn of my idea for my dissertation, struck by

\textsuperscript{21} I think often patients do not know it when they have touched us as deeply as we have touched them. While for some patients, this knowledge may be overwhelming and unneeded at the time, for others, I have found that hearing it is actually a necessary component to the therapeutic experience.

\textsuperscript{22} [Perfectly enough, a few days after I ended my own therapy to move cross-country, my analyst called to tell me that he’d been reflecting on a small but significant gift I’d given him before we parted. He asked for my permission to write about it in his current book. The moment was powerful for me in the ways I anticipated such a moment would be. Yet on the tail of the elation, it also brought up feelings that I did not anticipate, including feeling that he had left me with an intense reaction, both of validation and frustration, that I could no longer process with him. Fortunately, there was room to address how I had been feeling through some continued contact with him and privately in myself. I was left at peace through re-realizing some things about myself personally, about him, and about our relationship. I was left feeling calm in my conviction that the therapeutic relationship is not about meeting some perfect fantasied ideal, but rather about being centered in human love, and about being willing to continue a dialogue of relationship and psyche, even if ultimately we are each called to carry that dialogue in our own experience. I bring up this personal experience as an event in my life, occurring over two years after my terminating with Lirael, that made me reflect again on Lirael and my relationship and that made me think anew about how she might have experienced my asking to write about her, and how that experience does continue to go on for her beyond me. I realized that that request likely has changed its meanings over time in ways that neither of us could anticipate. I can only hope that Lirael feels supported enough at this time in her life to experience whatever reactions about me/us that she needs to experience, and that ultimately she is able to embrace that just as she is multiple, I am multiple, and our relationship was/is multiple. As Mitchell (1993) writes: “In ending with a patient, my deepest hope for the impact of our work is that it be valued without being sanctified, that it finds a place in her experience without superimposing a set of constraints on the ongoing personal generation of her experience” (p. 230-231).]
my sharing that I had learned a lot from her, because she said she usually thought of the therapy as an opportunity for her to learn from me. This was also a session in which Lirael used the word “friend” to describe who she additionally felt I was to her. While I don’t normally think of my therapy relationships as friendships, and I am sensitive to all the ways in which therapy has unique possibilities precisely because it is not friendship, in ways, she was right: we both knew each other intimately, even if a large part of how she knew me came from indirect expressions of my heart, rather than biographical disclosure. I wrote in my notes that I could feel that “a warmth came into our relationship that day that was very loving.” Looking back, perhaps this was a turning point when I more fully communicated to Lirael what she meant to me. I made myself vulnerable, surrendering my investment to her knowledge and her will, and that vulnerability mattered and impacted the course of our work. Lirael seemed immediately able to see my writing about her as a potent way to honor our relationship and acknowledge the ways in which it would be carried forward.

Talking about my dissertation with Lirael additionally evoked unresolved material about her relationship with her former therapist, Laura. Lirael was interested in reading this woman’s dissertation also, because she wanted to know her more through knowing her research interests and writing voice. At the same time, Lirael was terrified because the dissertation involved interviews with perpetrators of sexual violence. Lirael said that when she saw Laura’s dissertation title on the psychology department website, she felt destabilized as she tried to wrap her mind around Laura’s interest in a kind of person who harmed people, including Lirael herself. While these exchanges were a part of Lirael’s therapy with Laura, not with me, they additionally impressed upon me what is often the
inevitability of therapist disclosure and disclosure’s ongoing impact, including into other therapies, in ways that therapist and patient cannot anticipate.

Ultimately, in considering the boundary crossings that I made with Lirael, my reasons for them, and my efforts to work on them in good faith in our relationship, I return always to McWilliams’s (2011) assertion that the most important ethical consideration in working with traumatized people (and I would clarify: with everyone) is “processing mutually what has happened and what it means to the client” … especially in light of the traumatic violations that constitute a DID life experience (p. 351). One of the paradoxes that I have noticed to occur in many psychotherapies is that it is precisely the nature of someone’s wounds to take some degree of risking the wounding again to heal it. Whether someone is wounded because no one got close enough for deep intimacy, or because people got destructively close and boundaries were violated: in many cases, toeing the line of boundaries, reaching beyond, withdrawing, and processing the whole thing is a central part of the work and the healing. Indeed, much of the relational literature about “enactment” makes these basic points.23

For some concluding thoughts on self-disclosure and boundaries in my relationship with Lirael, Bromberg (1998) offers a rich description to contextualize and differentiate the multiple meanings of self-disclosure in the therapy relationship. He notes that it “derives its meaning from the ongoing context of the relationship”; it is not a

---

23 [From my own personal experience (and long fascination with boundaries and boundary transgression in the service of healing), I can reflect on this fascinating and maddening tension: in my own relationships with authority figures and healers, I have been harmed both by the betrayal of boundaries and by the betrayal of avoiding intimacy (and, paradoxically, healed by both—even if a healing at one side of the wound can never be a complete healing). Ultimately, the most healing relationships I have taken part in involved someone who knew how to dance with me without being afraid of me: who knew how to reach and break through when needed, how to give me back to myself when needed, and most of all how never to be rejecting when I asked us to engage in processing.]
discrete “‘technique’” that can be objectively or universally evaluated or applied (p. 261). Bromberg stresses that in order for self-disclosure to meaningfully serve the relationship, a therapist must genuinely offer personal material, not surrender it from a place of external or internal pressure. He makes the wonderful point that even in a case like Ferenczi’s use of “mutual analysis,” the times when it worked were not because self-disclosure is a necessary part of powerful analytic engagement. Rather, when it worked, it worked because the practice allowed Ferenczi to meet a patient who did not feel met by him in the analysis as it was going: Bromberg writes that radical self-disclosure in these cases succeeded “not because patients in general need soul-searching emotional openness from their analysts, but because that patient at that moment” was able to use a request for Ferenczi’s honesty as a way “to confront [Ferenczi’s] inauthenticity with regard to her” (p. 263). As Orange (1995) writes about self-disclosure, among other interventions: “If a type of intervention or response to a particular patient usually yields understanding and self-consolidation, then it deserves serious consideration, and vice versa” (p. 72).

Ultimately, it is helpful for me to remember that self-disclosure and deep genuineness and mutuality thus do not have a perfect correspondence. While they can go hand and in hand, their co-presence is not necessary, and one can exist without the other … for better and for worse. What we must follow, then, is our unique and co-constituted sense of how to keep a full, present heart alive in each individual therapy relationship. As

---

24 These reflections take me back to Lirael’s comments that what went wrong with her adolescent therapist was that she refused to give Lirael “a part of her,” which in the case of that therapy seems to have been not merely a lack of factual self-disclosure, but a failure of mutuality. As I reflect on Lirael and my work, I think that though self-disclosure is not a necessary (or sufficient!) condition for mutuality, Lirael was a “kind” of patient whom Bromberg describes: she who simply cannot feel cared for and able to continue the work without the analyst’s “gratification” of some disclosure requests (p. 264). In these terms, the reason that I disclosed with Lirael was because she and I had reached an understanding that she would not be able to experience the work as authentic and mutual in the absence of my factual honesty in disclosing personal material.
an example, I think of a time in my later, more professionally developed work with another patient that illustrates the dance between self-disclosure and mutuality: how they can complement each other and exist without each other. I was wondering with a young male patient toward the end of our work about what he most deeply was hoping for in our saying goodbye, and he shared that he wanted to know more about who I was and what was important to me. The sincerity and recognition of our co-presence in his question brought tears to my eyes that I did not bother to conceal from him, especially as he was a person who described chronic fear of being overwhelmed by intimacy but here was so bravely encountering it. We did end up having a conversation about some of my own values, especially as he explained that he was curious to share a more conversational connection with someone with whom he had let himself be so emotionally vulnerable. But what ended up being most important about his request for self-disclosure ended up being our work with the request itself: as an expression of his care for me, and his realization that even before he had asked the question, noticed my being touched, and learned more about me, he already had felt close to me as a person who had stayed with him while he learned his own heart so deeply.

While this kind of therapeutic calling is not easy—it requires being open to the challenge of fresh perception and collaboration in each new relationship—it also is inspiring in that it provides a way to work with how therapy simply is not one size fits all, not a set of techniques that one can master in the abstract. While we must learn the wisdom in the traditions of the profession, in each new therapeutic relationship the truths (or limitations) of tradition must be re-experienced and re-affirmed or challenged in fresh ways. As Bromberg (1988) says: “clinical judgment is always relational” (p. 307). In my
work with Lirael in light of her complex trauma history and experience of other people as not only abusive, but dissociatively invalidating, my presence as a differentiated, animated, warm person was utterly necessary to her, and always a collaborative process. I will explore the details of Lirael and my uniquely crafted relationship further in upcoming sections.

4.4 Working with Lirael: Love in the Psychotherapy Relationship

Implicit, and sometimes explicit, in everything I write in this project is my love for Lirael, both my embracing of that love in our relationship and in my discussion of that relationship, and my shying away from such intimacy. This process of leaning into and out of therapeutic love—of working with a deep sense of its healing power, and of feeling

---

25 [There is a voice in me. I cannot tell exactly whose voice it is. The voice says, “You should not be writing about love. Love does not belong in psychotherapy. It does not belong in academia.” Maybe what keeps me writing is another voice that comes: This kind of writing is the speech of silent voices, the speech of tearful meetings behind closed doors between trusted colleagues, the speech of whole-being encounters between therapists and clients. It was only through experiencing myself as profoundly loved, both as a training therapist and as a patient, that I can dare to imagine writing about this kind of love ... and that I can really do fully alive therapy work, and come into my own as a psychologist.]

26 By love, I mean a depth of feeling, of letting someone in, of acknowledging that I am forever changed by having known the person. I mean a sense of not only benevolently caring that this person is doing well, as I feel for the vast majority of my patients, but also a particular, special feeling of that person having been at work in and continuing to work in my own soul, changing my personhood and psyche and the way I feel in myself, my relationships, and the world. I mean the kind of experience where, when the patient and I have said goodbye at our last session, I have deliberately left at least an hour open in my schedule (or my likely, I have scheduled the patient at 4 p.m. on a Friday with nothing after), and I go for a long walk, look at the beauty of the world, and weep with loss and gratitude. So far, I have never had to grapple with personal feelings of sexual love for a patient, though I have experienced therapies where there was a strong erotic transference on the part of the patient that we openly addressed. I also have experienced therapies where there was a more subtle, unexplored erotic energy that was less complicated in the sense that it seemed simply to light up and move both of us along in service to the patient’s development. In these cases the patient and I may have talked more generally about how we cared about each other, but never specifically addressed the erotic pulse. I do think that it is important here for me to state that, as we use the word “love” to mean so many different experiences in our culture, when I talk about love in this project, I am not referring to romantic love, to “falling in love.” But that is because that was not my experience with Lirael: I very much agree with Maroda (1991) and Baur (1997) that just because romantic or sexual love is difficult to work with in therapy does not mean we should not write and talk about how to ethically manage romantic love feelings as they do inevitably arise in therapy—that’s just not this project.
stricken by shame about the way love evokes my own vulnerability, and our collective vulnerability as therapists—has happened for me to varying degrees with all of my patients. But I noticed love making a newly undeniable, to-be-reckoned-with entrance into my work through the particular intensity of my bond with Lirael.

Toward the end of Lirael and my work, I recorded this telling experience: “I saw Lirael the other day, on campus in the sunshine. I was walking behind her as she crossed the street in front of the library. She was wearing her orange coat, and I had the urge to hurry up my pace to end up beside her, to greet her enthusiastically, to ask how she was doing, how her trips were, how her interview and conference went. I realized, with nearly a start, that I ‘could not do’ this thing that I wanted to do. I realized that I never would have even considered it with another patient!”

Reading this vignette about Lirael now, I realize in a fresh way how much working with Lirael transformed me: at that time, I said that I would never consider bounding up to a patient and wanting to connect with him or her at that simple, warm-hearted, almost child-like human level. But after working with Lirael, I realize that now I feel this heart-opening toward many of my patients. Part of the gift that Lirael offered me is that she—something unique and precious in her being and our chemistry—broke through the façade I had put up between the professional and the personal; broke through my telling myself that to love a client is to be unprofessional or unhelpful, even when that love is thoughtfully and respectfully channeled.

It is perhaps a great professional secret how deeply many therapists love their patients. As I have described, I think that there is great fear stirred by this love—fear of boundary transgressions, maybe, sexualized or otherwise. But sometimes I wonder if,
more than that, therapists fear their own vulnerability. Maroda (1991) writes about how many psychotherapists have personal histories of relational situations where they felt emotionally unmet and out of control. Maroda says that the controlled intensity of therapy “offers the legitimate possibility for a better outcome” than the situations that led to one’s wounds, “yet also provides a situation where our frustrated needs for intimacy are gratified while minimizing the interpersonal risks that we must take” (p. 38). The therapy situation, with its careful boundaries and limits, in this sense is designed to protect the therapist as much as to protect the patient: whether the therapist has a history of feeling emotionally abandoned or emotionally violated, now, in fifty minute segments, she is able to titrate the amount of intimacy she receives. If the patient hurts her in some way, she can close her door and cry, shout, space out on the internet; perhaps, if she is lucky, she can go for a walk someplace beautiful, or call or go to a beloved colleague or friend who loves her and understands and can help her to take care of herself. And yet I deeply agree with Maroda’s ultimate point: while the boundaries of therapy may offer a profound opportunity for mastery and healing of oneself as much as healing of one’s patients, if we don’t recognize our desire to be gratified and healed as therapists, we are at the greatest risk of wounding those who come to us for help. As Maroda describes, I think that our fear and defensiveness around love, which we can easily legitimate with misguided, even if well-meaning, talk of boundaries, can become oppressive and even destructive when it inhibits us from fully meeting therapy’s moments of great emotional power. It seems to me that not only does this avoidance mean that our patients don’t get to be met in this way, unfortunately we also don’t get to have the powerful and mutually transformative experience of meeting another human being at this deep and healing level.
We avoid what Maroda calls the “symbiotic,” and what Jung called the “coniunctio.” To my sensibilities, we thus are missing out on the most profound gift that therapy is most uniquely suited to offer.

During my internship, three years after I’d terminated with Lirael, and after a lot more therapeutic and wider life experience, I worked with a young female patient who brought my early work with the kind of therapeutic love I encountered with Lirael to full fruition for me. I here will describe my experience with her briefly and generally, as a way of providing more context of what I mean by this kind of love by speaking from where I am now developmentally, at the end of my graduate training. I see my current position as one of far less shame and fear than what I was feeling during the time when I worked with Lirael—and I believe that I have reached this more liberated, fertile point significantly because of the professional and personal work that I was able to do with love due to Lirael’s inspiration in my life.

More than any other patient I’ve ever met, this recent young woman was ready and in need of this kind of love. She saw right through me. The chemistry was so intense that in her presence, without my having to say a word, I often felt like transparent glass. And in the same way from the other direction, I often knew intuitively what she was feeling or what she needed before she had to say very much or anything at all. In the world of therapy, and in the real world, too, it was a kind of love at first sight. The experience reminded me of something that a professor said to me earlier in my training: that finding the right fit in a therapist is “like falling in love.” I loved her immediately, she loved me immediately, and both of us knew it and even began to address it, including addressing and quickly being able to go into her deep relief that she could tell her story
and work with it without feeling that she needed to do a lot of explaining or feeling caught up in any shame. With her, I had a remarkable experience of Maroda’s (1991) comments about how we not only can’t hide as therapists, there is no reason to hide. It was clear that this patient’s sense that she could see me—my personality, the pain and experience in my own history, and my own values—helped her to feel that she was grounded, contained, and witnessed in such a way that even work with agonizing material felt bearable, at moments even joyful.

This woman asked me eventually to help her understand our work more deeply through a description of my own process and experience with her, and I spoke to her with more candor and validation than I have ever spoken to a patient, finding remarkable resonance between how I saw the work (but had not always explicitly processed with her) and her own highly sensitive perceptions of me and us. For example, she also had felt deeply and intuitively understood by me; and additionally she had felt that she understood me through the same channel of mysterious intimacy: she shared some remarkably accurate descriptions of my personality and personal history that she only had gained by observation. Interestingly, much as Lirael described her appreciation of my boundary crossings, this woman also described how it was in the moments when I expressively showed my own vulnerability—outrage, humor, worry, sadness, grief, care, sharing of personal resonance—that she felt the full revelation of my humanity and felt with relief and certainty that her perception that I loved her was confirmed. She expressed having gained a deep sense of hope through our relationship. She said that because I was with her in places where she always had imagined that she would have to be alone, and because I was a full person with my own life and soul that she could see,
she could carry a sense that life was more okay, and that the wounds of her history could be reckoned with and even integrated.

What I also shared with this patient was how much the strength and grace that she felt that she received from me paradoxically were loving gifts that I had felt her offer to me. We ended the therapy out of necessity sooner than either of us would have liked, so perhaps in more time, we may have been able to differentiate more from the symbiotic space that we had attained. But we both were deeply touched by our sense that we weren't always sure who had taken the reaching hand of whom; who had carried whom. It was an experience of deep femininity, mutuality, intuition, and wholeness, an expression of what Barbara Sullivan (1989) calls psychotherapy’s “feminine principle.” Sullivan writes that “rather than being guided by the mind, the whole personality, down to its animal and vegetable elements, is involving itself in the process. The knowledge … gained through this experience can never be shared directly with another person” who was outside of it, but only communicated through image, metaphor, story (pp. 23-24). In reference again to my previous comments about the early cases of hysteria, in ways my experience with this patient seemed like the kind of experience that I imagine the psychoanalytic tradition was born and shaped to attempt to contain and channel. (And yet, different from the origins, in our case we were two women together holding the space.) It was a mystery, beyond what any effort at explanation or interpretation can capture. I know that I left the therapy with a deeper sense myself that life is okay; with another healing experience of knowing that I am enfolded in belonging within the human family—and this sense from experiences with a woman who “knew” very little of my personal-biographical story.
And yet I have no doubt that as deeply as I looked into her soul, she looked into mine. I have no doubt that she knows something of my essence, perhaps even more radically than I even can see or know myself. In the way that she told me that I was a mirror for her resilience and beauty, I felt my own resilience and beauty returning to me from the light of receptivity and recognition in her face.

I never could have done this kind of work earlier in my training, and probably rightly so—it takes time, experience, and wisdom to build the capacity for trusting the chemistry and the archetypal resonances in the ways I did with her. I am only just beginning to trust it. And at the same time, I feel that part of why I could not have done such work earlier was not always because I or my patients were not capable of it, but because I was judging myself by what Barbara Sullivan might call “masculine” standards (standards of logic, linearity, easy ability to report the story back to someone else and have it make sense). I could never have settled into what it took to do the work without the deep presences of loving relationship that I had in my life at the time and that had let me know that my gifts were worth cultivating. I could never have done the work without therapist friends who knew my soul in all its wildness and loved me nonetheless, supervisors who had heard me speak and weep about my truest work and given me the grace to trust myself, and the good luck and privilege of knowing what it was like to experience loving and being loved in a deeply intimate therapy, with a courageous therapist, as a patient myself. And certainly, I could never have done the work without my experiences with Lirael, who on that day when I wanted to bound up beside her, and

---

27 [Interestingly, she said something to me that years before, I had said to my own sorcerer-analyst: that in every object in my/his office, she/I could see me/him. It was my quiet aesthetic self-expression that she reported, and that I had felt, had opened to her the numinous power of intuitive trust.]
throughout all of our work, as I will further describe, gave me my first taste of the desire for mutual intimacy with a patient as a necessary part of certain cases of healing: the vulnerability I felt in my own heart of wanting loving and love, and the grace that I was able to find, to trust myself enough to use my own human desire, my emotional responses, and our chemistry in the service of the work toward which Lirael’s needs, and my own needs, were calling me.

Ultimately, I think that part of what Lirael helped to teach me, something that I now try to communicate to each patient that I see in a way that they can hear, is “I see you, and in all of your complexity, you are precious to me.” While certainly, the communication of this message requires individualized thoughtfulness in timing and phrasing (and I don’t think we should say it if it is not time or if we are not in an emotional place where we can mean it), in my experience, I think this kind of communication is rarely an indulgence for either therapist or patient. Rather, I have found that it is often the direct simplicity of this message that is precisely what patients are yearning to hear. One might call this message a lovely little shorthand for what the relational aspects of this work are about, and/or for why in itself the therapy relationship can be so inexplicably yet radically transformative.28

I will tell a fuller story of the love in Lirael’s work with me in future sections, as I describe our relationship in greater detail, particularly my relationship with each of her alters. Here I will offer one particular example that stands out to me when I think about love and its place in our work. Near the end of our time together, Lirael experienced a

---

28 I also would argue that to communicate to a patient, “You are precious,” there is something else that we must know in that moment in order to offer such love: that we are precious, too, in all our complexity, to others, and to ourselves.
moment of profound love *doubt* related to her prior therapy experience with Laura. As she and I worked with her doubt, we additionally found a deeper opportunity to reflect on and address the personal aspects of our relationship: the relationship’s possibilities, its limits, and what it had meant to both of us.

The doubt was planted while we were meeting together for an ordinary followup appointment with her psychiatrist.29 He was turning through Lirael’s psychotherapy file, and out of it fluttered a card that Lirael had given Laura in gratitude while they were working together the previous year. Lirael later recounted to me her shock to see the card in that moment: she had assumed that Laura had taken it home with her and kept it in her possession, accepting it as a personal gift, rather than storing it with Lirael’s clinical records.

Knowing the significance of this card from my own experience looking at Lirael’s file, I still remember my own horror as the psychiatrist, with no way of knowing what he was stirring, curiously read aloud the hand-printed classification: “Blue Morpheus.” Lirael had drawn the butterfly on the card herself, shading it carefully and vibrantly with colored pencils.30 Somehow Lirael and I both maintained our composure during the

---

29 *Lirael worked with him because she considered the very low dose antipsychotic that he had prescribed her to be a helpful way to slightly “quiet” her others and give her some more space while allowing them to continue to exist. She did not, however, identify with a diagnosis of psychosis, a point of contention between them. While psychiatry historically has been reluctant to make or affirm DID diagnoses, Stickley and Nickeas (2006) note that some patients who receive psychotic diagnoses likely are better described by dissociative disorders and an appreciation of complex trauma.*

30 *I realize just now that the antique print, of butterflies, that I recently hung in my first personal office for doing psychotherapy has a huge beautiful Blue Morpheus at the top; I remember the patterned drapes in my childhood bedroom that my grandmother bought for me, how much I had wanted them: my fascination with those diaphanous clouds of multicolored butterflies—Psyche, and metamorphosis against all odds. I sat recently with a patient struggling against the longing for suicide, looking together at the butterflies and talking about the crisis of change; how impossible it is to see our coming new form when we are cocooned in darkness. I sat later with the woman I describe in the above section, who in our first appointment told me she knew we would “get along fine” due to her seeing my choice of image alone. There is a special magic to creatures who transform so utterly, a special intimacy to Lirael’s careful rendering.*
remainder of that meeting. Later we would come to understand that we both had grasped
the significance of the moment that day. But we did not speak about it until weeks later—even when we were alone immediately after the consultation; even in subsequent
sessions. Perhaps for a little while it only mattered that we could sit with the shock as a
pair, both sensing that we were creating space for and honoring a deep sense of
confusion, hurt, and loss initially too big to be named.

Lirael and I unpacked this moment in later sessions, particularly in a conversation
with her alter Carolyn. Carolyn told me that it had been a painful experience for Lirael
because it had led her to doubt the truth of the love that she had felt with Laura (“the
worst thing for me,” she said, referring to this kind of doubt), love that had had a
profound affect on her and that she deeply had believed to be real. In the moment the card
fell out of her file, she said that she began to doubt the truth of Laura’s love: to doubt that
she had meant something to Laura. I did not have the power to assure Lirael of Laura’s
love, as much as I could communicate what I knew about Laura’s care for her and
express that she surely had her reasons for leaving the card in the file. But I realized that
the most powerful response that I could offer was to invest myself in being
wholeheartedly present to and committed to working with Lirael on confronting the joys
and disappointments and simply the reality of love as it came up in our relationship. I
sought to do that in our time together.

My supervisor at the time and I had an interesting conversation about this
moment. He told me that he thought perhaps I could have said to Lirael that to leave
something in the file was not necessarily to deny a relationship with her; rather, it may
simply have been to make the file a home for all of the relationship, not just a certain
kind of formal clinical paperwork. I countered, though, that I am not sure that many clinicians really treat the file like that, even if it might be a professional ideal: after all, many parts of files can be subpoenaed (in some states, even process notes), and I personally know of many therapists who are careful and minimalist about how they describe patients and their work in formal records for precisely that reason. The idea that a file is a “safe” place for soulfulness and intimacy is somewhat invalidated by the idea that it is not always confidential. Personally, I felt more comfortable keeping Lirael’s gifts in my private possession; if I were to do it again, I think I would ask her immediately where she intended that I keep them (making sure that she understood the other set of confidentiality complications if something lived in my home desk or on my home office wall, for example, and not in a file in a locked cabinet in the clinic). I think that I intuitively initially chose to keep her gifts in my personal space, ultimately the choice she affirmed when we processed the incident with the file, because what seemed to matter most for Lirael were not questions of a certain kind of confidentiality or professionalism, but questions of intimacy and warmth.

Lirael had a remarkable capacity, through calling on her alters, for fostering love in the space between us, even if and when she herself, or I myself, might have felt too scared to sing love without assistance—later I particularly will describe this capacity through her bringing of the alters Sophie and Max. In our last session, though, Lirael had reached a point where she was able to bring us close to such love as herself. In our own ways, faced with loss, we both were what Lirael called “drifty”—not fully present. But at the end of the session, Lirael began intensely crying, after she gave me the scarf that she had knitted for me. I felt myself then be able to soften and open as much as I needed to in
order to meet both of us, and all of our parts, in the intensity of the ending after such a potent and transformative relationship. I was scared and sad, too, and Lirael herself helped me reach the point of opening my heart; sometimes our patients are stronger than we are. I wrote afterward: “A rush breaking through, as it became real—she made it real, and that is such a testament to the incredible strength she has.” As I later will describe, I see the intensity of the love that Lirael evoked in this session, without having to explicitly call on an alter, as a testament to the intense complexity and emotional range that she was becoming capable of bringing with her own hands, even in the absence of complete dissociation. Certainly, her power in these moments also speaks deeply to the gifts that she gave me.

While I write about personal love in this section, ultimately, I hope that in this project, I am presenting a fertile tension that I recognize and feel to be at the heart of psychotherapy with a multiple, archetypal imagination: between the transpersonal (or at least trans-egoic) qualities and needs of psyche work, and the personal nature of the relationship between therapist and patient. I like to see these two modes, each with great transformative power, as parallel tracks. Of course, I hope that I also communicate how these modes are intimately intertwined, co-constituting each other with deep mystery. And it seems that love is important for both. Even at the archetypal level, while one may not be working with person-to-person love, one is working with love nonetheless: as I have described, Hillman’s argument for personifying aspects of psyche is that such personification opens our hearts to that which is beyond the familiar, even that which initially feels beyond the pale, offering a means of recognition, intimacy, and respect. Of our work with the otherness of images, Hillman (1997) writes, “We might equally call the
unfathomable depth in the image, love, or at least say we cannot get to the soul of the image without love for the image” (p. 82).

Thus, part of what I brought to my work with Lirael was not only love for the woman sitting across from me, but also love for the range of psychic experience and expressiveness that she and I explored together. I sought to love her others and their ways of seeing even when they were challenging; even when she herself could not love them. For me this seeking is therapeutic love at its most holistic and radical: being willing to be there and go there, into whatever is present, and to aspire to show everything hospitality and curiosity. The incredible blessing of this way of working is that there is no way to find love for another’s gods and goddesses, on their own terms, without finding love for my own, and deep, rich compassion and gratitude for our shared human condition.
CHAPTER FIVE: RELATING TO THE ALTERS

5.1 Orienting

Lirael told me that the first time that she remembered returning to the present moment following a period of dissociation, and distinctly realizing that she had been absent, was during a day of kindergarten. Afterward, sensing that there was something remarkable about what had just occurred, Lirael tried to talk to her teacher about her experience of lost time. Her teacher, however, was not open to the magic of psychological life: “That doesn’t happen,” the teacher replied curtly, foreclosing discussion. Lirael learned through this encounter that others likely would not be receptive to her experience of time and the nature of the self; she would not speak again about losing time for many years.

As Lirael grew up, the necessity of managing her experience through periods of amnesic dissociation and multiplicity became even more pronounced as she experienced more traumas outside of her home. Particularly when Lirael was sexually assaulted for the first time as a teenager, she described how she was faced with a double trauma: not only the trauma of the attack itself, but also the fact that her life at home was an emotionally insecure one in which sharing or working through the trauma would have been impossible. She knew that she could not tell anyone what had happened to her. But she also knew that she could not contain for herself, alone, the unimaginable burden that had become her life story. In this context, Lirael said that she put the clothes she wore that day in the trash and her memories in a place where she would not have to access them routinely. Wisely, though, and perhaps because doing so is impossible, Lirael said that she did not throw the memories away. At that point, the people whose voices and
unique selves would not fully emerge for another five years began to form through the division of these memories away from Lirael. These other states maintained the memories for her, almost in the way in which a compassionate parent might hold the worries of a child for a little while so that he or she can rest. Lirael was able to experience the return of these memories and the realization of these “parts of [her]self” (she eventually began to think about the alters in this language) as an experience of being “born.” For the first time living with symptoms that fully met the diagnosis of DID, she described feeling like the most full and healthy self that she has been in her entire life. Dissociation helped her to survive, and its full announcement of itself in symptoms of DID created the conditions for her to come back to life.

While some people may find such dissociation and multiplicity to be outside of the range of comprehension, for Lirael, a part of her work in therapy involved not only understanding dissociative multiplicity as her reality, but also finding gratitude for this way in which it was a strategy that had helped her to manage experiences that otherwise would have been overwhelming: in an early world of trauma, it allowed Lirael to keep alive a workable self-experience, one in which memories and reactions that would have annihilated all sense of wellbeing were distanced from her “I” self-state. For example, when Lirael told me about her traumatic experiences with her high school therapist (being forced to participate in terrifying exposure therapy that she did not at all experience as helpful; being betrayed when the therapist gave Lirael’s father a vulnerable letter Lirael wrote after assuring her that it would remain confidential), Lirael said that after a few sessions, she stopped remembering them. And she added that she “didn’t
really worry about that because [she] didn’t want to look a gift horse in the mouth.”  

In addition to helping her to endure traumatic experience, dissociation also allowed that parts of Lirael incommensurate with her conscious “I” could consolidate and develop separately. Thus, Lirael’s total experience preserved the richness of many years—once she had reached adulthood and was in an environment in which she had more freedom and support to explore her life, it became a matter of accessing the fullness that, in other parallel selves, was waiting for her. Though Lirael’s experience is unique, through working with her, I learned about and considered the ways in which Lirael’s journey toward a fuller, more alive, and more integrated self-experience could be meaningfully understood to be the development of anyone’s self-experience, in our struggle to survive relational and existential wounds.

And yet, of course Lirael’s extreme form of dissociation and multiplicity also meant that her identity was more in pieces than many people’s identities; or rather, that the spaces between her various identities were without linkages: like a series of islands, close together, but with no bridges to span the water between them and to make travel continuous and easy. One might say that Lirael’s unconscious could be understood as constituted by precisely these spans of impassable water: when she was between the islands, she got lost in the water; when she was on an island, there was no clear network of bridges to help her remember how to access the others. 

Watching Lirael go through the actual experience of switching self-states was always remarkable for me; I once told her that it looked “magical.” Lirael usually would

---

31 Carolyn later told Lirael that she, as a wise and unruffled presence, “did” most of those sessions for them and for many years carried the worst of the emotional memories.

32 This description owes much to the previously discussed work of Bromberg (1998), and earlier to the work of Jung (1946).
gaze forward, as if at a fixed point. Her eyes both seemed to intensely focus and to glaze over. When she returned to her “I” self, she often looked soft and vulnerable, as if she just were waking from a long sleep: she would hold her arms across her body and sometimes laugh softly, almost as if giggling with embarrassment.

Lirael described to me what it was like for her to come back and have to become reoriented to time, place, people, and how she was feeling. She said that she liked to come back alone, as if she was around people, it was more difficult to be reoriented … especially if they were people to whom she did not want to reveal that she had been away. She once humorously told me that she especially liked coming back when she was eating, as food was immediately orienting (“Oh, good: It’s breakfast!”). She said that safety often was an immediate concern for her, physically and emotionally, and she shared the relief that she felt in “coming back” in therapy, as she quickly could become oriented to where she was and know that she was in a stable and loving environment.

As Lirael and I developed our relationship, we began to work with her alters more specifically. The word “alter,” while a bit distancing or magical at first, came to make a great deal of sense to me, as at its most basic it captures the profound alterity of her parts. Intensely, Lirael experienced these beings whom she called her “others” as “NOT me,” though our work involved learning to dialogue with their wisdom and consider the possibilities of claiming that wisdom as also her own. And there was much wisdom to explore: unlike other movements of the psyche, such as the obliteration of depressive lethargy, or the split idealization and devaluation of personality disorders, the multiple states of DID allows for a proliferation, rather than a shriveling, of complexity. I found
that there was something so fertile in a multitude of voices, a raucous chorus pressing on a “singular” voice.

As Lirael began to express more of her rich personal and relational range during our time together, helped along by how compartmentalized she had made that range to preserve it, I began to discover the richness of my own range rising to meet her. I discovered ways of engaging in relationship and in the therapy relationship in particular that I did not even know were accessible to me. Below I will explore Lirael’s alters in turn, introducing what each part did for her and then particularly focusing on what it was like to relate therapeutically to such multiplicity. I then will discuss relating to the alters as a system.

5.2 Beatrice

Beatrice was a 15-year-old female. Lirael chose the pseudonym “Beatrice” (not the alter’s name in real life) because of her affection for the character Beatrice in Shakespeare’s play Much Ado about Nothing. She/Beatrice wanted to be represented by a young woman who is feisty, spunky, smart, and proud. In real life, Beatrice was named by Lirael’s close friend, Jason. He chose the name based on a television character who is very talkative, sometimes to the point of being overly attention-seeking. This discrepancy illustrates an important tension that was developing for Lirael and her alters: while Jason sometimes saw Beatrice as opinionated in a way that could be annoying, Lirael was beginning to dare to appreciate how Beatrice’s strong opinions and energy could be wise and vitalizing for herself and her relationships. Beatrice was the alter who carried, expressed, and helped Lirael to express this kind of independence.
Beatrice had a few unique features as a part of Lirael. For one, Beatrice was the alter most interested in the behaviors and expectations associated with heterosexual femininity. Beatrice liked clothes and wanted to dress in ways that were conventionally feminine and attractive, even sexy. She sometimes would go shopping and buy clothing of which Lirael did not approve: when I first asked Lirael to tell me about how she felt about Beatrice and the role Beatrice played in her life, Lirael told me that Beatrice would come out and buy clothes for her that Lirael would never buy herself. With humorous and sweet primness, Lirael added that she found the “appearance” of Beatrice’s shopping adventures in her closet “disconcerting.” Beatrice also was interested in dating men and having heteroerosexual sex. These desires were especially significant and contentious in light of the fact that Lirael herself ambivalently was beginning to express erotic interest in women and often felt deep distrust toward men. Beatrice also was curious about things like the female reproductive system, as Lirael’s conservative parents had not allowed Lirael to attend health class, and personal grooming and beautification habits that Lirael never had explored, like waxing and makeup. Beatrice was invested in being conventionally “pretty,” which meant that she often came out around mealtimes and controlled Lirael’s eating in an attempt to lose weight. Lirael said of herself that she’d “always been the good girl,” and Beatrice’s flirtatious, sexual, and beautiful femininity co-existed in contrast to this “good” identity.

Beatrice also was unique in that she was the only alter who “did not want to be an alter,” in her words and in Lirael’s. Beatrice wanted to be her own person, with her own friends and her own boyfriend, her own body to adorn and comport as she wished. I considered this desire for autonomy to be significant, though it is an aspect of Lirael and
my work that we did not have the chance to fully explore. One way we came to begin understanding it is that Beatrice was so far from Lirael’s sense of herself that she believed that there was no way she ever would attain personal creative expression and satisfaction while Lirael ran the show. For example, Lirael felt close to Sophie, her female child alter, and she gladly made time for her to come out and enjoy herself by feeding squirrels, coloring, and jumping on the bed. Yet Lirael rarely allowed Beatrice equivalent pleasures. Lirael would be the first to say that she found Beatrice and her desires threatening, and Beatrice told me that she sometimes felt deprived of her just due and impatient to have more. As we worked together, though, Lirael began developing ways to nourish and learn from Beatrice akin to how she she took care of and respected most of her other alters. Beatrice seemed to be the frontier of self-knowledge and individuation/separation toward which Lirael was bravely moving.

I heard from Beatrice, through Lirael, at the very start of our work, the first day that Lirael and I met each other at the end of one of her final sessions with Laura. In a matter of fact way, Lirael said, “Beatrice doesn’t like you or trust you right now, but she probably will come around.” I thanked Lirael for sharing these feelings and affirmed their value, saying that I thought it wise that Beatrice did not automatically trust. “Of course we don’t know if everyone is trustworthy,” I said, inevitably having in mind what I already knew of Lirael’s traumatic life. “It makes sense to take time to come to our own judgments.” After all, Lirael had many reasons for distrust, especially toward people who were supposed to be the most trustworthy, “mental health professionals” included. It was crucial that at the beginning of our work she tell me the traumatic truth of what she had been through with people, and that I be respectful of her autonomy. (Teenagers do a
wonderful job of asserting the dignity of separate selfhood and demanding that it be taken seriously!)

Of course, implied in my comments that first day was that I already was making sense of communications from Beatrice as Lirael’s way of telling me that in ways she did not like me or trust me yet, and increasingly Lirael and I were able to hold this interpretation together (about Beatrice, and about all of her alters). Still, even up until the end of our work, expressing this doubt to another person challenged Lirael’s personal sense of herself, and so it always remained Beatrice, and not Lirael, who held and communicated information about their healthy suspicion.

After that initial communication, Beatrice receded into the background for a while: instead, it was Lirael’s exuberant child alter, Sophie, who primarily was present during the early months of our work. Lirael’s briefly being able to share with me Beatrice’s reluctance to trust me, rather than Lirael herself communicating a fear like that, and then Sophie stepping to the forefront, also allowed that right from the start, Lirael and I had room to develop a caring and collaborative relationship. By taking over for Lirael the distrust that otherwise might have made developing a therapeutic relationship extremely difficult, Beatrice gave Lirael a chance to attach. I see in this example what I have mentioned some others have commented on about DID (McWilliams, 2011): that fundamentally it is an attachment-preserving, and therefore potentially life-saving, symptom structure. While in her adulthood, it was less useful for Lirael to continue to split off her anger at her parents, for example, from her personal identity, as a child and adolescent, that dissociation likely made her survival at home, and the capacity to take in whatever love was there, possible. And certainly, as she formed
new relationships in her adulthood, this initial lovableness and lovingness was in her interest. As legitimate as anger is, I also think of how much more difficult it would have been for me to get to know Lirael had Beatrice been integrated and had Lirael led with her: Lirael likely would have been prohibitively suspicious.

I first “actually” met Beatrice in the flesh a few months after Lirael and I met. I remember greeting Lirael in the waiting room that day and sensing something radically different about her presence, while not being quite able to put my finger on it. It was something about how she responded to my greeting with more reserve than usual, with a “hello” that was almost tight-lipped. As I shut the door to the session room and sat across from her, I wondered what was about to happen. I suspected Beatrice’s presence in some diffuse way and felt very curious (and a bit apprehensive). I did not have to wait long, though, as Beatrice quickly announced herself to me by saying, “I’m here because Jason wants me to be.”

“Are you Beatrice?” I asked. I felt fairly certain now due to the edge of defiance in her voice: defiance about seeing me, but also defiance about Jason: not wanting to do what he said, though she had resigned herself to it. Her opening statement expressed so much: both a surrendering of her will (I’m here because he wants me to be) and an assertion of it (I’m ONLY here because he wants me to be).

I asked her questions about the situation, and for the first time she described issues with food that she had been experiencing. She described how she had come because Jason was concerned about the increasing food restriction that he’d been noticing Lirael doing at meal times, like only eating a bowl of Cheerios for dinner. Beatrice talked to me about how she was angry at Jason because he was being “pushy” in his talking to
her about his concern for the way she was restricting at meal times and insisting that she needed to work on this “issue” in therapy. It quickly emerged just how frustrated Beatrice was with Jason for being controlling, as had been other men in her life. But Lirael was so hesitant to express her anger at a special, also supportive friend that Beatrice had to hold all of it for her. Beatrice also said to me that she sometimes felt similarly pushed around and marginalized by Lirael herself. Beatrice said that she felt that people did not listen to her, and that Lirael was “judgmental” toward her, especially about the clothes Beatrice wanted to wear and her romantic and sexual interests. Considering how Beatrice often felt ganged up on, I found myself moving through the session with extreme care: both assessing the extent of Lirael’s food restriction and asserting that eating enough healthy calories is important for health, while also assessing the rich density of interpersonal dynamics at play, and the questions of sickness, danger, and health that transcended concerns about caloric intake. I told Beatrice that I felt that I had to be on the side of Lirael’s physical health as her therapist, but that at the same time I felt so aware that Beatrice’s being able to say “no” had something healthy about it, too, even if the way she was practicing that “no” may not have been so physically healthy. I understood that “hurt” and “help” could be very close to each other. When Jason said that Beatrice was “killing” and “bullying” Lirael, he was missing something crucial: the way in which his denial of Beatrice’s existence because she was difficult was in itself killing and bullying; the way in which Beatrice’s assertion of will and autonomy, while perhaps misguided when it came to something like eating, also at other times was intensely in the service of Lirael’s life.
Fortunately, Beatrice seemed to be able to hear where I was coming from in my balancing act. She expressed appreciation that I was grappling with these tensions and being transparent with her. At the end of the session, she said to me, with palpable relief, “I was afraid you were going to side with Jason.” We talked about the importance of respecting Beatrice as herself and a part of Lirael’s total being, someone who deserved our listening and attention, rather than judgment or dismissal. As I worked with Lirael for longer, and saw Beatrice a couple more times, I think it became clear that Beatrice also could appreciate how therapy could be her space, too: how even though Lirael was my client, it did not just belong to Lirael (to ego), or to Jason’s imperative that Beatrice be present solely to work on what he thought was most important.

In person, Beatrice was just as vibrant as I anticipated, an aspect of Lirael that was more of a handful: less sweet and accommodating. But I found her no less lovable. In fact, just as Lirael told me that she ultimately valued Beatrice, I appreciated Beatrice’s entrance as a way to grapple with Lirael as a more multifaceted person, not just someone who was pleasantly easy to get along with.

One of the things that most distinguished my relationship with Beatrice from my relationship with Lirael was Beatrice’s lower likelihood of simply agreeing with me, and my attempting to honor and even praise this fire. As herself, Lirael had a habit of attempting to stay very close to my words and speech patterns: she would try and finish my sentences, often so attuned that she would succeed in knowing what I was going to say next and simultaneously speak the words I was speaking, our voices layering on top of each other. She also often leaned toward me, with the subtle tension in her torso of a person craning toward another person’s perspective, attempting to catch all of it, mirror
it, and accommodate it. As herself, Lirael took good care of me, and the difference of being with Beatrice was a helpful illumination of the subtle, but demanding, labor that Lirael did in the therapy that might otherwise have remained invisible (especially because sometimes such resonance could be pleasurable for me). In ways Lirael was being a therapist to me, as while growing up she had learned the necessity of caring for others, the necessity of sacrificing her own needs lest she be abandoned. Beatrice was different. She looked at me carefully, almost quizzically, with sharp eyes, chin and shoulders down and body relaxed into the couch, waiting for what I would say next in a way that showed me that she was preparing to gauge how much she agreed, rather than immediately resonating with and affirming my perspective. Perhaps it partly was because she often wore low-cut shirts (which Lirael herself never did!), but I also was astounded by how different Lirael’s body looked when she was embodying Beatrice: when Lirael was not shielding and protecting her breasts, caving around them, the skin across her chest looked radiant and the space from shoulder to shoulder seemed voluminous: as if I could actually see the free and full expansion of her being in her breath. She often reminded me of Iris Marion Young's (2005) work about the impact of being breasted in patriarchal culture. Young notes that the chest is "the house of the heart," "an important center of a person's being" (p. 75), and that for a woman, "[i]f her energy radiates from her chest, she too often finds the rays deflected by the gaze that positions her from the outside, evaluating her according to standards that she had no part in establishing and that remain outside her control" (p. 77). As Beatrice, Lirael could be in touch with something more fearlessly expressive, as if taking back control from those who had taken it from her. She was
rooted, confident, autonomous, somehow both more open to life and less porous, more solid in herself.

Wanting and trying to be “pretty,” to explore and embody certain forms of femininity, also was an important part of Beatrice. In one of the few times I interacted with him, Max, Lirael’s male child alter, had shyly told me he thought I was “really pretty.” Of course, as Lirael often phrased sentences, he said “we think . . . ,” and it is meaningful to consider how Max was sharing the perspectives of everyone in the system. While Lirael and I did not talk much about the feminine way I presented myself and the way she related to that presentation—perhaps because I still was engaged in exploring and owning, beyond my own shame, my affinity with Aphrodite—Beatrice and I did have one conversation about her curiosity to ask me about wearing makeup and other classically feminine forms of personal adornment. Toward the end of our work, as Lirael, she and I had a more explicit dialogue about prettiness, and she talked about how she had only been told by two people in her life that she was pretty: the first, an actor from an old vampire television show who lived across from her grandparents in California. He was gay; she was eleven. The second time had been the year before, when she had dressed up for a school event, and her biochemistry teacher, a woman, had told her she was pretty. Lirael reflected, “I don’t think she knew how much it meant to me. And it wasn’t just how I looked. You could tell that it was also about you.” Lirael added how her parents had never told her that she was pretty. She didn’t expect it from her father, she said, but she was curious about what her mother thought of her appearance. And yet she feared asking because she did not want to be disappointed. I was struck and moved by Lirael’s deep uncertainty about not just her prettiness, but her broader human radiance. Lirael at
this time talked about wanting to wear a special orange dress, one that Beatrice liked, to our last session. It was a dress in which she felt beautiful and also scared of this feeling of beauty. It was a dress that challenged her and integrated her at the edges of her self-concept: orange, Lirael’s favorite color; cut and tailored in a way that flattered her figure, Beatrice’s desire. Lirael wanted me to see her as pretty; she wanted to see herself as pretty; she wanted beauty to be a natural and celebrated part of our work and our relationship to embrace her full self.33

The last time I saw Beatrice was a couple of weeks before our final in-person session. She told me that she had come because she was angry at her father for hypocritical comments concerning her upcoming move out of state for graduate school. He had been confronting her with crime statistics for her new neighborhood and worrying about the safety of her living alone, and she felt enraged by the irony of these worries: he never had cared for her wellbeing when she lived at home with him, and indeed he had hurt her himself. Beatrice described how his sudden “concern” felt like toxic control, an attempt to spoil whatever excitement Lirael felt about her budding independence.

Beatrice and I worked with helping her to feel, negotiate, and metabolize this anger and

33 I can appreciate people’s hesitancy to affirm women’s beauty: we live in a culture where there is a fine line between “affirmation” and “objectification,” where many women’s worth is excessively defined by how they appear. In this climate, it might seem like colluding with destructive “patriarchal” values when we affirm beauty and not intelligence, not creative passion, etc. Certainly it is dangerous if we compliment beauty at the exclusion of all other attributes. But I think it is equally dangerous when we never compliment beauty: by denying it as a gift within many possible gifts, as worthy of brightening our human life as any other, we load it with the same toxic power with which it is loaded if it is all that matters. We are stuck in a polarization that makes women, especially young women coming into their erotic power, damned if they are beautiful, damned if they are not. It was a gift for me to begin to learn more about Aphrodite through Beatrice/Lirael’s journey. I only wish I had celebrated Lirael’s radiance more effusively and unabashedly in that last session: my own hesitancy about the erotic, my own dance with Aphrodite, still was too early on its own course. While this is a discussion too rich to follow further here, worthy of another dissertation, it does seem important to invoke as the growing edge of a part of my own development as a woman and therapist, which I wish I’d had the chance to share more with Lirael. Ginette Paris’s (1986) discussion of Aphrodite in her book Pagan Meditations, which I read at the recommendation of my therapist the year after Lirael and I terminated, is a good reference.
its truth. I found myself reflecting on and being able to set aside my regret that when I initially saw Beatrice sitting in the waiting room that day, I had mistaken her for and asked if she were Carolyn, Lirael’s calm, diplomatic older female alter. I realized that in fact it was an interesting and rich mistake. Across the times when I’d interacted with her, I had felt Beatrice maturing, her rebelliousness tempering into wisdom and protectiveness of Lirael, even though Lirael had said that she felt that the others did not age. Beatrice increasingly had proven herself to be the part of Lirael that could stand up and defend Lirael’s total being, and even when Beatrice didn’t actively do so, she could maintain the vitalizing truths of righteous anger through all manner of extreme denial, on the part of abusers or even of Lirael herself. Beatrice had strong opinions and often was forthcoming in communicating them, including her anger at Jason, at a hypocritical and patriarchal Christian God, at the men who had assaulted Lirael, and most of all at Lirael’s father, and his confusing back and forth between cruelty and dissociative kindness. Beatrice could hold this anger with the knowledge that she was so strong and true that it would not destroy her or those she loved in spite of their failings.

As Lirael and I worked with how Beatrice fit into her life and total being, Lirael’s patience for and trust in Beatrice grew. She wasn’t quite ready to compromise on some things, like sexuality, but she did talk about thinking of what it would mean to integrate Beatrice more into her life in some ways, like letting Beatrice have a friend, or compromising on clothing, or letting Beatrice communicate her anger in a way that Lirael was able to co-own as her own anger (like telling her father that she was living in the new apartment despite his opinion). This deepening relationship between Lirael and Beatrice also allowed for a deepening relationship between Beatrice and me, as Beatrice also
became more multidimensional. These changes were apparent in this last session when Beatrice was present, as Beatrice and I reflected on all that we’d helped Lirael to work on regarding independence. At the end, I felt the heaviness of goodbye beginning to creep into me, and in a moment of realization and mourning, I said, “As I’m thinking about how near Lirael and my last session is, it occurs to me that I may never see you again. Is there anything you want to say as we prepare to say goodbye?”

Beatrice stared off thoughtfully for a moment. Then she met my eyes and smiled at me with the casual yet deeply genuine affection that only a teenager who has come around can offer. She said, “I didn’t think I would like you at first. But I’ve come to like you.”

As I reflect further on what it was like to relate to Beatrice as a part of Lirael, and what this relating and understanding uniquely called for from me, I reflect that Beatrice appealed to the vital (and sometimes rebellious!) adolescent part of me. At the same time, Lirael’s often resistant responses to Beatrice’s youthful energy appealed to the parts of me that felt more dutiful and in charge of keeping a teenager in line. Both of these aspects of myself interacted with Lirael and Beatrice as we all learned how to relate to one another and find a collaborative path most suited to Lirael’s total needs. Lirael once told me a funny, charming story about a day Beatrice chose their clothing in the morning and Lirael ended up spending the day agonizingly worried that the shirt she was wearing was too low-cut, while Beatrice repeatedly answered back, snappy and spunky, that it was not! Nearly two years later, I had a “singular person” experience that made me remember Lirael’s story with a vivid empathic laugh: on a Friday night, I was going on a date, but first had to attend a professional social. I dressed for the date and not for colleagues,
reflecting in passing that I had done enough integrating of my erotic life that I would not feel ashamed for looking a bit “date” at a professional gathering, especially one held at 7 p.m. on a Friday. But when I actually arrived at the social, my so-called “integration” rapidly unraveled into a war between the part of me that had chosen the skirt and the part of me who suddenly believed it to be far too short for a professional setting! Poignantly, it was largely because of my memory of Lirael’s story that I was able to experience what could have been a profoundly shame-filled couple of hours with at least a degree of good humor, self-compassion, and remembering of my place in the human family! The gift of this kind of love both connected me to Lirael and deeply to myself. For me it is a beautiful example of the ways in which our patients impact us and carry and hold us through their own healing.

I connected with and grew spunkier myself to engage with Beatrice because she joyfully reminded me of the wildness in us all—of the wildness and passion and gutsy defiance in me—and I valued her immensely because she challenged me to take on Lirael’s wildness, which so often lurked in hiding after Lirael’s years of pain, fear, and shame. I wish I could have gotten to know and work with Beatrice more: to face the challenge and delight in her spunk and to help Lirael work with and increasingly embrace those challenges and joys herself. When I spoke to Lirael’s new therapist shortly after she began working with Lirael, she alluded to how Beatrice was beginning to find even more of a voice and make more of her mark on Lirael’s experience as Lirael embarked on living a more independent life than ever before. And I felt confident that that’s a good thing. The adolescent in all of us, the wisdom of her vitality and refusal to be silenced by
convention and conformity, deserves to speak and to be heard, and to inspire both autonomy and relationship in more authentic and vibrant forms.

5.3 Sophie

The first time I met an alter, I met Sophie, Lirael’s six-year-old female child alter. Sophie was the alter with whom Lirael felt the most comfortably identified: Sophie loved coloring, jumping on the bed, feeding and naming the squirrels on campus, and being excited about scary events (like grad school interviews and Lirael’s move) by thinking of riding on airplanes, having ice cream, and meeting new kinds of park critters. She had to be instructed not to go around life in bare feet. Lirael understood Sophie as a part of her that somehow had remained innocent in spite of trauma, the part who still could love and live with faith in people. Sophie patiently saw the beauty in life and was unabashedly excited and exciting. Her laugh was infectious. A part of what she did relationally was ask me a multitude of questions (like about how my cat was doing, or what my favorite color was, or what my favorite dinosaur was). The innocence of this information-gathering both was non-threatening and disarming to me, and it allowed Lirael to develop a sense of trust and safety with the people Sophie happily interrogated for her (imagine the effectiveness in the effusive charm of a child’s seemingly endless curiosity).

Lirael and I had been working together for a couple of months when Sophie first came, and Lirael was beginning to trust me, to feel attached to me, and to feel excited about the possibilities of our relationship (I could say the same about my developing relationship to her and to our work). For a couple of weeks, Lirael’s excitement had been building, radiating beautifully from her, spilling out from around the edges of her “I” self-state. My experience of her at the time fit well with Lirael’s description of what it
was like when an alter was “close,” near to her experience and shining as a part of it but not entirely controlling it: even though I had not yet met Sophie, I already had a sense of who she would be when I did (Lirael had told me that I would meet her first, and soon), as her warm bubbly joy shone through Lirael’s bright gaze and eager laughter, a presence that I then described as one of “effervescent luminosity and exuberance.” During this time, it was a simple joy to be with Lirael as she sat (sometimes nearly bouncing out of her seat!) suffused with the happy affirmation of love once more showing her that it could illuminate her life. In tandem, I felt a little girl in me who also was not me, a little girl I had not seriously attended to in a long time. She was happy as well, also bouncing in the presence of such an exuberant capacity to trust and to play. She also wanted to play, and there also was a lot of love that she believed in, both with Lirael and with other life- and love-affirming events synchronistically occurring in my own life. Something else also rose in me, though, when I sat with Lirael during this time: it was a deep, heavy sadness. I felt my own wounds in this wounding world, and Lirael’s wounds, too: some sense of the impossibility of this joy as a sustained way of being in the world, and a grief about that harsh truth; some resonance with a part of me that was not fearlessly loving enough to hold and mirror such joy, and more grief with my recognition that my sense that I could not love was an expression of those who, when faced with Lirael as this child, sometimes could not love her. Also: those who, when faced with me, sometimes could not love me. Sometimes I felt when Sophie was near as if I were vibrating forcefully, too forcefully to resonate and meet Lirael’s excitement in an adequate way. I wrote in my notes: “Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by Sophie’s joy. Like I could never be enough of a mirror for that kind of vibrancy and enthusiasm.”
This also was a time when Lirael was offering me gifts like a coloring book page featuring a cat that Sophie had colored (it was my cat, Lirael told me—or at least how Sophie had imagined my cat to look!). And I remember in particular a crayon drawing that Sophie also had made herself for me, the first and most distinctive of many she would gift to me for holidays or just because. This drawing featured Sophie, me, and Stormy34, the black standard poodle who belonged to our clinic’s administrative assistant to the director and who sometimes would accompany his owner to work. Lirael loved Stormy so much; if she came to a session when he was visiting, I always would find her sitting on the floor in the main office, nuzzling his curly hair. Lirael’s way of describing these moments was that Sophie loved Stormy; that Sophie loved to have the chance to play with him (just as Sophie delighted in feeding the campus’s tame squirrels from her hands). I could see Sophie as Lirael and Stormy played: that huge smile, ear to ear with innocence; that delighted laugh.

In the drawing, Lirael/Sophie had rendered me in a way that showed how she had come to know me. I remember being touched to recognize myself there, in the astute compassion of her gaze (and it is a self that now, I can look upon and recognize as no longer the current “me,” though she captured a perfect rendering of me in that moment, down to the last detail): I am wearing the turquoise earrings I recently had bought for myself;35 I am wearing my hair in a knot at the base of my neck (though now I almost

34 Even pets deserve the protection of pseudonyms!

35 [I had purchased them at the very beginning of a love affair with turquoise and what it evoked for me, wanting vibrant and grounding stones in my life. Last year I lost those earrings in a park in Pittsburgh, a few days before I moved to the West Coast. As I paced fretfully through the grass, searching for a glint of blue, I remembered Lirael including them in her drawing; I thought of all that has changed in my life since that time, since I first needed turquoise, and suddenly I felt peaceful in accepting that the world had taken them from me.]
always wear it down); I am wearing a sweater in a pinkish tone that I am not sure I ever owned, but that certainly captured some of the feminine softness I had been seeking to bring to her (a softness that now I must admit I think I partially have developed away from). In the drawing, Lirael has drawn herself as Sophie. She has blonde curly hair in pigtails, a green shirt and pants, and blue glasses and shoe laces; her arms are lifted to the sky in delight. Her name, “Sophie,” proudly is written in blue crayon, with childish errors in the construction of some of the letters.  

It made sense that Sophie would hold and express this budding excitement and hopefulness, as Lirael understood her to be the part of her that had managed to preserve the innocent, trusting purity of childhood hope and love through all of the betrayal and pain that she had endured. And so it made sense that as a communication of where she was with me and with our work, Lirael would permit Sophie to meet me before anyone else. When Sophie first came to the session, she stayed the whole time, and then she went on her merry way after the session had finished, assuring me that she was fine to venture out alone because she had had instruction about wandering campus safely (it was at this time that Lirael told me about how Jason had helped Sophie to learn that she could not walk around outside barefoot, as she had on one occasion!). During the session, we laughed a great deal, talked about Sophie’s curiosities about my life, like where I lived, and more about what my cat was like. Much of the conversation felt like the sweet nothings of childhood excitement. I remember that we did not sit in our seats: it seemed

---

36 Throughout our work, I would receive other crayon drawings from Sophie as well, including a colorful squirrel, an airplane, a Christmas tree, a Thanksgiving turkey made from a hand tracing, and a smiling butterfly with mismatched wings like patchwork quilts. I found myself with the impulse to display these gifts on my fridge, though I resisted for confidentiality reasons. Nonetheless, I noticed my strong maternal reaction. I loved to imagine the state of pure, unadulterated excitement, joy, and blissfully secure attachment that Lirael must have been resting in when she as Sophie created these drawings.
impossible to remain seated during such joy. I recall us standing at the window, looking out at the trees on Mount Washington. “Through the tunnel, on the other side of the mountain,” I remember trying to explain to a small child, “is where I live.”

While Sophie was often close and co-present, woven intimately through our work because she was the alter nearest to Lirael’s “I,” she did arrive on her own at other times, when communicating heightened joy seemed relationally important. I remember in particular one visit that occurred in late February. I went to the waiting room and found Lirael sitting in a different seat than her usual (as herself, she was a creature of meticulous routine), holding a green and orange plastic stegosaurus from a nearby basket of children’s toys. “Can we bring Charlotte in?” she asked enthusiastically. I laughed with recognition—“Of course!”—also noticing with amusement the man sitting a few feet away and wondering what on earth he must have been thinking about our exchange!

Sophie told me that her roommate had just gone home for spring break, and so she had been delighted to unleash herself with coloring and jumping on the bed, so excited because of her upcoming flights for graduate school interviews and her trip home to see her mother and her neighbor’s pony. She reported to me that Lirael had told her she could come to session for a little bit. We had a conversation about dinosaurs, among other things. (“What color do you think dinosaurs were? What is your favorite dinosaur? When are you going to get your shiny ring?” (I recently had gotten impromptu-engaged, and Lirael had noticed my makeshift embroidery floss ring!)) In my notes I noted her “sweet, childish exuberance and impatience.” When Lirael returned, we talked about how near Sophie still was—a blurring between their experiences, as Lirael herself was overflowing with excitement about the major developments afoot in her life. While she also was
scared (and we would spend time with Max for those feelings), Sophie helped her (and both of us) to remember to see and honor her life’s hope and joy.

Overall, something about Lirael seemed young, all the time, not just during the initial months of her getting to know me or the times when she was most happy: it was as if Sophie were close all the time in Lirael’s daily life, the nearest to her “I.” And I think it was this nearness that made Lirael so lovable, and that gave her her great capacity to love. I noted soon after I met Sophie “how much of Sophie’s warmth is a part of Lirael all the time”; “how much that warmth makes me glow,” and maybe even “how much I depended on it” relationally as her therapist. Sophie’s existence, and how her separateness paradoxically allowed her to be held near to Lirael, helps me to understand more about the role she served. I once wrote in my notes, in the latter part of Lirael and my work, “I think sometimes Sophie has to come to convey to me how excited Lirael is.” And in the relationship, she also was coming to evoke in me the kind of unconditional warm-hearted love that a six-year-old child uniquely can foster. Lirael said that she loved that Sophie wasn’t “burdened” by the pain of life. As “the vibrant part” of Lirael who was “innocent to all bad things,” Lirael said that “Sophie help[ed] [her] to have something [she] never had.” Lirael profoundly valued Sophie’s “potential” for being “open to the world” and reflected on how she wanted to preserve this openness not just for Sophie’s sake, but for her own total personhood as well. Lirael reflected on how she “lost” this innocence, and it was not her “choice” “to be so scared.” Of course, while our experiences of loss are on a spectrum, we all experience some wounding to our innocence, inevitably, as we grow up and live. Sophie lived as a reminder to hope, and to remember the possibility for seeing with fresh eyes, regardless of what we have endured.
Lirael once made a piece of her own art that captured Sophie’s role in her life: it depicted a little girl feeding a squirrel; she called it “Sophie’s Gift.”

5.4 Max

Max was a ten-year-old boy, but a child alter quite different from Sophie, and whose presence and visits carried a very different purpose. He was the alter who held the intensity of Lirael’s childhood wounding at the hands of her father: the terror associated with experiences that felt dangerously out of her control, emotionally and physically. Max was inspired to choose his pseudonym by the character of the same name in Maurice Sendak’s beloved children’s book Where the Wild Things Are. Lirael told me that her Max had liked all of the monsters (I think particularly she was referring to Max’s delight at the monsters in the most recent movie version), and that her Max liked how Max in the book “has his own world.” While Lirael and I never had the opportunity to discuss what I’m about to say, I have come to find it powerful that Lirael/Max chose a book about keeping alive and taming on one’s own terms, by creating an imaginative place, the full and wild vitality of one’s life force and emotional experience. I love that Max, an alter most likely to come out when Lirael was intensely frightened, also identified himself with a little boy who could confront his own wild freedom with great audacity, and who manages to survive in a sometimes harsh adult world through the power of his own psychological resources. Max’s resources also extended to a creative curiosity about and engagement with the workings of the world. He enjoyed and felt greatly empowered by working with computers, and once Lirael told me that though Max was frightened during a plane ride (quite unlike Sophie’s love of thrill!), he was able to feel relief and satisfaction when as a response, he learned how planes fly.
I did not have the chance to spend much time with Max or to come to know him intimately in the ways in which I felt ordinary familiarity with Sophie, as understandably I think that his nearness and full presence entailed truly wild things: the expression of raw emotion. I came to appreciate both that the expression of Max was perhaps too overwhelming for Lirael for him to be around very often, and perhaps too overwhelming for me for him to be around very often: I like to think of myself as a therapist who can be present to whatever my patient needs, but of course despite our best intentions we all have our fears and resistances. I think that at times Max knew to stay away because he was too much for both Lirael and me to handle—maybe even in a way too much for the fifty minute structure of our sessions to contain. At the same time, sometimes I think Max came in order to push us to vulnerable places that we both needed to experience, and that in fact therapy can tolerate, but that in Lirael and my usual modes we sometimes were avoiding.

The first time Max ever came out in therapy, before I met Lirael, was during/after Lirael and Laura’s first consultation with the psychiatrist she was seeing at the time, when he used the word “psychotic” in front of Lirael to describe her experience. In retrospect I realize that I am not entirely sure what it meant to Lirael to be called “psychotic.” But I do know that being seen as “crazy” confronted her with the possibility

---

37 As I have mentioned, psychiatrists historically have doubted DID and turning to psychotic diagnoses to account for the experience of multiple people within oneself. But it seems clear to people who practice therapy with DID patients that dissociative structuring of subjectivity around complex trauma affords a very different kind of multiplicity than psychotic disorder fragmentation. While in a way Lirael “hears voices,” her experience of them is much more like the inner chorus or family that many of us find ourselves trying to placate throughout our day, and much less like the auditory hallucinations of psychosis, that impinge and unravel from the outside. On the spectrum of post traumatic wounding, DID is fundamentally different from psychosis and requires a different clinical imagination and relationship.
that she might have to be involuntarily committed, and she feared the loss of control and potential trauma of forced mental health care above almost anything else. She understood how this fear had its roots in her damaging experience with the therapist with whom she worked when she was an adolescent—Lirael said that this therapist had forced her to participate in frightening and unhelpful exposure therapy for her OCD symptoms, such as making Lirael touch raw meat, and had given to Lirael’s father a personal letter that Lirael had written after Lirael had been assured of its confidentiality. More generally, Lirael’s fear also expressed her experiences of traumatic betrayal at the hands of people who were supposed to be protective of, or at least benevolent toward, her. In this light, it is understandable to me that the word “psychotic” would make her feel terrified. Max also made an early appearance after either the psychiatrist or Laura (Lirael could not remember which) used the word “abusive” to describe Lirael’s father. It is not clear to me whether Max came out in terror at the memory of what he had endured, or if he came out in terror at the possibility that someone’s label could erase for him whatever goodness also had existed in the only father he had ever known. Lirael often said to me, about her dad, “I don’t want you to think he’s a bad person.” I think she and (some of) her others deeply did not want to think he was a bad person, either.

I myself first met Max at a time when, ironically, Lirael’s roommate had been psychiatrically hospitalized (I believe involuntarily) when her own therapist worried that she could not keep herself safe. In light of Lirael’s fears of involuntary commitment, watching her roommate go through this experience was absolutely terrifying for her. I will write from my notes about this session in close detail, as I had felt called to write
extensively and descriptively about what happened in my first experience of Max, recording and creating for myself a vivid narrative memory:

Lirael first began to tell me about her roommate’s hospitalization. She said that she feared visiting her in the hospital: feared that her worry about “becoming crazy” would make her act strangely, somehow “losing control” and seeming unstable to the hospital staff and so ending up hospitalized herself. But Lirael worried that if her roommate asked her to come and see her, Lirael would not be able to say no. She realized that telling the truth about not wanting to visit would lead her into talking about her DID, and she said that she did not know how to do so, as she had never before told anyone the story from the very beginning: she said that Laura had already known in a way, due to her diagnostic training, and that Jason and his girlfriend had known in ways before Lirael herself even did. Lirael was feeling so overwhelmed: she had been struggling through phone calls from the university counseling center, campus police, and her roommate’s parents. The parents had even come and taken Lirael out to lunch, concerned about their daughter, wanting to know more, wanting to appreciate Lirael’s support, and concerned about Lirael. And yet Lirael reflected, “They don’t know about me.” The whole situation was intense and exhausting: a time that invited Lirael to own and share her own suffering, and yet a time when she did not yet feel safe enough in the world and her relationships and confident enough in her own strength to do so.

Lirael commented that because of all of the distress, she’d been feeling generally “drifty,” and as our conversation continued through the session, her dissociation seemed to intensity, until suddenly she was gone entirely, and Max had arrived. While Lirael’s slipping away could have been an opportunity for me to work with her on practicing
remaining present even through great distress—focusing on the details of her sensory experience, for example, to help her stay in the room as herself—for whatever reasons I found myself unable to orient myself to her in this way. I reflect now that perhaps I myself actually was not strong enough or brave enough in those moments to hold a steady presence while simultaneously being aware of Lirael’s distress; perhaps also, in a more positive sense, I felt that letting someone else take over for her would have a therapeutic benefit both for her and for our relationship—that in a way it was not just her disappearing, but an opportunity for both of us to be closer to something precious and too other to her “I” experience for her to show it to me on her own. After the session, I wrote:

“Max came almost as if she knew that I could not meet her if she stayed as Lirael. Partly I think Max came because she was feeling so raw, with things so close to the surface. That is the explanation we shared with each other. But with that it also felt like she knew that I didn’t have it in me that night to carry her to that affect alone. Max helped both of us out. I felt relief, actually, when I watched her still, and I watched those feet and legs lift up to join her on the couch. I knew immediately that Max had come. I’m not entirely sure how. Intuition? The power of the changed personality? I truly was in the room with a ten-year-old boy. My knowledge of who Max is, and how at the moment, Max more than anyone made sense? She, Max, hugged her legs to her body and looked down for most of the time. Except for those little ventures up when he would peer at me, small, sweet, terrified but trusting.”

“It was like Lirael showed me that drawing, ‘Things in the night,’ about her father filling her bed with the wood roaches when he was angry at her for carrying them outside
rather than killing them, because she wanted to get to this place with me, to show me Max. The part of her that is terrified, abused, alone.”

This had been the moment when Lirael totally had gone away. As she talked about the fear evoked by her roommate’s situation, she began to talk about experiences of intense fear in general that also had been on her mind lately. She described this time when she was small and home alone with her sister and her father, and she’d been filled with fear due to her father’s sadistic punishment toward her and her sister’s childish kindness to the insect infestation. She was telling me about the horrible memory of this abuse and showing me the art that had allowed her to process it a little. As Max, she described to me how the bugs were “crawling up our legs and in our jammies,” visceral living memories of fear expressed in the trembling withdrawn way Max inhabited her body. I trembled in fear with her, present to the child as if the trauma had only happened the night before. Any distinction between the past and present dissolved as Lirael/Max and I sat inside one of the horrors of her life, and I sought to respond to her with more strength and compassion than what the child had known.

“Sometimes we sleep with the light on,” Max told me in a soft voice.

With tears in my eyes, and a sense of the ethical necessity of my full presence, I remembered times of paralyzing fear and loneliness in my own life and replied, “Sometimes I sleep with the light on, too.”

At the end of the session, Max apologized for his arrival, saying, “We’re sorry we interrupted things.” (As in other cases, Lirael’s use of the pronoun “we” here suggested a level of integration that either fundamentally existed or was coming to exist in her system: While on one level, Max was apologizing for appearing, Lirael/all of the
alters/Lirael as a complete multifaceted person also was claiming co-presence with Max, even if she felt ashamed for filling the session with fear.)

“Thank you for coming and showing me how scared you are,” I replied. In retrospect, I wonder if I might simply have said, “Thank you for showing me how scared you are”: the ambiguity of the “you” pronoun in English a perfect opportunity to blur the boundaries between singularity and multiplicity. And yet I continue to appreciate why I wanted to honor Max on his terms: a figure with whom Lirael so associated shameful and even dangerous vulnerability, Max had shown us how a full embodied expression of memory and emotion actually was strong, an opportunity to feel close to another person through unflinchingly expressing the truth of what is.

The end of the session also presented me with practical concerns about Lirael’s safety, as Max was still present and did not seem to be going away anytime soon. Lirael previously had told me that unlike Sophie, he did not know how to navigate around campus very well. But in the moment, Max assured me that Carolyn would help to make sure that everyone arrived home safely. Max was quietly having a bit of a hard time even in the session room, though, with practical details of life. “I’m not out very much,” he softly explained, as I watched him pick up Lirael’s scarf, looking at it as if he were not quite sure what to do with it. He put it down, then put on her coat, struggling with the zipper but managing.

“Can I help you?” I asked about the scarf. Max said yes, and I went over and wound it around him, dressing him, thinking that it was the closest that I’d ever been to Lirael, in a way the most intimate moment we’d ever shared. We figured out how to put the receipt from the session in her backpack, and we zipped it.

154
“Lirael will know what to do with it,” Max said, “She doesn’t like things to be out of order.” He wasn’t sure where to put the “Things in the night” picture, but with a cheerful shrug he dropped it into the backpack as well. It was so charming to witness this part of Lirael who was free from the way that her childhood OCD symptoms sometimes continued to hold her in their grip. Max, though present in fear, struck me as free in a way that allowed him to be almost blissfully lost in the wonder of the world. For him, the perfect order of objects did not matter so much.

My impression of Max as having a powerful capacity for ease and wonder deepened as we parted ways. On the way out of the clinic past the front desk window, he was excited to choose from its candy bowl: a blue jolly rancher. “It’s a magic bowl,” he said in a tiny, quiet voice, almost too quiet to hear: lost in wonderstruck awe at the pumpkin-shaped glass candy bowl that had taken the place of the usual one.

We said goodbye. From my notes:

“On my way back to my office, I sense a pause. I turn around and see Max, quietly, standing holding the door open and gently poking at the jelly stick-ons on the door: the leaves, the pumpkins, the letters that read ‘Welcome Fall.’

I reflect for a moment, realizing with a start the child that’s in me: the child who for all these weeks has been looking at those stick-ons, but who, at the busy behest of the adult, has never made a move. There is no reason for me to go back to him/her, but I can’t find any reason for me not to go back, nor can I stop myself. I go and join him, pressing, laughing softly together with him, the stick-ons for the first time.”

As Lirael and my relationship developed, and I came to know all of the others more, sometimes I would ask how a particular alter was doing, especially if he or she felt
especially relevant to what was going on in Lirael’s life at the time. As the months passed and I kept asking about Max, more and more he began to hold the part of Lirael that was terrified of and sad about the move that she was about to make for graduate school. One day, after she had received another invitation to interview for a program, she said, “Max is really scared about leaving Pittsburgh. A part of me is scared, too. I want to stay forever.”

As Lirael and I continued to work with Max, we worked on these themes of fear, strength, safety, and self-care. As Lirael in general was becoming stronger with remaining present and speaking as herself from the spaces of her alters, rather than transforming totally into them, I rarely saw Max, but I often heard from him through Lirael and found myself in dialogue with him. When Lirael thought about leaving her work with me, she would become scared and Max would be close. He seemed to be in a kind of dance with Sophie, who alternatively carried and expressed Lirael’s excitement about further spreading her wings. During this time, I tried to be careful to honor the legitimacy of both of their reactions.

When Max’s smallness, vulnerability, and worry would arise, I would try and be as present to them as possible. I would recognize the tell-tale signs of him even if Lirael had not totally switched: the small sweetness that her voice would take on, the gathered-up closing of her body. I would try and walk that line with her, at which Max was close enough for us to work with his emotions but not so close that he totally subsumed her sense of herself. My guiding principle became challenging us both to help her bear his nearness and speak its truths without pushing her too hard. And Lirael grew stronger and stronger at bearing him. I found myself amazed by her increasing wholeness, as she
became able to tolerate feelings that in the past would not have been possible. I also
developed an increasingly differentiated sense of my own being—with Max. With Sophie,
as I said I often felt myself vibrating forcefully, feeling her luminosity and exuberance
coursing through me and sometimes even overwhelming me. With Max, I became stiller,
quieter, clearer, feeling myself honing and holding. Max encouraged a kind of reverence
in me, a devoted, worshipful attunement to the pain of loving and losing and loving in
spite of loss.

Lirael and I also worked with her personal relationship to Max. She was
concerned and sometimes felt guilty about how terrified he was, seeing him as a person
who had stood in place of her to take and remember abuse. She told me that when he first
came to her—and it took him a long time to make himself fully known—she could not
sleep at all because he was so scared. (I hear that part of what she was saying with that
statement is that as Max’s full knowledge of what her father had done to them became a
part of her system’s consciousness, it was hard for her to rest and trust the universe to
hold her, when it had failed her so catastrophically in the past.) At the time when she was
planning her move and her father was bombarding her with crime statistics and saying
that he just wanted to protect her, she told me that sometimes she felt bad that she made
Max “go through everything.” I gradually came to think and to reflect to her, though, that
in fact what Max had offered her by holding this pain was a generous gift. I also told her
that in a way it seemed like Max actually was the strongest part of her, as the part that is
the most wounded has borne the most. He had gone through everything, knew everything,
and yet he had survived and maintained some capacity to attach. Lirael seemed helped by
this shift in perspective that highlighted Max’s generosity and resilience.
Max also related to me in a way that showed the beginnings of boyish admiration for or even a little crush on me, an attitude that to me further expressed his resiliency: hopefulness about love and the pleasures and joys of being in the world with others, in spite of everything. As I mentioned earlier, the day that I first met Max, he shyly told me that he thought I was “really pretty,” and he later also complimented my “pretty handwriting” (I would reuse a paper cup for the clinic cooler, designated as my own by my first name in a half-cursive scrawl!). “He wants you to know that he thinks you have pretty handwriting,” Lirael told me that day. “And he wants you to know that we’ll miss you when we go.”

5.5 Carolyn

Carolyn was an adult female alter, middle aged, who in many ways managed and orchestrated Lirael’s entire system. She was a kind of mother-father figure, compassionate and strong, able to remain calm in situations of high distress and able to make sure that Lirael and all of the others were safe even when the world, relationships, and their emotional lives seemed to be crumbling.

Carolyn would come out in situations that required an observant but unruffled presence. She had a remarkable capability to be aware of traumatic experiences and to be present to, and recount, shattering memories while maintaining calm and stability. Carolyn also had a deep maturity or wisdom, at times functioning as a skilled therapeutic or analytic presence within Lirael herself, an observing ego who held together many pieces, or even as a spiritual guide. She seemed to have a deep sense of what Lirael and the others needed in order for them to experience transformation, healing, and empowerment.
The first time Carolyn came out in therapy was with Laura, when Lirael chose to tell Laura about one of her adolescent experiences of sexual assault. It was an excruciating memory of being sexually violated in a bathroom at a social event by one of her high school classmates, who also had assaulted her in other school situations. Part of what made the experience so traumatic was that Lirael’s father was unable to arrive in a timely manner to pick her up, and so she was left waiting outside for him, isolated, terrified, and unable to escape from close proximity to the trauma. Lirael had decided that she wanted to share this memory with Laura, but in the end it turned out to be too much for her to speak on her own. Holding a flower that Jason had picked for her from a campus flower bed, with Carolyn taking over, Lirael was able to tell Laura the story for the first time. (When Lirael told me, as herself, we reflected with a sense of how empowered she could feel that this was the first time she was recounting a story that evoked such intense feelings of fear, degradation, abandonment, and anger.)

As Lirael and I talked about the way this memory of assault fit into her system, she described Carolyn as a kind of protector. She said about her overall memory of the experience: “The kids don’t know what happened there. They just know it’s a bad place.” While Max held the trauma of the worst childhood emotional and physical abuse from Lirael’s father, Carolyn alone for a long time was responsible for holding Lirael’s memories of sexual assault. There were other times as well, not only connected to experiences of sexual violation, when Carolyn would know something first but recommend to Lirael and the others that it wasn’t yet time for them to concern themselves with it. For example, after a powerful experience (which I’ll discuss in a later section) during which Lirael lost time but was not sure who had been in charge while she
was away, or if anyone at all had been in charge, Carolyn told her and the other alters that she did not think they needed to worry about the details of the experience at that time—that they only needed to rest in recovery and metabolizing. Carolyn seemed to be responsible for that which was on the furthest edge of Lirael and her system’s capacity for recognition and tolerance.

My relationship to Carolyn thus often was to a part of Lirael who had uniquely direct access to Lirael’s experience, both in terms of biographical details and in terms of the direction that Lirael’s total psyche seemed to know that she needed to take. I trusted Carolyn a great deal, and while Lirael and I always agreed that she herself was my patient, not the others, sometimes I nonetheless would find myself craving Carolyn as a kind of consultative figure, a supervisor from within Lirael. At a select few times, for me she did end up being a potent and ideal perspective with which to dialogue.

Carolyn came to me with Lirael’s consent at a couple of points throughout our work to serve in this consulting capacity. She came for the first time in late January, after Lirael had undergone a gynecological screening procedure: an ultrasound with an internal component, about which Lirael had felt extremely nervous due to the ways in which she anticipated that it might trigger memories of sexual assault. Because Lirael anticipated that she would feel too re-traumatized to undergo the experience as herself, she had made arrangements with her system in advance that Beatrice would be the one primarily present throughout the procedure. But the ultrasound had gone not as smoothly as planned with Beatrice at the helm: Beatrice had struggled and had experienced pain even though the technician had said that nothing should hurt. Beatrice became angry due to
this surprise and betrayal. The whole system felt destabilized, especially Beatrice, who felt violated and newly uninterested in the idea of having sex.

“I thought I should come so someone who was there can talk about it,” Carolyn greeted me matter of factly at the beginning of the session following this experience.

I wrote in my notes: “I felt like I was speaking to a wise old woman, or not even a human, actually—some kind of magical fairy godmother or goddess viewing the world with her clear and calm eyes.” I told Carolyn that she reminded me of the phrase “old soul,” and that I saw her as the wise-self part of Lirael.

While I was hesitant to engage Carolyn as a source of information, not wanting to talk behind Lirael’s back, after she had reported to me what had happened and was preparing to go away and let Lirael take over, Carolyn inquired without my bidding, “Is there anything that you want to ask me?” It was a captivating invitation.

I decided to turn the question around in order to preserve the autonomy of Lirael and her system, and so I responded, “Is there anything you want to tell me, considering your unique perspective on things?”

Carolyn took this opportunity to tell me that it really mattered to Lirael that I appreciated each of them “individually.” She also brought up the experience when Lirael saw the card that she had drawn for Laura fall out of her file. While it seemed that Lirael could not tell me the full shock and devastation of this moment herself (perhaps because she wanted to shield herself from the amount of pain evoked by the fear that her relationship with Laura was somehow invalidated), Carolyn conveyed the important truth of Lirael’s agony in this moment. She said that Lirael had “obsessed over it.” She had worried that Laura didn’t really “value” her. Carolyn further told me that it would mean
so much to Lirael if I personally kept everything that she gave to me. She finished by saying that she was telling me all of this because she was not sure that Lirael could “say it this way”: by which I think she meant something like say it in a way that was both vulnerable and strong enough to convey the emotional truth of what had happened and her reaction to it—the fullness of a situation that evoked both the power of love and the risk that it might be painfully fragile or unreal.

Carolyn finished the session by adding that she wanted me to know that graduate school was on Lirael’s mind a lot. She said that Lirael wanted to attend, but that Max was “really scared.” I told Carolyn that graduate school also had been on my mind as something that Lirael and I needed to talk about more, and I felt validated in this gut instinct that an observing part of myself also had been holding in distant awareness.

After the session, I wrote about my overall experience of the visit from Carolyn: “I feel like Carolyn came as a kind of supervisor; she seemed able to speak to me directly, dispassionately, in a detached and wise way, about what was going on. I felt like I was talking with some kind of observing ego over the therapy. I found myself connecting with her, feeling affirmed through her, about things that I know I need to talk to Lirael about. I acknowledged to Carolyn certain things that I think that Lirael and I have been colluding in avoiding. And yet it didn’t feel like I was constructing secrets with Carolyn.” I added, amazed by the healing and empowering effect that Carolyn had on me: “Realizing that I suddenly felt more able to think about the therapy in the long term; felt like I wasn’t avoiding things for Lirael and me: our relationship; the big choice that she has coming up. She and I can and will talk about that choice; the only way I can make sure she’s safe and free.” Thus, like Max’s powerful visit, this visit from Carolyn
and her unique gifts helped to push me to places that I think wise forces in Lirael knew I/we needed some help in reaching.

In this way, Carolyn served as a grounding and holding force for both of us: she reminded me that my experience was real, too; reminded me of the legitimacy of what my intuitive knowing sensed about the therapy, confirming and helping me to differentiate my sense that I did indeed need to have my eye and my heart on certain challenging aspects of Lirael’s experience and our work. In this way, Carolyn provided something for me that was unusually gratifying: a partner in keeping my eye on the ball, even when that task battled against my longing for unconsciousness in the fact of psychic and interpersonal pain and risk. While I think that this partner exists to some extent in all patients and all therapeutic processes (and in the multifaceted perception and presence of all therapists), with Lirael I had the rare privilege of engaging with this part explicitly.

While her presence meant that Lirael was dissociated, in a way Carolyn also existed as a profound opposite of dissociation: she was there, she was always there, she always knew, and she always could handle it. In this way she seemed to transcend the tangles of typical human personality and suffering, further illustrating my sense of her as somehow divinely omniscient: perhaps, even, she was the “self,” or the face of the many faces that most closely resembles an archetype of such completeness and transcendence.\(^\text{38}\)

\text{[I once had a powerful dream about this kind of archetype, that reminded me of Carolyn. I dreamt that a crowd of people was in the room where I was sleeping with me: a variety of women, of varying appearance and from all across the life span. They were keeping me awake. Suddenly, it occurred to me that I needed to address them and integrate them or I would never be able to rest. “We need to gather the archetypes!” I began to chant in the dream. Then suddenly, an older woman, crone-like, appeared. She had white hair and a pattern curved under each eye that I thought were wrinkles at first, but that I then realized were actually diamonds set in her face. I was terrified of her, but I knew she didn’t actually want to destroy me: she just knew more than I did; her perspective was more expansive. She knew things that needed to be integrated. When I worked with her image, I partly worked with the idea of a self that held many selves; an image of multiplicity within unity, or unified multiplicity. It was an image of cosmic holding-together that did not demand that individual complexity be erased, but only seen, and gathered, each part given its place.]}

\(^{38}\)
kind of wisdom, Carolyn once told Lirael that she would need to remember certain painful memories, like her sexual assault, in order to be a “whole person again.”

5.6 Caveman

Caveman was the one alter I never met. He was an adult male of ambiguous age. Lirael told me that she never actually perceived him as a full person: rather, he only existed as a pair of eyes glowing from within a dark cave, where he lived and spent his time pacing.

Caveman would come out at times that seemed to overwhelm Lirael with fear and anger. In these moments, he often would bite her on her hands and arms, though his self-injury had a different quality than Lirael’s own cutting (though she did not know Caveman well enough to convey to me what exactly he was up to). Caveman rarely came out during the time when Lirael and I worked together, and he never came out in session. Of the times when he did emerge, there was one occasion when Lirael was in a class in which people were talking about sexual assault, and Caveman took over and became so agitated, at risk of hurting her or causing some commotion, that Lirael had to leave. Caveman also came out after a therapy session, following a conversation that Lirael and I had about food (about maintaining her understanding that she needed to be healthy in the face of Beatrice’s pressure to be thin), and he also came out following a dream that Lirael had about the stranger who raped her when she was a teenager. Overall, Lirael and I came to associate Caveman with experiences that were not only painful in terms of emotional flooding, but that were uniquely surprising and piercing, disrupting Lirael’s capacity to cope in the realm of identity and language.
As I grapple with how to approach this section in light of my detailed, nuanced, and rich relationships with Lirael’s other alters, I realize that I don’t have much to say about Caveman, because Lirael’s relationship to him, and therefore my relationship to him, was so limited. In ways I acknowledge that perhaps Lirael and I collectively avoided him and the process of really delving into his mystery; in ways I think he just was so mysterious that it made sense that he would not be a primary part of our conversations, work, and understanding of Lirael. And in other ways, I wonder if to spend a lot of time focusing on him may not have been healthy for Lirael, at least not considering where she was developmentally at that time. Even Beatrice, with her ample humanity and lovableness, presented a challenge to Lirael’s capacity to accept and love; perhaps the time to consider such a wild force as Caveman still was a long time coming for Lirael and other people in her life.

When I reflect on what I think about Caveman now, I find myself musing on the nature of mystery and darkness, and wondering if perhaps there are forces of darkness within the psyche that cannot be tamed; that are not meant to be tamed; and even that are not in the service of generativity and health—that even might want to destroy us. Certainly, I have described how Hillman talks about the non-upward, non-growth oriented parts of the psyche, and perhaps one could take that so far as to consider a form of darkness that wants to wound, tear, and unravel.

At the same time, part of my countertransference reaction to Caveman is one of compassion. I never shared this response with Lirael; I am not sure how to make sense of it exactly, even now. But for some reason, when I picture him, I imagine a gorilla at the zoo: pacing in a cage; acting out toward spectators with violence and what may appear to
be vulgarity, but not because he is “bad”—because he is a wild animal. The issue is not his wildness, but the fact that he is held captive in a cage by his fellow animals, human beings. I don’t mean to say that I would try to feed Caveman from my hands: I think such a castrating approach would be dangerous and naïve, and disrespectful of his ferocity. I don’t doubt that Caveman could be dangerous. But there is a radical difference between wild and evil. (I recall my therapist once commenting to me, during a period of my own struggle with harsh self-criticism, that to call a snake a “bitch” is a “category mistake.”) I wonder if Caveman does not require taming, but instead some degree of liberation from the cave, a freedom that paradoxically may reduce his destructiveness.

I also have considered understanding Caveman through the lens of what many DID authors call a “persecutory alter,” a sort of archetypal alter that seems to be present in many cases, and who is often abusive toward the host and others, rageful and wild in expression. There are a range of perspectives in understanding this type, some of which consider the alter primarily as an internalization of and identification with abusive figures. Even if not considering the persecutory alter as this kind of internalization, some also see this alter as something that first is protective (containing anger when it would have been too dangerous to express) but that then becomes persecutory. Goodman & Peters (1995) propose what they see as an alternative to these primary ideas in the literature: the idea that so-called persecutory alters in fact are always protective of the host, and that the reason they become seemingly-persecutory (turning on the host in adolescence/adulthood) actually comes from trying to prevent events that might put the whole system at risk: for example, developing close relationships, or telling people about prior experiences of abuse: “What changes is the form of protective behavior which no
longer looks obviously protective and which may in actuality be harmful and life-threatening to the host” (p. 93). While in a nurturing environment, developing a close, honest, and trusting relationship may be in the service of life, for someone whose prior life experiences have been traumatic, becoming close to people realistically would be reminiscent of prior catastrophes. In this model, the persecutory alter does not need to be punished or radically suppressed, then, but considered as a being who still is looking out for the host, just in ways that may not be immediately understandable. Ross (1989) makes a related point, identifying one classification of persecutor alters as internal demons who “really want to be contained and loved” (255-257). Kluft (2000) similarly writes: “[i]f we listen to the most destructive alters, we will find an effort to avoid feeling powerless and vulnerable and that it’s not uncommon for the most problematic alters to have emerged in the context of the most intolerable experiences and affects” (p. 28).

It seems important to highlight that this sort of model is fundamentally humanistic, reminiscent of Carl Rogers’s (1980) famous image of potatoes in a cellar: sprouting toward any sliver of light, even though the growth may be pale and sickly. As I have indicated, I do bristle somewhat at this characterization of anger and violence: from a human perspective, it seems overly simplistic to characterize these emotions as primarily in need of a hug; and from an archetypal perspective, this stance seems overly humanizing and simplifying of more vast, wild, and complex energies. Caveman certainly evokes this tension. Ultimately, it seems that there is no definitive way to resolve it, and that one’s stance largely is a matter of theory and worldview, that must be combined with a clinical sensitivity toward the evolving needs of one’s patients.
As Lirael and I worked together, the richness and complexity of each of these personalities became more differentiated and better known to each of us. By our creating a space where varying perspectives could have their say, Lirael increasingly was able to express all of the facets of her being without acting out in ways that were harmful, and to have that expression witnessed, nourished, and gently drawn closer to her personal sphere of awareness. At the same time, because Lirael’s alters continued to be distinct, especially as they spoke more of themselves for the first time, Lirael and I also had to work with cultivating relationships between them, and between her and them. These relationships ensured that as more diversity and conflict emerged, amnesic dissociation did not increase.

5.7 The Alters as a System

Thus a major part of my work with Lirael consisted of helping her to facilitate dialogue with these internal others, dialogue both “within herself” and in her relationship with me. This meant conversation, negotiation, and collaboration—consciousness all around, rather than the loss of time that once had been necessary. As Lirael said, she was coming to realize that if she did not learn to “bend a little bit,” she would “break,” and “compromise can make people really happy.” Lirael achieved this greater consciousness through steadily increasing capacity for her alters to talk to one another, to fill in the gaps of lost time for her, and for her to be able to tolerate listening to memories, experiences, and opinions that were not always easy for her to accept as part of her own total being. As Lirael had had to spend so long in her life protecting her awareness from threatening memories and reactions, she described how she found great relief in being in a place where her alters could have a home: away from her childhood environment, she said that
it was as if they all “tumbled out of a closet”! We reflected on the joy that she was able to experience in her multiplicity, even through the challenge, as for the first time in her life, she had the chance to spend time with and to become familiar with all the parts of herself.

As Lirael’s facility with “internal” dialogue increased, she became more aware of herself as being a part of each member of her system. This expansion of “I” involved an increase in the multiplicity of her sense of her personal identity: for example, in terms of her anger at her past abusers, in terms of how she wanted to relate to other people, and in terms of deeply-felt identity concerns, like sexual orientation. For example, in terms of sexuality, Lirael’s alters and Lirael herself held a variety of desire and identity positions: Lirael herself was beginning to be interested in women, Beatrice was interested in men, and Carolyn was “not a particularly sexual person,” but she also had told Lirael that if she were to have a romantic partner, it would be a woman. As time passed and Lirael was more able to see the multiplicity of the system as her own multiplicity, Lirael reported that Beatrice was uncomfortable with the idea that Lirael might be a lesbian, because that would mean that everyone in the system was gay, not just Lirael. On the other hand, Lirael was uncomfortable with how she was implicated in Beatrice’s desire to initiate sexuality with men. Lirael once experienced a weekend during which she found a woman attractive, while Beatrice found a man attractive, an experience that, with humor, Lirael found “so strange.” While this complexity could have an overwhelming quality to it—like many people clamoring for attention all at once—Lirael did not want to reduce herself for a fantasy of simplification. For example, she found herself newly frustrated when her friend Jason told her that he thought she was “just gay,” and Beatrice was “the most bisexual part of her.” Lirael described annoyance that Jason could tell her “what
[her] experience is” or attempt to limit her to one identity. In how she related to the multiplicity of herself, Lirael had begun to imagine and practice respectful mutuality rather than continuing to believe that she needed to submit to the demand for a singular perspective … whether that demand came from outside or inside her self-experience. Lirael was becoming committed to and protective of the idea that there was a lot to her, and that her multiplicity was central to her humanity and expressive of her unique story, not something to be erased.

Lirael also was aware of the complexity of multiple selves in the context of human relationship. Once she specifically wondered about the impact that her alters might have on romantic love: what if Beatrice wanted to have sex with someone, she wondered, but Sophie wanted to play? As I often did, I worked with Lirael to think about the ways in which this multiplicity, while perhaps more extreme in her own experience, is a common part of the complexity of any human relationship, romantic or otherwise, for most people. So often different parts of us want different things in relationship, holding different content and different hopes—as when at first, Beatrice had been suspicious of me. Interacting with other people, then, was a matter of negotiation. And in both the ways that we worked on Lirael’s “outside” relationships and the ways in which we worked on incorporating and negotiating her multiple selves within our relationship, we helped her to practice this process. Crucial were the ways in which we gradually worked to decrease the dissociation: as her self-parts were able to communicate with each other and with me, the gaps in awareness that make working on a relationship difficult if not impossible slowly became less of a problem. By differentiating Lirael’s multiplicity while
heightening her capacity for internal relationship, her capacity for having a more vibrant, honest, and fulfilling relational life increased.

Lirael’s capacity for negotiation within and communication about her system gained considerable practice when she was dealing with major stressful events. Once was a time when she was instructed to work with semen in a laboratory science class, an assignment that for her felt far too close to traumatic experience. Carolyn ended up handling the situation, with a predetermined plan that Lirael would be entirely dissociatively absent during the class and dialogue with Carolyn later about what had happened. Another time involved the previously described gynecological appointment. Lirael and her system had agreed that Beatrice would be the best person to handle the procedure, though Lirael felt guilty considering the frightening meanings of the event for her, concerned that it would be like “making Beatrice go through a rape.” Ultimately, as I have described, Beatrice’s leadership ended up being problematic, and so Carolyn came to convey to me the details of the event, taking on her negotiating role that facilitated communication between everyone, and between Lirael and me, and that could oversee the entirety of Lirael’s process when fear and shame otherwise would have impeded.

Lirael’s history of self-harm and suicidality also was positively impacted by the increasing communication within her system, an outcome that for me especially highlighted the beneficial richness of conceiving of a human being as more than the will of the ego. At an earlier point during her time at the university, before she had established the external support system that eventually helped her so much, Lirael had fantasized about ending her life. Fortunately, at that time a sense of interpersonal ethics had kept her safe, as she was concerned about the impact that her death would have on other people,
even the strangers who would have to interact with her body. As the alters became
differentiated, though, Lirael found something even more intimately close for her to live
for, something rooted in a love for her own being. The first time, early in our work, that
she and I talked in depth about her suicidal past, I asked her what the others would think
now if she tried to kill herself. She quickly responded, “They would be sad.” I replied,
“The others love you. Which means that you love yourself.” Lirael’s increasing sense that
she would be missing to the world if she were to die was not only about those outside
people whom she had come to love and to count on, but also shaped by her sense of
ethical responsibility toward her total self, and the parts of herself, and the energies
moving through her, that transcended her ego identity. To kill herself would be to act in a
way that she had recognized would violate intimate interconnectedness in and
responsibility within relationships. Lirael’s multiplicity added a rich additional layer to
this relational-ethical approach: she knew that she also had an ethical responsibility to
relate compassionately to the parts of herself that did not want to die and did not want
Lirael to die; that even in a “personal” sense, she was not the only person to consider.
Suicide would have been devastating partly because it behaves as if there are not a
variety of perspectives that need honoring.

Sometimes the parts did not want to negotiate very well, however, and Beatrice
often played the major role in this tension due to her not wanting to share her subjectivity
with Lirael or with anyone else. This perspective is reminiscent of the relationship that
many of our egos have to our own wider range: not wanting anyone or anything who
disrupts their agenda to get in the way! Lirael herself also had trouble relating to Beatrice
as a part of herself. Once she told me that she felt like she had been Sophie, but that she
felt that she never was Beatrice, as anger and flirtatiousness were far from Lirael’s self-concept, threatening in a world in which her family relationships required that she be accommodating and nice and good. Unsurprisingly, there were times when Beatrice would co-opt the system, as when Lirael had a fight with Jason and Beatrice decided that everyone needed to be “sent away” so that she could deal with the situation fully as she saw fit, with more interpersonal fire than any of the others would have allowed. Beatrice tended to take control in ways that others did not, including taking time so that she could go shopping and controlling meal times so that she could regulate food intake. On her part, Lirael sometimes talked about fantasizing that Beatrice had a friend that was all her own to help Beatrice with her greater demands for personhood. While Lirael sometimes would become frustrated with Beatrice, she also seemed to appreciate the fact that Beatrice would “fight back” in interpersonal situations when she herself would not defend herself, as with her father or Jason, or even with me when we first met. While Beatrice could be a bit aggressive even toward Lirael, there was a kind of refusal to be passive about her that, as I have proposed, had a lot of health in it.

Max and Sophie also made an interesting and important pair in Lirael’s total self. As I’ve described, Sophie was full of enthusiasm about life and had a vibrant capacity to become excited about small pleasures and joys. While Max could become excited, too, his was a more quietly absorbed and subdued excitement, as in computer work. Each part seemed to capture an extroverted and introverted aspect of Lirael’s childhood self, and a state of innocence and of trauma. Sophie’s excitement sometimes would tell me about general excitement that Lirael was experiencing, as when she was flooded with joy and wanted to be active all weekend at a time when Lirael was finalizing the details of her
graduate school acceptance. As I attended to these parts, they helped me to be sensitive to the fact that fear/woundedness and excitement/wholeness exist within the same being and must both be approached and accounted for, without too much exclusive focus on one at the expense of the other. When Lirael had a very hopeful experience interviewing for graduate school, she told me that the guide at the university who had given her a tour had reminded her of me, a sense of resonance that I thought fit well with the role I played in helping Lirael’s self-exploration and navigation process. Below I will describe in more detail two major issues during the time of our therapy that illustrate well this developing negotiation process: Lirael’s decision to attend graduate school (and so leave our work), and Lirael’s relationship to her Christian faith.

Lirael’s decision to attend graduate school led to a significant relational process within her system. While I felt concerned about Lirael moving far away because I had come to believe that our work was grounding and transformative for her, I also felt thrilled for Lirael as I imagined her living her own free life more completely. Around this time, I began to consider, and to share with Lirael, my sense that her choice to attend graduate school invited us to listen to and “integrate” (or reject!) the variety of voices that had a say in this choice (both her own internal voices and the voices of her world, such as her father’s safety concerns and shifting opinions that attempted to dictate to her how she should feel about her increasing independence). Lirael and I collaborated on this plan of listening and integrating as an orienting focus for the conclusion of our work. We agreed that it was a way to facilitate her choice in the “cacophony of voices,” to use my then-supervisor’s phrase: a choice that felt like it was authentic and fruitful and that Lirael
meaningfully could own. I wrote in my notes at the time: “I will help her to make a choice and to feel real and alive while she makes it: to feel that it is hers.”

During this time, “internally” Sophie and Max primarily took the stage in working with Lirael’s mixed feelings about graduate school and the changes, both enlivening and painful, they all were about to undergo. Sophie often held and communicated Lirael’s excitement; for example, jumping on the bed and coloring with celebratory joy when her roommate was gone for the weekend, and being similarly excited to drink a milkshake and jump on the bed at a hotel room where Lirael stayed for one of her program interviews. Lirael also came to me as Sophie—Sophie reported to me that Lirael had given her permission to come as she wanted to visit and share so badly—which I understood as a way for Lirael to fully impact me with her joyful excitement and with how much we both needed to honor it, even in the face of loss and fear. While I worried that perhaps there was something “immature” about Sophie holding Lirael’s joy about graduate school—thinking that perhaps an alter so young could not maturely hold joy about such a multifaceted experience—I came to change my mind, as eventually it seemed to me that all of us when excited are buoyed by something like the trusting and effusive joy of childhood—and that the openheartedness of children is not necessarily “immature.” At this time, even when Lirael was in session as herself, she would remark that Sophie still felt close, a nearness that I sensed in Lirael’s presence—a blurring between their experiences, much like the Lirael-Sophie blurred joy she presented during her gratitude and enthusiasm at the start of our work together. As Lirael worked on honoring this excitement, she herself also reflected on how “wise” Sophie could be, particularly with her capacity for patience and acceptance, as when she did not blame
herself for mistakes (Lirael once gave a touching example that if Sophie were to spill milk, rather than castigating herself, she cheerfully would exclaim, “Whoops!” and simply clean it up). Sophie seemed to share this capacity with Carolyn (as the boundaries between Lirael and her others blurred, the distinctions between each of the others seemed to blur as well—perhaps even Lirael’s choice of Sophie’s name conveyed an appreciation of her wisdom (sophia), and indeed, Sophie’s name in “real” life was similarly rich with connections to something blessed and whole). Nonetheless, despite Sophie’s wisdom, Lirael and I did have to be careful that we not pay attention to her at the expense of the others’ needs or at the risk of not attending to painful events in Lirael’s life (like the gynecologist appointment), especially because Lirael tended to favor the brightness of Sophie. Lirael talked about her fantasies of keeping Sophie as a separate person, so that Sophie did not have to lose her beautiful innocence. If Lirael and I had continued to work together, I wonder if we might have worked on how Sophie did not need to be totally separate—Lirael did not need to become somehow “unblemished”—in order for Lirael to embody her purity and wholeness.

At the same time, Max carried Lirael’s sadness and fear about leaving. Lirael once said, “Max cries for me because I can’t.” At this time, Lirael had dreams that concerned Max, including one of being in elementary school on Valentine’s day and not receiving a Valentine from anyone but the teacher. Lirael also dreamt that other children wouldn’t play with her/Max at recess, only throwing a ball at them on the playground while they ran away, with no recess monitors coming to their aid. These events were not only from dream life, but from Lirael’s memories. Lirael and I talked about how she could feel sad for Max without feeling guiltily responsible for what he had to go through:
grateful that he had protected her by taking on something that she could not bear alone, and grateful that he was continuing to do so.

As Lirael’s last days with me arrived, Max always was nearby. During the day when she took her last visit to campus, she said, “Everything feels so big, and I’m so little,” expressing the Max part of her experience. She also expressed concern about how to take care of Max, as she found Sophie’s joy much easier to accommodate, less emotionally taxing on her and on others. As Lirael reflected on what Max needed, she said that “it’s a lot about safety.” Lirael came to learn that the more she could look for little things to honor Max’s needs, the more her overall self-care felt satisfied. For example, Lirael felt calmer after she bought Max a stuffed anteater. Lirael remarked that because the anteater had very large eyes, he could “see everything,” and this creature being vigilant for him helped Max to feel uniquely cared for, and Lirael to feel more at peace.

Lirael’s narrative of Max at the end continued to shift between him as weakness and him as strength. Once, she commented on feeling frustrated with Max because she felt that she “could be stronger if he wasn’t as close.” For example, one day she tried to call the therapist we had found for her, and Max came out. Carolyn then had to take over and make the call for them. Afterward, as Lirael in shame criticized herself, we talked about how “picking your battles” is important, and how maybe it was a time when Lirael just could be gentle with Max/herself and grateful to Carolyn for the decisive strength that she provided for them. Similarly, we eventually were able to say the same things about Max: Someday, you will be able to stay closer to his fear and learn from his
memories and feelings and help you both to heal. For now, perhaps you can find the grace to accept his gift.

Beatrice also had a role to play during this time, as she held and communicated anger at Lirael’s father. She came out and/or was present when Lirael’s father was trying to scare and belittle Lirael about the dangers he imagined in her moving to a new city. Beatrice told me that she did not feel that Lirael’s dad was her dad, and so she could tap into and express strong anger that helped Lirael break her attachment to her father’s good opinion enough so that she could put her foot down and claim her budding new life as her own.

Lirael herself had a related experience with her mother the day before Lirael and my last in-person session (as we later had several phone sessions to help with her transition). Lirael’s mother and father were with her at school to help her move home before her departure for graduate school. Lirael’s mother had brought her a bag and bow so that Lirael could wrap her gift for me, a kind gesture that Lirael deeply appreciated. Yet at the same time, Lirael’s mother had “confused” and “overwhelmed” Lirael when she told her that she had told Lirael’s father, without Lirael’s consent, that Lirael was in therapy. Lirael felt “invaded.” Lirael told me that her mother also had questioned the necessity of Lirael’s therapy experience, asking if she really needed to continue therapy after she moved. Lirael felt confused and distressed because she said that she was used to being on the same page with her mother. While Lirael’s mother had not acted toward her with the kind of cruelty that Lirael’s father had, in this situation she displayed how she still behaved toward Lirael with a dissociative structure: Lirael said that her mother would not deny that this conversation had happened if Lirael were to ask her about it.
later, but she still effectively was denying Lirael’s history of abuse and invalidation when she undermined the importance of Lirael’s therapy. She also was neglecting to recognize therapy as precious to Lirael—indeed, one of the most precious parts of Lirael’s life, the vessel in which she was becoming herself. I wrote of what I said to Lirael in response, “Maybe part of what’s hard about it is not just your mom not being understanding about therapy, but also your not being able to tell her about this experience that you’ve loved, that has been such a significant part of your life and your growing up here. She can’t see you—like how you feel like you can’t tell her about DID. Maybe sometime soon, you will be able to find some way to talk to her about what’s so important to you. And maybe she will be able to hear you.” This conversation led to the long, deep, heartbroken, yet powerfully alive sobbing with which Lirael ended our in-person work.

Lirael’s religious community and personal relationship to God also provided an opportunity to work with negotiating through dissociation and multiplicity. In addition to attending church off campus, Lirael participated in a fellowship of Christian university students, where she found support for some of her most difficult experiences, including through discussions of surviving and healing from sexual trauma. Lirael’s participation in the group was a helpful way for her to explore her relationship to Christianity on her own terms, though Lirael still struggled with “hypocrisy” in the Christian faith. Lirael told me that “Christians are good at judging people.” At the same time, Lirael found true compassion and nourishment in this group, and we often talked about the challenge of feeling both that a community may not accept you for who you are and that it may be a strong source of support. While the group was not without its problems, Lirael found its general warmth to be healing in light of the experiences of religious pain in her past. In
her childhood Christian community, Lirael had wanted a communal church blessing for her suffering related to her OCD experiences—many others in the church who were struggling with illness and loss were to be blessed at this particular event. But Lirael said that her father refused her request, as he was ashamed for Lirael’s struggles to be publicly recognized, though Lirael longed for this acknowledgment and support. Thus, one of the most loving experiences Lirael had with her college Christian group involved this simple kind of witnessing presence. She said that the first time she went to the group, she arrived an hour and a half early because her roommate had locked her out of their room so that she could drink with friends. Lirael said that someone from the group already was in the space hanging posters and asked Lirael if she wanted to help. After an experience of being bullied and rejected that so painfully mirrored those of her childhood, Lirael took the welcoming gesture of a stranger for the act of decency and compassion that it was.

More particularly, Lirael began to find the group healing because she formed a relationship with another young woman member, who provided a non-intrusive supportive presence for Lirael during times when painful discussions stirred Lirael’s memories. Lirael described how this young woman intuitively held Lirael’s hand during a presentation about childhood trauma and then gave Lirael her phone number in case Lirael wanted to call her to talk. After this experience, Lirael described to me wanting to feel closer to this possible new friend, though not without ambivalence, as she was not sure that she wanted to offer her an “explanation” for why she had begun to cry. As Lirael reflected on why this encounter with this woman felt so touching and healing, she remarked that she felt that this young woman “just listened,” unlike someone like Jason, who though well-meaning, “offer[ed] advice,” and certainly unlike her father, who
shamed Lirael’s experiences as beyond the scope of Christian compassion. The healing presence of this young woman—her capacity to sit with Lirael without pushing or demanding—seemed to provide Lirael with the beginnings of an understanding of what a truly kind and nonjudgmental friend could offer.

While Lirael valued this emotional and spiritual support, at times she continued to feel hurt by Christianity, struggling with Christianity’s own tendency to dissociate and split. Particularly, Lirael felt confused and hurt by Christian perspectives that demonized diverse sexualities. Through our work, Lirael increasingly became able to recognize ways in which she had internalized these judgements and continued to apply them to others and to herself. She began to see beyond judgment, so that she could appreciate the multiplicity and complexity of values and truths, finding respect and compassion for her own deeply felt experiences.

Lirael and I often worked with negotiation among her alters as it was impacted by the Christian group and Christian perspectives. Lirael struggled with Christian counsel toward “forgiveness,” as she (perhaps especially Beatrice) felt that this attitude bypassed necessary anger at perpetrators. Also, in group meetings simply the presence of conversation about certain traumas was triggering for Lirael and required system navigation. For example, at the meeting when she shared that bonding experience with the other young woman, a visiting speaker had presented about his experiences of being sexually abused as a child. Lirael was frightened by the thought of staying as her “I” self-state at the meeting, but she said that she also wanted to be present for his talk, and so she “made the choice to stay” as herself, expressing her increasing willingness about approaching challenging experiences with her “I” consciousness. Lirael told me that she
began crying during the presentation and asked Beatrice if she would take over. But Beatrice responded that she thought Lirael could “handle it.” Lirael added that she also considered asking Carolyn, but she quickly discovered that she herself wanted to “see if [she] could do it [her]self.”

This was a powerful moment in Lirael’s negotiating relationship with her alters, one that revealed their increasingly sophisticated collaboration and Lirael’s growing capacity to assume tolerance for a range of awareness as herself. As far as I knew, this experience seemed to be the first time that Lirael both had asked for help directly in the moment and that another compassionately had denied the help, particularly another like Beatrice, who so valued being out on her own and taking charge. Lirael’s subsequent fantasied conversation with Carolyn, in which she herself had decided that she actually wanted to do it on her own, affirmed the wisdom of Beatrice’s denial. Significantly, while Lirael had embraced the support of her alters in the service of her continuing “I” presence, she also received support from an outside person: her budding young woman friend, who somehow knew to come over and sit beside her.

In this situation, Lirael and her alters offered their perspectives in the service of a collaborative, integrated wellbeing. It is clear that as Lirael’s conscious awareness and capacity to dialogue expanded, transparency in how the alters were helping Lirael could increase. Her greater self-capacity also allowed Lirael herself to be open to experiencing the love of an outside other. In the time following this experience, Lirael increasingly was able to tolerate certain experiences as within the range of her conscious multiplicity. She struggled on an unfair exam, for example, and afterward, instead of thinking of cutting herself as punishment for not performing well, her previous preferred recourse, Lirael
simply welcomed herself to feel reasonably angry at the professor for testing his students on material he never had taught.

Lirael said that at her last meeting with the Christian group, she said goodbye by sharing with members “how [she] came to God,” telling some of the stories of her traumas and her efforts to find a sense of continuing grace in life. This moment was a crucial one for Lirael, both because she was beginning to imagine and practice more interpersonal love and trust and because she was growing in faith that regardless of how other people responded, her self and her system could handle it. Lirael said that Carolyn helped her to speak but that it felt like Lirael herself did it and was there, co-present with Carolyn’s assistance: “It was me; I was there,” she told me. And I reflected to her how it seemed like Carolyn had helped her speak with her own voice. Through this experience, Lirael and I noted the generosity of the others, and the ways in which, the more Lirael listened to their needs, the more steadfastly and courageously they proved themselves to be her greatest champions.

Lirael also practiced navigation within her system through the ways in which she developed her personal values and relationship to God as they were distinguished from some Christian values (one example being her work to differentiate a more nuanced understanding of forgiveness; Lirael cited her gratitude that the man who spoke about his childhood abuse did not naively ask that survivors forgive, but instead said that “Jesus had had an unblemished childhood so he could replace your childhood with his own”). Around this time, Lirael and I talked a great deal about selves/self and gods/God (even if not always in those direct terms). Lirael shared with me how much our integration work related to her relationship with religion and religious people, a relationship in which the
“outside” world felt as fragmented and split apart as her “inner” subjective life, and as much in need of the balm of dialogue and increasing richness. For example, Lirael once cried as she described her realization that she wanted to feel closer to her mother spiritually, but that within their relationship, it only was possible for Lirael to be one restricted version of her total being (for example, not erotically interested in women). Lirael added that she wished that she could sit down with her mother, with the bible, and look at it with her, reflecting on how it isn’t “black or white,” but “complicated,” and Lirael, in her own complication, was “okay.” I reflected to Lirael that perhaps she also wanted to do this complexity-increasing and accepting work for herself toward herself, an idea with which she deeply resonated. Indeed, in our work, we already were on this journey.
6.1 Orienting

I have described the profound value for Lirael in not succumbing to pressures to integrate: the rich, creative potency of embracing multiplicity and complexity, in our relationship and in her alters’ relationships, rather than a singular fantasy of unity and progress. I also have described the post-Jungian, archetypal polytheistic critiques of monotheistic, ego-oriented psychology. But what may be of value in our cultural fantasies of wholeness, in monotheistic spirituality, in Jung’s fascination with the mandala? Within the fertile mess of psyche’s multiplicity, how do we understand experiences of felt profound wholeness? We may wonder if they are just one among many archetypes, or if there is a transcendent or superordinate place for such feelings. While this exploration is far too large for the scope of this project, it seems necessary to at least touch on how Lirael’s story illuminates this conversation.

There is ambiguity in how we talk about self/Self, even at the level of the seemingly simple choice of capitalization. For heuristic purposes, it can be helpful to use “Self” to refer to that which is beyond the ego of our day to day “I” consciousness, as in contemporary Western culture we regularly use “self” as a synonym for ego. Self with a capital “S,” however, points to a larger, less personal quality of existence and experience. At the same time, ultimately Jung did not make a distinction between “self” and “Self,” as he argued that to capitalize “self,” even when we are meaning to speak to that which is beyond the ego, can endanger us of idealizing the self and losing its ordinariness.  

---

39 For this reason, I generally have chosen to write self with a lowercase “s” throughout this project.
As I have described, while post-Jungians have deconstructed Jung’s tendency to prefer unity, wholeness, integration, and orderliness in his descriptions of the self, clearly Jung’s own understanding of the self defied such simplicity: Jung himself already was deconstructing himself in his own work. Redfearn (1985) highlights the complexity of Jung’s perspective: he differentiates Jung’s views of the self as “a primary cosmic unity,” “the totality of the individual,” “an experience of ‘wholeness,’” “a primary organizing force or agency outside the conscious ‘I,’” “the unconscious or the organizing center of the unconscious,” and the “emerging part of the self” (p. 9). In contrast to the ego use of the word, Redfearn notes that for Jung, the experience of “self” is primarily of a “not-me” quality: the “me” experience is the ego, who consciously integrates and organizes, “paradoxically . . . as a sort of complex” (p. 9). More recently, Colman (2009) similarly describes how Jung viewed the self as both “center” and “totality,” transcending these opposites, and not coinciding with either ego or the unconscious, but as a midpoint between conscious and unconscious (p. 153). Colman also notes that in Jung’s later work, Jung additionally saw the self as an archetype, partly unconscious and thus represented through symbols, and also as an organizing principle, with the ego as “midwife” (p. 160). Colman helpfully lists all the ways in which Jung described the self throughout his career: as “individuality, mid-point between conscious and unconscious, union of opposites, totality of the psyche, centre of the psyche, archetype, wholeness, and organising principle” (p. 161). In terms of more recent post-Jungian perspectives, Colman notes that many tend to describe the self as not a structure in the psyche, but a structure of the psyche (p. 170). Salman (1999), for example, argues that the self “exists only as a
symbol of process,” rather than as a reified entity, representing our ongoing capacity to create metaphors, tell stories, and make narrative sense of our existence (p. 73).

Brooke (2009) also provides a helpful description of contemporary understandings of the self in light of considering Jung through the lens of phenomenology. While classic and contemporary understandings of the self, in our inside/outside, Cartesian, and increasingly brain-focused culture, tend to position self as internal to a person, Brooke challenges this distinction. He notes that in fact “the world is the landscape of my psychic life” (p. 603); that “the psyche is the world in which we live and find ourselves” (p. 604). Thus, it is important to acknowledge that to speak psychologically and of experiences of the self is not to be describing some entity or process locked within the private sphere of an individual person, but instead to be describing that person’s total engagement in a socio-historical, cultural, ecological, aesthetic, embodied, relational, meaningful world. Even one’s dreams and images, apparently private events, come to be in the realm of a self that is the world: Brooke writes, “the self dreams, and the ego finds itself present and dreamed within that psychic gathering that we call the dreaming self” (p. 606). When Brooke preserves the notion of “interiority,” it is not as that which is isolated from the world, but rather as the understanding that “the human world is always threaded with psyche’s movements, or imaginally constituted, and that it becomes relatively enduring despite changing environments” (p. 610). I will explore the richness and expansiveness of these understandings of the self, specifically in terms of dissociation and multiplicity, as this self emerged in Lirael and my work.
6.2 The Self in Lirael’s Experience

There were times when Lirael seemed to be in touch with a process unfolding through her experience of multiplicity that seemed transcendent, encompassing, and enduring, even if not in the form of a “reified entity.” These are moments that I connect with some kind of larger self experience.

The primary experience that Lirael had that first put me in touch with an awareness of this kind of self occurred in November, a little more than halfway through our work. Lirael lost time for the longest period in months, from Friday to Saturday evening. The loss was precipitated by a devastating visit from her father, during which he was kind to her and acted as if they had an uncomplicatedly good relationship. For Lirael, her father’s pure kindness was in itself a dissociative structure, denying all of the times he had been cruel. As Lirael doubted her life and what she tentatively and preciously had come to know to be true for her, she slipped away from her “I” consciousness. She said that the next thing she knew, it was one day later.

Lirael returned to her “I” reality that Saturday evening on the sidewalk in a Pittsburgh neighborhood. Powerfully, Lirael described this moment as one of profound “silence”: she said that somehow all of her alters had been as if chased far away, and she was utterly alone for the first time in memory. I vividly can imagine her having this experience: it was a blustery, wild-feeling day, shortly after hurricane Sandy, and I imagine Lirael standing windswept and without a coat, alone beneath the early dark fall sky. I wrote in my notes at the time: “I could see her, running, wandering through the chill wet streets, alone but powerful a few days after the wild hurricane storm. Alone should seem vulnerable, but somehow she seemed wild and free and strong.” I see her as
both vulnerable and so massive that she is almost terrifying: as big and wild as the forces of this changing, turbulent earth.40

The first thing Lirael said that she saw as her own vision returned was a Dachshund, whom she quickly learned was named Mustard, and his owner, a gentle elderly man. Lirael later reflected on how blessed she felt to encounter someone who knew she needed help at the exact moment when she came back to herself. (Or perhaps she came back because her larger intelligence sensed the presence of these two beings who compassionately could be there for her.) The man introduced Mustard, and Lirael knelt and began to play with him. With Mustard’s companionship, Lirael said she felt her “personhood” returning. “You look lost,” the man said to Lirael with concern. “Where are you trying to go?”

Thinking of a place that she anticipated would feel safe to her, Lirael gave him the address to her church. Fortunately, he knew how to help her reach it. When Lirael arrived

40 [I think of one of my own powerful experiences of such an expansive self: driving alone, west, cross-country over several days in late August, my whole life in my car. As I traversed the psyche of my home country, I had never felt so utterly alone, so massive, so all-encompassing, as if I were made of everything and everything made of me. I felt wild, harsh, bleak, greedy, destructive, vibrant, beautiful ... all these multiple things, “good” and “bad,” that we all are in this time. I felt how much my psyche is made of this world, this time into which I was born. As I approached my destination, soon after the shock of the Badlands and a lingering sense of genocide in the Black Hills, I drove through thick smoke that covered western Montana, dark haze held close to the earth as it spread from the wildfires raging in eastern Washington. I stopped at a gas station off the highway and stood outside of my car among strangers, many of them migrant workers from Mexico. We stared together at this world, overtaken by night at noon. I imagined what my native Pittsburgh was said to have looked like over a hundred years ago, when the fires of the mills made the street lights come on at noon and left the walls of all, steel workers and tycoons, coated in darkness. “We have made the forests so out of balance,” my friend in Washington offered me. “Fire destroys and restores.” In the blowing dust and wind and rain storms that followed me as I crossed Washington the next day, I shared with my friend my sense of vast expansiveness, loss of ego, richness of psyche, and both wonder and almost apocalyptic terror that I felt after traversing so many places and feeling the immensity of the changes that I personally was going through, and that the country and world were going through simultaneously. “Yes,” she said, “it is an apocalypse. It is the world’s apocalypse, and it’s your apocalypse. They are one.” I ate dinner alone in Seattle looking out over Puget Sound, feeling too big to fit inside the restaurant, and I knew both that there was something at work in the world so much larger than me ... and that there is some self much larger than the strictures of my ego that, through life experience, I was becoming able to sense.]
at the church, even though it was a weekend evening, there was an event going on—yet another gift. Lirael said that the people there were very kind, asking her if she needed to go to the hospital (of course, she replied with an emphatic “No!”) and respecting Lirael’s sense of how she was doing and what she needed. With everyone assured that Lirael was safe, the church members offered that she join them in eating and gave her a coat from their collection for the homeless. Lirael engaged in conversation with the warm strangers, and she said that she felt particular satisfaction from her time with a woman who had a daughter who was on the autism spectrum, with whom Lirael shared her own sense of being impacted by her sister’s spectrum experience. Lirael said that this encounter finished the work she had done with Mustard, helping what she called her “personhood,” by which she meant her sense of embodied belonging in life and the human family, to return the rest of the way. Lirael said that she then was able to make her way safely back to campus. She also was able to attend church the next day, and she told me that she found herself deeply grateful that no one behaved in a “weird” way about her somewhat mysterious experience of need the previous evening.

Lirael and I agreed that somehow this period of time seemed crucial, perhaps one of the most crucial nights of her life. Lirael described the whole experience as one of “God looking out for [her.]” She wondered what would have happened to her had she not found the man with Mustard; had she not found the warmth of the church community with which to reconnect to herself and others. She wondered if she could have pieced together where she was or made her way home. Certainly, the experience that Lirael had spoke to the most compassionate, generous, and merciful aspects of Christianity, and the call in many religious traditions to treat the stranger as God. In a psychological way,
Lirael and I reflected on how it was hard for her to believe that the world could be safe and looking out for her. I commented that when the world was bad, she wondered what she had done to make it that way. But when it was good, she was afraid that it would be taken away from her. In a conversation with my supervisor soon after, he described how he thought that as Lirael and I talked about the generosity of God and the world, in some way Lirael also was talking about the generosity of an experience of self. He commented that it seemed to him that Lirael was wondering: “Am I strong enough? Is the God in me wise enough?”

My supervisor also suggested considering Lirael’s lost day as a dissociative fugue state, rather than as an episode of lost time more typical of DID, as Lirael and I at first had understood it. Certainly it was an unusual instance of losing time for Lirael, unlike previous experiences in the sense that she did not experience one of her alters as having managed the lost time for her. She said that when she returned, it felt like the others had been “pushed away” and there was no one there but her. She described how her system had “all been talking,” but no one was sure what had happened—her others were unable to report back to her as they normally did; everyone was without information. Lirael even was concerned that in light of this silence, perhaps “there [was] someone else,” an alter whom she had never met. Carolyn assured her, though, that they did not need to worry about that question at that time. Lirael said that to be “without the chatter” of the others had been “scary,” but also “nice.” I felt that silence palpably when I was with her listening to her remarkable story. I imagine that for a moment, Lirael could experience and say to herself: “It’s just me. It’s always been me. It always will be me. I survived.” As much as I value multiplicity, theoretically and in our work together, imagining this
moment of Lirael herself/Self alone and, on some deep level, unafraid, moved me to tears.

While perhaps this felt sense is enough, the question of how to understand God or self, and if such a “thing” is inside or outside, in a world of many gods and many selves, for me continues to remain profound as it is illuminated through this unique experience in Lirael’s life. Lirael said that she had an ambivalent relationship to surrendering to “God the Father,” due to all the wounds of religious and cultural patriarchy. At the same time, God was a central part of Lirael’s life, and as our work developed, Lirael was cultivating a warmer personal relationship to God, on her own terms. She was able to imagine that in this experience, God was loving toward her. Yet as my supervisor pointed out, this long dissociative period also was an experience that put Lirael powerfully in touch with the availability and compassion of her own “inner” resources: she said, “She is becoming in touch with the God inside her,” a holistic God experience indeed. For me this tension makes the singularity of the experience in this moment so powerful. When the alters vanished to nothing but memory, Lirael was left with the opportunity to experience that she knew how to open to the world with trust and resourcefulness.

Thus, I think that even though there is great value in critiquing unity and enjoying the richness of non-integrated, centrifugal energies, there also is value in thinking of the self as a vast, majestic God. Even if the self is not some entity to which we can point, perhaps we can think of our processes, our unique systems of multiplicity, as a God, as they entail such vast awareness, synthesis, creativity, insight, and wisdom, often to degrees far beyond that which we ourselves can consciously and deliberately access within any single position, ego or otherwise. The self as our process works in mysterious
ways, and somehow it is always there for us, holding us, guiding us, deeply made of us, even through periods of chaos or insanity (or at least, chaotic and insane from the perspective of the ego!). For someone like Lirael, this vision of self as wise can prove especially empowering, as she always had believed that all of the power existed outside of her: that she herself had no wisdom or authority or autonomy. In this sense of self, one does indeed rest in the embrace of a powerful God … but a God close to one’s personal experience, in fact made of the fabric of one’s deepest, highest, fullest being. In this sense, I recall a conversation in which Lirael and I explored her wish that she could know directly from God if God truly accepted and loved her: and our dialogue turned to our shared awareness that in some way she was talking about hoping to someday be able to find such affirmation from her own resources.

The last months of Lirael and my work brought a proliferation of rich images of the self as emergent process through Lirael’s art. At the time, I wrote about her art: “She told me that these pieces were new, and I could tell from the quality they had. Something more spacious, both more clear and more complicated.” I described the images: “The first was of a young girl sitting on a beach, her legs in lotus. Her face was downcast; her eyes closed. Dressed in white, she looked peaceful. ‘Like a monk, a little Buddha,’ I told Lirael. Behind her, a clock disintegrated into glinting metallic golden shimmers, as if a strong gust of ocean wind were blowing it away. This was another ‘loss of time’ piece, but there was something so beautiful, so calming about it—none of that obliterating Alice in Wonderland panic. Something about the solidity of that sitting girl—her presence would go on, even if the time disappeared. She existed outside of time: the self. I asked Lirael about this, this sense of enduring aloneness that I saw merged with strength and
calm; that reminded me of the time she went away and came back alone. This girl was also in a kind of heaven. (Isn’t that what we mean by eternal? Atemporal?) The sun came into the picture from the side, not its body but the pouring light, and it illuminated the multiplicity of colors in the water: every shade of blue and green and pink and silver and gold. This was an image of the majesty of God, inside her and outside her. It was an image of someone alone on the beach, alone in the universe before God. Naked and whole.”

Lirael also made a drawing called “Many faces.” I wrote of it: “A woman with long flowing hair, faces staring off and contorting within her hair, one on her forehead, this face’s hair coming down below the larger woman’s eyes, like tears.” Lirael also made “an image of a woman with her head partly submerged in water, tears glowing golden, like light bulbs suspended from strings, dripping down her hair into the darkness.” She reflected on how they were “the other’s tears,” these beings who cried for her when she could not. For me these images evoke multiplicity within wholeness, potently containing femininity, fluidity, pain, darkness, illumination, vision. For our last in-person session, Lirael had made other images of multiplicity held within the whole potency of images of women. One was of “three women, layered upon each other: one in the back, with makeup dripping and hands steepled before her face, then one in the middle, facing forward, faded, with a woman with her back to us, walking into the other woman’s face.” I asked, “She has her back to us because she is leaving?” Lirael said yes. The sides of the picture also included tree branches with ice on them. Lirael said, “A tree like that I think of emptiness.” I described it as “barren, cold, lonely, dead.” Lirael

---

41 [This image recalls to me my dream of the woman with diamonds in her face, who reminded me of Carolyn and even of an image of the self.]
reflected that there is an emptiness and loneliness in the space of moving on, in leaving one thing and beginning another. While we often think of self-images as fertile, a part of the self that Lirael found at this time was the strength of a tree that was surviving the winter, co-existent with her sense of joyful flowering.

One of the last images that Lirael shared with me she described as being related to time and the self. She called it “at the mercy of time.” I described it: “A young woman sitting, knees tucked under her, on her feet on railroad tracks. Her hands above her head, her head bowed down. Behind her, a clock roars toward her, like the train. The whole picture has a pinkish cast; the clock disintegrates into a kind of mist, the numbers half gone.” While Lirael had spoken so much about feeling at the mercy of time due to losing it, in this image, I also saw the being at the mercy of existence that she shared with all human beings: the day before our last day of work, there was no way to escape time’s progression, even if she obliterated her awareness for a little while. And yet she continued through time, even if someday it would come and destroy her wholeness as it destroys all of us, bringing loss with it.

Lirael also saw potent God/self in the psyche of the world as she neared her move, in a way that at times felt almost magical to witness. She talked about wanting to say goodbye to the grotto on campus, a place that had meant a great deal to her in a few ways: at one time, it was a place where she fantasized about killing herself; at another time, it was a place where she had found healing peace. Lirael said that she wanted to bring a flower and leave it there, like the daffodil that she had held during the session when Carolyn told Laura for the first time about one of Lirael’s experiences of sexual assault. Jason had picked that flower, though, and as Lirael imagined having a similar
experience of grace and beauty in spite of the horror that also lingered at the grotto, Lirael mentioned that she did not feel quite comfortable with picking a flower—because it did not quite seem like hers to take. In a beautiful synchronicity, however, as Lirael was walking on campus soon after imagining this plan, she looked down and happened to see a plucked tulip lying in her path. It seemed like a gift: in the middle of cobblestones, nowhere near any other tulips, with no indication of a person or animal who had left it. “It was perfect,” Lirael said. She took it with her to the grotto and left it there as an offering.42

A final thought to further relieve any tension between multiple others and the self in Lirael’s experience is to take to heart Hillman’s (1981) liberating statement that “[t]he task of psychology, let us stress, is not the reconciliation of monotheism and polytheism” (p. 124). For Hillman, such a dilemma simply is not within the purview of psychological work. We can feel liberated from having to decide if the one holds the many or if the one is of the many. What we need to know to practice is simply that psyche is going to be unhappy if we attempt to cage it: Hillman says that, in such a situation, “what else can the Gods do but become diseases, which is where Jung found them” (p. 135)? Instead of requiring unification or integration, then, continuing the path of our individuation is about “differentiation” and conversation (p. 124): “[E]laborating, particularizing, complicating, affirming and preserving. The emphasis is less upon changing what is there into something better (transformation and improvement) and more on deepening what is there

---

42 [Over two years later, walking on the boardwalk over the bay in the northern reach of Puget Sound where I recently had travelled to live, I looked down and saw a perfectly incongruous rose petal lying in my path. With a yellow base blooming into orange and pink, it anticipated the vibrant fall sunset that moments later streaked the sky above the San Juan islands. It brought me light in a time of darkness. I carried the petal in my palm and walked until the sky was dark; across time and space, I thought of Lirael.]
into itself (individualizing and soul-making)” (p. 124). Certainly, this is the kind of stance toward her experience that Lirael and I developed and shared together, and it created a rich ground for her to be and to become. Hillman (1975) also emphasizes that one of the richest results of letting go of the demands for integration or singularity is that “with the departing dominant unitary fantasy would go as well its dominant emotion: loneliness” (p. 42). And certainly, in my descriptions of the rich collaboration, intimacy, discovery, joy, and challenge that entered Lirael’s life as she worked with her personifications, we can see through experience the truth in his comments.

By the end of our work, Lirael’s level of present-moment complexity, even when she was in session “simply” as herself, by our mutual understanding clearly had increased. Her presence felt noticeably changed to me, more “separate and solid,” with more “stillness,” I wrote at the time. I also noted a new “confidence in her face, too, when I speak. Like she might be ready or willing to doubt me, question me. Less relationally concerned, less attentive to my words: doesn’t repeat what I say, as she so often has. Lots of looking down drawn and concentrated focus—and her own focus, her own world.” In our environment of trust, Lirael was beginning to find and express more of her own being even while staying with her “I” self, showing less and less preoccupation with my approval.

Lirael’s last appointment with her psychiatrist and me vividly crystallized my understanding of how Lirael had developed on her own terms through our work, by highlighting a situation in which she (and I!) still needed to deny her full reality in order to maintain the peace. As I sat with her in the appointment, and the psychiatrist spoke to her about how she was an exemplar of psychiatric “recovery” (as far as I knew, he had
never come around to the idea of complex trauma or DID, instead still considering Lirael to be in “recovery” from a psychotic disorder), I noticed the ways in which all three of us colluded to ignore a past of relational disruption. I thought of how Lirael was having to hide the complexity of herself—the others and dissociation had never been a part of her discussions with him after their first meeting, when apparently he had considered them the voices of psychosis, and Lirael had felt undermined and frightened. And yet it was within this full reality of multiplicity and dissociation that Lirael had found a more authentic life and was making an exciting future. Considering this denial of the legitimacy of her experiences (in which I felt implicated, as I also was too scared to speak up), I wrote: “It’s like we’re all dissociated, and I see her performing as a beaming child. ‘You’re flowering,’ he said, as he reflected on how this probably would be the last time that he saw her, barring some future point when he sees a scientific paper that she’s written. And I found myself frustrated with him for building up this impossible self that she could never reach; splitting off so much that is true and real about her—and frustrated at myself for not breaking our collusion. She is flowering, but not only as this person he wants her to be.”

And yet, of course he was right that Lirael was flowering (and as the world seemed to know, when it offered her the tulip!), even if I ultimately felt that Lirael herself had the right to name and claim such an experience, on her own terms… to name that a significant part of her flowering also clearly was formed by a darkness, a descent, this confrontation with the decay that provides that fertile ground from which the spring flower finds her roots and bursts forth in her true colors: something like what Sylvia Brinton Perera (1981) calls a woman’s “descent to the goddess,” a sustained processing
of the “dark … repressed feminine” so demonized and marginalized in our masculinist, scientistic culture (p. 94). Or what, as I have described, Hillman (1972) calls an appreciation for Persephone, “queen over the dead souls” and “bringer of destruction,” who helps us deepen and enrich psyche with “the beauty of the knowledge of death and of the effects of death upon all other beauty that does not contain this knowledge”; "The beauty of soul which alone surpasses the allure of Aphrodite …" (pp. 101-102). Lirael was not flowering so that an authority could admiringly tell her so. She also was not flowering so that I could write this dissertation about her …

Lirael and my last session brought the clearest articulation of an empowered “I,” on her own multifaceted terms, that I ever had heard her express. As she spoke about realizing that therapy was precious to her in spite of her mother’s dismissal; realizing that she wanted to live in the apartment she had chosen despite her father’s attempts at intimidation and manipulation; and realizing that she could say “no” to therapists that I had recommended for her purely based on her own gut instincts, Lirael appeared to be towering with a new potency from the heart of her own experience. She said to me, “I am learning that I know what I know, regardless of what other people think.”

Lirael’s unflinching parting words remind me of a section of Barbara Sullivan’s (1989) *Psychotherapy Grounded in the Feminine Principle*, that describes a patient at the end of her therapy. Years ago, it was these words from Sullivan, about a therapy fully realized, that inspired me to enter this work. Sullivan writes: “The patient, losing her old adaptation to collective norms, will be clumsy and difficult as she struggles to integrate the dark forces … that she has contacted. She will *not* meet society’s expectations but will be her own true self: not a static self, but a developing individual who can be
unpleasant as well as nice. She will be less amenable than before, but more vital, more real, and more exciting to know” (p. 65). Bromberg (1998) describes a similar vibrant outcome for one of his patients, speaking in particular to a dissociatively multiple reality like Lirael’s: “As the work evolved she became increasingly stronger, less dissociated, more spontaneous, more playful, and more loving. At the point we ended, as far as I could tell she had most of her selves pretty well in hand and she was using them robustly and creatively in a full life” (p. 328). In a world beyond the need for accommodation to a traumatic other, a world in which one knows that one has enough “inner” resources and enough love to live grounded in and expressive of one’s truth, multiplicity has a home … and amnesic dissociation no longer needs a place. A brutal and benevolent god, she quietly finds her rest.

In concluding this analysis of Lirael and my work—of the relationships of her participation in psyche and between us—I realize that Sullivan’s words struck me all those years ago not only because I wanted to help others to achieve such complex alive being: they also inspired me because I had been captivated by the desire for this aliveness for myself. Why did Lirael touch me so deeply? Why did our chemistry work so well? I think partly because in my own unique way, and in a human way, I also knew what it was like to feel that there were too many pieces of me to fit together; because I knew what it was like to believe that certain voices had to be banished from relationships; because I knew what it was like to feel unmoored and unfree; because I knew how badly relationships could harm, and how deeply they could create new ways of being. Lirael knew little about the particulars of my own psychological story; we never talked about it. The content of my story is quite unlike Lirael’s. But she did know my faith that we were
human together, swimming in powerful forces of psyche in this human and psychological world. And so, her own transformation transformed me. They all touched me deeply: Sophie, with her capacity to be joyful; Max, with his courage to be vulnerable; Beatrice, with her will to be spunky; Carolyn, with her grace to take care of others; Caveman, with his will to continue being even voiceless in darkness; and Lirael: with her remarkable insistence that all of her remain fully alive. Lirael may be surprised to know this: that her refusal to abandon any part of her being radically transformed my own relationship to my work, to myself, to my loved ones. She helped set the stage for a transformation in my understanding of ethics and of love, to an ethics beyond egoic morality. In healing my own relationship to my human complexity—in both recognizing my wounds and my shadow and realizing that all deserved life and love—I became a richer, more vibrant person, and a wiser, fiercer, and more radically compassionate therapist.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

7.1 Transformation of Experience and Suffering

Dissociative multiplicity provides us with a potent way to explore new images through which we can envision psyche. As I already have explored these themes throughout earlier chapters, here I specifically will elaborate on the creative, transformative, and transpersonal richness that dissociative multiple “pathology” can facilitate. To conclude, I also will provide some final reflections on the nature of this project as a whole, focusing on both the challenges and the opportunity that this kind of writing can provide.

I have shown throughout this project that DID usefully can be understood as a path of transformation as much as it can be a debilitating form of sickness. While in its extreme, it is an atypical form of subjectivity, and in that sense can impede life, if the person has supportive connections to help her honor her uniqueness, alters can be a profound gift, the return of that which has been split off, so that a person can own a real history and live a fuller life. I once joked to a supervisor that while many people think of DID as clinically difficult, in fact I found working with Lirael more immediate and simple than working with some other patients who were more defended against ego-incompatible memories and personal reactions. As I have discussed in terms of relational perspectives, we can argue that everyone lives in some degree of dissociation, even if the person does not have a full-blown dissociative disorder, and that therapy is a path of movement from dissociation to conflict. Multiple personalities, as a starting point, in itself already begin to embody a fruitful process of differentiation. While amnesic loss of time is indeed destructive and not in the service of consciousness, as adaptive as this
defense can be when necessary, when multiple personalities arise and can provide information and engage with oneself and loving people around oneself, a life individuated from trauma becomes possible.

Allowing the self to be multiple also frees up the imagination to engage with archetypal energies, and at its richest, it holds the tension about whether they belong to oneself or are other to oneself. As Lirael worked, she grew in her ability to consider her others as parts of herself, and yet she maintained their otherness in a way that allowed for a vital interpersonal engagement that had an immediacy that our more typical monophonic dialogues lack. In this sense Lirael’s experience embodied a reaching beyond the dichotomy between the personal and the archetypal, the human and the god, the individual life and the mythic. Indeed, I was most struck by how DID suffused Lirael’s self-experience with a profound degree of psychic wonder and generativity, the fertility many of us might feel when we dream, when we encounter figures both of us and not us, who call us to attend to that which we have overlooked. While dissociation by nature means a vacating of the present moment for self-protection, paradoxically, when a dissociative life becomes populated by the splintered fragments of the selves/others that the ego has been avoiding, avoidance of complex truths is subverted, and fuller self- and life-recognition and work becomes possible.

As I have described, Lirael’s experience of dissociation and multiplicity also extended into a process beyond personification that one might call the self, as in her experience the day when she lost time and returned to find all of the others fallen away into a large Being. As I have indicated, I hesitate with how to approach this experience without overreaching, becoming monotheistic and unpsychological. Nonetheless, it is an
experience that reminds us of the power in appreciating and surrendering to the intricate relationship between multiplicity and unity, and perhaps even to experiences of nonduality.

While some might argue that this experience meant that Lirael’s ultimate state was a unified one, and that she needed to integrate her alters in order to “really” become herself, I don’t think that this is the case. Rather, I think that what Lirael found that night was a force for wellbeing that was somehow transpersonal and both her core and her/the world’s expansiveness. In her moment of deepest need, it seems that Lirael touched the self both beyond and made of her ego and others, and that she then saw that power reflected to her in the benevolence of the ordinary world to which she eventually returned. As I have thought about Lirael over the years, I repeatedly return to this experience and its paradox, ultimately deciding that like the mysteries surrounding the darkness of Caveman, there is a radiance to it that cannot be understood entirely. Perhaps these mysteries are as it should be. It was a gift for Lirael to find such powerful wholeness when she profoundly needed it. But it was in the painful, delightful, and rich entanglements of her multiple personalities that she made her life and did her work. If she found some larger shadow, light, and self, it seems to be that such a self exceeds questions of integration and personality, even if it forms the web out of which Lirael, and all of us, take our forms.

Above all else, I personally experienced with Lirael that for those who have been profoundly wounded by those who were supposed to be there for them, and whose experience is being enriched by active multiplicity, for therapy to come alive and do real work, it must be a real relationship. For me a part of this learning was relaxing certain
fears that I had about therapist self-disclosure. Lirael’s intense and wise mistrust and her propensity toward “drifting” in unsafe encounters meant that I needed to shift my expectations and comfort levels around how much a therapist is supposed to be personally present in the room. While traditionally, therapists have tended to privilege aspirational neutrality, I have described how many more recent conversations explore the necessity of substantial therapist interpersonal presence, for reasons of working within the vessel of the relationship and healing relational trauma. In considering an archetypal perspective as well, I have come to consider these modes—the transpersonal/archetypal and personal/relational—as parallel tracks, and even tracks the sometimes cross each other, merge, shape-shift, change faces. Psyche and relationship are not always as easy to separate or even differentiate as we may imagine. For Lirael, the absence of my aliveness, emotional life, and willingness to interweave my being with hers would have been nothing short of traumatic, something I learned when she told me about her former therapist. As I have explored, surely it was no coincidence that at the same time that I was proposing writing about Lirael, I also was working with an analyst who transformed my life through his willingness to be intensely in the room with me, as much as he transformed me through his deep respect for the truly psychological. As I reflect back on both of our therapies, it strikes me that really, neither myself as a psychotherapist nor my analyst actually disclosed that much: the focus always was, and in my belief always should be, on the psychological movement of the patient. While Lirael, as I have described, did know some of my meaningful personal biographical details, she never “knew” an articulated version of my own psyche story, just as, in grateful frustration, I complained to my therapist that I did not “know” his. At the same time, Lirael did know
my story in a deep way, in her own way, a way that neither of us may ever articulately know and that, paradoxically, both is the truth about me and as much about Lirael as it is about me: just as I know my analyst’s deepest being, and through that mysterious knowing, know my own deepest existence. At the end of our work, my analyst told me that one of his own analysts once told him that anyone can evoke a transference response, but that it is the truly skilled work to return it to the analysand, through the heart of a real relationship. I hope and trust that whatever Lirael knows about me—the stories about my capacity to love, to be wounded, to fail, to hurt, to love again—she also is coming to know that those stories also are her own capacities and resilience, and are archetypal stories, stories that have lived long before us, that have lived through us, and that will live long after we are gone.

Considering experience as dissociative and the self as multiple also illuminates new ways to transform how we understand all of ourselves. The tyranny of singularity dominates in many aspects of our conceptions of psyche and world. Allowing the self to shine with her many jewels allows us both to hold an image of wholeness and of fragments, and to tack back and forth between the two, perhaps never entirely settling in one camp or another and becoming all the more alive through this flexibility. Archetypal psychology’s images of the pantheon are evocative here. There are many gods we are called to serve, a far reach that our imagination must attain to encompass all of the possibilities for humanity and for ourselves. In permitting a multiplicity that simultaneously is owned as one’s own experience, we take more of reality into ourselves, hold and respect more shadow, find new ways of ethically relating to ourselves and others, find more possibilities for play, and find new heights and depths of love. We also
know that nothing lasts forever, and that as surely as Sophie would need to draw one afternoon, Beatrice would need to buy a new dress on another. Which other needs me today? Was a kind of background orienting mode of Lirael’s life. Which way of being human must I serve? Through a life in which we sacrifice upon many alters, pray in many temples, we simultaneously know the vast responsibility that it is to be human, and the play and the joy. All of them must be attended to, from the demons to Aphrodite. In this vision, the unconscious is not vertical, but horizontal; multiplicity is not a defect to “normal” consciousness, but a mythic story made flesh to remind us of the magic of this very life.

7.2 Position of Therapist and Researcher, and Considering Limitations

As my discussion of the therapy relationship and my efforts to shape this dissertation already have made clear, I believe that DID calls for a different positioning of our therapeutic and research minds and hearts, one more open to intimacy, flexibility, and multiplicity.

This stance considered, it seems pertinent for me to comment that engaging with this material and writing this dissertation was incredibly difficult! I often felt like I had many minds, or like I was addressing many topics. Engaging with DID on its own terms in this way was quite intense. I found Romanyszyn’s direction a guiding force in this process that otherwise might have turned unbearably chaotic.

I also can appreciate how others from differing theoretical bases may take fundamental issue with the ways I have approached this work, though I hope to have provided illustrative theoretical justifications and transparency about why and how I have done what I have done. I expect that the project can be evaluated by the standards that I
set for myself, and a part of those standards include my willingness to be vulnerably engaged and soulful with the material and my process, and an awareness that aesthetic and imaginative resonance is a part of how this project’s value can be determined by readers. The shadows and limits of this work arise from the same place: that it is my process and individual engagement that serve as the instrument for this project to come into being (very similarly, in fact, to the shadows and limits of individual therapy). I hope that I have accounted for these limits through efforts to engage with the genuine otherness of my notes and memories, theory, and transference dialogues, and through ongoing conversation with the intellectual and emotional sources of inspiration and challenge in my life. In setting up a relational and archetypal epistemology, the heart of how I see this work and its shadows is as a contextual and intimate hermeneutics, a process of understanding, revision, and renewed understanding. As one of my inspirations for the writing-as-method aspect of this project commented, neither this process nor the “final” product is privileged in this understanding: both have their value; neither is ever finished. This project for me speaks to a particular period in my stepping into the long stream of efforts to understand psychotherapy and psyche. It converses with many voices and I hope may offer something, even if small, to those who read it. Certainly, it has been a fruitful conversation for my own development, and implicitly it already has touched others, professionally and personally, in my life through the ways in which it has changed me. It will continue into new forms in my future; it thanks those who are deeply a part of me now, celebrating them as both mine and infinitely beyond my personality. Already, I am beyond this work, even in these moments of offering it for the first time.
Ultimately, as I say goodbye to this process, I have been reflecting on the extent to which we demand cohesive unity in our academics, and the extent to which not all that human beings seek to inquire into is best addressed by this style. While I understand this demand in light of the values of academia, it seems to me that writing about DID, and maybe even writing about any depthful psychotherapeutic work, poses its own unique demands that challenge typical linearity, unity, and professional distancing. In this sense I share Romanyshyn and Hillman’s belief that an engagement with a poetic humanities imagination is sorely needed in order for us to speak soul, psychological life.

Taking seriously this call toward soulfulness, and having followed it quite far myself to do this work, I also can reflect more personally now, from experience, that the challenge of invoking soulfulness is that one must surrender to a process that often exceeds individual will (and so we find ourselves writing passionately at 4 a.m. with a sense of the nearness of the gods … instead of having everything done at 4 p.m. the day before as we'd planned!). And the challenge of writing about an experience close to the heart is that one’s love must be deeply involved. In truth, then, the realities of doing this project proved to be much messier than the plans. The realities involved some crying and sighing, lots of uncertainty, and long months of procrastination. Some of the procrastination was simple avoidance, but I also believe that some of it was a kind of profound fermentation, an invisible unquantifiable working before I could begin working, that I do not entirely understand let alone find myself able to describe clearly even now. Much of this project initially was written in other places (and some of it has stayed in those other places): in my journal, in emails and letters and text messages, in other creative writing projects developing simultaneously. Much of this project also has been
spoken in other places: in long conversations with friends, lovers, colleagues, professors, supervisors, my therapist, my patients. At times I was talking about this project even when I did not know that I was talking about this project. It worked on me as much as I worked on it.

Though the transference dialogues did help me through this dense forest of complexity, I laugh a little, in retrospect, reading anew Romanyszyn’s “prescriptions” for them. After having gone through all of this work and writing, the steps seem almost quaint—like steps to describe what it’s like to fall in love, or what it’s like to attempt to heal when your heart has been broken. It seems to me that at least I (and maybe few of us) do things in steps, in someone else’s order. I worked so diligently to channel a geyser. And yet it was a geyser all the same.

Nonetheless, as a practice, discipline, I know, gives us something to do while we are waiting; to hold onto when we are uncertain. I am glad that I had some powerful thinkers supporting me. But do I recommend that others do this “method” that I have described and presented: that they do what I did? Do I even think that others “could”? Truthfully, I have come to believe that I could not ask that anyone do what I did anymore than Jung felt that he could expect others to be “Jungians.” I would say that though I created a plan and turned to it during times of doubt, my method was that I wrote the project that was calling me in the way only I could write it. More directly: I was the method—just as I believe that even if theoretical exploration, knowing, and practice is an important aspect of therapy, we ultimately are our own unique and precious therapeutic instrument. If I was the method, then perhaps if there is a way for me to generalize, it is to say that my method offers the call to find your own method. I imagine
that not everyone feels called to do such writing, but for those who do: I want to read
how stories come to be through you.

I remember once reading that if the books we want to read don’t exist, we should
write them (the idea credited, I think, to Toni Morrison). Therapists talking with
vulnerability and heart about what it is like for them to do the work: that is what I want to
read as a therapist and a writer myself. It’s also what I want to read as a patient (though
of course being a therapist myself, I am a particular kind of patient!). I’m sure that there
are other people who want to read this kind of telling, too. I suppose what this process
ultimately has left me with, then, is an invitation: that we write for each other as
colleagues, and for ourselves as patients, and even for our patients. I recognize that the
work that we do is intimate and powerful, and that we have our patients’ privacy, and our
own privacy, to be sensitive to. But I want to know in some way about the moments
when you sobbed with love and grief when the patient left your office, when you said
something you thought was crucial but that you did not dream of telling your supervisor,
when you snapped at your patient or cried in front of your patient, when you trusted
yourself that a risk you were taking was worth it—a reach across the divide rather than a
violation of sacredness—and when you didn’t trust yourself. I want to know when it was
right, when it was wrong, and when it was a mix (in other words: most of the time). I’m
finally becoming comfortable with my humanity. I want to know yours.

For me the value of such writing is and can be judged by relationships. Whether
my work here is a perfect exemplar of something or other doesn’t quite matter to me. If it
lives a life beyond me that reaches out to you, a life beyond me that reaches out to me,
then to me that feels like a wonderful small victory, a simple cause for celebration.
As a teenager and young woman, I have loved the intimately personal writing of other women: in high school I passionately consumed the entirety of Sylvia’s Plath’s unabridged journals; these days, I read Anaïs Nin at the recommendation of my dearest friend. While I was attempting to imagine and then write this dissertation, the dissertations I tracked down to read were usually other women’s, those that by topic and word of mouth I thought most likely to contain honest stories about the writers themselves, and I combed them for those details and remember those moments above all others. In a way, it may seem like a voyeuristic longing, in the pejorative sense, to seek out others’ precious truths (even when those truths are freely given). But I think at its powerful heart, the longing is something more complex, maybe even holy: a longing to see another full resplendent human being; a craving to hear the sound of a voice when it is speaking a profound truth in the first person. Perhaps it is this kind of desire, I realize now, that also led me to my passion for the unique human situation offered by being a therapist (and, on the other side, the unique, closely related preciousness offered by being a patient).

At the same time, in my personal and professional life, I have felt haunted by the idea that the diarist, the memoirist, is not a real writer. That she's self-indulgent. I remember feeling quite hurt when I was an undergraduate and read the passages in *The Second Sex* when Simone de Beauvoir (1949) asserts that female writers will never be as good as male writers until they stop writing about their own particular sensory and relational experiences, and start writing about the abstract and the universal.\footnote{Now I would argue that from her own place in sociocultural and intellectual time, de Beauvoir here is speaking with internalized misogyny, a kind of misogyny that can be quite insidious and difficult to find one’s own voice to refute—a misogyny that, even all these years later, certainly has been insidious for me.} I
wondered, did my creative calling to describe the particular, to describe my own experience, make me less of a thinker and writer? Did it mean that I would never measure up to my male colleagues; that my work was not truly artistic or intellectual; that it would never really matter to anyone?

I think that I have made it clear that I wrote this project with love for Lirael and for this therapy work and all that it can be. Perhaps what is less clear, but equally important as I conclude, is my realization that if I reach to speak from my deepest heart here, perhaps another major figure for whom I wrote this project always has been my own self: me, who for so long has been at work on believing that I am welcome to speak with my own multifaceted voice. I wrote for myself, with love.

And I wrote with love for you, whoever you are, if you needed to read this and know that you too are welcome. If it mattered to you, it matters.

I sense them near to me now as I conclude, as I reflect on speaking with love our truths and our depths: Sophie is jumping on the bed with a joyful smile; Beatrice is offering me the slightly begrudging nod of the teenager who thinks I’m not so awful after all but who still does not quite want to smile too much; Max is glad that his fear has faded some, and he imagines the safety to dream; Carolyn is grateful that other people hold a wisdom place like hers and would like to speak with some of these analytic ancestors; and Caveman, pacing in his darkness, is slowing slightly with relief in knowing that even he with his sharp teeth does not have to die.

And myself, this therapist and writer, and my own near gods and goddesses? They are pleased that even in the unifying tyranny of a project like a dissertation, in my ego
realm I have devoted the space for them to be: pleased that I have not lied, or let anyone
die, or compromised too much with forces that would leave them without a place in the
light of intellect. And yet I know that a writing project of such scope and expectation and
evaluation and audience, no matter how much space we make for it, in its brutal demands
can only ever truly be the worshipping of one fierce god. Now for other alters/altars. It is
time.
References


Edwards, D. J. A. (1998). Types of case study work: A conceptual framework for case-


Schuster. (Original work published 1905)


(Original work published 1905)


published 1921)


case study and contemporary perspective. Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson.


Shedler, J. (2006). That was then, this is now: An introduction to contemporary psychodynamic therapy. Retrieved from http://www.jonathanshedler.com/PDFs/Shedler%20(2006)%20That%20was%20then,%20this%20is%20now%20R9.pdf


