

## **Educating the Creative Imagination: A Course Design and its Consequences**

Austin Clarkson, Ph.D.

*York University*

### ***Introduction***

Reflective practices did not become a part of my education until long after I earned a doctorate and began a career teaching music at various universities. It was while on my personal journey under the guidance of practitioners of C. G. Jung's analytical psychology that I learned how working and playing with expressive media at a deep level of the creative process releases symbolic images that can become guides to individuation. Feeding that discovery little by little into my own teaching led eventually to the idea of designing a course on the creative process based on Jungian principles. In 1982 I was given the opportunity to propose an interdisciplinary course in fine arts for the school of part-time studies at my university. I put forward a proposal titled "Foundations of Creative Imagination" with some trepidation, as C. G. Jung was not exactly at the top of the charts on our recently-founded and otherwise progressive campus. He was *non grata* in the psychology department, and only a handful of colleagues in fine arts and humanities were known fellow travelers. As this would be the first course at my university on Jung's theory and practice, I was surprised but delighted that it survived the scrutiny of my colleagues and was accepted into the calendar. The course was offered for the first time in 1984 and received so warmly that it was offered every year or two thereafter through the next decade, at which point I retired from active teaching. In this paper I shall give an overview of the curriculum and discuss some unforeseen consequences.

### ***The Course***

The students who enrolled were for the most part fine arts majors completing degrees in dance, film, music, theater, and visual arts. The class of between 15 and 20 students met for four hours one evening a week. The room was large enough for a circle of chairs for presentations, with the rest of the space clear of furniture for experiential exercises. We also held sessions in an art gallery, a dance studio, and

out of doors in a wooded area. The meetings usually began with discussions of assigned readings and presentations on the topic of the day. After the break came the exercises and time for processing the results. At the end of each session we set aside a few minutes for journaling. When given as a two-semester, 26-week course, the team of instructors included specialists in art therapy, dance therapy, voice and story-telling, and Jungian psychology, while I looked after the musical side of things and administered the course. When given as a one-semester 13-week course to candidates for the B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees, I gave the course alone.

The curriculum can be summarized in some dozen concepts: (1) Creativeness is a drive that guides individuals to the actualization of their innate potential. (2) The creative imagination mediates the primary process of the unconscious and the secondary process of conscious ego awareness. (3) The threshold or liminal zone between the primary and secondary processes is variously named the “transcendent function” (Jung), the “aesthetic experience” (Dewey), the “presentational state of awareness” (Langer), the ‘tertiary process” (Arieti). (4) Activating the imagination in various expressive media releases emergent symbolic images that have an adaptive, homeodynamic, life-fulfilling tendency (Stevens). (5) Such emergent images are complex, multimodal formations that combine sense data and intuitions, feelings and thoughts, memories and incipient portents. (6) Discovering correspondences between personal images and primordial (archetypal) images from cultures past and present fosters the symbolic attitude. (7) Learning the vocabulary, grammar, and effects of symbolic images develops competence in the language of the imagination. (8) Activating the imagination engages the creative process (preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification); the cycle of the creative process includes a de-integrative phase and a re-integrative phase. (9) The creative process is cognate in structure with the ritual process; self-created rites of passage deepen and intensify the creative process and evoke in the group a sense of “existential or spontaneous communitas” (Turner). (10) Sharing the results of the creative process in the group fosters confidence in the individual’s creativeness, the ability to communicate in the language of the imagination, and trust in the group as a safe container for the individuation process. (11) Personality type indicates the pattern of preferences that identifies the individual’s approach to learning and creativeness. (12) Personality type indicates how people relate to each other and fosters mutuality and collaboration in the group.

The struggle to find a balance between the claims of the reason and the imagination is as old as education itself (Frye, 1963; Egan, 1993; Kearney, 1988; Miller, 1996; Kessler, 2000), but in an era of cognitive science the emphasis on instrumental rationality and critical thinking leaves little room for inner-directed, symbolic thinking. The challenge at the outset of the course is to devise ways of putting on hold the critical attitude that prevails in university classrooms so as to

### 3 *Clarkson*

free the creative imagination to play. After kindergarten, play has become an increasingly alien concept, even on playing fields, so it takes some time before students re-learn how to take play seriously. They know how to ‘unpack’ images intellectually, but the course shows them how to ‘backpack’ images until meanings emerge spontaneously, usually with an aha! shock of recognition. Edward Whitmont, author of *The Symbolic Quest*, the basis text for the course, writes: “The symbolic approach can mediate an experience of something indefinable, intuitive or imaginative, or a feeling-sense of something that can be known or conveyed in no other way, since abstract terms do not suffice everywhere” (Whitmont, 1969, 16). The first lesson is to leave open the meaning of emergent images until their effects have been experienced. The following overview of the course cites examples from personal stories written by eleven members of the fifth cohort of the course (Clarkson et alia, in preparation).

The course is an immersion program in the creative imagination, and at the first evening the students make collages. They gather around a table covered with stacks of many-colored tissue papers while the instructor says, “Touch the colors and sense their different energies. What feelings do they bring? Everyone responds to colors differently.” They take a few sheets, tear them into pieces, and paste the pieces onto cardboards with paintbrushes and white glue. “Be playful and spontaneous! Let accidents happen! Avoid known forms! There’s no right or wrong way of doing this. Have fun!” Some want more detailed instructions and have difficulty being playful and spontaneous. Others are apprehensive about ‘doing art’ and having their work critiqued. Anxiety subsides when the collages are put up on the wall and we begin to view them as harbingers of new meanings rather than as objects for critical judgment. The colors, shapes, and designs begin to take on symbolic forms. One collage has a large blue area that the student recognizes to be a Black Panther, her tutelary figure for the rest of the course. Another collage has a patch of red that leads to Little Red Riding Hood and eventually to the guiding figure of Aphrodite. Many initial collages point uncannily to what is about to unfold during the next eight months.

One student reported that she had difficulty seeing what others saw in the collages during that first meeting, but realized that a new dimension of sight, a form of “vision/seeing” was being born, “a marriage between the obvious and not-so-obvious.” Working this way, she says, “developed an atmosphere of sacred trust in processing of each other’s work,” and she noticed herself warming up and softening to the process and to the people around her. Activating the imagination puts the intellect in touch with deeper levels of the psyche and arouses positive feelings of well-being. On leaving the class that night she felt “alive and vibrant.”

After viewing the collages we introduce the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*. Each student formulates a question, throws three coins six times, and scores the throws to obtain one of 64 hexagrams. They read the texts and reflect on how the hexagrams respond to their questions. The instructor then asks whether they can find any correspondences between the collage and the hexagram, and several find significant linkages. Without making the point explicit, the first meeting challenges the logical concept of causality, for there is no possible rational connection between a spontaneous collage and consulting the *I Ching*. This jolt to the cognitive standpoint is founded on Jung's reception of Wilhelm's edition of the *I Ching* (Jung, 1979). He welcomed the work as a much-needed corrective to Western habits of thought, for it introduced what he called "synchronicity," the quantum principle of a-causal order that links non-local events (Jung, 1982, 179-181). It is not too long before students begin to notice the effects of synchronicity and incorporate them in their on-going creative process. For Rudolf Ritsema, "using a divinatory system is an exploration of the unconscious side of a situation. The symbols evoked adjust the balance between you and the unknown forces behind it" (Ritsema, 1995, 16). During the remainder of the course the students consult a modern edition of the *I Ching* as they choose, and many find that the Sage becomes a helpful guide (Anthony, 1988).

The second meeting is in a campus art gallery and introduces the basic exercise for activating the imagination. The exercise is as non-directive as possible and thus differs from techniques of so-called "guided imagery" that engage participants with selected images in order to achieve specified outcomes. It follows the four phases of the creative process first enunciated by Graham Wallas: preparation, incubation, illumination, verification (1926, 87). During the 'preparation' phase the students walk around the gallery and select an artwork that attracts them. While they sit facing the works the instructor leads them in a brief relaxation. The 'incubation' phase activates the imagination to form a strong imaginal bond with the artwork. They scan the artwork all over slowly, then close their eyes in order to 'see' the artwork with the eyes of the imagination. They imagine going into the artwork and exploring it, then focusing on a color, then on a shape. The exercise concludes with a period of silence, a 'solo' time during which the imagination is free to play. This is the 'illumination' phase, when authentic images flow spontaneously into conscious awareness. The 'verification' phase consists of recording the experience in words and images (oil pastels and paper are provided) and then sharing them with a partner.

When conscious awareness is relaxed and the imagination is activated, the transcendent function is engaged. Things that appear distinct in the ordinary, space-time world begin to blur in the liminal zone of imaginal cognition. Sense modalities--vision, hearing, somatosensory perceptions, etc.--flow together in

## 5 *Clarkson*

surprising combinations. The membrane between mind, body, and spirit becomes permeable, which accounts for experiences described as body-knowing, cellular responses, and subtle body phenomena. Images seem to take on a life of their own and are often accompanied by powerful affects. These affect-images are experienced as new and surprising and yet authentic and meaningful. Because they involve the whole being, participants report a sense of fulfillment, abundance, and even awe. Some describe the experience as profound, erotic, blissful, and even spiritual. From sharing their responses students recognize the extraordinary variety of reactions that can result from the creative process and appreciate that the imagination is a powerful and untapped source of personal knowledge.

There is often an inner struggle between wanting to participate in these seemingly strange exercises and the inhibition against giving up control to the creative imagination. One student wrote that she wanted to feel more free but often felt that it wasn't "proper to behave so." When an exercise did work for her, she felt supercharged with energy. An indication that the inner and outer worlds are coming into productive partnership is heightened motivation for the course. During the early weeks many show great interest without really knowing why. They look forward to the exercises even though they can't figure out the rationale that connects them. Puzzlement gives way to intense involvement when emergent images and feelings begin to reveal distinctive, recurrent, and meaningful patterns. As they become accustomed to the rhythm of the creative process, they look forward to the exercises as means of discovering new and fascinating images.

Presentations are given and discussions held on principal concepts while the students are undergoing the series of exercises in activating the imagination. Psychological type is a major topic throughout the course, and the participants are given the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) at the outset. Discussing the in-class exercises provides many examples of how different types respond to the same experiences. The structure of the psyche is presented according to Jung: conscious and unconscious, ego and shadow, complexes and the Self. We study the archetypes of the Warrior (Hero/Heroine), Mother and Father, Sibling, Child, and Beloved in their positive and negative aspects in myths and fairy tales. The students begin to observe daily events for clues to the individuation process and keep a course journal to record in-class exercises and (if they choose) their dreams. The ego attitude becomes more flexible and permeable as they encounter emergent images and affects. Sooner or later they realize that a previously hidden world has opened up and there is a dramatic shift in the cognitive standpoint. As one student put it, "outer events quite beyond our conscious control seem to correspond to and give form to unconscious trends that are striving towards expression." Another wrote that learning how to track images and engage them through dialogue and

active imagination showed that they speak through a “body-knowing.” A third student said that at first he did not identify with any images, then he identified with all images, and finally he found a middle way of “walking in the field of images.” And a fourth wrote that she now realizes the power of imagery to carry messages not available in other forms, and that it was a major breakthrough to learn how to let herself be spontaneous, express emotions directly, and validate them without first attaching a thought (usually tinged with fear or judgment).

### ***Primordial Images***

The first semester concludes with an essay on an image that came up during the exercises. Usually the image emerges so forcefully that there is no question what it should be. But some students have difficulty in choosing. The image of a bunny kept appearing to one student, but she thought that a bunny was too cute and cuddly to be suitable for a major project. Then she dreamed that a bunny came to her and said that now that she has dreamed of a bunny she can use it for her image. The bunny became her guiding figure for the remainder of the course. They amplify the meanings of the images by researching their occurrence in various cultures and art forms while continuing to find personal associations during the in-class exercises. Discovering meaningful correspondences between personal associations and the cultural meanings of an image fosters the symbolic attitude and an understanding of the relationship between the personal and the objective psyche (Jung’s collective unconscious).

Jung’s concept of the primordial image or archetype is compared by Anthony Stevens to the fundamental dynamisms that are postulated in many fields of enquiry--the innate releasing mechanisms of ethology, the behavioral systems of evolutionary psychology, the algorithms of cognitive science, the deep structures of linguistics, and the genetically transmitted response strategies of sociobiology.

Whether one calls these psychological adaptations archetypes or algorithms, both cognitive science and analytical psychology conceive of them as built-in assumptions that certain typical figures (e.g., mother, child, stranger, mate) and certain physical features (water, shelter, edible substances) will be encountered in the social and ecological environment (Stevens, 1995, 126-132).

Archetypes appear to have autonomous energies which they seek to achieve in the psyche (in the form of images, symbols, and myths), in the personality (in the form of complexes), and in outer reality (in the form of behavior). Their survival value lies in their ability to further fitness, adaptation, and growth, which Jung subsumed under the concept of the individuation process (*ibid.*, 94-97). Participants confirm that their images have adaptive value, for they accept them as authentic expressions of the personality. Dialoguing with such images establishes

## 7 *Clarkson*

communication between the ego and the Self. In the process the ego becomes more responsive to whatever is Other.

The concept of the archetype is introduced after the students have been immersed in images for several weeks. They have encountered the archetypes of color in the first meeting when they made collages, and thereafter colors take on particular powers. One student cut her finger on a piece of glass and a poem flowed out on redness as the life force. For another, whose image was the Black Madonna, black became “darkness of unknowable depth.” Green connected a third student to the earth, the life of the instincts, and the *viriditas* of Hildegard of Bingen. The next meetings introduce the Stone, and the Tree in the Forest as archetypal images. Students bring a stone to class and tell its story as though the stone itself is speaking. The stone stories weave together primordial with personal meanings. One stone is pregnant with potential, as if inside it the whole universe is waiting to be discovered. Another is incomplete, bearing scars of separation and in search of wholeness. A third came from the ancestral home of Scotland, and though it is small and insignificant, it is useful to others. Several weeks later the students re-read their stone stories as though they are autobiographies and discover that the stones have told them their own stories but from another, more inclusive perspective.

The next evening we gather in a woodlot on the campus. The students wander about looking for a tree that attracts them. Sitting beside the tree in a meditative state, they engage in an imaginal dialogue with the tree. After an hour they return to the classroom and record the experience in a collage or drawing and a journal entry. One student sees the mask of a bear in her tree, and the Bear becomes her guiding figure through the course. Another merges blissfully with a tree that tells of the inner strength that comes from connectedness with all of life and of the wisdom that is available to those who seek and ask. A fallen tree with new shoots growing from it provides an experience of death and rebirth.

In subsequent meetings, exercises in body movement and music activate the creative imagination in various media and further the dialogue between the ego and the Self. After the course is well under way the creative process begins to operate spontaneously. One student finds herself taking photographs without knowing why, only to discover later that they have become core images for her process. Another notices blue jays during the week and chooses the image for an active imagination exercise. It transforms into an eagle, which becomes her guiding figure for the year’s process. To enrich the fund of available images, the class divides into groups and gives presentations on the symbol systems of Astrology, Alchemy, the Tarot, Kundalini Yoga, and the Native Medicine Wheel. When the symbolic attitude is well established, they notice images appearing synchronistically from many

sources. They discover that learning the language of the imagination requires as much knowledge and practice as any language.



## **9 Clarkson**

### ***Personality Type and Creativeness***

Many traits have been associated with creativity: divergent thinking, introversion, self-esteem, tolerance for ambiguity, willingness to take risks, behavioral flexibility, emotional variability, ability to absorb imagery, and even the tendency to neurosis and psychosis (James & Asmus, 2001). To isolate traits as predictors assumes a normative concept of creativity. The premise is that the traits possessed by eminent creators can then be taught to make ordinary people more creative. People learn about the creativity of Darwin and Mozart, Picasso and Einstein, while their authentic, personal creativeness is not affirmed and valued.

The theory of personality type corrects the normative attitude with the idea that each person has particular gifts according to their type, and that no one type is in and of itself more creative than any other. The degree of talent and aptitude in a domain is independent of the individual's preferred type of creativeness. Building on the typological scheme of William James, Jung developed a theory of personality that is now widely applied by means of the MBTI (Jung, 1971; Myers, 1980, 1993). It holds that type is a given of the personality and remains relatively stable through time. When eleven members of the fifth cohort of the course did the MBTI again six years later, their scores were virtually unchanged.

As students become familiar with the range of types in the class and the unique qualities and gifts of each type, they begin to value their own type and understand how it differs from and relates to others. They understand that some types prefer to work independently (introverts) and others in groups (extraverts); how some take in information through the so-called five senses (sensing types) and others through the 'sixth' sense (intuitive types); how some evaluate information logically and impersonally (thinking types) and others empathically (feeling types). Jung combined the three polarities of attitude (introversion-extraversion), perceiving (sensation-intuition), and judging (thinking-feeling) to produce a system of eight types. (For more resources on the MBTI, go to <http://capt.org>.) They learn that each individual possesses all the functions, but that the proportions vary according to their type. When thinking, for example, is the dominant function, sensing and intuition are the auxiliary functions, and feeling is the inferior function. They discover that though getting in touch with the inferior function is the greatest challenge of all, it is the route to their most powerful creativeness. The range, richness, intensity, and originality of the students' final presentations give evidence of how fully they have engaged all functions of the personality.

### ***The Cycle of the Creative Process***

We introduce a model of the creative process at the beginning of the second half of the course (see Figure 1). The students have been through one cycle in the first half and are ready to take the process deeper. The basis for the model is the T'ai chi symbol, already familiar from the *I Ching* as an image of the interflow of opposed energy forms in nature and human experience. A host of contrastive qualities are associated with the complementary principles of Yin-chi (dark energy) and Yang-chi (light energy) (Ritsema, 1995, 68-69). The familiar form of the T'ai chi symbol lies at the northeast and southwest positions of Figure 1, if we think of the diagram as a compass with north at the top and south at the bottom. The dot of light in the dark area and the dot of dark in the light area symbolize inception, the beginning of a new phase of development. The difference between the northeast and southwest positions lies in the direction of rotation. The northeast figure appears to rotate clockwise, while the southwest figure rotates in the opposite direction. Thus the cycle of the T'ai chi is analogous to processes that have two phases, such as simple harmonic motion, the heartbeat, and breathing.



Figure 1: The Cycle of the T'ai Chi as a Model for the Creative Process

Proceeding clockwise from the northeast position, the dots increases in size while the complementary areas of dark and light energy correspondingly decrease. At the east position the dark and light areas are in balance, and at the southeast the clockwise phase reaches its fullest extent. Between the southeast and south positions the Yin and Yang energies completely fill their respective areas, causing the process to reverse from clockwise to counter-clockwise motion. The south position now symbolizes the moment when the energies are utterly opposed. The out-breath has ceased and the in-breath has not yet begun; the pendulum is poised

## **11 Clarkson**

at the limit of its arc. The emergence of a point of dark in the light energy and a point of light in the dark energy initiates the next phase of the cycle. The west position finds the two energies again in balance, and the return phase reaches its apogee in the northeast. A reversal again produces maximum opposition in the north position and the return to the clockwise phase. We suggest that the clockwise phase represents the de-integrative aspect of the creative process, which breaks down the status quo, and the counter-clockwise phase the re-integrative aspect out of which emerges the new condition.

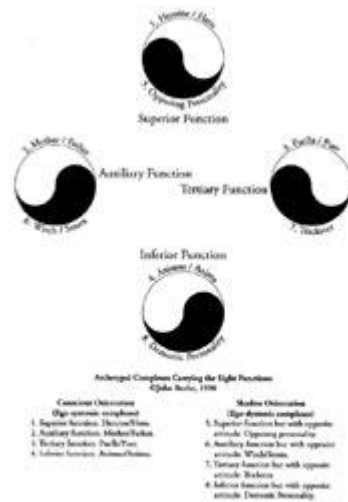
The model conceptualizes the dynamics of the creative process. During the de-integration phase psychic energy flows to the unconscious, leaving the individual feeling stuck and even depressed. In a culture that privileges the goal-directed conscious attitude, it is a challenge to be stuck in the depressed position and wait patiently, trusting that the illumination will break through to begin the re-integration phase. One student wrote that after the discussion of the cycle of the creative process she no longer fought the depression that had resulted in a bout of illness. The breakthrough came when she suddenly understood the meaning of two photographs that she had taken the previous term. A painter went through a period of darkness that she realized was the time of incubation. She let go of all thoughts, even the wish to understand, and let her paintbrushes take over. The breakthrough came with a series of paintings that produced a sense of movement, as though an embryo was being born. A third student fell ill and became depressed, but she decided to go with the feeling of darkness instead of fighting it. The breakthrough for her came during a visit to an art gallery where the painting of a young boy brought her the renewing energy of the Child. The model of the creative process convinced a fourth student, who had suffered from depression, that depression is as important and natural a part of his life cycle as are the highs.

We discuss the difference between the goal-directed, purposeful energy of the re-integration phase and the feelings of doubt, frustration, and even depression of the de-integration phase. They recognize that the de-integration phase is a natural part of the creative process and that one must wait until the new image breaks through to initiate the final phase of the project. The moment of the breakthrough happens differently for each student, but when it occurs they experience a rush of energy. Everything seems to come together as they prepare for the final presentations. They find that they can give up trying to work out problems intellectually and put their trust in the confluence of conscious and unconscious forces in the liminal zone of the creative imagination.

### ***Enter the Masks***

The second half of the course is built around a mask project. Working in pairs the students make masks on each other's faces with plaster-of-Paris bandages. While decorating the mask, they leave open the question of its identity. They dialogue with the mask, and write poems and songs for the mask. One evening they bring costumes, dress up as the masks, and silently introduce them to each other. The coming-out party for the masks ends in a lively dance.

After the mask process is under way, we introduce a schema that links eight of the archetypes to the eight personality types. (John Beebe distributed this model when giving lectures and workshop, but did not publish it. He gave permission for me to adapt it here as in Figure 2.) Four positions are supportive of the ego standpoint (ego-syntonic), while four are opposed (ego-dystonic). The positive aspect of the dominant function is the Warrior (Hero/Heroine), while the shadow aspect is the Opposing Personality. The positive aspect of the auxiliary function is the supportive parent (Mother/Father), while the shadow aspect is the negative parent (Witch/Senex). The positive aspect of the tertiary function is the Child (Puer/Puella), of which the shadow aspect is the Trickster. The inferior function is associated with the Anima or Animus, the positive aspect of which is the Beloved and the shadow aspect, the Demonic Personality. Having worked with personality types and archetypes through the program, the students assign figures of their own choosing to the various positions of Beebe's model. Some make additional masks to represent those figures. The realization that the full range of functions and archetypes resides within each individual furthers a dynamic and developmental perspective of the psyche.



### **13 Clarkson**

Figure 2: Archetypal Complexes Carrying the Eight Functions

The mask process concludes with building an environment or altar for the mask that can be transported to the classroom and to compose rituals to take place in that environment. Because they have to work quickly, they give up trying to figure out solutions intellectually. Several comment that while doing these last assignments they noticed that they were giving over control to the tertiary process and trusting that their creativeness would flow. One student who felt stuck for a long time said that she proceeded without letting her thinking function interfere and found that the box built itself.

After making the environment for the mask, the students are given an imaginal journey into the environment in order to develop their rituals. One student was inspired to make several paintings that she mounted as the background to her final performance. Another student resisted the last assignments and, while working on the box, figured out what was causing the resistance. A dream then gave her permission to build the box according to her own thoughts and feelings. A fourth participant came out of the incubation phase to find herself in a powerful flow of energy that carried her through preparations for a dance performance. A fifth student found that on letting the tertiary process take over, building the box was easy and fun and made her feel very much alive.

The breakthrough releases an exhilarating rush of creativity that involves all their resources, conscious and unconscious. After a long period of self-doubt one reported that after the breakthrough the new image took on a life of its own. Another said that while working on his final presentation he let the process develop, fully understanding its implications and without fear of feeling intimidated. Trusting the creative process and with energy that has been stored up during the incubation stage, the students prepare to give their final presentations with little or no help from the instructors, as the masks have become their authentic mentors and guides. The mask process provides a rich reservoir of material for the final presentation, a twenty-minute performance or show of work in which the masks play crucial roles. The final essay documents how the creative process unfolded through the year.

#### ***The Ritual Process and Community***

The archetypal reality of the ritual process is evident from the fact that it appears spontaneously in dreams and fantasy journey exercises. During an active imagination exercise the Bear takes one student to a cave with the bones of his ancestors. She sheds her skin like a skeleton-spirit and is led deep into the cave where, with the aid of fire and prayers, the Bear calls up spirits which slash her

back with their claws. The Bear heals her wounds in the flames, then leads her out of the cave, where she is re-clothed in her skin. The ritual motifs of fire, wounding, healing, and renewal occur in other stories. Another student tells of a visualization exercise during which she descends deep into the earth and meets an old woman who gives her a spindle with which to spin the strands of her life. She then climbs a spiral staircase back into the light. During a fantasy journey with the image of the Path in the Forest, a third student imagines that a Fox is exploring a cave with a pool in it. The Fox takes off her skin and dives into the water. After the swim she finds that her skin has changed into a long red dress. When she puts it on, she is transformed into a beautiful woman. During a fantasy journey with the mask a fourth student is led to a cave with a fire in the middle. A ritual takes place in which she integrates the many aspects of the mask. When she steps out into the light, she feels restored and at one with herself.

The theme of ceremony and ritual is touched on from time to time. We discuss the history and symbolism of Thanksgiving (Harvest Festival), Halloween (Saowain, The Day of the Dead), the Winter Solstice (Christmas, New Year), and other festivals. Near the end of the course we study the structure of the ritual process and investigate the practice of rituals that are self-created to accompany important life-events--birth, childhood to adulthood, marriage, separation or divorce, recovery from illness, mid-life to old age, and death (Turner, 1987; Hine, 1987). The assignment is to design rituals for the masks that combine aspects of both the sacred and the profane. Some have difficulty with the topic of ritual, as they think of rituals as phony and unrelated to the lives people actually lead. After the course one such student realized that ritual was one of the components of the course that she valued most highly. She commented that each class meeting embodied a sense of ritual, and that the ceremony of completion that brought the last evening to a close was especially meaningful.

Turner notes that the liminal phase of the ritual process generates a sense of homogeneity and comradeship in the participants that dissolves social divisions of rank and class such that all feel entitled to membership in the group. He found that rituals generate a community of equal individuals that has about it a quality of sacredness, which he called 'existential or spontaneous communitas' (Turner, 1969, 94-96, 132). Attention to ritual brings the creative process of the individual student into a social context and constellates a strong, even sacred sense of community in the group.

The last three meetings of the course are given over to the final presentations. It is a time of intense anticipation, adventure, risk-taking, and crucial discoveries. What until then has been largely a personal journey becomes a shared enterprise. Each presentation takes on the aspect of a rite of passage that affirms the bond between the individual and the witnessing community. Several students involve

## **15 Clarkson**

classmates in their presentation, and sometimes the whole class is asked to take part. The students become each other's teachers. Both as witness and presenter, they discover some new knowledge that marks the conclusion of this stage and the beginning of the next stage in their journey. At the end of the course several feel the need for further study and write in the course evaluations that they wish they could do the course over again or could pursue the subject at a more advanced level. Unfortunately, there were no means to do so, which is perhaps one reason why the cohort of 1994-95 decided to stay together and form an ongoing group.

### ***Consequences***

By way summarizing the effects of the course I shall quote from statements made by members of the fifth cohort soon after it was over:

On creativeness: "Since every human being has the capacity and ability to develop creatively, this course provided valuable insight in order for everyone to recognize their potential, individuality, and creativity. I personally gained understanding and the encouragement to create what I feel or think."

On emergent images and community: "Being on the edge of discovery at every moment, waiting for something new to emerge, to surprise, to bring to wholeness and to bring us into communion with one another, this course put me in touch with the sacredness of the creative process and of the space created."

On connecting with the Self: "The creative process is a spiritual path to becoming who we truly are. This class provided a safe environment for me to connect with the deep self, the creator who is fully and originally myself."

On the opposites: The explanation of the Yin-Yang symbol shifting to the opposite when one of the two sides reaches its maximum was helpful to me to understand the cycles of light and darkness, consolation and desolation, life and death (cycles of life) as well as in the creative process. I love the process of creativity, allowing mistakes to occur, to be open to possibilities."

On unlocking creative potential: "This course has shown me the key that can open up my unconscious and see the potential of the creative mind. It has given me the confidence to confront and understand my creative potential and therefore my true self."

On the individuation process: "I have gained a deep appreciation and respect for the workings of the psyche and how it connects our inner and outer worlds. I have received an exciting gift of insight, understanding, and compassion for the human spirit. . . . It is the journey of life."

On the journey: "This course has started me on a journey I didn't know I needed to take, but once begun, it is one that I cannot deny or leave--even with all

the ups and downs, light and dark, joy and sorrow that have been encountered--until that journey is complete.

For the students of the fifth cohort the course did not end as usual with final presentations and term papers. The sense of *communitas* had formed so strongly that at the last class they set a date to meet again. Ten years later the group is still together, although a few of the original class went separate ways and some new members have joined. We gather four times a year at members' homes and other locales to share what has happened in our lives, show new work, engage in fresh creative exercises, and plan group projects. Some members now live hundreds of miles away but keep in touch via email because the group has taken up a permanent place in our lives, an extended family that sees to the continued renewal of our creative energies. In 2000 the group decided to give a public show of artwork in a local community art center and took the name The Milkweed Collective. In conjunction with the show Milkweed gave workshops on the creative process to children and adults. In succeeding years the Collective has given two further group shows and provided the day-long workshop *Exploring Creativity in Depth* to several hundred children from area schools.

Teachers who took the course toward their B.Ed. or M.Ed. degrees have adapted elements of the curriculum for middle school and high school classrooms (Clarkson, 2003, 69-72). Another outcome of the program was an exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Since 1993 some 75-100,000 visitors have sat in a booth in the Canadian Historical Collection, put on a headset, and listened to three audio programs while viewing a landscape, "The Beaver Dam," by the Group of Seven artist J. E. H. MacDonald. One of the programs is a 12-minute version of the exercise for animating the imagination while viewing an artwork. Some 2,000 Share Your Reaction cards have been left by visitors who recorded their experiences in words and drawings. The cards show that activating the creative process transforms the painting for children and seniors, first time visitors to a museum and seasoned gallery-goers, students from poor neighborhoods and teachers. Young people say that now they know how to go into a painting they will do it on their own, and teachers say they will do the exercise with their students (Clarkson & Worts, in press).

### ***Conclusion***

Eleven members of the fifth cohort collaborated in writing a book on their experience of the course and its consequences. One author begins her chapter with a poem titled "Home," which she wrote one morning near the end of the course. The poem ends, "I've never lived here until NOW." Another author closes her story with the exclamation, "I AM WOMAN. I AM HOME." A third chapter is about reclaiming an abandoned house. The author of a fourth tells of realizing that



## 17 Clarkson

she needed to move from her old house and make a new home. A fifth student had to leave his family to find himself. The individuation process reveals the necessity of being at home to one's Self.

In their respective stories several quote the saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher will come." They mean not just the flesh-and-blood instructors of the course, but the teachers that emerge from the creative process as personal guides. As one puts it, the course was a vehicle for discovering "my animal teacher." The language of mythos is the language of the imagination (Kearney, 1988, 395-396). Telling the mythos at the heart of one's story is to discover the source of meaning and identity and the authentic path for life's journey. Northrop Frye speaks of the language of myth as metaphorical language in which subject and object are not clearly separated, but linked by a common power or energy. The terms of such language are not abstractions but concrete, dynamic powers. The language of mythos is "solidly anchored in physical images connected with bodily processes or with specific objects" (Frye, 1982, 6-17). "I've never lived here until NOW," and "I AM HOME" are expressions that tell of a more holistic reality.

This curriculum provides a model for educating the imagination so that it can collaborate with the reason to produce a cognitive attitude that bridges both the inner world of mythos and the outer world of logos. The students in the program and those who applied it in their own classrooms have demonstrated that it enhances the sense of authentic identity and motivation for inner-directed learning. I am most grateful to the students who took the course over the years and especially to the members of the fifth cohort for providing illustrations for this essay. I am sure they join me in wishing that it will provide encouragement to readers to contribute to this enterprise each in their own way.

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## **19 Clarkson**

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