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Modalities of Intersubjectivity in Neo-Shamanic Ritual Healing

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Nofit Itzhak

Committee in charge:

Professor Thomas Csordas, Chair
Professor Janis Jenkins
Professor Steven Parish

2010

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2010

DEDICATION

For my mother and father.

There is a light that never goes out

EPIGRAPH

If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it.

Isadora Duncan

In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art. Even more. It is the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world – in order to set up a shadow world of “meanings.” It is to turn *the* world into *this* world. (“This world”! As if there were any other.)

Susan Sontag, 1966: 7

It’s not the song. It’s the singer.

Shamanic healer explaining therapeutic efficacy

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Modalities of Intersubjectivity in Neo-Shamanic Ritual Healing

by

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Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, San Diego, 2010

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The focus of the current ethnographic study is a neo-shamanic healing ritual, practiced by contemporary Euro-Americans in the west coast of the United States, called soul retrieval. Moving away from symbolic, interpretive or representational approaches to the study of ritual healing, this study offers an experientially specific account of neo-shamanic healing process that is grounded in embodiment. The ritual

healing practice of soul retrieval is formulated here as a process of self-transformation and self-objectification, which is facilitated vis-à-vis a series of relationships that are created throughout the healing ritual and extend beyond it. The effort made in this paper is bifocal, in the sense that it attempts to elaborate on embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology by drawing on a particular ethnographic instance, while at the same time contribute to the anthropological literature on ritual healing and therapeutic process from an analytical perspective grounded in embodiment.

INTRODUCTION

The last several decades have seen a florescence in writings on the body in social science and critical theory. Nick Crossley (1996b) distinguishes between two broad theoretical orientations to the study of the body in relation to culture and social life. The first, associated primarily with the work of Michele Foucault, portrays the body as a cultural object, a *tabula rasa* that is “inscribed” on by political and socio-historical forces. The second, typically drawing on the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, views the body as a subject that is actively participating in the constitution of culture and social life. Crossley asserts, however, that the two approaches are not incommensurable and demonstrates the manners in which they can be fruitfully brought together.

In anthropology, a different but related distinction can be drawn between the anthropology of the body and the anthropology of embodiment (Csordas 1994b, 2002). While anthropologists have long written *about* the body (e.g., Blacking 1977; Douglas 1970; Hertz 1960; Polhemus 1978), studies that take embodiment as their analytical starting point are scarce. Tracing some of the historical developments within the literature on the body in anthropology, Asad (1993, 1997) notes a gradual transition from biologically-centered theories into ‘symbolic’ ones. Exemplified in the writings of Mary Douglas (1966, 1970), symbolic studies of the body, he claims, either analyze the body (or body parts) as representing something else or alternately study the various representations of the body in social life.

Contrary to the plethora of studies focusing on bodily representations, however, Asad (1997) notes the scarcity of studies that address body *formation*. Drawing on Mauss's *Techniques of the Body* (1979 [1934]) he calls for a change in the study of the body, in which it is not "viewed simply as the passive recipient of 'cultural imprints', still less as the active source of 'natural expressions' that are 'clothed in local history and culture', but as the *self-developable* means for achieving a range of human objects – styles of physical movements (for example, walking) through modes of emotional being (for example, composure), to kinds of spiritual experience (for example, mystical states)" (Asad 1997: 47-48). Asad further challenges the notion that the study of symbols can indeed tell us something significant about 'the human mind', or the idea that 'symbols' are an interface through which the disembodied mind can meet the world, stressing that not only do signs acquire their interpreted sense through embodied practice, but "the body's knowledge of the real world is not always dependent on signs" (Asad 1997: 44).

Likewise moving beyond the earlier anthropology of the body, Csordas (1994b, 2002) synthesizes the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty with the anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu, to elaborate on embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology. Problematizing the very distinction between subject and object (among other dualities), Csordas's cultural phenomenology postulates "a methodological standpoint in which bodily experience is understood to be the existential ground of culture and self, and therefore a valuable starting point for their analysis" (1994b: 269). Noting that none of the widely accepted definitions of culture seriously consider culture as grounded in the human body, Csordas demonstrates how the collapse of the subject-

object duality that results from an analysis grounded in embodiment, allows us to effectively explore how cultural objects (including selves), are constituted in the course of cultural life (Csordas, 2002). Needless to say that within this paradigm, then, bodily acts are not an external manifestation or representation of meaning that lies within them, but are generative and constitutive processes in their own right.

Although Asad (1997, 1993) and Csordas (1994b, 2002) elaborate on embodiment from different theoretical perspectives, they both mark a move from an analysis of objects already in the world, to an analysis of objects as they are *forming* in the world. This methodological and theoretical stance allows us to explore *the manners* in which the human body is both constituted by and is constituting of, culture, centering our questions on formation and process rather than on ‘things’.

This paper is an attempt to apply this broad methodological and theoretical stance to the study of ritual, specifically a healing ritual practiced by contemporary Euro-American neo-shamans in west coast of the United States, called soul retrieval. The effort made here is bifocal, in the sense that I seek to elaborate on embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology by drawing on a particular ethnographic instance, while at the same time contribute to the anthropological literature on neo-shamanic practice, ritual healing and therapeutic process from an analytical perspective grounded in embodiment.

Moving away from what I refer to here as symbolic, interpretive or representational approaches to the study of ritual healing, the current study seeks to provide an experientially specific account of neo-shamanic healing process that is grounded in the experience of the body-in-the-world. In lieu of explanations that

center on transformations of meanings, manipulations of symbols or reinterpretations of memories, the transformative potential of the neo-shamanic journey is conceived here in terms of a prereflective interaction with, or experience of, alterity.

Specifically, the ritual is formulated as a process of self-transformation and self-objectification, which is facilitated vis-à-vis a series of relationships that are created throughout the healing ritual itself and extend beyond it. Analysis centers on the multiple modalities of intersubjectivity that are formed in the course of the ritual, and highlights the manners in which understanding intersubjectivity as intercorporeality or co-presence allows us to better conceptualize therapeutic process and efficacy in the case of neo-shamanic ritual healing and possibly beyond.

I begin with a brief historical review of neo-shamanic practice and its intellectual roots, followed by a survey of the anthropological literature on neo-shamanism, addressing the dearth of research that focuses on the healing aspects of the practice. I then attend to the ethnographic literature on ritual healing outside neo-shamanic practice, explicating the need for an analytical stance that addresses the healing experience itself and is grounded in embodiment. Before commencing with the analysis of the soul retrieval ritual itself, I provide a concise review of neo-shamanic healing practices, neo-shamanic cosmologies and a description of soul retrieval healing ritual procedure. The theoretical elaboration on embodiment, intersubjectivity and intercorporeality, is not developed in a separate section, but is laced in the analysis of the ritual process itself.

The ritual is analyzed here from the vantage point of the relationships it instantiates, taking into account the agentive and active role, played by both healer and

patient in the course of the healing ritual, rather than analyzing the ritual as a series of operations or procedures performed by the healer on an essentially inert and passive patient. Analysis is carried out in three stages; these three analytical stages do not correspond to three distinct temporal or structural 'breaks' in the ritual healing itself, but instead align with the three relationships that are fostered in the course of the ritual. At the same time it is important to note here that these three relationships are not identified by the neo-shamanic practitioners themselves, but are a distinction I make here for analytical purposes only.

CHAPTER 1:

SHAMANISM, NEO-SHAMANISM, RITUAL HEALING

The History and formation of neo-shamanic practice

The term ‘shaman’ first appeared in European literature in 1672 in the memoirs of exiled Russian churchman Avvakum and was introduced to Western scholars by Dutchman Nicholas Witsen (Hutton 2001). Although none but the Tungus tribes of Siberia use the actual term ‘shaman’ or rather ‘šāman’ (Eliade 1964), the word has become a blanket term, used both popularly and academically, to refer to individuals of various cultures around the world who make use of particular trance techniques for healing purposes (Hutton 2001). This can be largely credited to religious historian Mircea Eliade whose comprehensive comparative work *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, published in 1964, had a profound impact on both academic literature on shamanism as well as on neo-shamanic practice and played a significant role in the ‘birth’ of both neo-shamanism and neo-paganism (Znamenski 2007). Academic critiques put aside¹, Noel (1997) goes as far as to proclaim Eliade the ‘forefather’ of such contemporary practices.

Eliade’s monumental effort entails a comparative study of numerous magico-religious practices. However, rather than grounding any of them in their particular cultural context or emphasizing differences between such practices, Eliade draws on what he believed to be underlying commonalities between these practices, asserting that shamanism is a universal phenomenon that spans not only across cultures, but

across time, possibly predating the stone age. Shamanism, he claims, is an archaic practice that existed at least at one point in time among all human populations, serving as ancient's man vessel of contacting the sacred. To further this claim to universality, Eliade dedicates a considerable portion of his book to the exploration of the numerous cultural expressions of the *axis mundi*² and the tripartite shamanic cosmology³.

Stressing the need to differentiate shamanic practice from other forms of magic, religion or healing, Eliade points to the specific form of trance induced by shamans, one which he refers to as 'ecstasy', as the deciding criterion. Shamanic 'ecstasy', he asserts, is characterized by a flight of the shaman's soul, during which it is believed to depart his body and "ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld" (Eliade 1964: 5). However, unlike other trance states, such as those characterizing African 'spirit possession' (e.g., Janzen 1992), during the shamanic trance, the shaman remains partially aware of her surrounding.

Today, some scholars are calling for the deconstruction of the term 'shamanism' and insist it is a generalizing term that cannot be considered relevant to understanding the varied phenomena categorized under it (e.g., Descola 2008; Hutton 2001; Taussig 1987). However, regardless as to whether shamanism can or cannot be considered a global, universal phenomenon and whether Eliade's analytical approach is valid or conducive to the understanding of trance religions, the relevance of his work to the discussion at hand lies in the fact that his work greatly influenced, indeed shaped, the face of neo-shamanic practice. Even today, Eliade's metanarrative is reproduced over and over again by neo-shamans who consider it the ultimate authority on 'native' shamanism (Wallis 2003).

Another major influence on the development of neo-shamanic practice was Carlos Castaneda and his controversial books, who was, according to Drury (1989: 81), “the first person to make the shamanic perspective accessible to Westerners” . We may say that while Eliade provided the intellectual or academic resources upon which neo-shamans could draw on in their construction of neo-shamanism as a practice, Castaneda was the first to put forth the idea that Westerners themselves could *become* shamans (see Castaneda 1968)⁴.

The third and perhaps the one most directly responsible for the flourishing of neo-shamanisms in the West is former anthropologist, Michael Harner. Drawing on his own research and personal experiences of various shamanic communities, Harner published in 1980 the first in what would become a flood of “how to do” books on shamanism, *The Way of the Shaman*. By adapting and decontextualizing shamanic practice from its original cultural grounding, Harner transformed shamanism into a self-help therapeutic and spiritual practice, which he claimed was synthesized from the very core of all shamanic practices around the world (Harner 1980). In his effort he aimed to effectively “peel off the cultural differences between shamanism in different cultures, and to develop the common core, the fundamentals” (Harner in Lindquist 1997: 26). Harner named this method *Core Shamanism* and following the publication of *The Way of the Shaman* (1980), established the Foundation for Shamanic Studies (FSS). The FSS is currently one of the largest and most successful neo-shamanism schools worldwide, offering a variety of training workshops inside and outside the United States in addition to its initiation of various financial aid programs aimed at ‘preserving’ shamanism throughout the world.

However, core shamanism is but one of many neo-shamanic practices that are currently taught and practiced worldwide. Joan Townsend (2004), in an attempt to categorize the various strands of the practice, draws a distinction between neo-paganism (e.g., Wicca, white witchcraft, Goddess religions, etc) and neo/core-shamanism. Lindquist (1997) likewise differentiates between these two categories, citing neo-shamanism's lack of adherence to one symbolic system and higher level of flexibility in practice as two of the more important differentiating criteria⁵. Although contemporary practitioners of shamanism rarely refer to themselves as 'neo-shamans'⁶, I find the distinction useful; first, to differentiate between contemporary, non-indigenous shamanic practice and indigenous shamanisms and second, to differentiate between neo-shamanic practices that draw on Harner's a-cultural notion of 'core' shamanism, as opposed to neo-pagan traditions that are focused on reclaiming one's cultural and spiritual roots by means of adopting specific practices, values, or regalia supposedly associated with a particular indigenous population or 'spiritual tradition'. The community of practitioners that are the focus of the current study are neo-shamans that draw on the teachings and principles of Harnerian core-shamanism (although they are not a part of the FSS school).

Neo-Shamanism, Ritual Healing and Embodied Practice

Reviewing the anthropological literature on shamanism, Atkinson (1992) concludes that neo-shamanism is "by far the most significant recent development in the field". Indeed, the past two decades have seen an explosion in the global spread of

neo-shamanic practices, alongside other ‘new age spiritualities’⁷. In spite of the obviously growing place of new age practices and neo-shamanism in particular in people’s lives, anthropological inquiry into this rapidly growing field remains scant. While shamanic ritual practice among non-Westerners has been explored and studied with great care, neo-shamanic practice has often been subject to academic ridicule, neo-shamans dismissed as ‘inauthentic’ or Indian ‘wannabees’ (e.g., Clifton 1989; Deloria 1998; Kehoe 1990, 2000).

The few anthropological works that have addressed neo-shamanic practice in a non-condemning manner are engaged primarily with neo-shamanism as a socio-cultural phenomenon in the context of late capitalism, a social movement (Heelas 1996; Jakobsen 1999; Johnson 1995; Lindquist 1997; Minkjan 2008; Wallis 2003). These studies are all broadly engaged with questions of secularization and reenchantment, attempting to explain the resurgence of magico-religious practices among supposedly rational and modernized individuals. Another body of literature on neo-shamanism has been produced by anthropologists ‘gone native’ (Goodman 1988; Harner 1980, 1988; Turner 2005; Winkelman 2000, 2002, 2005) who focus on the therapeutic application of neo-shamanic ‘techniques’ and engage in a somewhat enthusiastic advocacy of neo-shamanism as therapy. However, while these authors attest to the efficacious nature of shamanic healing, none offers us an in-depth account of this efficacy, nor of the healing process itself. One exception is Lindquist’s work on soul retrieval (2004), which will be discussed at length later on.

This lack of attention to therapeutic process that we observe in the small body of literature on neo-shamanic ritual healing, however, extends well beyond this

particular field. Csordas (1988, 1994a, 1996) notes that within the rich literature on ritual and religious healing, little attention is typically given to the question of therapeutic *process*. He points to the fact that, although theoretically varied, virtually all hypotheses on ritual healing efficacy and process (e.g., Frank 1973; Levi-Strauss 1966; Prince 1964; Turner 1964) tend to resort to ‘black-box’ explanations and account for efficacy by referring to “the global role of psychological mechanisms such as suggestion, catharsis, placebo effect, or regression in service of the ego” (Csordas, 1988: 138). However, the actual workings of these global psychological mechanisms typically remain unelaborated and unexplained. What we are left with, then, are statements in the vein of, ‘what really heals people is the placebo effect/catharsis/altered states of consciousness’, but what actually gets ‘catharted’, or the manner by which an alteration of our state of consciousness brings about healing or change, remains unexplained.

To amend this, Csordas claims, we must attend to more than just the ritual *procedure*, and bring into our analysis the *experience* of healing, making the self the center of our analysis. This requires that we acknowledge that the recipient of healing is more than an inert body upon whom the ritual sequence is performed, but rather an active participant in, and enactor of, the healing process. Drawing on this line of argument, coupled with a conception of self as inherently and primarily intersubjective, analysis in the current study is specifically centered on the intersubjective encounter between Self and Other, the space of the ‘in between’, as the locus of the transformative ritual process.

Another bias in the study of ritual that the current study attempts to overcome is what different anthropologists referred to as the symbolic, interpretive or representational bias. Asad (1993) critiques classical anthropological approaches to the study of ritual and their concern with ‘decoding body symbols’ as well as the schism that was set by British anthropologist such as Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard, between the social meanings of rituals and the somatic and psychological states of participating bodies. Don Handelman (2004, 2008) warns us against the representational bias in Western analytical thought, which, coupled with text-based postmodernism, “threatens to swamp so many of the phenomenal phenomena that anthropologists study” (2004: 192). Studying religion and ritual within a representational framework, he claims, run the risk of losing the phenomenon’s own coherence and integrity. Prior to interpretation, we must first face the phenomenal in all its richness and its own right, something which Handelman claims poses one of “the greatest intellectual challenges of anthropology, even as one gets it wrong over and over again” (2008: 193).

Lindquist (2008) makes a similar point in her study of healing in Tuva, critiquing the interpretive anthropological tradition that conceives of culture as a system of symbols. Within this tradition, which draws on the Saussurian model of semiotics, Lindquist claims, ‘interpretation’ becomes the task of decoding meaning, deciphering symbols. Practices in this tradition are treated as secondary, a manifestation of meaning that lurks beneath them: “They are conceived as recurrent ways of doing things whose primary rationale is to signify—and, importantly, to signify symbolically—by referring to certain specific referents through shared habits

of interpretation that attach to these referents conventional and thus shared meaning” (2008: 114). This symbol-and-meaning approach has been recently critiqued by others as well (e.g., Kleinman 1995; Seeman 2004).

Susan Sontag (1966), writing on art and art critique, highlights the problematic of interpretation especially for the modern age:

Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there. This cannot be taken for granted now [...] All the conditions of modern life – its material plenitude, its sheer crowdedness – conjoin to dull our sensory faculties. And it is in the light of the condition of our senses, our capacities (rather than those of another age), that the task of the critic must be assessed. What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more [...] The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art – and, by analogy, our own experience – more, rather than less, real to us. The function of criticism should be to show *how it is what it is, even that it is what it is*, rather than to show *what it means*. (1966: 13-14)

What holds for the critic’s analysis of art is equally valid for the anthropologist’s analysis of life. Returning to the problematic of ritual efficacy we have posed earlier, I propose that the *experience* of healing, which we must access if we are to reach a specificity that goes beyond global explanations, can be successfully achieved by applying a methodological stance that is rooted in the phenomenology of the body, or embodiment, starting our analysis with “the experience of perceiving in all its richness and indeterminacy” (Csordas 1994b: 7). Before turning to the analysis of the ritual itself, I briefly review some theories of embodiment.

Although it is Marcel Mauss (1979 [1934]) that must be credited for first introducing the term *habitus* to anthropological scholarship, it is only in the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1980) that the term is given significant theoretical weight and is methodically developed within his theory of embodied practice. Arguing against logocentric theories and the Saussurian structural position that conceptualizes culture in terms of grammar or code, Bourdieu proposes that where culture truly exists is in the human body in action. It is the body, then, claims Bourdieu, that must serve as our analytic starting point when attempting to understand the world. The term *habitus*, defined as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (1977: 72), is introduced to explicate this position, collapsing the body-mind duality by positioning the body as the locus of social practice.

The dialectic inherent to the concept of the *habitus* can be glimpsed in the idea that while it is a structure that limits the potentialities of human expression, the *habitus* still is a historical product, created in the process of human practice and hence one which is continuously, albeit slowly, also changing in the course of human action. Csordas (2002) suggests that “the locus of Bourdieu’s *habitus* is the conjunction between the objective conditions of life and the totality of aspirations and practices completely compatible with those conditions. Objective conditions do not cause practices, and neither do practices determine objective conditions” (2002: 63).

Elaborating on embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology, Csordas (2002) proposes a synthesis of Bourdieu’s theory of practice with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological philosophy. Like Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty (1962) is also engaged

in the collapsing of dualities, but while Bourdieu's primary concern is with the collapse of the mind-body and structure-practice dualities, Merleau-Ponty's critique of empiricism and intellectualism in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) is more evidently concerned with a collapse of the subject-object or transcendence-immanence dualities.

Explicating his theory from the analytical starting point of the problematic of perception, Merleau-Ponty (1962) critiques the empiricist dichotomy of subject-object that posits a transcendent objective reality, which is external to and independent of (indeed, imposes itself on) subjective consciousness. This notion of the object-as-truth dictates perception as determined and unambiguous. By demonstrating the indeterminate and ambiguous nature of perception (such as in the case of various optical illusions), Merleau-Ponty highlights the important role context, or background, plays in the process of perception, demonstrating that we never perceive atomistic sense impressions, but always Gestalts. How we perceive things, Merleau-Ponty tells us then, is at least partially determined on how we look at them, which is in turn partially dependent on the object's background or context. Since perception is demonstrably *not* determined by objects, then analysis cannot start with objects and be traced back to subjects. Instead, Merleau-Ponty proposes we start our analysis from the everyday, lived engagement with the world. Analysis must begin with perception and end in objects and not vice versa.

This position expressed by Merleau-Ponty is not to be confused with intellectualism, which posits 'mind' as the incorporeal substance and the source of meaningful perception. Merleau-Ponty rejects both the dualism and the presupposition

of meaningful perception rooted in the subject's consciousness, that are at the base of intellectualism. It is not the object, nor the subject that precede perception, rather: "perception is an originary process rooted in the dialectical relationship of the organism and its environment, which gives birth to both the subject and the object of perception" (Crossley 1996a: 27). The locus of perception, or where perception begins, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the body-in-the-world and it is for the purpose of studying the embodied process of perception from its starting point (the body) rather than from its end point (objects), that he introduces the concept of the 'preobjective' or 'prereflective'. It is important to note that the preobjective by no means exists *a priori* or independently of culture, as the phenomenological endeavor is engaged with capturing that "moment of transcendence in which perception begins, and, in the midst of arbitrariness and indeterminacy, constitutes and is constituted by culture" (Csordas 2002: 61).

Both Bourdieu (1977, 1980) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), then, attempt to collapse Cartesian dualities, by positioning the body-in-the-world as the analytical starting point of their theories. Bourdieu, by focusing on practice and Merleau-Ponty, by problematizing the process of perception. Csordas's synthesis of Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu hinges on the meeting point between *habitus* and the *preobjective*: "To conjoin Bourdieu's understanding of the 'habitus' as an unself-conscious orchestration of practices with Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'pre-objective' suggests that embodiment need not be restricted to the personal or dyadic micro-analysis customarily associated with phenomenology, but is relevant as well to social collectivities" (Csordas 1993: 137).

Within this paradigm, then, bodily acts are not the external manifestations of something else but are generative and constituting processes, hence it is the bodily acts in themselves that bear the analytical weight. Before commencing with our analysis of soul retrieval from a perspective of embodiment, in the following section I provide a brief sketch of neo-shamanic cosmologies, followed by a review of soul loss philosophy and soul retrieval ritual procedure.

Neo-Shamanic Journey and Cosmology

Soul retrieval is only one of several types of healing rituals performed by neo-shamans. To understand the ritual procedure of soul retrieval we must first familiarize ourselves with basic neo-shamanic cosmologies and practice. The greater part of any neo-shamanic ritual takes place during the shamanic journey into the ‘non-ordinary reality’. Following Vyner, Lindquist refers to the neo-shamanic journeys as “rituals of the mind”, in the sense that “the performative sequences of these rituals unfold, for the most part, only the minds of the practitioners” (2004: 158). Csordas (1996), studying similar ritual practice among Catholic Charismatics in the USA, favors the term ‘imaginal performances’. These imaginal performances are characterized by vivid imagery that engages the person journeying not only visually, but auditory and kinesthetically, similarly to the manner in which dreams engage of all of our sensory modalities.

The ‘non-ordinary reality’ to which neo-shamans journey is the spirit world, an ordinarily invisible realm parallel to ours. The spirit world is a tripartite universe,

divided into lower, middle and upper worlds. The lower world is journeyed to in search of healing (either psychological, spiritual or physical) and power, while the upper world is sought for gathering information, asking questions and gaining knowledge. The middle world is seldom journeyed to by most shamanic practitioners and is said to hold the spirits of persons still living. Journeys to the middle world are made for various 'mundane' reasons that typically include interacting with close persons in the practitioner's life. Souls can only be retrieved from either the lower or upper worlds, but there is no distinction between souls that are retrieved from the upper world or lower world⁸.

When journeying to the spirit worlds neo-shamans typically lie still on their backs, usually on a mat of some sort, wearing a blindfold. The alteration of the state of consciousness is achieved by listening to the sound of a monotonous drumbeat. In cases of individual session the person journeying uses an audio recording of the drumbeat, while in cases of group gatherings or shamanic workshops the shaman leading the group would typically drum for the group as they journeyed. When journeying individually, neo-shamans typically narrate the journey aloud and record the narration. However, the volume of drumbeat is usually loud enough to prevent the journeyer from hearing her own voice narrating the journey. In cases of group journeys, the journey is not narrated aloud, but instead later transcribed from memory. Prior to the actual journey, various pre-rituals are performed, such as rattling, lighting candles and burning of sage.

Soul Loss and Soul Retrieval

The particular journey for soul retrieval is carried out in cases of soul loss, something that, according to neo-shamans, practically all people suffer from. Soul loss is a state in which a part of one's soul is torn, usually as a result of trauma, and leaves the person's body. The opportunities for soul loss are numerous, as the definition of trauma is sufficiently wide to include instances as horrific as child sexual abuse alongside almost trivial incidents as a sudden fall. While trauma is the chief cause of soul loss, it is certainly not the only one. A great variety of interpersonal interactions may result in soul loss. Souls can be stolen by people who are jealous of us or taken by means of manipulation. At times, we might even voluntarily give our souls away when trying to appease or placate others whom we care about. Finally, others may also 'throw' their souls at us, without our consent or knowledge. These 'velcro' souls then stick to the afflicted person against their will and weigh them down⁹.

Unlike various indigenous shamanic communities where the accumulation of souls is positive regardless of the means by which it is acquired¹⁰, the neo-shamanic philosophy of soul retrieval is clearly rooted in Western notions of health and illness and in an ethnopsychology that is informed by psychodynamic theory. Soul loss is conceived not so much in terms of 'power' as in the case of most indigenous shamanisms, but rather as a violation of the boundaries or autonomy of the individualistic self. This autonomy of the self 'holds both ways', in the sense that one's soul must remain whole (not split), but also exclusively one's own (not added to). While for the Jivaro (Harner 1972), for example, stealing a soul from another adds

to one's power and prestige, souls taken from others or souls others might give us willingly are cause for suffering and disease in neo-shamanic practice.

In her paper on soul retrieval among neo-shamans in Sweden, Lindquist (2004) suggests that while neo-shamanic practice is more similar to Western psychotherapy than to shamanism as it is practiced in indigenously shamanic communities, a crucial difference between neo-shamanism and psychotherapy is that the former posits an alternative cosmology that is not indigenous to its practitioners. She claims that it is for this reason that neo-shamanic healing fails, as people tend to eventually abandon these cosmologies and return to their "usual ways of living". However, based on my experience with neo-shamanic practice and various other healing techniques, including Western psychotherapies, I observe that while neo-shamanic healing certainly fails at times, it does not seem to fail, on average, more than any other therapeutic technique; and further, that whether or not people who undergo neo-shamanic healing chose to adopt shamanic cosmologies seems of very little consequence to the success of the healing.

In fact, I believe that at least one of the reasons for the proliferation of neo-shamanic practice and its increasing popularity in Western countries is due to the fact that the seemingly 'exotic' cosmologies neo-shamans seem to believe in are only 'skin deep', and are in fact extremely compatible with meta-narratives rooted in enlightenment discourse as well as in an ethnopsychology that is drawing on popularizations of Freudian psychoanalysis. Neo-shamans, as a rule, don't really adopt new cosmologies, and nor do they need to, in order to be persuaded by the potential efficacy of neo-shamanic healing. As we have seen in the case of soul retrieval, neo-

shamanic notions of health and illness are perfectly compatible with Western notions of the self as a bounded individual.

In fact, it is neo-shamans themselves who make sure to draw the connections between neo-shamanic cosmologies and Western ethnopsychology by ‘psychologizing’ their practice. Soul retrieval is a particularly good example for this, as one way in which neo-shamans explain the concept of soul loss to their clients is by likening it to the psychological process of dissociation¹¹. Sandra Ingerman, for example, a leading trainer of soul retrieval workshops in North America, titled her book, *Soul Retrieval: Mending the Fragmented Self* (1991), clearly alluding to Jung’s concept of the fragmentation of the psyche (Jung 1902). The analogy between psychology and shamanic healing is not only alluded to, however, but is made explicit, as is evident from the explanation given by a neo-shamanic healer:

When we lose a soul, as a result of some traumatic experience, whether it’s sudden fear or loss of someone dear to us or whatever, that part of me that cannot tolerate that trauma, it runs away, to protect me, in a way. Because if that part stays, I will probably go mad, because I wouldn’t be able to handle that trauma. Anyway, so that part of me that goes, and with that part, some goodness goes out of me, some power goes out of me. That’s why we say, when later in life we come across some challenge in our life, some situation in our life, that suddenly we can’t handle, we go into depression or become sick, and the shaman says, you need a soul retrieval. They go and bring that part back for you and then suddenly you are coping with the situation that before you couldn’t cope.

There is something magical about the work that possibly I will never understand. But if you like, in some ways, we could draw... a simile, between psychology and shamanic work, the healing that we do through shamanism. That in psychology we say that people who are extremely traumatized, that aspect of themselves, they dissociate with that aspect of themselves. Right? So what happens is, they lose power.

They become weaker. Shamanically, we say that this person loses power, their soul loses parts of itself, bits of itself. So the more soul you lose as a result of traumatic experience the weaker you become. In psychology they call it dissociation. That people dissociate with that damaged part of themselves, that aspect that experienced the trauma.

What this quote demonstrates is not only the extent to which soul retrieval practice is psychologized, but also the manners in which the concept of soul loss is effectively related to people's daily experience of distress and suffering. Csordas (2002) suggests that the process of healing as rhetoric of transformation must start with persuading the patient of the validity of the healing framework, or that the particular healing practice itself is at least potentially efficacious. The shaman, in the quote above, effectively creates this precondition for her clients by anchoring the idea of soul loss (and hence the potential efficacy of soul retrieval), in their daily experience of suffering. The validity of her explanation is further supported by the ethnopsychology of trauma and the already established credibility of psychology as a scientific discipline.

Demonstrating the reality of soul loss and consequently the potential efficacy of soul retrieval is also achieved by citing the common use of metaphors that seem to allude to the experience of soul loss in people's lives. Often, in explaining the process of soul loss to new clients the shaman would refer to expressions such as "when my husband left me, part of me left with him" or "since he died I have been only half alive". These culturally salient metaphors are cited by the shamanic healer as evidence that while we might not be conscious of our souls leaving us as a result of trauma, our use of language and metaphor can, in fact, disclose that reality to us.

Just as the opportunities for soul loss, or negative soul gain, for that matter, are innumerable, so are the effects of soul loss on one's life. Those can range from an inability to 'cope' with certain things (such as a persistent fear of authority), to depression, chronic lack of energy or in extreme cases the manifestation of physical illness. A complete loss of one's soul results in death. The severity of the symptoms that result from soul loss is understood to loosely correlate with the number of souls or soul parts that have been lost. The more traumas one experienced, the more souls one would potentially lose, resulting in a more perforated and weakened soul body. Alternately, severe soul loss may also be the result of a single traumatic event, in the case that the trauma had an especially strong impact on the person. However, it is important to note that there is no set of strict rules regarding the relationship between trauma and soul loss, be it in terms of the severity or specific character of the symptoms.

Soul loss is rarely diagnosed by identifying certain symptoms and tracing them back to a possible cause, indeed even determining whether one is in need of soul retrieval is rarely determined by either patient or healer without consulting the spirits in one way or another. Although the shaman would usually note to herself or even inform the patient that she believes they may be in need of soul retrieval, the spirits are almost invariably consulted beforehand. This is especially true when the patient herself specifically requests for a soul retrieval, whether for a specific traumatic event or due to the presence of certain symptoms which she self-diagnoses as resulting from soul loss (generally speaking, any gestures of self-diagnosis on the part of the patient are usually treated with 'mistrust' by the shaman). While other shamanic journeys are

often jointly formulated by shaman and patient in the course of the healing session, soul retrieval is considered a powerful procedure that should ideally be recommended by the spirits.

The decision to perform a soul retrieval is typically based on instructions given to the shaman or patient in a previous journey or on instructions given to the shaman in the course of a special 'diagnostic journey'. In rare occasions, the shaman will allow herself to rely on her own experience in determining the need for a soul retrieval, although that is more likely to happen in cases where the symptoms are judged to be severe and urgency called for. At any case, even upon embarking on the soul retrieval journey itself, no specific souls, or souls that have supposedly departed due to any specific trauma, are solicited for. It is extremely rare for the shaman to travel to the spirit worlds searching for a specific soul, of a specific age, that is presumed to have been lost due to a specific trauma. Rather, she embarks on the journey with the goal of retrieving whatever soul is 'ready to come back' or is needed by the patient at that particular moment. Ultimately, then, the decision as to which soul is retrieved rests in the hands of the lost soul itself and the spirit helpers of the person undergoing the healing.

This means that diagnosis is ultimately retroactive and determined in the course of the healing process and not vice versa. The trauma that may have caused the soul loss is elaborated upon retrospectively and a psychological trajectory is created to trace its effects on the emotive-behavioral state of the person, which the retrieved soul will now, in a domino effect, undo. However, the results of soul retrieval cannot be predicted by the shaman, spirits or patient, and so the 'root' of one's problem is often

determined by observing the changes in the patient's life following the healing ritual, and as a neo-shaman explained to me: "what we do here might heal you somewhere else, not necessarily what you are working on".

Soul Retrieval Ritual Procedure

The ritual procedure of soul retrieval is a rather lengthy one and may, at times, spread over a period of weeks, although the basic procedure is typically completed within a few days to one week. The first in a series of shamanic journeys performed in the course of the ritual is undertaken by the shaman. As mentioned before, soul retrieval is not performed to seek any particular soul for a particular trauma and no narrative or account is typically provided by the person seeking help regarding the possible cause of soul loss prior to the initial retrieval journey¹².

Immediately following the initial journey performed by the shaman, during which the lost soul is encountered and brought back (typically held in the tightly clenched fist of the healer), the shaman introduces the soul into the person's body by blowing it in. Typically, the soul is blown into the chest (usually referred to as the heart or Heart Chakra) and the top of the head (usually referred to as the crown or Crown Chakra). The patient continues to lie on the floor, with her eyes closed and her hands placed over her chest as the shaman gently drums and uses a variety of bells, verbally welcoming the soul back to the patient's life. Before going on the journey the shaman instructs the client to think of a (visual) metaphor that would enable her to 'embody' or 'soak' the soul, incorporate it back into her body. This metaphor is then

used by the patient when the soul is being introduced back into her body by the shaman.

After about twenty minutes, both shaman and patient either listen to the tape recording of the journey or to the narration of the journey by the shaman. The journey is transcribed for later reading and contemplation. While the journey is recounted by the shaman, the patient might recall certain past events that may correspond to the messages or events in the journey, at which point both shaman and patient jointly elaborate on and reinterpret the particular event in light of the journey messages and vice versa. This concludes the first part of the ritual.

The next stage is performed by the client and is a brief journey in which she asks a spirit teacher (preferably a tree, but not necessarily), what must she do in order to 'root the soul into her'. At this point the client might meet, for the first time, the retrieved soul in its 'corporeal' form, but not necessarily. The messages from this journey are meant to provide the client with some practical or concrete instructions as to what needs to be done immediately following the soul retrieval to successfully assimilate the soul. The instructions received vary drastically from person to person.

If the person did not meet the soul during the 'rooting journey', she is sure to meet it during the next journey. This third journey can be performed shortly after the second one, a few days following it or even a week later. Its purpose is for the patient and soul to meet each other and allow the soul to explain to the patient the reasons it had left in the first place. During this journey the soul also tells the patient what she must change in her life or behavior, to welcome the soul back into her life and embody it completely.

After receiving specific instructions from the soul in the third journey, either the patient or the shaman would journey yet again to ask for advice on how the patient can 'break' the habit, pattern or maladaptive behavior that the soul asked changed or how could she achieve any of the goals or requests set by the soul during the third journey. Additionally, although not necessarily, certain rituals might be assigned in any of the journeys, that are to be performed by the patient in her daily life for a period of several days to several months.

CHAPTER 2:

ANALYSIS

The data presented in this study was gathered in 2009 over a period of one year of participant observation among neo-shamanic practitioners in Southern California. During that time I have participated in various neo-shamanic workshops and courses and observed private neo-shamanic therapy sessions. I conducted open-ended interviews with clients that underwent multiple therapy sessions as well as with workshop participants. Over thirty hours of interviews were conducted with the neo-shamanic healer alone. While the data presented here and used for the study was collected exclusively over a period of a year in Southern California, the ethnographic background I draw on for the purpose of my insights into neo-shamanic practice draws on close to ten years of sporadic participant observation in various neo-shamanic and new age groups in Israel, Spain, the UK, Norway and Poland.

The interviews used for the current paper are of a single neo-shamanic practitioner with whom I have closely worked during the year of ethnographic research in Southern California. Elena, a woman in her mid-sixties, has been practicing as a shamanic healer in California for over two years, but remains partially based in the UK, where she has lived for most of her life, and trained as a social worker over twenty years ago. Specializing in the field of child sexual abuse and adult survivors, Elena ran a successful psychotherapeutic practice in the UK for over ten years, but following a personal crisis, gradually began to work with ‘alternative’ or

‘complementary’ healing practices, shamanism among those. She has been practicing and teaching shamanism around the world (mainly in Europe and the United States) for over ten years now. Although she has completely abandoned her practice as a social worker and currently practices only ‘complementary’ healing techniques (focusing on shamanism in particular), her psychotherapeutic training is evident in her work.

Compared to other practitioners of shamanism, she clearly leans towards the therapeutic and less so to what is typically thought of as the ‘New Age’. Although she practices and teaches several other spiritual or healing techniques, Elena refrains from ‘mixing’ them together and sessions and workshops I have attended did not draw on any other spiritual practices. She trained as a shamanic practitioner in the UK and Denmark with a former student and collaborator of Michael Harner’s. While her practice draws on some of the principles and teachings of Harner’s Core Shamanism, however, it is also distinctly different, not only as a result of her teacher’s divergence from the Harner school, but also due to her own psychotherapeutic background. However, during the past year she has been attending workshops conducted by the Foundation for Shamanic Studies (FSS) with the aim of becoming accredited by the school in the United States. She has also published a book on shamanism and neo-shamanism several years ago.

In accord with the principles of Harnerian core shamanism, that purports to strip shamanic practice of any culturally specific characteristics (this, as opposed to neo-pagan practices that emphasize the use of certain ‘native-like’ regalia and paraphernalia), Elena does not don any special dress for either her private or group

work. A special healing outfit she owns and was instructed to purchase by her spirit teachers, is used in extremely rare occasions during elaborate healing rituals. Sessions typically take place in her residence and workshops in various urban locations of no significant characteristics.

A successful shamanic healer, Elena reports to never having actively advertised herself. Clients are typically referred to her by friends and family members and she seems to possess a charisma of a kind that encourages people to open up to her quickly, often resulting in acquiring clients following dinner parties or various social interactions. Elena not only conducts workshops for persons who are interested in practicing shamanism for their own personal healing, but trains students to become shamanic practitioners and teachers themselves. Her students, in Europe and the United States, periodically organize training workshops (either basic shamanic classes for beginners or advanced for people who already took the basic class), which Elena leads. These workshops also serve as a training-by-apprenticeship, as the students attend the workshops as observers or ‘supporters’. People who attend the workshops may continue to work individually with Elena, and vice versa, but not necessarily.

Throughout the analysis of the ritual I also present the case of Anna, a middle aged neo-shamanic practitioner, who underwent soul retrieval while on a soul retrieval workshop. Anna herself also makes her living by practicing various healing modalities. Interviews with Anna were conducted immediately following her soul retrieval and twice more, in intervals of about one month. As I do not offer here a person-centered account of her healing process, no elaborate biographical sketch of Anna will be given, other than to explain that the traumatic event she believed her soul

retrieval referred to was a repeated experience of child sexual abuse, which she had never told anyone about, but remembered vividly. Some of her recollections of the childhood trauma, insights and experiences during and following the shamanic journeys, are presented at the beginning of each of the three analytic sections below, however, as a means of telling her story alongside the analysis of the ritual itself.

Birth of the Soul

I will read you the journey that the woman did for me on the course:

“Anna came to this world to be joyous and to feel peace within. Even through the challenging times of life. You were born to be fearless and fear free. Your essence is saturated with the DNA of God. Radiance and brilliance will forever be your medicine of the earth. There was a scene where you were beautiful seven-year-old little girls. Dressed in a beautiful white outfit, all white.”

I think that is trying to indicate the purity, that I am pure, because I thought I wasn't pure, that I was damaged. I felt that all the time. And I felt guilty and dirty. Because I thought it was my fault, because I wasn't doing anything about it [the sexual abuse].

“A man appeared who had dark hair. I didn't see any specific harm being done to you, but you became frightened of something concerning the presence of this man. This made you lose your feelings of trust and made you have feelings of being unsafe in the world. You were dressed beautiful, you look radiant and pretty, but you lost the inner feeling of the true beauty from within. Later on, a quiet calm woman appeared, with brown hair, pretty. She moved quickly and remained in the background. The seven-year-old part of you was glad to return. She held on tightly, so glad to return, as if she was waiting for so long for the glorious occasion to reconnect with the purity, trust and beauty of a true essence, the light of her soul.”

Although the first relationship that is established in the course of the soul retrieval ritual is the one between the patient and the shaman, within the neo-shamanic framework this relationship is secondary to the one between the patient and her own spirit teachers, and in this case, the patient and the soul. Nevertheless, the relationship between shaman and patient is a crucial one to the healing process, since, as I seek to demonstrate here, it is in the space between the patient and the shaman that the retrieved soul first appears, initially as an object, and ultimately as a subject with whom the patient enters into a relationship.

In her paper on soul retrieval, Galina Lindquist (2004) conceives of the ritual as a joint reconstruction of traumatic past memories that is carried out by shaman and patient through narration and performance (both actual and imaginal)¹³. In her analysis, Lindquist focuses on two broad processes – first, the actual interaction between shaman and patient during which past stories and journeys are narrated, for the purpose of reinterpretation and reobjectification of the patient’s traumatic memories. Second, the imaginal performance which takes place during the shamanic journey itself whereby the patient interacts with the soul in a manner that allows her to “change the scene of the memory further and thereby attain a new experience of the past” (2004: 166). It is through the reconstitution of past memories, Lindquist claims, that the self is ultimately transformed.

I address Lindquist’s (2004) analysis of the interaction between the patient and the soul during the shamanic journey later on. For now, however, I wish to point to a glaring omission in her account of the interaction that takes place between the shaman and the patient and one which I believe is perhaps one of the most important moments

of the ritual; it is the moment that immediately follows the shaman's journey, when the soul is blown into the patient's chest and head. The first moment we 'meet' the retrieved soul in Lindquist's account is when the patient is conversing with it in the shamanic journey. The crucial moment when it first makes its appearance in the ritual sequence, however, is long before that, and the space in which we first encounter the soul is not the imaginal journey realm, but the very 'actual' space between shaman and patient, as the soul is returned to its rightful abode in the body. Discounting this moment, as Lindquist does, deprives us of a crucial insight into the healing ritual as a whole.

This omission became evident to me not while reading Lindquist's (2004) account, however, but when discussing the idea of memory reconstitution with the shamanic healer I was working with: "You are missing the point", she informed me, "People don't heal because we change their memories or because of some reinterpretation of their trauma. They heal because before the soul retrieval something was missing in them, and when they get the soul back, they feel complete again. They feel something has returned to them". I confess that I did not give much importance to this statement when I first heard it. After all, this is the standard account neo-shamans give when explaining the efficacy of soul retrieval, but that did not mean that it was the best explanation. As I contemplated this notion, however, it occurred to me that perhaps it was¹⁴. It was then that I realized that a phenomenological account of the embodied process by which the soul itself is created is crucial to the understanding of the ritual in its entirety.

First, if we consider therapeutic efficacy to be a matter of rhetoric of transformation (Csordas 2002), then the moment the patient experiences the soul entering her body is crucial in establishing both the potential efficacy of the practice to create change as well as the reality of change actually taking place. Alluding back to Mauss's body techniques, if persuading someone of the existence of the sacred is best done through the body, then the same surely holds for the case of the retrieved soul. However, this is almost a truism, as indeed no human experience is ever dis-embodied and hence every aspect of our existence is quite literally *in the body and by the body*. What, then, does a perspective of embodiment or embodied action allow us to understand about this process that a representational approach to ritual would not? To answer this question, urged by the shaman's statement, I now turn my attention to the phenomenological moment in which the soul is constituted as an object through bodily practice in the course of the ritual.

As I have stressed before, within the paradigm of embodiment, bodily acts are not the external manifestations of a deeper meaning that lies beneath them, but are generative and constituting processes in their own right. Starting our analysis from the perspective of the perceptual constitution of objects rather than the perspective of objects already in the world, allows us to trace the manner in which objects are constituted through bodily practice and in this case allows us to observe how therapeutic efficacy or the healing potential of the ritual is established and reinforced in the course of the healing process.

What I propose here specifically is that the soul as an object/subject is created in the course of the ritual in the intersubjective, indeed intercorporeal, space between

shaman and patient and that the significance of the interaction between these two *body-subjects*, to use Merleau-Ponty's term (1962), lies in the immediacy of their co-presence or positioning in relation to each other as two bodies already *in-the-world*. I seek to demonstrate that the efficacy of the healing ritual is not (primarily or exclusively) a process of negotiation of symbolic meanings or narratives reconstructing, indeed that the healing takes place (at least partially) *prior* to either understanding or reflection. I begin my analysis with Anna's account of her experience immediately following the introduction of the soul into her body:

N: Did you feel something when she blew the soul into you?

A: I felt it, yeah. I felt tingling.

N: where she put the soul or everywhere?

A: no, everywhere. But you have to think of a metaphor, for when they blow it into you. I imagined a blue light. I thought that's what I'll do. You have to think of it first. You have to think of a metaphor, how to embody this soul.

N: ah, okay.

A: so when she blew it into me, I imagined a blue light. It went in here (*pointing at her chest*) and it just covered my body. And then I was lying there for 20 minutes.

N: okay, so what happens in those 20 minutes?

A: you just put your hands on your belly and you just lie there and soak it in.

N: soak the soul in?

A: ahm.

N: so, did you see anything or feel anything during those 20 minutes?

A: I think I was just so... I don't know... no, I didn't. No, I just kind of... I didn't think about it that way. I was just... imagining the light in my body.

What is interesting in this account is the fact that Anna's spontaneous experience of 'tingling' in her body following the shaman's blowing of the soul into her chest is a very common one. In fact, many people who undergo soul retrieval report feeling tingling, mild electrical currents, warmth, 'energy', or a pleasant heaviness in their bodies following the moments that the soul has been introduced into their bodies by the shaman. These sensations manifest spontaneously and are not verbally instructed for by the shaman at any point. This is true of both cases where the patient is instructed to think of a particular metaphor to assist the integration of the soul or not¹⁵.

The immediate and spontaneous nature of the experience of the soul as a tingling or warmth suffusing one's body indicates to us that the sensation of tingling is not a representation of the presence of the soul as a pre-existing object, but rather a constitutive performance of it, manifested *in the body* and *by the body* at a prereflective level. The retrieved soul literally and practically comes to life at the moment of its supposed introduction into the body and it is within this spontaneous manifestation that we glimpse Merleau-Ponty's *preobjective* and Bourdieu's *habitus*, objectifying the soul into this particular shape and not another¹⁶. The prereflective nature of the interaction between shaman and patient in the course of the soul retrieval is implied in the following quote by a shamanic healer:

So what happens is that essence in you, that strength, that power, that goodness in you that went with that soul, the shaman brings that essence back. He doesn't literally bring a four-year-old child back. Although the essence appears in the form of the four-year-old. But it's that essence, that goodness that the shaman brings back. That energy, that power, that he brings back, and fits it back, fits it in that hole that is in my etheric body, in my soul body. And then suddenly I feel different, and really the shift is dramatic.

The neo-shamanic soul is 'an energy', a substance that is at once immaterial yet materially effective and one which simply 'fits in a hole' in one's 'soul body'. The transformation is not mediated by an understanding or reflection over the significance of the event, but is sudden, 'the shift is dramatic'. The soul, then, is not an already existing object, which the shaman introduces into the person through a series of symbolic actions, which are then (even if not consciously) interpreted by the patient. It is the patient as a *body-subject* that constitutes the soul, objectifying it and pulling it out of the indeterminacy of experience in the course of the ritual.

What becomes apparent here, first, is that while the patient lying on the floor might seem to be a passive body being 'subjected' to the healing procedure, as traditional anthropological accounts of ritual healing might have us think, the patient is in fact a subject actively participating in the healing process, even at this initial stage. This and more, is clearly echoed here in the shaman's illuminating explanation of the therapeutic process of soul retrieval:

E: now, here, it's not about being a believer, but for them to be full participants, in accepting, embodying this soul, knowing that truly this essence is coming back to them. That's why, before you journey for them, you ask them to think of a metaphor, that they can use that

metaphor, when you come back and blow the soul into them, they can use that to see that soul in them.

N: okay. So, when you tell people to think in advance of a metaphor, how do you think that helps them?

E: they are embodying it, there and then, more. From that point they are involved. It's not just something that was blown into them and from tomorrow it will become part of them when they do the ritual. From beginning, it's put into them and they are actively soaking it in, they are drinking it in. Then, it's stronger. It's not just my blowing. They actually have soaked that in, more. Through this... they have taken, they have become involved. They have become active in soaking this energy in. it makes it more real for them, I think. And they feel nurtured. Because then I sing. It's almost like a lullaby. You sit there, you rattle them gently, you use the bells, you use the bowl, you give these sounds. You take them away. They are not immediately getting up and are back in this reality. They are just lying there, almost like a woman that has just given a birth to a baby. And they are just lying there and holding the baby, if you like. You are actually putting the seed in and letting it grow by saying to them, 'use the metaphor to internalize it'. So their attention is much more on what has happened to them. And then they are just lying there and soaking that in. And even when I didn't use to tell them to think of a metaphor, they would do it anyway. They feel it. Often people say to me, when you blew into my chest, I felt tingling in my body. You know? They say that, often.

The use of the metaphor to aid the integration of the soul during the ritual, highlighted here by the shaman, points us again to the active role the patient plays in the healing process and the crucial role *attention* plays in the process of self-objectification that is inherent to the therapeutic process as a whole. The deliberate use of a metaphor to assist in the 'embodying' of the soul is made to ensure that the patient's attention rests where it should – i.e., on her body. In light of the fact that the metaphor is not simply given to the patient by the shaman, but has to be thought of by the patient herself, it is again interesting to note that the pervading metaphors used by

people undergoing soul retrieval are those of ‘light’ (often white, yellow, blue or purple) suffusing their bodies.

At this point we might claim that the metaphor of light is compatible with Western notions of ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ as incorporeal, light-like entities or to the shamanic New-Age ethnopsychology that elaborates on the existence of soul or spirit as ‘bundles of light’, following the writings of Carlos Castaneda (e.g. Castaneda 1968). We might then assume that it is the invocation of the ‘light’ metaphor that brings about the sensations of tingling, warmth or currents reported by people undergoing soul retrieval, as might be the case in the ‘actual’ world, when one exposes one’s cold body to the light of the sun, resulting in sensations of warmth, a tingling, or pleasant currents.

However, note that the shaman recalls a time when she did not use to instruct patients to think of a particular metaphor to assist them in the incorporation of the soul, and yet either the experience of light in sensory-imaginal form, or the somatic manifestation of tingling, warmth or currents still manifested spontaneously. We would be mistaken, then, to assume that it is the mental invocation of the ‘light’ metaphor that inspires the sensations of tingling in the body, indicating the presence of the soul. The soul manifests prior to such reflection.

Something else in the shaman’s account that is of particular import to our discussion is her likening of the moments immediately following the introduction of the soul into the patient’s body to the moments after giving birth: “They are just lying there, almost like a woman that has just given a birth to a baby. And they are just lying there and holding the baby”. Likening the soul to a baby to whom the patient has given

birth highlights several issues immediately relevant to our analysis. First, the use of this particular metaphor is echoing the ongoing analysis of the soul as an object/subject that is created through bodily practice in the course of the ritual, and not as an already constituted object that is symbolically introduced to the patient's body.

Further, the healing process is not described here by the shaman as entailing an incorporation of a missing object/part into the body of the patient, but exactly the opposite; the patient is conceived of as having created something new, given birth, the quintessential generative act¹⁷. This apparent contradiction in the conception of the soul as at once new and old, created and restored, is of importance to our discussion, as it points to an inherent ambiguity or duality in the 'nature' of the soul as a subject that is at once familiar and foreign, Self and Other. We shall return to this point later on in our analysis to further elucidate the significance of this paradox to our understanding of the ritual process.

Finally, the baby metaphor also alludes to the joining of two bodies that would have preceded the creation and eventual birth of the soul as a third Ego that appears in the space between the patient and shaman. If we draw the analogy of intercourse a bit further, then the process of self-transformation portrayed here is not only inherently intersubjective, but quite literally, intercorporeal.

In the opening line of the introduction to her book on body image, Gail Weiss (1999: 1) tells us that "to write about the body or even the body image is a paradoxical project". These very expressions, she explains, suggest the body is a discrete phenomenon of investigation, a misconception she aims to amend throughout her text. She Draws on the work of Merleau-Ponty for whom the body is always already in the

world, and hence always engaged *with* the world, and brings him into dialogue with Schilder, noting that: “Both stress the fact that a body image is neither an individual construction, nor the result of a series of conscious choices, but rather, an active agency that has its own memory, habits, and horizons of significance. Both stress as well the intercorporeal aspect of the body image, that is, the fact that the body image is itself an expression of an ongoing exchange between bodies and body images” (Weiss, 1999: 3).

Weiss (1999) is offering us here a theory of embodied practice, which presupposes the self, or *body-subject*, as inherently intersubjective and hence fashioned and refashioned via intercorporeal encounters with other *body-subjects* in the world. Taking up Weiss’s assertion that embodiment must be conceived as intercorporeality, Csordas (2009) adds that describing intersubjectivity as intercorporeality holds further benefits:

First, it helps us avoid the temptation to think of intersubjectivity as an abstract relation between two abstract mental entities. Second, because bodies are already situated in relation to one another, intersubjectivity becomes primary, so that we do not have to begin as did Husserl (1960) from the Cartesian position of the isolated cogito and later arrive at the possibility and necessity of others. Third, it thereby helps us distance ourselves from the subjective idealism that can be detected in Husserl and that Ricoeur described as “the maleficent side of phenomenology” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 234). (Csordas, 2009: 119).

I argue here that conceiving of intersubjectivity as intercorporeality will also allow us to better understand both ritual efficacy and process in the neo-shamanic

case. Before elaborating my analysis further, however, I briefly review some theories of intersubjectivity.

In his paper, *From the Native's point of view* (1974), Clifford Geertz addresses a central methodological question in anthropology. He asks, "if anthropological understanding does not stem, as we have been taught to believe, from some sort of extraordinary sensibility, an almost preternatural capacity to think, feel, and perceive like a native ... then how is anthropological knowledge of the way natives think, feel, and perceive possible?" Answering the question, Geertz asserts that empathy, or what he refers to as "correspondence of spirit", is not and should not be, the means to the anthropological end of understanding subjectivities. Rather than attempting to put ourselves in the shoes of our informants, he suggests, we ought to engage in analysis of the symbolic forms (words, images, institutions) by means of which people represent themselves to themselves and others. It is by analysis of these symbolic forms that we will gain access, Geertz proposes, to the native's point of view, the native's self, the native's mind.

The question Geertz (1974) is raising, however, has been asked before, and the encounter between anthropologist and 'native' is merely one instantiation of the wider ontological question of Self and Other and the question of how (indeed, whether) we can ever 'know' the Other. Descartes, approaching this very question, as did Geertz, from the perspective of the isolated cogito, had to recourse to a theological solution in answering it. We can never truly know the world, Descartes tells us, but God would not deceive us as to present our sense with a false impression of reality. Husserl (1991), starting, as did Descartes, with the isolated cogito, but attempting to overcome

some of the problematic of his account, resorts instead to transcendental idealism. Abandoning Cartesian doubt for phenomenological bracketing, Husserl suggests we relinquish the attempt to ‘know’ objective reality and shift the locus of our attention to the experiencing subject instead. This is not to say that ‘objective reality’ does or does not exist, but since we have no possible way of ascertaining its objective existence, we must only attend to its subjective existence. This assertion is obviously problematic when taking into account other subjects, for when taken as is, results in solipsism, or the reduction of others into the subject’s consciousness of them. This presents us not only with serious ethical problems, but also epistemological ones.

Recognizing this problematic, Husserl (1991) develops a theory of intersubjectivity that is predicated on a process of analogical transfer. While we can never know others directly, we do recognize that they are *like* us. It is via this process of ‘analogical apperception’ that we constitute Otherness within consciousness. This recognition of the Other’s likeness to us¹⁸ is a product of our natural inclination towards ‘pairing’, or the tendency to transfer attributes from one element to another when perceiving likeness between them. Further, the fact that our bodies are located at different positions in space leads us to appreciate that other people, although like us, have a different perspective on the world and hence cannot be identical to us. It is for this reason that Crossley (1996a), categorizes Husserl’s theory as an egological theory of intersubjectivity.

Husserl’s Egological theory of intersubjectivity is predicated, however, on his notion of ‘the sphere of ownness’ and hence, claims Crossley (1996a), if taken to be a primary process, is inevitably solipsistic to some degree. Committed to the Cartesian

position that starts analysis from the vantage point of the isolated cogito, Husserl's reduction to the sphere of ownness is problematic. Schutz (in Crossley, 1996a) demonstrates how this very reduction is self-contradicting, as a reduction to the sphere of ownness presupposes a sense of what does not belong to the Self and hence is Other. The notion of Self without the presupposing of an Other, then, becomes meaningless, collapsing the very notion of the monadic psyche. It is important to stress that this does not undermine or dismiss Husserl's theory, but merely suggests that his account of intersubjectivity be considered a secondary process rather than a primary one.

Contrasting or complementing this egological notion of intersubjectivity are what Crossley (1996a) refers to as theories of radical intersubjectivity. Buber (1958) is perhaps the most obvious representative of this stream of thought, in his assertion that the world is primarily and inherently 'two fold', in the sense that human subjectivity is already, and always, oriented towards alterity. The Buberian Self or 'I' is never a constant, but a *relation*, defined by its position to an Other. For Buber, at once an ethical and theological writer, the Other with whom the Self communes, takes one of two forms; It is either object-like, a thing to be used by the self, an 'It', or a complete subject, a 'Thou', with whom a true and total relationship is formed. It is clearly the 'I-Thou' relationship that Buber values as the only meaningful and true bond we can share with our fellow humans, a relationship he likens to one's relationship with God. Doing away with the isolated cogito altogether, Buber's ontology moves the locus of the Self into the 'interval' or the 'in between' of the 'I-Thou' relationship. The encounter between subjects, then, is not reduced to the consciousness of either one,

but rather is an irreducible primordial structure in which each subject's thoughts and experiences are interwoven with the other's. This joining, according to Buber, is achieved, primarily but not exclusively, through language.

Crossley (1996a) likens Buber's 'I-Thou' relation (1958) to Merleau-Ponty's notion of perception (1962). Just as the Buberian Self is positioned in the 'in between', so is perception essentially a dialogic process where subject and object conjoin - we don't perceive objects, we commune with them. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is an opening onto Otherness at a preobjective, prereflective and pre-egological level. This notion of perception as an engagement with the world effectively eliminates the mind/body dualism, since 'mind' as a substance that is inherently incorporeal or immaterial could never meet, could never touch, the material world. A mind, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962), could never *perceive* the world. This grounding of the self in the body, and hence in the world, the canceling of mind or spirit as an incorporeal animating presence, compels us to attend to intersubjectivity as intercorporeality¹⁹.

For Merleau-Ponty (1968), the *body-subject* forms a system with the world. We are all visible-seers, tangible-touchers, we cannot touch the world without being touched by it at the same time, as we are always already part of the world. And just as perception is located neither in the subject nor the object, the system formed between *body-subjects*, cannot be reduced to either one participant. Within this system, the body-subject does not contemplate the Other, but simply *is* with the Other, reciprocating action with action. The portrait of the Self emerging here is not only

inherently relational, but one that is continuously shaped and reshaped through embodied action and its prereflective being *with* the world and *in* the world²⁰.

Conceiving of intersubjectivity as intercorporeality in the case of the neo-shamanic ritual allows us to better understand the immediacy with which the soul comes into being in the space between two bodies, within the system formed between healer and patient, as well as the immediate nature of the healing process as a whole, as described previously by the shaman. Drawing on the theories of embodied action we have reviewed so far, we could say that the patient heals, quite simply, at the request of the shaman. To use a less verbal metaphor, we could posit the healing process here as one of action and re-action, one in which the shaman extends a hand, which the patients either chooses to clasp or not. Whether or not the patient reciprocates, I believe, is at least partially dependent on the degree to which they are convinced of the gesture's potency. Returning to Buber's I-Thou, the clasping of the hands is a function of the degree to which *both* patient and healer can recognize each other as subjects, and consequently, the degree in which they are truly open to each other.

Carrying forth the metaphor of 'soul as baby', suggested by the shaman, and the allusion to intercourse folded within it, could we not, then, conceive of the gesture embodied in the ritual as a joining of bodies during love making? I do not suggest here that the process of blowing the soul-essence into the person by the shaman, and the resulting experiential manifestation of the soul is a symbolic enactment of the joining of bodies and subsequent birth, but rather that the act of soul retrieval is in itself, a moment of such corporeal intertwining, and as such, allows for the birth of something

new, a new soul, a new Self. The breath that departs the shaman's lips to leap into the patient's breast, as like in its supposed incorporeality to the soul that is born of it, gains corporeal presence.

Merleau-Ponty tells us that in dialogue, self and other are "woven into a single fabric" (1962: 354). I would add here that in the parting that follows this joining, neither self nor other are ever the same. The birth of the soul is the birth of an alter ego, in the moment and the space between the shaman's lips and the patient's breast and hence an act of self-transformation, for if the self dwells in the 'in between', then we are, quite literally, our relations to others. As we have noted, while the soul is conceived of as a lost part of the patient's self that is brought back from the past to bear on the present, it is also conceived of, and experienced as, new, a 'baby' born of the joining of two body-subjects. The soul is revealed here, then, as simultaneously self and alter, or rather the once-me is transformed in the process of the ritual to a new-me, that is also, ultimately, not-me. Appropriately, the next steps in the ritual center on the interaction not of the patient and the shaman, but on that of the patient and the now objectified soul.

Mirror in a Mirror

So I journeyed. I met my seven-year-old. I was with Seyla and Mollan (spirit guides). In the journey she told me:

"I left because I couldn't cope with the shame I felt for what Robert did. I felt dirty and ashamed. Guilty. And I couldn't cope with Mama's sickness all the time. I felt unsafe and unprotected."

Because she was always taken to hospital, you know?

“I will help you to get your trust back and not have so much fear of authority. To hold your head up and be proud of yourself. See yourself equal. Heal suppressed guilt feelings and shame. Clean yourself from shame. Free yourself from fear of male authority and authority figures. Keep your head up and be proud of who you are.”

In a book titled *empathy and healing*, Skultans (2007:15) reminds us that “the act of ethnographic mirroring of narrative experience by the fieldwork”, can elicit additional (potentially painful) emotions from informants, recalling the story of Odysseus, who stoically faced the many misfortunes in his life, only to break down in tears when hearing his life story recounted by a blind minstrel. “So the famous singer sang his tale, but Odysseus melted, and from under his eyes the tears ran down, drenching his cheeks. As a woman weeps” (Homer 1965: lines 521-23 in Skultans 2007:15). The significance of our past experience, Skultans tells us, is only fully appreciated when uttered through the lips of another. It is this apparent paradox that is the heart of our discussion here, as we examine the second relationship established in the course of soul retrieval ritual, the relationship between the patient and the retrieved soul.

The first shamanic journey undertaken by the patient herself, following the retrieval of the soul performed by the shaman is a short one and ideally takes place under a tree. The purpose of the journey is to receive instructions from the spirit of the tree, on how to ‘root the soul into the body’. Anna’s instructions from the tree consisted of a ritual that was to be performed daily over a period of eight days. She was to sit with her eyes closed, either by an actual tree or imagining that she was

sitting under a tree, and call the seven-year-old soul to her. She was then to nurture the soul, take care of her, tell her how beautiful and capable she was and sing her a lullaby (a specific one that Anna was familiar with). During the journey the spirit of the tree informed Anna that she must also sing the lullaby ‘at the center’, when the workshop participants convene in the common room, sat in a closed circle facing each other. It was during this initial journey to the tree that Anna first meets the retrieved soul in its bodily form, and although she exchanges no words with the soul during the journey, her experience of their meeting echoes Homer’s account of Odysseus and the minstrel:

When I sat under the tree and I saw her, Nofit, I was so heart broken. I cried. I cried. I came back [from the journey], and I couldn’t stop it, I just kept crying. I couldn’t stop my crying. And then, when I was talking [in the group] I was crying, and my heart was in my throat. I said, ‘my heart is in my throat, I don’t know how to share this’. And... and it’s hard for me to sing, but that’s what they told me to do.... And I was crying when I was singing. I don’t know where the voice was coming from, Nofit. Everybody was crying with my voice.

In her analysis of the imaginal interaction between the patient and the soul during the shamanic journey, Lindquist (2004) argues that it is the reconstitution of memories that takes place during the journey that transforms the self. She uses Mead’s (1972 [1934]) theory of self to elucidate her point, centering her analysis on the process of forgiveness that she claims takes place between patient and soul. The soul, Lindquist explains, is Mead’s primordial and immutable *I* while the patient is the socially constructed *Me*. It is in the course of the ritual that the *I* forgives the socially constrained *Me*, and vice versa, as they both return to the point of the trauma where

they first parted and reconstruct the traumatic moment in a manner that empowers the patient. While Lindquist (2004) is right to focus on the interaction between the patient and the soul during the imaginal encounter in attempting to explain the efficacy or process of soul retrieval as a healing ritual, the particular turn her analysis takes is somewhat problematic. It is not my intention to engage in a comprehensive critique of Lindquist's account, but attending to what I believe is a misreading of Mead's theory of self might serve as a jumping board to articulate a different, and I believe more accurate, explanation of ritual process and efficacy here.

Mead (1972 [1934]) centers much of his theory of self on the idea of 'taking the role of the other'. He argues that it is by taking the role of the other that communication between persons is made possible and that it is through the interaction with the Other that the Self is objectified, becomes known to itself. To clarify this he differentiates between two aspects of the Self: the *I* and the *me*. While human existence, claims Mead, is primarily habitual and non-reflexive, the formation of the *me* requires a reflexive move on the part of the self. The *me* becomes known to the self only retrospectively, and only as a result of an interaction with a generalized other. The *I*, on the other hand, is an aspect of the self that may only be known directly and not reflexively or in retrospect. The *I* can never be subject to reflection, for once we reflect on our behavior, the *I* is immediately transformed into the *me*. This means that in Mead's schema we never truly "know" the *I*. In this respect it is present in our lives only as a historical figure; it is what we were a second ago.

The soul in Lindquist's account, then, cannot be Mead's *I*, or rather we may say that analyzing the interaction between patient and soul during the journey cannot

be made using Mead's *I* and *me* in the manner Lindquist is using the terms. However, Mead's theory of self (1972 [1934]) can be relevant to the understanding of the therapeutic process and efficacy of the shamanic ritual. One of the key principles of Mead's theory is the primordially of intersubjectivity, or the idea that the self is shaped primarily through interaction with others. In this sense, Mead's theory of self fits within Crossley's (1996a) category of 'radical intersubjectivity'. Mead's emphasis on two components of the self, the *I* and the *Me*, serve to highlight the importance of reflection and objectification to the process of self-formation, as well as the fact that objectification is impossible without an 'external' and what Mead refers to as 'generalized', Other. Within this framework, then, the soul in the journey is neither a *Me* nor an *I*, but rather an Other. Albeit an Other that is also me.

This Other within me is not the object of Klein (1932) and Fairbairn's (1952) object relations psychology, but a genuine other, a subject, or in Buber's terms, a Thou. Indeed, Buber himself stresses that an I-Thou relation need not take place only between two human beings, as our opening to alterity is part of our very makeup. Meeting otherness does not necessitate the actual presence of another human being, since "alterity is an elementary constituent of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and this is how it is part of the structure of being-in-the-world" (Csordas 2004: 164).

As already mentioned, within the neo-shamanic framework, the relationship between shaman and patient is considered to be of lesser importance to the healing process than does the one between the patient and the spirits (or in this case, the soul). Indeed, it is the multiple interactions with the soul that the shaman considers to be the true root of the healing process:

Then [after the ‘rooting journey’], you journey and talk to the soul and ask, how are you coming to help me? What changes do I need to make in my life that will make you feel welcome? That is where the healing happens. Because they go and meet the soul and ask it, why did you leave? For themselves. It may be the same message they will hear [as was given to the shaman in her journey]. But *they* are hearing it. And then, asking what changes do I have to make in my life to make you feel welcome, that means they have to get out of that pattern. That is very powerful. I think that’s very important. It’s a double taking responsibility. Double embodying it. Double integrating that soul into themselves, which is beautiful. And totally, the shift in people, it’s... yes, it is that energy that comes back [referring to the actual retrieval of the soul], but it’s also their activeness in the work that makes it more powerful, the embodiment becomes more concrete.

Both Anna’s account of bursting into tears when meeting the soul for the first time under the tree, and the shaman’s insistence that it is during the interaction with the soul that ‘the healing really happens’ bring to the foreground the paradox of the specular image. At the core of this paradox is the notion that the coherence via objectification of the self is achieved through a process of self-alienation. The paradox of becoming Self through Other is, as we have already seen, at the base of Mead’s theory of self (1972 [1934]), but theories of intersubjectivity centered on the notion of the specular image were also put forth by Lacan (1977) and Merleau-Ponty (1964), in their writings on child development and the mirror stage. Contrasting and comparing Lacan with Merleau-Ponty, Weiss (1999) tells us that: “The visual image of the body presented to the child in the mirror cannot, Merleau-Ponty asserts, be equated with the child’s own experience of her/his body, and yet, the perception of the specular image as a *discrete, unified* image of the child’s body is precisely what facilitates the

necessary restructuring and maturation of the child's bodily awareness into a unified postural schema" (Weiss, 1999: 12).

Contrary to Lacan (1977), who posits the specular image as a source of paranoia, Merleau-Ponty (1964), while acknowledging the alienating character of the specular encounter, considers it to offer the child "a new perspective not only on her/his own body and her/his being-for-others (what we may call an 'outside-in' perspective) but *simultaneously* allows the child to project her/himself outside of her/his body *into* the specular image and, correspondingly, into the bodies of others (an 'inside-out' perspective)" (Weiss, 1999: 13). Both theories take a radical stance on intersubjectivity, in the sense that the challenge facing the growing child is not one of learning to recognize the Other, but rather one of separating the Self from a primordial position of entanglement or symbiosis with the Other.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1964), a schism is introduced at the moment of specular recognition, when the child realizes that the mirror image is *of* himself but not identical *to* himself. This schism, between 'of oneself' and 'to oneself', which remains a source of alienation throughout our lives, however, is also what enables us to project our own bodily awareness beyond the immediacy of our bodily experience and actively incorporate the Other's perspective of our own body: "what is true of his own body, for the child, is also true of the other's body. The child himself feels that he is in the other's body, just as he feels himself to be in his visual image" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 133-134). It is our ability to 'project' ourselves into the bodies of others, claims Weiss (1999), that "provides us the ground for strong *identifications with others*,

identifications that expand the parameters of the body image and accomplish its transition from an introceptive, fragmented experience of the body to a social gestalt” (1999: 13).

The Other of the specular image, then, is not the divine subject of Buber’s I-Thou, in the sense that it is a separate entity with whom we don’t experience an immediate union, but neither is it the object of his I-It. It is, rather, Husserl’s alter ego, quite simply another I – like me, but not me, in a sense, an image *of* myself, but not identical *to* myself. And if our ability to recognize ourselves in the bodies of others is the ground for our identification with others, as Weiss asserts, then it is also the ground for empathy:

After a week, the person journeys to the soul that you have brought back, and asks the soul, how are you going to help me? Often, the messages are very similar to what they have told the shaman in the journey. Having said that, maybe it’s the same message, but they hear it with a different languaging. And *they* hear it. So therefore, it’s more real to them. They hear it on that subconscious level. So it’s more real to them. When they do the journey, meet the soul and hear from the soul saying, the little child saying, if you do this, I will feel welcome, it will please me, then they have a different commitment. They make a commitment to please the child, because they see the child, they have an empathy for themselves, they are nurturing themselves. They are taking care of the little child that has come back. They make a commitment to do, to live differently.

The soul the patient encounters in the journey is at once a genuine Other, an alter ego with whom she has a meaningful interaction, and a specular image of herself, another me. And just as Odysseus was able to see himself in the recitation of the minstrel, so the patient is only able to see herself reflected in the eyes of her now

returned soul. To return to Mead's terms, the process of reflection where the *I* becomes *me*, is only possible through the positing of an Other, be it 'actual' or imaginal. It is our reflection in the Other that quite literally allows us to reflect on ourselves, to become, momentarily and repeatedly, objects to ourselves. It is only then that we can *see* ourselves, indeed *make* ourselves.

In this sense, the interaction with the soul is similar to an interaction with any Other in 'actual' reality, for that matter, to the interaction between any patient and healer. However, in the neo-shamanic case we have the added value of a continuous interaction with this Other even after the healing session has terminated. The interaction with the soul as an alter ego does not end with the initial journey to meet it, but continues at times over a period of weeks. Following the journey, most patients have to perform certain 'rituals' in their daily life that typically involve the presence of the soul as a counterpart. Additionally, journeys are transcribed and are read and reread by the patient in the days and weeks following the ritual. Visiting and revisiting their experience in the journey establishes a day to day relationship with the soul, that revolves around the particular issues that have come up in the journey as therapeutic themes the patient must confront and heal. The importance of this continuous engagement with the soul as alter ego is highlighted by the shaman:

I bring that back and I put that energy back in the person. So what happens is, now this is where... you kind of bring it in. it's a bit like when they meet and they hug the baby or the child and they let it melt into themselves. It's like I put a nail in the wood and tap a couple of times, but it is just resting there. If you touch it, it will fly. Now, with that, there are certain rituals that they have to do. Daily rituals, that the spirits give. If you like, every day they do that ritual, it hammers that

nail further in. By the time they finish their daily ritual, it might be 5, 7, 9 days, whatever it is, by the time they finish, the nail is totally inside the wood. You really have to extract it. It will not fall. So the same way, this energy that I believe to be part of their soul, that dissociated part of themselves, it gets firmed into them, back again. Because they are every day welcoming the soul, they are told to welcome the soul to their life. It's reinforcing that it actually has come back, that part of them.

The shaman's metaphor of the nail being hammered into the wood highlights the incremental nature of the therapeutic process (Csordas 2002), something which is also confirmed by Anna, as she recounts her experiences during the days following the soul retrieval:

That song [the lullaby] was given to me. And I do sing it occasionally, and I cry when I sing. Yeah. But I am seeing her all the time around me, with the platted hair. And when I think about her, I want to cry, and I want to hug her. Because she was very innocent and very frightened. And confused. And not wanting to hurt people's feelings. Even at that age. The child understands to take care of the adult.

This statement by Anna takes us back to her recounting of the very first encounter with the soul in the journey, when she is given the lullaby and is instructed to sing it to the child for eight days. Just as the breath of the soul at the beginning of the ritual is a corporeal presence between shaman and patient, so can the lullaby sung by Anna to the soul conceived as an anchor line drawn between them. Equally conceived of as incorporeal, both breath and song nonetheless also have a sensuous, palpable, presence. In a paper titled *Intersubjectivity and Intercorporeality*, Csordas

(2009) makes a compelling argument about the corporeality of language itself, suggesting that:

To spin out some of the implications of this line of thinking, we can say that the filaments of intentionality that crisscross between and among us humans take sensuous form in language. Speaking is a kind of sonorous touching; language is tissue in the flesh of the world. Or, to be more graphic, think of language as a bodily secretion; and if there is a suspiciously erotic connotation to this proposition, I can only remind you of how we refer to speaking as intercourse, and the double meaning contained therein (2009: 118).

The filaments of intentionality that are drawn between patient and soul, expressed in song, are a sonorous touching, stretched over the schism, the *écart*, in Merleau-Ponty's terms (1968), between self and other. Of interest in this particular case, is the reversal in the directionality of the gesture we observe in the relationship between the patient and the soul compared to that between the patient and the shaman.

While within the relationship between shaman and patient it is the shaman who initiates the interaction, the shaman who first invitingly gestures towards the patient, in this relationship it is the patient who takes the position of healer in relation to the soul, the patient who gestures, through the lullaby, to the soul. However, by empathizing with the soul, recognizing her reflection in her eyes, more so, since the soul is *at once me and not-me*, the patient is at once healer and patient, giver and receiver, reaching forth and reaching back. It is the patient's hand that is at once stretched out in an offer of help and the hand that is clasping it back.

The patient's relation with alterity, however, does not end with the objectified soul. Another modality of intersubjectivity begs our attention, albeit one that might not be readily observed in the ritual sequence.

New Horizons

The process that I went with the seven-year-old was very significant. Because it really did touch me a lot. Even now I want to cry...I think it's my reaction to it is significant. That I am reacting, there is so much sadness coming up for me. And the effects of it, that all this time, it has haunted my life. And I want to be free of it. The guilt, the shame, this I'm not pretty, I'm not good enough. This authority thing. These are very significant and I feel I want to free myself from them. I don't want to come back for that anymore.

And I honestly never thought that that experience was such a big effect on me. But it was. I remember. Laying there. Like, stiff. So he won't know I'm awake, that I know what he is doing.... I am always surprised when people say 'you are pretty'. Before that, I never felt that. I was the singing girl. The happy child. I grew up with this inferiority.

So hard to forgive someone like that. To carry it all these years. And really, when you look at it, I can understand her saying [in the journey], he didn't do real harm, but you are afraid. And, I guess in court of law, that would be nothing. It would be thrown out, because there was no penetration. But they don't understand what it does.

While the last relationship examined here might not be readily observed within the ritual procedure, it is, nonetheless, of importance to the success of the ritual as a whole. Not representing any particular moment or an interaction with a distinct alter ego, the relationship explored here lies in the global experience of the shamanic journey, in the encounter with a radical alterity, or what I refer to here as the 'sacred'. Explaining the efficacy of shamanic healing, the healer tells us:

When you go to altered state, when you allow yourself to totally let go and the sound of the drum sends you to...that altered state of consciousness. You are bypassing your critical mind. I always say, I point to the forehead, and I say, this is your logic and intellect in front, and the back is your subconscious. And there is a curtain, a board, that is between them. And when you are able to go totally into altered state, you bypass that. And you go deep into your subconscious. So, the messages you hear, you hear, I believe from spirits. Call it DNA, call it subconscious, call it higher self, call it whatever you want. I believe that it comes from the spirits. So, the spirits have no ego, no mind, and they know us. They really are very much... they are wise. So, the messages that they give, because they know us, they make the messages congruent with that deep belief system in me. So that's one aspect. Secondly, when I hear it on that deep hypnotic level, if you like, or altered state of consciousness, something shifts in me, because my behavior comes from that deep messages that I have there. So when another message comes and takes over from that, it's almost like it comes and cleans the old message and a new message is replaced there. Sometimes I use the metaphor of the blackboard, I say, imagine that your subconscious, the back of your mind, is a blackboard. Things are written there. And when you journey those old messages get wiped out and new messages get written. So people come back and... very naturally, they tend to, kind of behave differently, or act differently. But we are not conscious of it. We just do it. And often people will not reread their journeys. They don't do the things I recommend them to do. Including myself.

There are several important issues that the shaman's account is bringing to the fore. First, in accord with our analysis thus far, the healing process is conceived here as immediate and prereflective, specifically conceptualized within the ethnopsychology of the psychodynamic subconscious. The success of the shamanic journey is predicated, according to the shaman, on a reaching beyond, or bypassing of, a barrier, a 'letting go' of the 'critical mind', that allows the messages given by the spirits in the journey to directly alter negative belief systems lurking deep within the unconscious recesses of the journeyer's psyche²¹. Further, the centrality of 'altered state of consciousness' is emphasized as the key to the achievement of the correct state

of trance within which one would be able to ‘let go of the critical mind’ and be susceptible to the new messages given by the spirits during the journey. In this regard, the shamanic journey is conceived of as a kind of self-hypnosis, albeit with the critical difference. Compared to the hypnotic trance, the shamanic trance is deeper and the messages received are not of human origin, as the shaman explains:

Because I did hypnosis, I think I understand it a bit more from that perspective. Often people say, hypnosis works, it helps me. What happens in hypnosis? People go into altered state. They call it going under. So they let go of their mind. Now...I don't know how much actually they are willing to let go when they undergo self-hypnosis. I don't think people totally let go. But also, they have an idea – oh, I do this because, for example, I have low self-esteem. But it's possible that inside them, it's not self-esteem, it's something else. And then they give this message to their subconscious about low self-esteem. And then they are surprised that nothing happens. Why? Because the real belief system is something else, and the message is not congruent with that inner belief system. And when someone else is hypnotizing you and working with you with hypnosis, again, I am another mortal human being. No matter how good I am at my interview, no matter how great I may be in my work, still, it's not a 100% that I truly understand...So therefore, that's why hypnosis works but sometimes it doesn't.

Explaining the efficacy of shamanic journeys by referring to altered states of consciousness is not uncommon (e.g., Harner 1908; Winkelmann 2000). However, as we have noted before following Csordas's critique (1994a, 1996), saying that healing happens due to an alteration of one's consciousness is a global ‘explanation’, which in fact fails to actually account for either the process or the manner in which change actually happens. My attempt to provide a more satisfying and experientially specific explanation to the manner in which the shamanic trance may facilitate change, as well as elaborating on the nature of that change, begins with suggesting that what the

shaman refers to as ‘going under’ or going into an altered state of consciousness could be fruitfully conceptualized using Mauss’s notion of *techniques of the body*. I propose, specifically, that this particular technique facilitates yet another intersubjective encounter in the course of the ritual, this time between the patient and the sacred, and so it is to an exploration of the particular characteristics of the shamanic trance that I now turn.

I start this exploration by drawing explicitly on the shaman’s account presented above, focusing on several metaphors she uses to describe the nature of the shamanic trance and its efficacy. First, I propose that the encounter with the sacred that takes place in the course of the shamanic journey is what the shaman refers to in the quote above as ‘letting go of the critical mind’ or the ‘bypassing of the veil/barrier in the mind’, which is facilitated by ‘riding the sound of the drum, and further, that the shamanic trance as a particular technique of the body would be best conceptualized by focusing on elements of ‘control’ and ‘movement’ in the trance experience.

To begin with, the shamanic trance state is characterized by ‘stillness’ or lack of motion. The person journeying lies on her back and is relatively still throughout the journey. Additionally, the trance state is characterized by relative sensory deprivation, as no feedback from sight, sound or touch is available to the journeyer. This, of course, allows the journeyer to divert greater attention to the imaginal events of the journey by blocking disturbances from the ‘outside’. However, if we consider this particular bodily practice in its own right, then experientially, it constitutes a state of stillness, even a floating in an undefined space. It is our senses, after all, that orient us in space, and deprived of those, our sense of spatiality and motility is radically altered.

The only sense of motion inherent to the shamanic trance as a body technique is the sound of the drum. Indeed, the drumbeat is the only exogenous sensory stimulus available to the journeyer and it is the only 'element' in the trance experience that is not only moving, but ever-moving.

Returning to the shaman's metaphors, then, it becomes clear how this particular technique of the body, once mastered, can bring about a 'letting go of the critical mind' which is the condition for the success of the shamanic journey. The 'critical mind' here refers to our ability to reflect or analyze, an act that entails the halting of one's 'stream of consciousness' or 'train of thought' and the act of objectifying and examining it. This halting motion is negated, however, by both the never-ending motion of the drumbeat, which, so to speak, urges us to keep on going, as well as the state of sensory deprivation and passive body posture. The state of sensory deprivation and relaxation negates the 'critical', reflexive 'move', in a similar manner to which the continuous motion of the drumbeat does: as the drumbeat creates the sensation of a stream-like motion in the body, so the state of relaxation and sensory deprivation promotes a sense of space-less-ness that a reflexive 'halting' would disrupt. In this sense, if we move from the metaphor of motion to that of muscle-tone, then the reflexive move requires a tensing up which the tension-less position cultivated in the shamanic trance discourages.

I suggest here that it is the ability to enter this particular body state, what the shaman refers to as a 'bypassing of the barrier in the mind', that constitutes an encounter with the 'sacred' as a radical Other. The Other here, however, is not an externalized, objectified figure, but the very experience of the self as foreign to itself,

the experience of Self *as* Other. In his notable statement on the theory of religion, Csordas (2004) argues that “alterity is the phenomenological kernel of religion” (2004: 164). The true object of religion, and at once “part of the structure of being-in-the-world – an elementary structure of existence” (2004: 164), alterity, claims Csordas, not only accounts for our tendency to produce religions, but indeed makes religion an inevitable part of human existence. He identifies the alterity of embodiment itself as this kernel of religion, a notion that has been elaborated upon by phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968) chief among those. Elaborating on this work, Csordas (2004) draws on the observation that we experience our bodies as at once familiar and foreign to ourselves, indeed, at once Self and Other, to explicate his point:

Merleau-Ponty goes to the heart of the matter when he discusses the intertwining or chiasmus between the sentient and the sensible within our own bodies: “My hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand” (1968: 133). Furthermore, he observes that one can have the curious situation of one hand’s touching an object and at the same time being touched by the other hand, such that there is a crisscrossing and reversibility of the sentient and the sensible (Csordas 2004: 170).

According to Csordas, it is the objectification of embodiment itself that gives rise to the ‘sacred’ as a cultural phenomenon. Discussing the Catholic Charismatic practice of “resting in the Spirit” (2004: 169), where supplicants report experiencing a heaviness of limbs as they are overcome by the divine presence, Csordas addresses the interplay between the sensations of *heft* and *lift*²² that we inevitably experience as embodied beings, to explain the manner in which the ‘sacred’ comes into being in the course of the practice of “resting in the Spirit”:

This thinglike heft of our bodies in conjunction with the spontaneous *lift* of customary bodily performances defines our bodies as simultaneously belonging to us and estranged from us, and hence the alterity of self is an embodied otherness. While resting in the Spirit, the heft that is always there for us indeterminately and preobjectively is made determinate and objectified. Its essential alterity becomes an object of somatic attention within the experiential gestalt defined as divine presence (Csordas 2004: 169-170).

Returning to the shamanic journey, we can recognize the manner in which this intimate embodied alterity plays a crucial role in the healing process. While neo-shamans do not conceive of their practice as religious and nor do the spirit teachers they encounter in their journeys granted sacred or divine status, the shamanic trance, as a technique of the body, amplifies the alterity inherent to the self, or rather makes it 'determinate and objectified'. The 'heft' Csordas (2004) talks about is the 'letting go' the shaman aspires to, which is also the experience of alterity that is at once intimate and radically alien. The fact that it is the Self, which is experienced as the sacred Other, and not an objectified, external figure, aligns with the New-Age ethnopsychology that posits the Self as the seat of the divine (see also Lindquist 2004).

This takes us back to the analysis of the relationship between the shaman and the patient and the position of the soul as both old and new, retrieved and conceived, as well as to the observation we have made regarding the relationship between the patient and the objectified soul as an engagement with a genuine Other that is at once also a specular image of the Self. Applying the phenomenological observation of the

alterity inherent to embodiment to these two intersubjective encounters, we could understand their duality as perhaps inevitable.

This experience of Self as Other we observe here is also tantamount to an elaboration of alternatives (Csordas 2002) on a global scale, as the person journeying experiences in effect, *another way* of being herself, and another way of being with others. After all, “what the voices of others can do for us that we cannot do for ourselves, is that their otherness which enters into us makes us other. They can arouse a dialogically structured response in us, they can create possibilities of change within us that we cannot create with ourselves alone” (Shotter 2004: 8 in Skultans 2007: 15). This tallies with the shaman’s insistence on the immediate and unexplained manner in which change occurs in people shortly following the shamanic journey:

They further take responsibility to take care of themselves, and change their path, to make a shift in their life. And that automatically changes their whole perspective, the view, the film, the vista, the way they look at life. It’s very powerful.

As well as Anna’s account of the changes she underwent following her soul retrieval:

In the course I went to, I didn’t feel it like I used to feel before. I used to be more sensitive. I just feel much more standing tall on my own. That I am okay on my own. I am much more action orientated, rather than just dreaming about things. I am less procrastinating, less fearful about actioning things. Definitely, I have, in myself, in my body, I feel more courageous and less... when I imagine myself in a doctor’s office, I am not seeing myself talking to the doctor like I used to. I am seeing myself actually telling the doctor what my issue is and wanting results. Wanting good answers [...] And if I have questions I will ask them. And I feel in myself comfortable to even demand, I want an answer to my questions. You know? So I feel very powerful in that

sense, since the soul retrieval. Something has shifted in me. I feel comfortable talking about money. So something has shifted in me. Because they [the spirit teachers] said authority and money, I treat them the same. So I have a feeling something has happened for me.

The transformative potential of the shamanic journey, then, lies not in a reinterpretation and reobjectification of memories or meaning, nor in the manipulation of symbols that somehow correspond to a deeper strata of the patient's psyche, but to the global experience of Self as Other that amounts to an opening of a new 'vista' (in the shaman's words), or a new phenomenological 'horizon', a new way of being and a glimpse of a new possibility of being with others. The particular technique of the body implemented by neo-shamans, the shamanic trance, effectively objectifies the alterity that is always and already part of our makeup as embodied beings, to create a relationship that is perhaps the most paradoxical of the three we have reviewed thus far, as an opening to an Other that is at once radically intimate and radically alien.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has been an attempt at producing an experientially specific account of neo-shamanic healing process that is grounded in embodiment. Arguing against symbolic, interpretive or representational approaches to the study of ritual healing, that conceptualize the healing process in terms of transformations of meanings, manipulations of symbols or reinterpretations of memories, I have demonstrated here that the transformative potential of the neo-shamanic journey can be fruitfully conceptualized in terms of a prereflective opening to, or experience of, alterity.

Specifically, I have argued that the ritual of soul retrieval, formulated as a process of self-transformation and self-objectification, is facilitated vis-à-vis a series of relationships that are created throughout the healing procedure. I have centered my analysis on the multiple modalities of intersubjectivity that are formed in the course of the ritual, highlighting the manners in which understanding intersubjectivity as intercorporeality or co-presence allows us to better conceptualize therapeutic process and efficacy in the case of neo-shamanic ritual healing.

I have suggested that the healing, as a process of self-transformation, occurs in the intersubjective/intercorporeal space between Self and Other, who are immediately positioned in a relation to each other as two *bodies-in-the-world*. Starting my analysis from the perspective of the perceptual constitution of objects rather than the perspective of objects already in the world, allowed me to trace the manner in which the self as a cultural object is constituted through bodily practice in the course of the ritual.

At the very end of her paper on soul retrieval, Lindquist (2004) tells us about the healing process:

In the process of healing, the social self reaches the primordial self, but this happens only through the mediation of the other, the shamanic healer. To recover one's holism, one must go outside the boundaries of the self. The sufferer has to turn to the other for help, allowing her to enter the zone of sovereignty otherwise not to be trespassed. This turning to and opening up oneself to the other is not trivial for a Western individual – it is a price one pays for healing, a kind of self-sacrifice. Such exposure of a patient's self to the shaman in healing can be compared with the bodily exposure of a medical patient to her physician, the voluntary surrender of privacy one otherwise observes (Lindquist 2004: 168).

I agree with Lindquist that the neo-shamanic healing process inevitably entails an opening to an Other, or to alterity. I have focused in my analysis on three different intersubjective moments that are fostered in the course of the ritual, between the patient and the healer, the patient and the soul and the patient and the sacred. Although I have focused on different modalities of intersubjectivity in the analysis of each of the relationships, perhaps the crimson line that runs through them is the centrality of alterity to the process of self-transformation and change. A direct consequence of this is the emergent relevance of the category of the 'sacred' to the study of healing, indeed, human life, that spans well beyond what is typically categorized as the 'religious'.

It is for this reason, also, that I find Lindquist's specific formulation of the opening to alterity necessary to the healing process during the shamanic journey is ultimately inappropriate or inaccurate. In describing the intersubjective moment

between healer and patient in terms of 'self-sacrifice' and the exposure of one's body to the critical medical gaze, Lindquist is missing two crucial things in her understanding of the ritual; first, the condition of alterity that is inherent to our existence as embodied beings and second, the true and reciprocal joining that must take place between self and other (be it actual or imaginal) in the course of the successful ritual. This joining entails more than the physician's examining gaze, which, ultimately, never actually touches the body, and an opening on the part of the patient that runs deeper than that born of self-sacrifice.

ENDNOTES

¹ For a survey of academic critique directed at Eliade's work on shamanism, see Znamenski (2007).

² The World Axis is manifested in various mythologies as the world pillar, cosmic mountain, world tree, and other similar images.

³ Although Eliade (1964) himself admitted that other cosmological arrays are to be found in various cultures, ones that believe more than three worlds exist, he dismisses these accounts as anomalous and insists on the universality of the tripartite cosmology.

⁴ Znamenski (2007) cites several other "inspirational texts" of neo-shamanism. Along with Castaneda's accounts (whether we consider them to be ethnographic or fictional) of the Yaqui magician Don Juan, he points to various anthropological or semi-anthropological texts, and the writings of such scholars as Joseph Campbell and Carl Jung, along with various Native American biographies. However, I consider these of lesser importance to the current paper since they appear to have had less of an encompassing impact on the field in comparison to Eliade's work, and especially in relation to the particular type of neo-shamanic practice presented in this paper.

⁵ Townsend (2004) further differentiates between core and neo shamanism. However, in doing so, she seems to accept Harner's own definition of core- shamanism, which she describes as an experiential method based on "the core features which underlie all shamanism". Under the category of neo-shamanism Townsend catalogues what appears to be any other Western version of shamanic practice: "an eclectic collection of beliefs and activities...based on a constructed metaphorical, romanticized 'ideal' shaman concept". Such practices as Seiðr or Celtic shamanism which profess to draw on 'ancient cultural traditions' in their practice are also included in this category.

Although I believe distinctions are called for when writing about neo-shamanism, I find this particular one somewhat problematic. First due to the fact the Townsend seems to favor Harnerian shamanism over all other forms of neo-shamanic practice but more importantly because by adopting Harner's own definition of core shamanism as the actual essence or core of indigenous shamanic practice throughout the world, the academic debate regarding the validity of this claim is being ignored. I believe a more prudent and balanced stance would be to position Harnerian core shamanism under a more general category of neo-shamanism, rather than positioning core and neo shamanism as two distinctly different practices. It seems to be an inherent characteristic of this particular field to produce

great variability of practices, leading Wallis (2003) to propose we talk of neo-shamanisms in the plural form, rather than neo-shamanism in the singular.

⁶ In the case of the particular group I worked with, the term ‘shamanic practitioner’ was favored. Referring to oneself as a ‘shaman’ is perceived as conceited, while ‘neo-shaman’ denotes a qualitative differentiation between ‘shaman’ and ‘neo-shaman’, which is likewise rejected.

⁷ Although it is not possible to accurately estimate the number of practitioners of neo-shamanism worldwide (for a discussion of this problematic regarding the New-Age movement see Heelas, 1996: 106-132, and for the same problematic regarding neo-shamanism in particular, see Lindquist, 1997: 287-298), a recent survey by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NIH, 2008) indicates that 38.3% of adults and 11.8% of children in the United States are using some form of complementary and alternative medicine (shamanism, specifically, was included in the survey categories). These figures are higher than those of a similar survey conducted in 2002.

⁸ Interestingly, this tripartite division parallels the tripartite division of the neo-shamanic self into mind, body and spirit, as well as the three main categories of journeys that correspond to these three aspects of the self. Upper world journeys revolve around the matters of the mind, such as the acquisition of knowledge and information. Healing journeys to the lower world are a matter of the body, for even though healing is always conceived of as spiritual or psychological in nature, healing journeys to the lower world are typically very physical, in terms of the particular character of the healing procedures experienced by people in the spirit realm. Finally, retrieval journeys, are a matter of the soul and are also conceived of as the most powerful in effect and most difficult to undertake.

⁹ This form of negative soul gain, typically receives less attention than soul loss, at least in the case of the shamanic healer I have worked with. The treatment for negative soul gain is different to that of soul loss. The healing does not require the shaman to undertake a journey on behalf on the patient and is carried out by the patient in the course of a specific shamanic journey devised for that particular purpose. Excessive souls are not ‘exorcised’ as is the case among Christian healers (e.g. Csordas, 2002), but instead are gently and willingly parted with.

¹⁰ For example, see the Jivaro (Harner, 1972), who kill their enemies and shrink their heads to acquire the power of their souls.

¹¹ For an elaboration of this idea see Ingerman, 1991.

¹²In Lindquist's account of this ritual performed among neo-shamans in Sweden (2004) the ritual process begins with a verbal account given by the client that might indicate a traumatic event that is the cause of the soul loss. This initial account by the client, according to Lindquist, is then elaborated on and altered by the shaman. My experience, however, not only in the United States but in Europe and with the same school which is Lindquist's particular field, is that this need not always be the case, and indeed rarely do people start with accounts that would address or point to a specific soul loss that would then be addressed in the soul retrieval journey.

In most cases, the shaman specifically prefers not to receive any prior information, lest that would 'contaminate' the journey by influencing the authenticity of the experience. This is an acknowledgement of the possibility that the shaman's 'mind' (judgments and preconceptions) can interfere with the communication with the spirits. The interpretive work that does take place, in my experience, across countries, is done following this first journey, when the images and experiences recounted by the shaman are taken up by the person seeking help and 'matched' with memories of what they consider to be traumatic events in their past.

¹³ Although the ritual sequence described by Lindquist (2004) is somewhat different to that described here, it is still sufficiently similar to merit the comparison.

¹⁴ This is not to imply that Lindquist's analysis (2004) is erroneous in her emphasis on the manner in which the interaction between shaman and patient constitutes a reinterpretation and reobjectification of memories. In her summary of the soul retrieval ritual process Lindquist tells us: "when the shamanic self visits the patient's memories, its intentionality sets in motion hitherto frozen scenes. The vector of this motion is a dynamic of successive journeys and tellings: (1) The patient's initial narrative that sets the stage; (2) the shaman's journey based on this narrative, putting this set stage in motion; (3) the shaman's telling of the journey, objectifying this changed setting and offering it to the patient as a new ground for memories; (4) the patient's journey to this changed memory setting, now assisted by shamanic intentionality, which enables the patient to change the scene of the memory further and thereby attain a new experience of the past; (5) the patient's objectifying this experience by narrating the journey, thus getting a new memory complementing, if not replacing, the old, traumatic one. Journeys and narration are mirrors, nesting within each other at odd angles, transforming images of the past" (2004: 166). I have observed this process of telling and retelling, interpretation and reinterpretation in the course of the soul retrieval ritual, and while I believe it is of import, my experience has led me to conclude that its import is only secondary.

¹⁵ Note that even in the case that a metaphor is invoked, it is the patient that must come up with the particular metaphor themselves. The metaphor is not provided by the shaman.

¹⁶ The question of why the introduction of the soul is experienced by the majority of people as tingling or warmth and not as some other form of sensation, say a stabbing or penetrating sensation is an interesting one. Clearly, it reinforces Csordas's (2002) assertion, that the *preobjective* is not pre-cultural, but exploring the forms that people spontaneously objectify certain sensations (in this case tingling) out of the indeterminacy of the *preobjective* allows us to further enquire into the experiential nature of the phenomenon in question. In this particular case, perhaps an inquiry, currently outside the scope of this study, into the experiential and phenomenological moment of healing as incorporation could also teach us something about the cultural constitution of trauma and loss.

¹⁷ Note that while the case discussed in this particular study is that of a woman, the shaman's explanation is a general one, that would likewise apply to male patients.

¹⁸ This is not to be confused with sameness in the strict analogical sense. See Csordas, 2009; and Dillon, 1986.

¹⁹ At this point it would serve to emphasize that although Crossley's (1996a) distinction between Egological and radical intersubjectivity is indeed useful, and although Merleau-Ponty (1968) indeed parts with Husserl on crucial points of his account of intersubjectivity, he is also drawing on his work quite extensively (Dillon, 1986).

²⁰ Needless to say, this does not imply that this mode of intersubjectivity can account for all forms of human interaction, as people also engage in reflective and purposeful behavior when with others as well.

²¹ This explanation draws not only on the psychodynamic concept of the psyche as consisting of conscious and unconscious compartments, but also on the New-Age discourse which draws on strands of cognitive therapies emphasizing the centrality of 'belief systems' that shape our psyche and thus direct and shape our lives.

²² Csordas's use of the terms *heft* and *lift* follows R.M. Zaner (see Csordas 2004: 169).

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