

ON BEING SHOT AWAKE AND THE DREAMS THAT FORESAW IT: A TRANSPERSONAL SELF PSYCHOLOGY VIEW OF PTSD RECOVERY

Judy Schavrien, Ph.D.
Palo Alto, CA

ABSTRACT: Using excerpts from an autobiographical manuscript (Schavrien, 1993), along with self psychological theory, the author sorts out both having been shot in the face and having foreseen the incident in precognitive dreams. She uses these experiences to constitute a case history that expands the parameters of self psychology into transpersonal realms. She particularly expands the *mirroring* dynamic such that, not just a person, but also a community, culture, landscape, or deity can mirror negatively or positively, bringing harm or healing. As a psychotherapist specializing in Post Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD) who was then stricken with it, she tracks the shattering and reconstitution of self—from spiritual emergency to spiritual emergence.

Near midnight, on the brink of April Fool's Day in 1986, I was mugged and shot in the face. A series of dreams led up to this mugging. I had been working with a spiritual guide and paying close attention to dreams; the goal was to make my 40th birthday, which would arrive on April 4th, a watershed birthday. The dreams, as it turned out, not only led up to this mugging but foresaw both the shooting and my recovery from it. The recovery entailed a fulfilling of the goals I had set for my 40th—but these were accomplished by way of challenges, choices and events that would have seemed, before the fact, hideous, wondrous and, on the whole, bizarre.

In this essay, the experiential account of these matters is at the core. In other words, this is a case history that sets the client's voice (my own from back then and also recently, in a retrospective view) above theoretical filters and inferences. The assumption is that no theory can do justice to the richness of an experiential skein, but that, on the other hand, some theoretical filters can illuminate at least a slice of the experience. The theory may, in turn, profit from the experiential account, which forces a broadening and deepening to fully accommodate that account. To validate this approach, I invoke William James, e.g. *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1961) and *Radical Empiricism* (1912), and case history theorists such as Sigmund Freud and Heinz Kohut, who used their own material in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *The Case of Mr. Z.* (Strozier, 2001, p. 14) respectively.

Two theorists are immediately relevant to the events in a period just before, during, and for about 7 years after the mugging. I am building on James' (1961) approach to conversion experiences and on Kohut's (1984, 1985) self psychological theories, especially as the latter bear on the shattering of self by way of traumatic impact.

Send inquiries about this article to Judy Schavrien, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Global Programs, at jschavrien@itp.edu

Copyright © 2005 Transpersonal Institute

Both theories look to the integration of the divided self as central not only to healing but even to enhancement of the previously “sick” person.

A last research orientation, one that thoroughly informs this piece, is feminism. There is the feminist advocacy for the frankly subjective stance and recountings (Gross, 1993, p. 293). There is also the feminist social vision from which the research is inseparable; i.e., when and not until society honors the wholeness of women and other marginalized groups, then does it honor and foster human wholeness (Gross, 1993, pp. 19–22).

THE CLIENT: A LOSER? A WINNER?

I draw from an autobiographical account written over a period that extends from the time of the mugging through the next 7 years (1993). By the end of the 7 years, aided by the ongoing attempt to journal the experience, by psychotherapy, by an 18 month healing journey through tropical countries, and, finally, by a move to a new region in the States and a new life, I was decently healed from Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD); that is to say, the major symptoms had cleared up. Until that time it had my body, mind, and heart in a crabhold. Perhaps it had my soul and spirit as well, perhaps not—I will let the reader be the judge.

Let me clarify a few things beforehand. If you looked at me now you would not think, “Now there is someone who was shot in the face.” Good plastic surgeons are partly to thank for this, but also those benefactors, both professional and ordinary, who worked with me on every level in the wake of the trauma. Among benefactors, I count myself. Oddly enough, though, even the malefactors helped.

I will further clarify as to the outcome of the shooting. There is a paradox here. The first part of the paradox is this—the shooting brought me terrifyingly near to “losing face” in every way possible—physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, near, in short, to losing my standing in the community and the world. Before the mugging, in terms of career story line, community status, etc., I had managed to look like “a winner.”

I had pursued and attained this with all the ardour of a Jew who has the yellow star hovering perilously near to her lapel. I would, however, never have imagined that the Jewishness played a role. I was brought up more reformed than reformed—with no explicit reminders of the holocaust nightmare on the continent. I had grandparent generations heavily affected, in Holland and East Europe, by anti-Semitism; in fact the Dutch side had suffered decimation; but I knew little about that. My point is, however, that the holocaust God was there bedeviling me the instant I was shot. And before that drama occurred, I had needed first and foremost to be a winner. All very Jewish.

On closer examination, then, “loser” and “winner” may not be what they seem: opposite categories. With the mask of the “winner” ripped away, one can find oneself, in the wake of a devastating attack, exposed as insignificant, leading the life of a pariah, lonely and despised. At least it can seem that way. Loser, winner—the

terms raise the question of how one relates to the social context. At the moment of one's inner disintegration, even shattering, from the impact of trauma, one can likewise suffer a dis-integration (Kohut, 1985) from society at large. Society continues on, of course, business as usual, and may well leave you behind. One can be foundering in this exile, in danger of becoming a permanent "loser" or, at the very least, a retiree from life. If, on the other hand, one is lucky or graced, and diligent as well, one can return from exile in the desert having obtained a vision, bringing that back to the tribe as a gift (Paulson, 1995). Having survived the initiation ordeal, one may even thrive.

With this caveat in mind—not to solidify winner and loser into opposite terms because, in the paradoxical language of the mind's depths, they can be kissing cousins—let me boast on behalf of this "client," myself. This *is* the story of someone who *heals* from Post Traumatic Stress. I do not end up addicted, permanently unemployed, permanently numb and depleted of ambition, or else released just enough from the numbness to be incessantly raging. I do not end up, in my terror, permanently avoidant, hypervigilant, then seized by flashback. I do not end up, in short, captured in the hellish dimension of that moment in time—the moment of the shooting and the shattering—never to escape.

On a lighter note, no, not a lighter note, there is the litany of possible physical aftermaths. My friend at the time, in the glory of her medical internship, was pleased to demonstrate that if the gun had been pointed at this angle, a few degrees south, I would have had a permanently dripping salivary gland. At this angle, a few degrees north, I would have been quadriplegic. . . a few degrees east or west, blind or deaf, a few degrees further north braindead. Instead, the bullet just ripped through my cheek and gave me a bad scare.

THE SHOOTING AND THE DREAMS

It happened on the South Side of Chicago in a university neighborhood surrounded by ghettos. The voice of the woman who was shot is the voice of a baby boomer—urban, intellectual, and Jewish—a psychotherapist who specialized in working with the Post Trauma Stress of incest survivors. I had been very much affected by the agonies and the strivings of the late '60s and '70s; I still experienced matters in terms of conflicts between the races and genders and in terms of programs for solving these conflicts, for racial and gender liberation and reconciliation.

Like others of my generation, I had taken an interest in mind study, working with a Zen Roshi and other Buddhist experts. (In the wake of the shooting I would find a Tibetan Buddhist lama with whom I continued to study for the next 7 years.) I had studied long-term with someone who served as a tutor for my psychic skills and, more importantly, as a spiritual guide. The information about my spiritual proclivities is relevant because, as I have mentioned and you will discover, this account focuses on two aspects of the event: One narration recounts a shooting but the other a sequence of precognitive dreams. The dreams both anticipate the shooting and assure me of surviving it. In the months that followed the shooting, I could even replay the tape of the session preceding the events, in which I told

the dreams to my spiritual guide—I had really had them! Because I am reassured by the dreams and also because I am proud and edified to have broken the time barrier with them, they steady me through the shooting, the shattering of self, and the healing.

The Shooting

What follows is an excerpt from my memoirs (1993) written from 1986–1993. (Locations and names will be altered for the sake of confidentiality.)

It is the first warm night of spring, almost midnight, almost April Fools. I am leaving my car, lifting up from the driver's seat. There is a gun to my head, and a black teenager nudging me with it: "This is a stick-up." Sixteen or seventeen. A stocking on his face or close-cropped hair? A bandanna? A buddy stands guard in each direction—gang-organized—he's head honcho. He reaches across me for my purse. I hold on tight. Mugged twice in the last 4 years, I am furious in advance at having to reconstitute my identity: new driver's license, credit cards, new lock and keys for the car, the apartment; furious about the 3 or 4 months of time and energy this invader steals. (Did someone say 3 or 4 months? Ha! it will take years, may well take life to "reconstitute my identity"!).

And then it clicks: "Judy, this young man has a gun to your head." So within seconds from his first word I let go of the purse; he has it. Then I turn—I remember this motion, my neck as it made its way toward him. Deliberate, intentional, I turn my head and neck toward him, look him straight in the face, and scream. The scream, I hope, will make him run away, discourage him from lingering; don't even think of rape! But he doesn't run. Instead he takes his gun and sideswacks me on the cheek: a TV gesture, half pragmatic, half symbolic—"shut up!" He shows his buddies, shows himself, shows me! Then I see a flash of light two inches from my left cheek and afterwards hear a gunshot. Someone in my head is saying, "Light does travel faster than sound!" She is also saying "What was that?!" I conclude "Oh no, a gunshot!"

Impelled by my scream, or the shock of the shooting, he takes off toward an alley. I know the street well; it is my own. There is an alley that borders the horseshoe of buildings that is my home and he makes a dash for it. The other two, flecks in the corner of my eye, bolt toward the lights in the opposite direction. As all this happens, I am lifting my hand. I lift till I boomerang to inward attention—because, having reached my cheek, I have suddenly discovered there is no cheek, only tissue and blood. A split second later I am sprung out of my body—upward, to the right, looking down obliquely. I am taking it all in, astounded: "Oh my God what has happened to the life of this woman; she'll be an outcast now, maimed and despised. Can her life just be ripped inside out in an instant?!" And yet, in what seems like slow motion—because a stark new world unfurls, rotates slowly—I grasp in an instant—not the review of my past life, as people in near-death have reported, but the arc of my future in which I am mutilated and alone.

Even if there are well-wishers attending, I am still condemned to a life apart, pitiable, without a partner and lover, trapped in shame and solitude. I'll be on the

bottom rung of the social ladder, an untouchable. No place to be in a dangerous world. And I'm suddenly recalling, with the force of self-evidence, that the world is a jungle. This view lies stashed in my personality, popping out, upon extreme provocation, like Jack-in-the-box or like "the snake-in-the-birthday-gift," to quote a client of mine, an incest survivor. In the quotidian world, reasonable, civilized, the truth of things is papered over. We are lulled into forgetfulness, however thinly papered over that truth may be. We forget that Justice is for the privileged; and privilege may not last through the next coffee break.

This mugger has burst through the balmy spring night's rice paper of normalcy, and brought his grotesque world with him. His nightmare world. He leaps into my head to become my nightmare, literally. And there is no skin left on me to divide my world from the world at large. His gunshot has ripped away the skin of half my face, half my personality. So he is inside and outside all the time. And he will be for years. Waiting to kill me when a crane drops a piece of steel and the crash is that gunshot all over again. Or else the T.V. sends through me a spray of gunshot, a barrage of gunshot, surge after surge of adrenalin; I'm draped casually on the couch with friends, trying not to twitch. Eventually I stop asking friends to switch stations (although this altered perception, in which gunshot is no joke, nothing you stand up from, the next day, flashing your well-known grin—goes on for years). I stop asking in sheer embarrassment at seeming cowardly. When a bike whizzes past while I sit in my car, it is the mugger suddenly whacking me with the gun; it is a new mugger arriving to finish off the job. But at least in my car no one sees me flinch.

Ten days after the incident, as I sit at breakfast in the local joint, still bandaged, still new to the world at large, I am so grateful for the strapping young man who comes to my table, careful in his approach, asking permission all the way, and introduces himself by telling me he is taking a course in feminist literature. His girlfriend has sparked his interest. He then launches into a description of what he saw that night, concluding it was all just like a nightmare that burst out of nowhere. It was stunning, horrid, uncanny. I say "Yes, that's just the way it felt to me. I don't mind at all that you brought it up. I'm so glad it's not completely my own imagination—it did have that texture, didn't it?" . . .

He leaves the table. I am not fabricating, I then say to nameless accusers (internally of course; people are eating their ham and eggs). There *is* evil; there *is* death; they leap on you in an instant. And in this neighborhood they do! More often than in most! However set off the place imagines itself to be from the ghettos that surround it . . . You can get mugged right here on your own street, if you are a nice middle class black or white who lives in Hyde Park, one of the oldest, proudest integrated neighborhoods in Chicago. Or you can get shot, if you prefer, in the ghetto, as a teenager pursuing a medal of honor in a gang war. Am I insane—who incessantly encounters chaos and death, for whom the mugging never stops happening?—or are you who imagines that it never will?

This next excerpt cuts back to the moment when my soul is "sprung out of my body—upward, to the right, looking down obliquely." I hope to enlist your patience and diligence here as a reader. How so? The autobiography is told by way of various

jumps back and forth in time, in order to capture the simultaneity of events in the material and spiritual worlds; those sequences of events compose different threads in the skein of that one moment, the moment of the shooting-yet-sudden-spiritual-comprehension—the emergency-emergence moment (Grof, 2000. Includes ideas co-authored with C. Grof, p.137). This is a moment that I would unpack throughout the following years. In any case, right now we are doing a reprise, a re-viewing, of the aftermath of the gunshot.

Let us cut now to near midnight. I have driven home from the bar. Let us take up from the point at which I left off. I am looking down obliquely at the bleeding woman and saying—in no linear way, with lightning quick comprehension—“Oh my God, is she going to be bitter? Bitter about male violence? Bitter about blacks?” It had been black teenagers who had mugged me the other two times, both times in a team, smash and grab while I sat at a red light, a fist through the passenger window. And I had twice fought off black muggers, male of course, once in Chicago, coldest night of the year, a huge man trying to steal my coat in a movie house; once on a bus in Amsterdam, Surinam teenagers rolling a drunk, myself a small woman pulling them off, chiding in incomprehensible English.

The irony is that my spirit had been alchemically brewing, in the mysterious half-hidden way of long-term change, a turnabout in my relation to men. This had been happening in ways both known to me and unknown. I’d been working toward the change for months—and hoped it would arrive soon, with my 40th birthday. Now, at the instant of the shooting, this 40th birthday of mine is in fact just 4 days away. So let us take up the story, as I say, as my soul sits perched above my person, looking down from the right parrot-wise, surprisingly focused though catapulted there by shock. After future-life review, the soul takes note: ‘The task here is to avoid bitterness.’ Lightning-fast bitterness had proposed itself as a tack to take, a remedy for confusion, and lightning-fast had been rejected. Perhaps the months of spiritual preparation toward my 40th were paying off, or perhaps even more so the years of work in a service profession, as a psychotherapist—taught over and over again by my clients, incest survivors, about courage; and about belief, against all odds, in love.

And then I have no time, because I have to start handling the physical end of things. Knowing this, I am immediately back in my body. Someone has appeared on the street. It has taken him perhaps 3 minutes beyond the moment of the gunshot. He yells, “Don’t worry, we have called an ambulance.” I muster up voice power to reach him down the street, “Call another.” And he says, “Don’t worry we’ve called an ambulance.” I repeat, trying to speak clearly through the maiming, “Call a second ambulance.” And he fails to grasp what I’m saying, reassures me. My guess—or knowledge?—is eventually borne out. I assume, at the time, a second ambulance is necessary, perhaps because I’d recently heard of ambulances lost in alleys, stranded in one-way streets. In any case, no ambulance ever does arrive.

In the meantime, someone else emerges onto a front stoop. The first man, pointing, says, “He called the ambulance.” We are standing equilateral—me

beside my car, the first man down the street, this new man right across from me. As I am later told, this man had been upstairs in his bed. Hearing the gunshot, in a half-sleep, he has been seized with fear for his little daughter. Then, fully awake, he reaches for the phone. Now, as he enters the night through the door of his building, he says “Come over here, let me hold you.” So perfect, so wonderful. He doesn’t care about the blood; he holds me and lets me bleed all over him. We sit down on the stoop and he holds me.

Even at this midnight moment, this seeming nadir, the healing is beginning. It begins with the gift that I give to myself—an instantaneous spiritual comprehension that I must reject the easy and seductive solution, which is a hardening into bitterness. To put the gift in other words, it is a “strength under fire.” The healing begins also with the kindness done to me by the man who holds me. In the immediate period after the mugging I discover that this man is a flower man, a garden architect. Years after the mugging he tells me, without any prompting or corresponding accounts from myself, that, as he woke from his dream and came down to the stoop where he was to hold me, he experienced himself not so much as Jim R., the individual, but as a kind of archetypal self, taking part in an archetypal drama. The dream sequence I will soon narrate does, in fact, identify an archetypal drama waiting to happen: a reconciliation between a woman and her “brother” that lessens the great gender divide identified by feminists during the late ’60s and the ’70s. The dreams signal an impending transmutation of feminist anger into reconciliation.

What the Dreams Accomplished

A crucial element in this particular story is the way in which the gift of a sequence of precognitive dreams staved off a complete shattering. Not until my birthday, 4 days after the mugging, however, did I remember that I had foreseen the event through the dreams. I was complaining at a gathering that the people I considered my protectors—my spiritual guide, Margaret, and my nearest and dearest, Gerrie, who had, like me, studied with Margaret for years—failed to foresee this event. My guide was reputed as psychic, successfully employed by the police on cases; why could she help others in distress and not me, and so on.

Yet, when I did remember the set of dreams and their direct bearing on the event, I was exhilarated. I was thrilled by the precognition. Before the mugging, I had come, through considerable research, to believe theoretically in precognition. Why say “theoretically”? Only in the wake of the mugging/dream events did I discover that my previous belief was *merely* theoretical. All of that research had done less for my confidence than this one incident. Granted, it was a poignant one.

So time was not linear! So the mind—and I interpreted the precognition to bear on the capacities of *all* minds—had a reach way beyond what was conventionally supposed! I had escaped from the de-magified world that Max Weber (1904–5), the sociologist, had identified as causing our modern dis-ease. I was restored to a re-magified world and self. There was so much potential and—as my senses and spirit encountered and continue to encounter this re-magified world—actual healing in this for me.

The Precognitive Dreams and Their Transpersonal Context

From my autobiographical manuscript (1993), I now excerpt the account of a dream sequence. The first and last dreams are predictive of the shooting and of the fact that I will survive; they are precognitive, with the last one quite explicitly referring to the shooting. In any case, as you hear about the dreams, picture them drenched in a light that seems to signify extraordinary meaning; take them to be, as Jung recalling Otto would say, “numinous.”

Here is the relevant excerpt from the autobiography.

I'd been working with a spiritual guide and psychic, Margaret, to realize my 40th as a landmark birthday. (We had, in fact, been working together for a decade.) . . .

I had goals. I'd been picking nuclear family lint from my navel for about 20 years. Sick and tired of it, I wanted a new focus. I did not find all the “work I had done on myself,” as we say in therapy circles, fruitless—far from it. But enough is enough. I wanted to enter the wider life, be less self-absorbed. And I was tired too of some of the ways in which my feminism had shut me off from men's experience. One life, I thought, if there's only one life why miss the experience of half the species? I'd been tuned out, could barely sympathize, and therefore could hardly know. It was time, I thought, to change that. So these were the two goals: joining the wider life, and reconciling with men. When I got shot, surprisingly enough, my spirit instantaneously remembered them.

I had had a series of four dreams. I knew they were about my 40th: I knew they were very special dreams. The first occurred several months before my 40th. I'm standing on a little podium, a platform. Before me is an aquarium like a huge Ming vase—full of murky green water. I reach in and get hold of a creature, small and wiggly like a tadpole. To find the creature and put it in a protective shell—this is my job. So I reach with the other hand, grope in the wet and slime, find the shell, ensconce the tadpole. Good, that's done. Now the tadpole is protected—I have done my job. But 3 minutes later, the tadpole bursts from its shell; it is apparently a healthy growing creature. So I grope again, find this new tadpole, locate a bigger shell, put it in the shell. But then it happens again. Bigger creature, I find a bigger shell. O.K., job done. About the fifth time, what emerges from the aquarium is a huge tortoise. I turn my neck in some dismay, search the room. My father and brother are there; they are even friends again. (It is, in real life, a time when they have been fighting for some years but are beginning to mellow and reconcile.) I'm elated to see them on good terms, feel freer to ask their help. “Open the room pronto, would you—across the hall!” They've got teamwork. They do it. I shoo the tortoise into the room, slow-moving, shoo shoo shoo, and shut the door. Excellent, what a fine shell. My job is done.

I walk away down the hall. At the end of the dream I turn back to look at the room and my brother has just set fire to it. I am not provoked. I shrug my shoulder, saying, “Now I get it. *Form, No-form.*”

When I wake from the dream I take stock as to whether it *has* upset me. But no, I am fine, whatever his motives—Form, No-form; No-Form is just the next stage in the natural growth process. That way of viewing the natural had issued from explorations I'd done with a Tibetan Buddhist friend, Anna. She had shown me pictures of a Tibetan lama in the midst of meditation; his molecules were vibrating at such a rate he seemed to be half disappearing. I allowed that the blurring of the photo might be attributable to some entirely more secular cause. Nevertheless, also through sitting in Zen sesshin, I'd seen it, I'd simply seen it: form and no form exist simultaneously; my birth and death are within a split second of each other; who knows, perhaps even my return.

Then a while later I have another dream; and my brother is in this one too. We are together in a little rowboat—rowing over to the other shore. (I take this to refer to my goal of entering the wider life, or as Buddha put it, “Gate gate paragate parasamgate,” gone, gone, gone all the way to the Other Shore).

There is a third dream, similar, in which my brother and I row to the other shore. I comment on this in the memoirs by pointing out that brother Marty and I, half a continent away from each other and independently, had both taken an active interest in Zen Buddhism. “. . . and my poor Jewish mother holds her head and wonders what she did wrong.”

Each time I have these dreams, there is a series of bleeps to wake me at 4 a.m. Take note of this dream! And, each time, I do in fact pop up in obedient response: I look around the house in search of an electronic alarm, even a wristwatch that could make such a sound. And find no such thing. I take note of the dream. And the dream is lucent too—no question but it comes from another dimension. . . .

As to the fourth dream (I discover in retrospect I have dreamed it 3 weeks before the mugging), Marty stands before me and, in a spirit of malice and competition, shoots me. But I have a thick aura around me, an egg of light, so that the bullet entering the light gets swallowed up there. When Marty grasps what has happened, he tips a metaphorical hat. With genuine graciousness, also typical of him, he says, “You see, what are you worried about? You're invulnerable.” When I wake from the dream I'm calm; the dream seems to say, “You really are that strong.” It does even say, “You are invulnerable.” I still puzzle over this—fear that it smacks of self-delusion . . . In any case, when I wake, I take the dream to be reassurance.

It is worth noting that when I first recorded these dreams I assumed they were merely symbolic, bearing on goals for my 40th, reconciling with men and entering the wider life. I hardly expected a literal enactment.

THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

I have now presented two excerpts that bear on a shattering of self in violent trauma, with its aftermath of dissociative states, such as flashback, that characterize Post Trauma Stress. I have also presented excerpts from the dreams that both presage

a healing and contribute to it. How do James and Kohut illumine the dreams and events in this story?

Integration of the Jamesian Divided Self

James (1961) proposes that one of the varieties of religious experience begins with a divided self that, often after a dark night of the soul, shifts to a new center in the self and heals through an integration. He is speaking here of the reborn self, the convert; rather than use such a dramatic term to characterize how I healed, I focus in this article mainly on the 2 years following the mugging. The mugging entailed a violent shattering, and the healing of it would call for a re-integration. It is true, however that there *was* a kind of conversion, at least a shifting into what I had named in my 40th birthday goals as the “the wider life.” Before the dreams-and-shooting I might have had a foretaste of the shifting. It would mean moving from a contract first and foremost with Mastery to instead an ongoing acknowledgement of Mystery. But I had certainly not arrived at such a shift. Afterwards, by way of the recovery, I did eventually place less emphasis on “face,” intellectual and social standing in a university community, and more on direct relation to the powers that be. In other words, while pursuing and keeping up face, I had lived more in the world of Mastery; as I explored earlier in this essay, I was driven by the Jewish pursuit of *nachas* (which would translate roughly into the pleasure one gives to family and tribe because one is doing well). After the mugging and the healing that issued from it, I gave greater emphasis to cultivating a direct relation with the All; I had first and foremost to acknowledge the Mystery.

Leading up to the conversion, according to James, there may be a subconscious *incubation*. How does this relate to my own story? Surely the dreams are evidence of the subconscious incubation. James describes what is incubating as suddenly “breaking through” to the surface and perhaps even seeming as if it came from nowhere. This answers well to what happened.

Needs of the Kohutian Self

Heinz Kohut will help us examine more closely the hows of the shattering and reintegration. According to Kohut (1985) the self develops by way of relating to selfobjects: These are people identified from the point of view of their function. The mother mirrors the infant, and this kind cherishing eye makes possible a healthy development of the *grandiose* pole of the personality—the pole which eventually sustains a self-cherishing and sustains the ambitions of the self. Kohut also de-genderizes this selfobject, calling it the *empathic matrix*. The father, or relevant parent, acts as the admirable one who inspires development of the *idealizing pole* of the personality. The infant and toddler will see this person as the biggest and best on the block—the *omnipotent parent imago* with which to merge and from whom to take and internalize, eventually, ideals and values.

Throughout one’s life, one continues to need selfobjects, to react enthusiastically toward one—sustaining self-cohesion and self-regard—and to serve as admirable models. One needs such people in a moderate way or, if development is incomplete, in an intense and disturbed way. On the other hand, anyone, seemingly healthy or

not, who, in the wake of a violent trauma, shatters in one or both poles of the personality, may then desperately need those who mirror in a cherishing way (grandiose pole), protect in an admirable way (idealizing pole), or both.

Kohutian Repair: Optimal Frustration

Relevant to my own story—and expanding Kohutian theory, as I aim to do, toward the transpersonal and integral—not just the partner but also the community, the planet, and divinity can perform these functions. Alan Roland makes an observation related to community as selfobject when he says, “Self psychology is beginning to have something to say . . . in terms of cultural selfobjects; that is, that aspects of culture with which one resonates help to sustain a cohesive sense of self” (1988, p. xi).

Equally relevant is the fact that partner, collective, and divinity can actually or seemingly *fail* in these functions. They can visit upon a badly fragmented self a negative mirroring or disillusionment. Any given story *can* end tragically, and Kohutian theory (1985, pp. 36–37) allows very explicitly for “Tragic Man in a Tragic Universe,” the person who, met by a world unreceptive or even hostile to ambitions and ideals, cannot fulfill the *program of the nuclear self*. On the other hand, Kohut allows for the paradox that these failures of empathy, when subject to repair, may prove to have provided *optimal frustration* (Strozier, p. 348). If the person in question, thrown back on his or her own resources, can reconcile and move beyond the *optimal frustration*—that is to say, can self-perform the internal repair for this *moving beyond*—there will be growth.

The Shattering Self: Primal Fantasies

Ulman and Brothers (1988) in their book *The Shattered Self* extract from Kohut’s theories two primal fantasies; the fantasies characterize in turn the grandiose pole, that needs mirroring, and the idealizing pole. For the grandiose pole there is this fantasy: “I am invulnerable.” For the idealizing pole, that, in the beginning, identifies with the omnipotent parent imago: “I am omnipotent.”

Let us return to my own story. I am suddenly shot in the face—this shatters any fantasy of invulnerability and thereby shatters the self. In that same grandiose pole I suffer under negative mirroring from partner/world/divinity, at least as I construed the events. But I healed by way of the positive mirroring I was granted or acquired by scouring heaven and earth—earth on a worldwide journey and heaven in a series of invocations and encounters.

Hasty Reconstitution

Within a week and a half I returned to seeing on a regular basis all the psychotherapy clients and supervisees in my full practice. The bandages had either just been removed or were just about to be. (I do not remember clearly). This hasty return was deliberate: My clients should not imagine that their therapist could disappear in an instant!

Ulman and Brothers (1988) offer an enlightening perspective on my all-too-game attitude. They caution against the remedy a traumatized person is likely to apply. S/he attempts to reconstitute the “old self,” blissfully ignorant of this new information that has come flooding in.

The following passage gives you a snapshot of my attempt to convince my long-term therapist, to whom I all unwillingly returned for a course of treatment after the mugging, that I have Post Trauma Stress Disorder. I want the diagnosis so that I can get reimbursement from a Victim’s Assistance program. It fails to occur to me that I actually suffer from it; but I am not quite in my right mind.

“Dave, Benny G. has told me that Crime Victims Assistance will cover these costs if I am diagnosed with Post Trauma Stress.” At this point, I whip out my expertise and suggest to Dave how he might match the DSM III symptoms with my own. But I am dubious, despite all I have narrated, that I actually suffer from PTSD; I fear I am pushing his integrity and will receive, however delicately rendered, a rejection that makes me turn red.

With bravura, I launch, reading from my pocket edition of the DSM III: “It says you have sleep disturbance. I do have sleep disturbance, you might say that. It says you get recurrences. Well we could consider I suppose the nightmares recurrences . . . And there are the flashbacks. Circumstances that reproduce the event: well like loud noises with me, or even just the night itself, I’m jumpy all night; sometimes I’m more than jumpy, terrified the whole night. (I do not mention that most nights I wake up screaming). Oh yes, it can be a climate that reminds you of the event, they explain, so I suppose it can be a period of the day. You feel disconnected from normal goals and pursuits and have lost your taste for accomplishment . . .” Dave, to my surprise and relief, accepts my proposed diagnosis, shows no qualms. “Another symptom would clinch the diagnosis,” he says. “What do you say to ‘suppressed affect’?” Suppressed affect? I am surprised. Surely I am expressive enough about this incident, too expressive for some people’s taste. We proceed to have an excellent session, one that heralds a new era in my healing. At the end of it, Dave gives me a book I might read, about a woman shattered, literally, into the pieces of a multiple personality: *Andrea’s Prism*.

I take it home and read her description of a father who enjoyed, as a prelude to raping her, skinning a favorite cat of hers or throwing, for her horrified and helpless delectation, a stray into the flaming incinerator. As an adult, at least in one of her personalities, she is prey to seizures of rage. As I read about her, something bursts like a bubble. I leave a message on Dave’s machine: “I’ll grant you your final symptom, Dave; call it suppressed rage.”

Well, when I returned so hastily to my clients I suppose I might have been protecting *myself* from the image of death now branded onto my retina—perhaps that too. Going back to work helped me close my eyes on that glimpse of the abyss, even though their pupils were still smoking. I attempted to reconstitute posthaste both my self and my invulnerability. On a more mundane note, I was reconstituting my standing in the community. The last thing I wanted—with that bullet having torn a hole in my cheek—was to lose face.

What came out of this—both the stress of the mugging and the hasty attempt to reconstitute—was the following: an excruciating back condition, as if my spinal cord were split down the middle. I had fallen in the aftermath of the mugging. Now the back pain was excruciating: I could not sit in the same place for three minutes at a time without jumping up and moving. This back condition, which lasted for years but abated somewhat after the first year, seemed to have some relation to the tear in my perceptions of the world.

Let me put it this way: More than one body worker in the following years would look up in astonishment from working on me and say “You are two different people; each side of you feels like a different person.” According to my own sense of things, the side that was shot experienced how very dark human beings, life, the universe could be—brute force and cruelty prevailed. The other side of my face and body was flooded with the light. Just as, in the last precognitive dream, there was the egg of light around my body, in the previous dreams there had been a rich light drenching each dream throughout. In continuity with this, at least it felt that way—some opening in me, some rejoicing, when I realized I had foreseen both the mugging and my survival, also filled half of me with light.

The Horror, the Wonder, and the Enhanced Self

Eventually, after 9 months of foolish and hasty “reconstituting,” I took off for a world trip that kept me, in fact, drenched for a year and a half in tropical light: Australia, China, Japan, India, the Holy Land. I was often close to the earth—in hostels, on tatami mats in group homes, getting to know the landscapes by foot, traveling, in short, on a shoestring—and bathing in light. These healing activities—dreams and travelings—seemed to me like a continuous skein of light. They brought healing on all levels, beginning with the physical. This needed to happen; I could not just leap-frog into a spiritual overcoming.

The healing that would begin to show itself fully after 7 years, when Post Trauma Stress no longer gripped me in the same way, was a matter of putting the pieces together, especially those two sides of myself. To my mind, I had to reconcile the seemingly hideous and wondrous aspects of the universe, or more specifically, of the powers that be in the universe, in order to find myself again as a single self. If this could be done, my sense of self and world would certainly end up broader and deeper than ever. I would have integrated the self—the one that had been divided in earlier life, then shattered during the mugging, reconstituted hastily, but finally re-examined and reassembled to answer more nearly to the breadth and depth of things.

EXPANDING SELF PSYCHOLOGY

Landscapes, Cultures

New mirrorings helped to heal me. Self psychology does not normally designate either a landscape or a cultural context—communicated by hosts from that culture—

as potential selfobjects.¹ I am by contrast saying that landscapes and cultures can and do perform mirroring. The journey is an age-old curative, but this is a new way it can be viewed: it provides for someone imprisoned in a booth of shattered mirrors that reflect a shattered self, a myriad of new mirrors by way of new contexts. It can shake up a self stuck in time and space, refreshing it with a generous variety of alternatives, all much more surprising and therefore more noticeable than the person's former mundane self scenarios.

Divinities, Collectives

*Divinity I: Yahweh.*² Now some people, including a Jewish author and friend, took this mugging to be “random, urban violence” (personal communication, S. Bellow, April, 1986); he said so both in writing (Bellow, 1987) and in a sympathy visit. I countered by talking with him instead about the God of Holocausts. I had a case to take up with the Jewish God about this—and it was a little *less* embarrassing to discuss this in terms of God's injustice during the Holocaust than to ask God whether I was so bad as to deserve this. If I wasn't so bad, was I so *insignificant* as to rate no protection in a just world? It was easier to return to accusations most Jews have wrestled with. I should add that Jews feel like righteous sons and daughters rather than like apostates when they wrestle with these issues and register accusations, because questioning the Hebrew Bible God, a God who never pretended to be perfect, is good Jewish theology. One may come away from the wrestling, like Jacob, with a limp, but at least with a sense of having come to terms, and at best with a new promise. Jacob's new moniker is *Israel*—and that means “God-wrestler.”

To return to the conversation with my author friend, one that was continued, internally and externally with others in my global travels: The conversation can be viewed in terms of mirroring. I took God as a selfobject and was now, in the aftermath, taking to heart the grotesque mirroring implied in the mugging. I had been raised as an unobservant Jew and had no sense of believing that Yahweh existed. Yet my anguish and indignation within moments of being shot indicated that I believed I had a contract with this non-existent God. I had just been giving therapy that afternoon and was, I thought at that bloody moment, not such a bad person. Where was the Jewish contract? I am a relatively good girl; therefore You protect and reward me. Consciously my belief had been in my own actual father's fairness; but it seems he had been standing in for the universe (*in loco divinitatis*) and had given me a confidence, apparently a false one, that God is just. Instead when I looked in the literal mirror, in search of some more cosmic mirroring, what I saw was a scar still flaming with the insult.

Travel around the world, and much intense exchange with Yahweh, at least the one I carried with me, did finally result in a healing. I had found myself a roommate in Perth, Australia—we picked each other up in a café. Terry and I got along wonderfully. He had been looking for a strong woman; I had been looking for someone with intense straightforward blue eyes like his, who needed (if his hand on his neck was any indication) something I could provide—some soothing. We almost decided to date, but I told him I was mostly a lesbian; we

thought the better of it. He took me in to rent in his house. This revived my memories of roommate days in college. One day I realized that I did not need to demand a justice from God the Father that would match the rules in my head. My new view was that God was in some sense like a roommate—at least He needed to be like that, momentarily, for me to arrive at some understanding with Him I could tolerate. So it went this way: God and I had had our first roaring big fight and now we understood each other better, made more room for each other, had increased our intimacy.

I did not have to feel insulted. Insulted, I might well have remained shipwrecked on Kohut's characteristic 20th century rocks: "Tragic Man in a Tragic Universe" (1985). I would have sustained irreparable shocks to both the mirroring and idealizing poles and the fantasies that sustained them: Suddenly, instead of invulnerability, I would discover, "You mean *I could die?*" and suddenly I would have to accept the unacceptable, "You mean God *isn't* perfect?" Instead, I adjusted to both of these, taking them in at a rate I could tolerate. When the "roommates" answer came to me, amidst the generous kindness of Terry and his Australian buddies, and their need of me too, something in me relented. Could something have relented in God? He must have seen me hanging in there, fighting like the proverbial Irish "divil," like Job, to find and accept His rationale. His answer to me was kinder than to Job (who heard a thundering, "*How DARE you question?*")—more like the one to Jacob. We came to terms.

Decades later, as I look back on my own "roommate" solution for healing my divide from the power or powers that be, I realize there is a resemblance between the "roommate" and Rumi's Sufi "Friend," although I hadn't read about Him yet. Both allow for a great range in relating to the divine, from sordid suffering, even social pariah status, to joyous ecstasy. Both avoid as well trapping divinity in a set of human standards for legalistic perfection.

To return to my dispute and reconciliation with this particular divinity, how real or unreal is the Yahweh under discussion? I had suddenly discovered that I believed in Him, much to my surprise, at least believed enough to know I now had a real bone to pick with Him. And my sense is that He believed in me also, enough to work with me. How does He exist? As Jungian Archetype or, more likely, as something in a mind realm? He might be a deity in the Tibetan Buddhist "Samboghakaya" mind realm, a realm that we are all generating but which is also generating all of us—no way to separate these two. Is Yahweh real? Some would say He is the *only* reality. My particular answer is that He is *at least* this real: as real as Judy, probably much more so. Yahweh lasts longer and has more influence.

Divinity II: the Goddess. Relevant to the physical recovery are my dealings with the Goddess. Through traveling the Earth with its many glorious geographies, through walking and walking, my body was persuaded to return to the planet. I had experienced the mugger as someone who said, "Get off the planet; you're not wanted." I had experienced the seeming indifference of divinity, or downright hostility, as if this conveyed the same message. Instead, with feet on the ground and ground underneath my feet, I gradually took in the nurturance for which the Goddess has always been courted and thanked.

There was another encounter as well—not just with the life-giving Gaia goddess, or Tara, the Goddess of vegetation (whom I later “contracted with” through a long-term relationship to Tibetan Buddhism) but with Kali, the death-dealer who gives spiritual insight. I will convey this briefly.

Before being shot, I had been reading Heinrich Zimmer’s (1969) tome, *Philosophies of India*, as well as his book called, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* (1972). I had said to myself, when I have time to take off in a year or two, I will go to India and attempt to answer these three questions: “What is maya?” “What is karma?” and “What is moksha?” Indian myths about yogis who are so foolish as to ask, “What is maya?” often recount horrendous experiences for the yogi in the wake of this particular question. One such yogi is Narada.

After Vishnu responds to Narada’s question, “you don’t want to know,” and then feels pushed to demonstrate, the god has Narada plunge into a body of water: The old yogi emerges as Sushila, a beautiful princess. Her father gives her to the neighboring prince and with him she fully experiences the delights of love. She becomes queen with many sons and grandsons and with great happiness. In the course of time, however, a great battle arises and she loses sons, grandsons, husband, father, all. She lights their funeral pyre and throws herself into the flames. Narada emerges from the flame which had turned into a pond. Vishnu addresses him (I paraphrase), “You see? But still, you will never be able to fathom.” (Zimmer, 1972, pp. 27–31).

Narada did not receive a merely theoretical answer, which might have sounded like this: Maya is the illusion of this shifting phenomenal world, the play (*lila*) of its appearances, which you foolishly bank on as solid reality and attempt to hold in place. Instead, Narada came to know what maya is, but feelingly. Relevant here is the old saw: Be careful what you ask for.

In any case, the instant I realized I had been shot, I “knew” I was hearing Kali’s terrible laughter—the shooting occurred, after all, 15 minutes before April Fools Day began. In fact, this really was the beginning of an answer to my audacious question, “What is maya?” I was getting, at the instant of the shooting, an answer that would bring the point home. Just as my dreams had helped me get the truth of precognition “in my bones” instead of just in my head, the shooting gave me a “bone” understanding of maya as well.

Nine months later, during my healing journey to the countries of the South, I was no longer particularly thinking about Kali and her terrible laughter. I had fallen back into my usual skepticism about “The Goddess.” The Goddess— isn’t that just wishful thinking on behalf of us American feminists? However, when I arrive in Secunderabad to meet my friend and hostess, Maya—yes, that *actually* is her name—the first place she takes me to is the mid-Autumn Durgha festival. There are thousands of people, perhaps tens of thousands of people, out in the street celebrating Durgha-Kali. If this two-in-one Goddess is fictional, she surely has hordes that are real live extras in her film. She is no more or less fictional than the Judeo-Christian God, or, again, than my surprisingly-still-alive self.

The Neighborhood and Nation

Black, brown, and white: Reaching out. How did the mugging affect my social self-image? I felt shattered. I had an argument in my head with the three black gang members who seemed to care little whether they “took me out” or not. In Chicago, racial tensions were high; the '70s had brought things to a fever pitch. Now, in the '80s, tensions were papered over or obsessively avoided and denied. For the middle classes and those attempting to enter them, it was the time of the cocaine superhero and the pursuit of six figure incomes; it was *Dynasty*.

Yet I considered myself a decent enough white liberal. Acting on my political convictions, I had taught at Malcolm X Junior College, hadn't I? Why didn't these folks attack a redneck? That was the accusation to the outside, voiced, however, to myself alone. Then there was the accusation to the inside: I was a shabby liberal. Yelling to the outside, yelling to the inside . . . a rage followed in the wake of the self shattering.

How did the rest of the community, other than these gang kids, mirror me? I speak of a community that, at the time, was hardly a community; there were painful divisions in the United States, and still are, between black and white. Black friends and acquaintances helped me heal—some simply by saying that the muggers enjoyed mugging a white girl. This is what I sensed; my friends helped me feel more sane. When I confided in a black friend, of an older generation, that I now crossed over at any black male I saw on a dark street, because I could not make out friend vs. foe, and nevertheless I hated issuing that kind of insult—she replied, in her usual nonsense voice, “Honey, when I'm on the street at night, I don't let *nobody* get near me!” A few days later she, in turn, confided in me. Her father had kept a gun in the house. There came a day when he argued with a close friend, who picked up the gun and shot him dead.

An important healing moment came in India, when a woman who cleaned my friend Maya's house, where I stayed for a month, reached out without prompting to give me protection from the evil eye. It was a gesture made in love. She had been a farmer's wife and they had lost their land in the recent drought; even so, she came from generations of poverty. I needed her spontaneous kindness, especially hers. Why? I needed to feel forgiven by the poor. People with Post Trauma Stress do feel guilty. One of my guilts was that I felt hated by that mugger as a white person and perhaps for good reason—after all, I could ignore in my comfort the nightly screams and gunshots coming from neighborhoods all around me. And before the mugging I really could. I now felt that the mugger needed me to know more feelingly his reality, to get it in my bones.

To repeat, I felt guilty towards the poor of my own country. But at least this Indian woman Venkama, tiny from generations of malnutrition, could forgive me. And Venkama needed me too. I had a fresh way of seeing (and literally holding) her, unobstructed by the barriers of caste.

This exchange did not of course end the work to be done: for that I had to return to my own people and give and receive what I could.

Cracking along the fault lines. Hyde Park at the time was a university community surrounded by gang-heavy ghettos. Other Chicagoans might avoid the neighborhood at night, some even in the day, but neighborhood types were in chronic denial: So they would be busy trying to figure out what I did wrong and formulate a strategy for steering clear of my errors. Or else they would, oddly enough, recount to each other, looking right through me, how they had disabused some newcomer, moving in, of the notion that it was a dangerous neighborhood. I'm not making this up.

On the other hand, at the house of the Anavarathans, now long-time residents of the neighborhood, who were always doing so much to bring East and West together, there was a party filled with visiting intellectual and artistic celebrities from India. Jeyanthe, when I walked in the room that night, did the opposite of what many in the community were doing: "Here's my friend Judy; she was just shot a few blocks from here!" There was no hush hush in Jeyanthe's house. It was so liberating.

The point is—community can, like God, be taken as a sort of mirror for the self, negative or positive. And let me add this further piece to the body of theory: Shattering can be reciprocal. The violence of the shooting troubled this community; witness the woman who phoned me, prepared to campaign for lifting university suppression of true reporting in the local newspaper. (My own incident had been reported, typically, as a mugging but not a shooting). The community's fault lines were constituted by its vulnerability to the twin social ills, war between the races and between the genders. The community stood in danger of shattering, as an individual does, along the fault lines. These divisions in the community self manifested starkly on the streets at night. And this community, with its ills, sat nested in a nation similarly troubled.

From Other to Self

Darkened mirror, empty niche. There were other shocks to my system. A major one came by way of the woman who was my ex-partner. We were still best friends. We had been partners for 14 years; we even imagined we would be some time again.

I had met Gerrie in the heyday of the feminist movement and I seemed to have hit upon a lioness—strong, kind, fierce, from the Nordic farmlands. Through the years she had "shown up" for me—we had done so for each other—steadfast in crisis. Without knowing the self psychological slogan for it, I was blissfully idealizing, that is to say "merging with the omnipotent other." At the apocalyptic moment of the mugging, however, it came as a shock that she was not all that I expected, nay required. The muggers seemed to want me gone. More than anything, I wanted my friend to counter with a wholehearted "Come back to the planet."

Gerrie reacted to this mugging as if I were making it up. She would call it my "accident," as if she could not translate properly from her original dialect, no matter how many times I replied, "This was a mugging—I was shot." Here is a relevant

excerpt. Implied in it are two poles of Gerrie's own dilemma at the time. She had just changed from being a community social worker, devoted to service, to pursuing a career as a stockbroker. Her switch was not atypical of the boomers, from hippy to yuppy. She was here in America, wasn't she? She should get rich.

A distant friend of ours arrived from Europe, trailing a consort of painters who would exhibit with her. Gerrie found lodgings in Hyde Park for each and every one. She was protective toward them at the dinner table. I might begin by saying, "Yes I suppose the stitches are obvious but I get them removed next week. I must have been in shock when he whacked the gun into me because . . ." And she would jump right in with, "I got a new customer today, an attractive dyke, belongs to the yacht club. Huge circle of friends . . ." I would get the message that I was scaring the visitors with my talk, or bringing down the real estate values, and, after a feeble protest, ". . . it was only when I felt the blood and tissue . . ." I'd trail off into my scalloped potatoes. The cover-up taxed me much more when our good friends came over to visit. Although the sheer body warmth was balm—when I sat apart from others or alone in my apartment, the mugging never stopped happening—still I needed in addition the warmth of their hearts and spirits: I needed them to hear my story and say, "Do not leave the earth. We want you back." But whenever I began to address the matter, Gerrie, in seeming innocence, would find a way to cut me off.

What she could do, she did do, mostly on the physical plane. She fed me and took me out on walks. She had me in her apartment much of the time (we lived next door, since separating). This mitigated my fear of solitude.

Gerrie did not or could not recognize, at that time, the actual shattered state I was in and the magnitude of the trauma. Since she was for me, as Kohut describes, the selfobject one takes in adult life—in common parlance, the love of my life—I suffered here a dislocation not just as shattering but more shattering than the rest.

Broken heart, open mind. Oddly enough, Gerrie's seeming to blank out both me and my suffering took on a different meaning in retrospect. It brought its own benefits. In Kohutian terms, a gap in caregiving can transform into an optimal frustration. Usually "optimal" will be on the gentler side—then again I was 40, not a teenaged soldier, and not a child in captivity, attempting to survive incest. I had accumulated some strength. So, in the end, what broke my heart opened my mind. I was pushed off the notable and insistent dependency I had on Gerrie; I was pushed out into the wide world.

I traveled throughout the world, telling my story to everyone I could induce to listen, very much like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. And people all over the world in every conceivable setting—on a mountaintop, in a supermarket checkout line, at a monastery in the desert, sipping coffee at a café—said to me, in different forms and colorings "What a terrible thing happened to you! Come back to the planet!" Compassion was what brought me back—I simply didn't find it where I assumed it would be. To quote a friend of mine who worked with the AIDS and the cancer communities: "You just can't predict who will step up to the plate." (J. Mayer, personal communication, April, 2005).

From Self to Self: Aggress or Coalesce?

Let me return to issues related to mirroring. What made me most vulnerable to any aspect of this mugging that shattered self-love was the following: I myself was as given to self-hatred as to self-love. As I described when addressing racial and gender divisions in the community, the “self” shatters along the fault lines. Self-hatred became the biggest threat to my reconstitution and survival.

Here is the literal way I came to confront the problem in the wake of the mugging. I was having a session with my spiritual guide and she was listening to my physical regimen: protect the scar from sunshine with a brimmed hat, massage the scar by smoothing on Vitamin E oil morning and night, etc. She stopped me; she said, “When you massage the scar, I want you to look in the mirror and say, ‘Judy, it wasn’t your fault. Judy, I love you.’”

Born and bred in New York, I replied “Margaret, not California!” But I knew immediately that this would be the right practice, because I knew it would be dreadfully hard. And it was. On my massaging fingertips, salt water mixed with the vitamin oil to yield a strange texture: watery oil, oily tears, morning and night, over the course of a year.

Here, by way of an excerpt from the autobiography, is how I discovered and confronted my own self-disavowal, self-abandonment, in a therapy session. The excerpt demonstrates two themes at the heart of this case history: that of the fragmented self and that of the compassion, in this case self-compassion, central to its healing.

I had returned to my long-term therapist, Dave, and this was my second or third session. (The characters in the following session, it may help you to know, correspond to actual vocations, avocations, and activities of mine).

The next session I introduce Dave to my recent cast of characters. (I am not a multiple but this *has* been a shattering event.) We distribute ourselves. The *writer* is in an armchair. The *visual artist* takes a perch on the radiator. The *lover* takes the couch, draping her body. The *metaphysician* claims the phone table (having, as she brags to Dave, the direct line). The *therapist*, when it is her turn, brings a straightback over. There is finally a *victim*, crouched under a far-off endtable.

The writer, sunk comfortably in the chair, has her particular dilemma: There are 13 ways to see this story, like Wallace Stevens and his blackbird. Where does it start and end? . . . Meanwhile, the visual artist has been content to let her speak. She hesitantly takes her turn to communicate about smashed sidepanels on the street; the cheek feels/looks that way; could she superimpose these in a drawing, like Picasso, doing the inside and the outside all at once. The inside of the face the outside of the car. Jagged shards, you know, like accordion bellows smashing in.

The metaphysician has much to tell Dave about a pilgrimage to India she had been planning, to learn the nature of maya and karma, and after came her dream

sequence and her precognitive dream; she has changed her view, of karma, at least in this instance, because it isn't At this point the lover interrupts. She flips her yearning body around: they are all off in the stratosphere; she is furious that her M.O. will be severely hampered by this facial damage. She turns on the victim with a cold rage.

Here the persona of the therapist takes the floor and is the first one with an attention truly directed at the entire crew. "Look at her, all of you. She feels miserable. She is under the endtable and not one of you has a scrap of attention or kindness for her. You all want to use what she's been through, that's very nice; but you hate her!"

At the next session, Dave and I discuss that old warhorse of therapy: transference. No I am not transferred onto him. But during the course of the week I have come to realize that I'm behaving like someone in transference. I realize it now. With Gerrie. I am demanding of Gerrie that she love, with redoubled fervor, exactly what I most hate in myself. This angry, terrified and bewildered victim. This *victim*.

REPRISE: ENHANCED SELF, ENHANCED THEORY

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995), in *Trauma and Transformation*, write about the enhanced self that can result when reconstitution after shattering is successful. I have healed on many levels, physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. Body workers no longer comment on the two bodies in one. I also healed the unbearable contradiction between a self-in-a-Holocaust-world and a self-in-a-world-of-miracles. Both worlds and selves cohabit quite comfortably now. It is a world of horrors and wonders and a self utterly vulnerable with unexpected powers. There really *are*, as Hamlet says, "more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,/ than are dreamt of in your philosophy." (I.v. 166–167).

Both James's view of the dynamics of conversion and Kohut's views in self psychology have provided filters for clarifying the anatomy of the wounding and the dynamics of the healing. I have stretched the parameters of self psychology so that community, nation, planet, and divinity may perform as selfobjects, mirroring and serving as ideals, in this healing.

Once one speaks of planet or divinity, one has already enhanced self psychology with transpersonal perspectives. But here is an additional transpersonal dimension. Just as this Westerner encountered the East, in dreams leading up to the mugging and in the aftermath, in the same way let us bring self psychology into close encounter with that aspect of transpersonal psychology which accommodates Eastern views. I introduce some Buddhist views that take us beyond the Kohutian self.³

BEYOND SELF: LESS IS MORE

Let us throw a different light on healing from PTSD: Are there advantages to shedding, or even being forced to shed, the solidified self-image? Can enhancement—or, more precisely, enhancement *beyond* self—come from *just* that direction?

Granted, for healing there must first be a phase of repair to the self—and this cannot be leap-frogged. You have to be Somebody in order to be Nobody (Engler, 1986). And, granted, “a phase of repair” is a simplistic way to describe development. Engler’s later views formulate the two lines of development, the psychological Somebody line and the spiritual Nobody line (Engler, 2000), as interweaving rather than proceeding in a linear fashion. Nevertheless a development beyond self does occur—one that entails going beyond the usual sense of self as either fixed or separable. The self-grasping abates: The person comes to recognize and remember that the self shifts with co-arising circumstances, inseparable from the interactive network that is the cosmos.

After a violent trauma, one has a self-image that is in some sense a “veteran”—it will not be surprised to find itself shattered and having to start afresh. It may have undergone *hedewa*, a great shock that Tibetan Buddhists see as a potential opening, or it may have simply noticed the incessant discontinuities of everyday life and consciousness, for instance, the gap between thoughts when no “I” exists. In the gap can be experienced the noSelf or panoramic mind. The experiential glimpse can then be stabilized—usually through long practice—into a View. One comes to see one’s own story as a single, particularly colored, instance among millions of stories . . . Sooner or later we all do get the rug pulled out from under us. Then we get an opportunity to abstain from bolting for new ground, for a new and *solidified* self-image, self-story, on which to take a stand. (We will of course have a self-story, but we grasp onto it less insistently) (Engler, 2003). We can instead dance on air. We say “yes” to the risks of life, making groundlessness our path (Chodron, 2001).

Here, in selected verses from his poem, is what the Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) says about who we are. The parameters of self are pushed beyond the isolated ego. We become what I have referred to as the noSelf or what Thich Nhat Hanh so beautifully calls *interbeing*.

Please Call Me By My True Names

Don’t say that I will depart tomorrow—
even today I am still arriving.

Look deeply: every second I am arriving
to be a bud on a Spring branch,
to be a tiny bird, with still-fragile wings,
learning to sing in my new nest,
to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower,
to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry,
to fear and to hope.
The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death
of all that is alive.

I am a mayfly metamorphosing

on the surface of the river.
And I am the bird
that swoops down to swallow the mayfly . . .

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones,
my legs as thin as bamboo sticks.
And I am the arms merchant,
selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year old girl,
refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean
after being raped by a sea pirate.
And I am the pirate,
my heart not yet capable
of seeing and loving . . .

My joy is like Spring, so warm
it makes flowers bloom all over the Earth.
My pain is like a river of tears,
so vast it fills the four oceans.

Please call me by my true names,
so I can hear all my cries and laughter at once,
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names,
so I can wake up
and the door of my heart
could be left open,
the door of compassion.

Reprinted from *Call Me By My True Names* (1999) by Thich Nhat Hanh with permission of Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, www.parallax.org

NOTES

¹ Re cultural self-objects, Roland's remarks (1988, p. xi), as quoted earlier in this essay, I spotted recently. I came to my line of thought independently. This applies to overlaps with other relevant authors such as P. Sheppard, E. Bayer, I. Harwood, and M. Pines.

² I had some conversations, in 2003–4, on the relationship between divinity and trauma with a student and friend, Katherine Unthank. She has her own line of thinking on the subject, not a self psychological one, but one that is rich and original, well-informed with PTSD clinical knowledge.

³ Kohut thinks about divinity and our relating to it, but only in nooks and crannies of his work; there is a relevant selection of these thoughts in Strozier's book (2001, pp. 327–333). But the bulk of the theory instead speaks of how the self developmental line culminates in cosmic narcissism. This end-point attainment entails a transcending; but it happens by way of the self attaching itself to larger purposes, attaching libido to them. By contrast, the transpersonal version offered in this article addresses mirrorings and idealizings in which divinity plays a role, and a development beyond self into the Buddhist Empty or noSelf.

REFERENCES

- BELLOW, S. (1987). *More die of heartbreak*. New York: Morrow.
- CHODRON, P. (2001). *The places that scare you*. Boston: Shambhala.
- ENGLER, J. (1984). Therapeutic aims in psychotherapy and meditation: Developmental stages in the representation of self. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 16(1), 25–61.
- ENGLER, J. (2000). The 1001 forms of self-grasping or . . . do you really have to be somebody before you can be nobody? A. Cohen (Interviewer). *What is Enlightenment? 17*. Retrieved December 1, 2003, from <http://www.wie.org/j17/engler.asp>
- FREUD, S. (1955). *The interpretation of dreams*. J. Strachey (Trans. & ed.) London: George Allen & Unwin. (Original work published 1900).
- GROF, S. (2000). *Psychology of the future: Lessons from modern consciousness research*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- GROSS, R. (1993). *Buddhism after patriarchy: A feminist history, analysis, and reconstruction of Buddhism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- HANH, T. N. (1999). Please call me by my true names. In *Call me by my true names*. Berkeley: Parallax Press.
- JAMES, W. (1912). *Essays in radical empiricism*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.
- JAMES, W. (1961). *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature*. New York: Collier.
- KOHUT, H. (1984). *How does analysis cure?* (A. Goldberg & P. Stepansky, Eds.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- KOHUT, H. (1985). *Self psychology and the humanities: Reflections on a new psychoanalytic approach*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- PAULSON, D. (1995). *Walking the point: Male initiation and the Vietnam experience*. Plantation, FL: Distinctive Publishing.
- ROLAND, A. (1988). *In search of self in India and Japan: Toward a cross-cultural psychology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- SCHAVRIEN, J. (1993). *On being shot awake and the dreams that foresaw it: Memoirs of a PTSD specialist*. Unpublished manuscript.
- STROZIER, C. (2001). *Heinz Kohut: The making of a psychoanalyst*. NYC: Girard, Strauss and Giroux.
- TEDESCHI, R. G., & CALHOUN, L. G. (1995). *Trauma and transformation: Growing in the aftermath of suffering*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- ULMAN, R.B., & BROTHERS, D. (1988). *The shattered self: A psychoanalytic study of trauma*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- WEBER, M. (1904–5). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. New York: Scribner's.
- ZIMMER, H. (1972). *Myths and symbols in Indian civilization*. (J. Campbell, Ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- ZIMMER, H. (1969). *Philosophies of India*. (J. Campbell, Ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

The Author

Judy Schavrien is Associate Professor and Chair of the Global Ph.D. Program at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP) in Palo Alto, California. In addition to pursuing research and practice in personal and cultural Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), she is published as a painter and anthologized as a psychological theorist and poet, having received 14 national and international awards. Most recently she was nominated Oakland Artist of the Year. Prior to joining ITP she helped found M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Women's Spirituality at the California

Institute of Integral Studies, had served as Senior Staff at the Carl Rogers clinic in Chicago, and taught Focusing with Eugene Gendlin in international workshops. She received BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Chicago.