

COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER: AN INQUIRY INTO THE DEEP SYMBOLIC NATURE
OF THE VANISHING HONEYBEE

By Bonnie Bright, M.A.

Founder, Depth Psychology Alliance, www.depthpsychologyalliance.com

Email: bonnie@depthinsights.com

Twitter: www.twitter.com/@bonniebright5

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Biography

Bonnie Bright is pursuing a PhD in Depth Psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, CA, having completed Master's Degrees at both Sonoma State University and Pacifica Graduate Institute. She is an active board member for AHBI, the Association for Holotropic Breathwork, which supports practitioners of the unique breathing technique developed to help individuals access healing and insight, while completing certification as a professional facilitator. Bonnie has trained extensively in the Enneagram, a psycho-spiritual personality typology system and in Dagara-inspired ritual and medicine with West African Elder Malidoma Somé.

Bonnie's writing appears in the 2010 anthology, *Rebearths: Conversations with a World Ensouled* (Edited by Craig Chalquist, published by World Soul Books).

Bonnie is the founder of the first online depth psychology community, Depth Psychology Alliance (www.depthpsychologyalliance.com) and offers depth psychology-oriented research, writing, coaching, and consulting services for individuals and organizations. She can be reached bonniebright@depthinsights.com or you can follow her Depth-related updates on Twitter @bonniebright5.

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ABSTRACT

This project is an investigative inquiry into the implications of a compelling and inexplicable event: the sudden mass vanishing of billions of honeybees in what is now termed Colony Collapse Disorder. Use of a Heuristic framework engenders a deep examination of the potential symbolic significance of bees in light of their mass disappearance at both an individual and cultural level. Employing a Jungian lens, this project considers the ongoing loss of honeybees from the shamanic perspective of soul loss, then examines the increasing rift between humans and nature in relation to colonization, all apparent factors in the condition of colony collapse. Last, this inquiry explores the link between the bees and the goddess in an attempt to understand how the increasing loss of the sacred feminine from our worldview correlates with the plight of the dying honeybee. Findings include a look at how the symbolic meaning of Colony Collapse Disorder calls for regarding and beholding difficult situations and conflicting elements in order to allow the transcendent function to emerge. Rather than a rigid and surface attempt to analyze and fix the issue of the dying honeybees and to stave off our own potential colony collapse on a human scale, a return to earth and to nature, both inner and outer, is required.

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INTRODUCTION

“In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order” (Jung, 1959, p. 32).

“The upheaval of our world and the upheaval of our consciousness are one and the same” (Jung, 1970, p. 177).

In October of 2006, just weeks after beginning the Depth Psychology program at Sonoma State University, I experienced a life-changing event: an encounter with what Carl Jung, twentieth century psychologist and one of the founders of depth psychology, called the *numinous*, a powerful unknown force. That event, for me, was inexplicable, earth shattering, and entirely unexpected, surpassing comprehension or understanding. *Numinous*, a term Jung borrowed from Otto Rank, describes “a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will” (Smith, 2007, p. 110), a force that can seize control over human subjects and alter their consciousness, arousing affect and bedazzling them. Jung correlated *numinous* with the soul, and believed a thing that is numinous is dichotomous: able to be both fascinating and attractive as well as terrifying and repelling at the same time. Jung insisted we cannot encounter the numinous and not be irrevocably altered (Smith, 2007). The experience initiated, for me, paradoxical and conflicting feelings of both the most incredible joy and the most intense despair I could possibly imagine. Away at a workshop when the encounter took place, I returned to my home and the Depth program to try and put my psyche back together again and come to terms with what had occurred. Days later, in a seemingly unrelated global event, honeybees began disappearing by the billions.

At the time, I didn't see a connection between the astounding mystical event, what might be best described as an encounter with my own soul, that impacted my psyche so deeply and personally and the ensuing natural event in the material world arising in the consciousness of the Earth. But both of them engulfed me, overwhelmed me, and devastated me to the point where I could do nothing else but turn my gaze and regard them, an act which led me on a dramatic descent into despair and hope. This project is an investigation into the powerful symbolism of the vanishing honeybees and their corresponding meaning to me, which continues to unfold even now, nearly three years later.

Chapter I – To Be Captivated

Take from my palms, to soothe your heart,
 a little honey, a little sun,
 in obedience to Persephone's bees.

You can't untie a boat that was never moored,
 nor hear a shadow in its furs,
 nor move through thick life without fear.

For us, all that's left is kisses
 tattered as the little bees
 that die when they leave the hive.

Deep in the transparent night they're still humming,
 at home in the dark wood on the mountain,
 in the mint and lungwort and the past.

But lay to your heart my rough gift,
 this unlovely dry necklace of dead bees
 that once made a sun out of honey.

--Osip Mandelstam

Sometimes events occur that naturally captivate our attention, arresting us mid-stream in our daily lives and returning to our thoughts with increasing intensity. While there is no obvious initial explanation for why these events seem to grab us, if we turn our attention to them, create a container in which they can unfold and allow them to speak to us through images and emotion, they can provide powerful messages about our personal lives, our psyches, and our relationship with the culture and cosmos around us.

In my case, I was catapulted into awareness by the abrupt phenomenon of the disappearing honeybees. The U.S. Department of Agriculture first investigated the alarming and unprecedented trend in late 2006. Like lightning from the blue, beekeepers had suddenly begun reporting losses of between 30% and 90% of their bees, removing the lids of their standard box beehives for routine maintenance to find their hives completely empty except for the queen and a

handful of her attendants. Moreover, the bees were nowhere to be found, having virtually vanished (Benjamin & McCallum, 2009; Jacobsen, 2008; van Engelsdorp, Foster, Frazier, Ostiguy, & Hayes, 2006).

Additionally, evidence of this phenomenon seemed to appear all over the world within days of each other. By spring of 2007, one fourth of beekeepers in the United States reported losses of over 30 percent of all colonies. In the winter of that year, die-offs reached 36 percent and countries around the world including Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Europe and other regions reported their honeybees were vanishing by the billions (Cox-Foster & van Engelsdorp, 2009; Stipp, 2007). Though honeybee populations had been hit hard by disease and parasites in previous decades and their numbers had been steadily declining, this was something entirely new and shocking.

Epidemics tend to spread in a linear manner from one location to the next. Thus, it is typical to recognize a trend to the expansion of disease and to be able to track its destructive path as it moves to new and different territory. In this instance however, manifesting virtually simultaneously in so many locations around the globe, it was clear to beekeepers, and imminently to scientists, that something new was afoot. Furthermore, the fact that the absent bees are nowhere to be found is an additional source of concern. Typically, honeybees at the end of their life cycle are as efficient at dying as they are at living, venturing just outside the colony to die in close proximity to the hive so their bodies don't have to be moved. The bizarre lack of dead bees has led experts to believe that the bees are dying far away and alone, widely dispersed from the hive (Stipp, 2007; Cox-Foster & van Engelsdorp, 2009).

Quickly termed *Colony Collapse Disorder* due to entire colonies dying out virtually overnight, this unnerving trend appears sinister and inexplicable (Cox-Foster & van Engelsdorp,

2009). To me, it seemed like the end of the world. Something was radically out of balance. Though thousands of species have become endangered or even disappeared entirely in recent years, the humble honeybee is so omnipresent and important to our daily experience, it is hard to imagine what its disappearance might mean. Honeybees are responsible for one out of every three bites of food we put in our mouths (Cox-Foster & van Engelsdorp, 2009). Not only are they valued for their honey, collectively they are almost single-handedly responsible for the successful pollination of apples, almonds, strawberries, cherries, carrots, broccoli, blueberries, peaches, pears, pumpkins, and soybeans, among others. Additional crops like alfalfa, a primary source of food for cows, ultimately means our supply of beef and milk, as well as cotton, is also directly affected by the day-to-day existence of the bees (Kolbert, 2007).

It is clear, however, that my own interest in the ongoing vanishing of the bees goes far beyond my concern for its initial impact on my immediate physical environment. The phenomenon of Colony Collapse Disorder is something that lives in every cell of my being, establishing itself as a presence, a harbinger, perhaps, of something monumental to come. It has taken up residence there, calling my attention with a resounding plea to pay attention to something new, something that can both teach me and try me in my relationship to my self and to the culture in which I live.

What does she feel in those last moments of life, the solitary bee, when she finds herself a victim of a sudden mysterious curse, cut off and alone, far from the hive and the way of life in which she has always participated? How does she manage the strangeness of isolation as darkness falls around her? Scientists contend that Colony Collapse Disorder is a result of individual bees becoming lost and disoriented, unable to find their way back to the hive. Typically, bees, though their brains are less than one percent of the size of the human brain, have

excellent visual memory; not only can they recognize and respond to human faces, but they depend on visual landmarks to find their way home. Additionally, research suggests bees are tuned in to the magnetic poles of the earth itself and rely on the passage of the sun and the pull of due north to help them navigate to safety and shelter with their precious cargos of nectar and pollen destined for the benefit of the colony itself (Fountain, 2003).

What has gone wrong that the bees are losing their way? Bees have existed for nearly a hundred million years (Handwerk, 2006), and honeybees, for their very survival, are dependent on the impeccably ordered social system and accompanying set of rules and roles that has evolved over millennia. Alone, they perish. Their instincts, by necessity, dictate that they be able to find their way home at any given time, that they never fail to fulfill the responsibilities they are assigned as part of a demanding community that relies on the individual parts to survive, and that, above all, they never, ever abandon the queen who is the life-force of the hive.

It is said by some, that we too, as humans, have lost touch with a deeper part of our being, with the very instincts that call us forward on our divine, evolutionary path. Carl Jung, who dedicated his life to studying the pathology and potentiality of human beings, established a profound theory that humans, though vastly and inevitably interconnected, have lost contact with our selves, with each other, and with nature, allowing our thinking egoic personas, which are driven by fear and by greed, to take control. As a result, we find ourselves dislocated in the fabric of life and being, and disoriented in the process of living.

Indeed, my own transformational encounter with the numinous on that fateful October day in 2006 just as the bees began to disappear revealed to me both the irrepressible, boundless, inconceivable essence Jung called the Self and the devastating condition we have adopted and learned to tolerate as human beings that are disconnected from that divine foundation. Jung

(1964) explained, "Through scientific understanding, our world has become dehumanized....Civilized man...is in danger of losing all contact by his living an urban existence....This loss of instinct is largely responsible for the pathological condition of contemporary culture" (p. 85) .

What, then, does our loss of contact with nature, both inner and outer, have to do with the vanishing honeybees? Where do these two events parallel each other, and where do they intersect? How can we regard the sudden and awful disappearing of the bees from a depth psychological perspective? Does this disturbing symptom in the natural world signal a cultural pathology, erupting into my own consciousness and that of our contemporary culture on behalf of the greater collective unconscious, the ailing of the world soul? It behooves us to take a very close look, for the gradual loss of relationship by many of us as individuals and seemingly by mankind as a whole and to the greater totality of creation, to nature, instinct, and a vibrant living earth has become a disorder of it's own.

In mythology, bees have long been said to symbolize the soul, capable of bridging heaven and earth, the realm of the divinities and that of the flesh; flying in and out of ears or mouths to come and go between the humans and the gods. With the divine messengers quickly disappearing, what might be indicated for our own survival as a culture and species? Are the bees, as some experts point out, acting like the proverbial canary in a coal mine—foreshadowing the imminent demise of the human race as we plummet toward a colony collapse of our own? In his recent book, *A Spring Without Bees*, Michael Schacker (2008) muses on the mythical as well as biological implications of CCD, referring to it as a potential *Civilization* Collapse Disorder. It is clear, however, that significant change must begin at an individual level. How, then, might my own psyche regard the phenomenon and go about integrating my own disordered self back into

communication with inner and outer nature and the universe around me in order to re-establish contact with the power and majesty that resides there? In the next section, I discuss the methodology and research techniques I have used to explore this captivating phenomenon and the mystery and meaning it presents.

Chapter II – Methodology: Making Honey

Last night as I was sleeping,
 I dreamt - marvelous error! -
 that a spring was breaking
 out in my heart
 I said: Along which secret aqueduct
 Oh water, are you coming to me,
 water of a new life
 that I have never drunk?

Last night as I was sleeping,
 I dreamt - marvelous error! -
 that I had a beehive
 here inside my heart.
 And the golden bees
 were making white combs
 and sweet honey
 from my old failures.

Last night as I was sleeping,
 I dreamt - marvelous error! -
 that a fiery sun was giving
 light inside my heart.
 It was fiery because I felt,
 warmth as from a hearth,
 and sun because it gave light
 and brought tears to my eyes.

Last night as I was sleeping,
 I dreamt - marvelous error! -
 That it was God I had
 here inside my heart.
 ---Antonio Machado

The research framework for this project, based on work from Clark Moustakas (1990), is Heuristic Inquiry, a qualitative methodology focused on open-ended inquiry centering around one's self and perceptions. Additionally, I employed depth methods to supplement and support the understanding generated by the Heuristic framework. These depth methods, *accessing non-*

ordinary reality, ritual, and writing, allowed me to delve more deeply into the inquiry through the lens of the Self.

To begin with, it is important to say that this work took its own sweet time. It is no secret that patience is an art when it comes to writing, and the vital significance of allowing space for understanding and integration of a significant psychological inquiry to take hold inside one's self is paramount. Though I was first captivated by the disappearance of the bees in early 2007, I only found myself finally able to ground and locate myself within the work enough to adequately articulate a portion of my findings well over two years later.

While I knew when I first encountered Colony Collapse Disorder that it was a profound and compelling event for my own psyche, no amount of research alone enabled me to integrate or articulate even a fraction of what it meant until ample time had passed to allow the meaning to take hold and unfold. One by one, as each of my peers triumphed and completed their thesis projects for the M.A. degree, I struggled to grasp just how I could ever communicate meaning regarding this entity that seemed to have gripped me. One of my peers asserted that the Master's thesis is simply a "big research paper," but, increasingly I felt that, in my case, it was something far more powerful that had got hold of my psyche and was insisting on being regarded and addressed on its own timeline. Rather than me having the bees as a focal point for my research, it seemed much more as if they had me. And, though I resisted for a long time, berating myself for not seeming to have the creativity or discipline to sit down and write the thesis, over time, I learned to honor the autonomy and integrity of the topic which *chose me*, and the intimate, healing relationship that developed between us.

When making honey, a bee empties the nectar she has gathered from flowers out of her mouth and honey stomach into a honeycomb cell. There, the watery liquid must be fanned with

her wings to evaporate the excess fluid. She will ingest and evacuate the basic substance, what might be called the *prima materia* from alchemical lore, as many as 200 times until it becomes perfect liquid gold with optimum sugar content and consistency. And, just to gather that selfsame *prima materia*, the nectar from the blooms, the tireless bee may exit the hive to forage as many as six or eight times a day, flying anywhere from two to eight miles on a given trip to seek out and collect her prize. Each time she returns, her earnings may total just enough content to make a quarter-teaspoon of finished honey. It can require visits to over two million flowers resulting in 75,000 loads of nectar and travel as far as 55,000 miles to produce just one pound of honey (Longgood, 1985).

In the same spirit, developing this project has required sustained endeavor. Coppin and Nelson (2005) deeply appreciate the intense and recurring effort it takes to conduct a psychological inquiry, saying:

Although psychological inquiry can be a joy, it is unusually demanding. It asks one *to be fully involved with the opus on every level*. . . . the work extends well beyond the ego to reverberate in the depths of the soul. At these deeper levels, the work truly becomes psychological, unearthing wounds and complexes that other wise may have remained unconscious. (p. 101)

Additionally, Coppin and Nelson (2005) maintain that employing method is part of the challenge. Like turning nectar into honey, applying method is always a reductive process, condensing phenomena in order to try and describe it. They suggest, “Reduction is consistently harsh on psychological phenomena which, by their nature, are fluid, multiple, and complex,” (p. 7). Indeed, the multitude of experiences and emotions I encountered regarding my work with the bees while researching and writing this project was extremely fluid and complex. The fact that the plight of the bees was a dynamic phenomena that changed day by day, and the fact that I was a spontaneous witness to individual dying bees on a regular basis as I observed their ongoing

collapse, presented a fundamental complexity of the research on an emotional level. Ultimately, it was as if parts of my own self were suffering and dying along with them. Trying to find a container in which to study the phenomena over time and allow it to percolate and take shape in me was challenging at best, and it is ultimately why I settled on the Heuristic approach.

Heuristic Research

The Heuristic methodology is part of the larger domain of qualitative research which, according to Glesne and Peshkin (2002), makes a particularly powerful framework for the art and science of Psychology. They suggest qualitative research “explores the poorly understood territories of human interaction” (p. 173), likening it to methods used by explorers to understand the physical or biological ways patterns make up a physical landscape, affirming, “Qualitative adventurers seek to describe and understand the processes that create the patterns of the human terrain” (p. 173).

Clark Moustakas (1990) derived *Heuristic* from the Greek word *heuriskein*, which means *to discover or to find*. As the founder of Heuristic Inquiry, he insists the value of the methodology lies in the fact that it places a topic or experience relevant to the researcher at the core of inquiry, emphasizing self-observation and self-inquiry as the main methods of discovery. Due to the self-searching nature of the process, it often includes non-traditional forms of knowing and achieving insights such as intuition and incubation of thoughts and experiences.

Beckstrom (1993) defines Heuristic research as a methodology that includes self-inquiry in order to extract the fundamental meanings of important human experiences, and in which the individual’s frame of reference is hugely significant. Each person enters the inquiry with a certain lens, that is, specific life experience that causes him or her to think the way they do. The investigator must be willing to stay open while still valuing self-experience, ultimately

discovering the data within himself and decoding the essential meanings of experience which ultimately leads to awakening and transformation of his own self (Moustakas, 1990).

Michael Polanyi, twentieth century scholar and philosopher, suggests that the power of Heuristic Discovery is *tacit knowing*. According to him, all knowledge is either made of or is rooted in our ability to know something—such as how to recognize a face among a million—but to not be able to articulate how we know it (as cited in Moustakas, 1990). Moustakas (1990) illustrates this point with reference to a tree:

We can sense unity or wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts. Knowledge of the trunk, branches, buds, flowers, leaves, colors, textures, sounds, shape and size...enable a sense of the treeness of a tree, and its wholeness as well. This knowing of the essence or treeness of a tree is achieved through a tacit process. (p. 21)

Tacit knowing is linked to explicit knowing or direct experience through *intuition*.

Intuition allows one to sense a pattern or perceive wholeness and integration. Often this move requires a leap that allows for shifts in method, perception, or direction leading to critical discoveries along the way and allowing or creating shift and revelation within the investigator as well. Other key elements of the Heuristic methods are *indwelling*, turning inward to seek more in-depth comprehension of the type or significance of a particular quality or theme belonging to human experience, and *focusing*, a clearing of inward space around a concept to allow for deeper and more sustained access to tap into its essence (Moustakas, 1990).

The Heuristic inquiry typically comes together via six stages of methodology as identified and defined by Moustakas (1990): *initial engagement*, *immersion*, *incubation*, *illumination*, *explication*, and *creative synthesis*.

Initial engagement. In this phase, the researcher discovers an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to him. This consists of an inner search to determine what topic holds important social meanings and personal compelling implications, generating sustained self-

inquiry and dialogue. When I first encountered the phenomenon of the vanishing bees, I was immediately shocked and captivated, feeling something about the event was compelling and astonishingly amiss. Once I engaged in the process of observing them, I was completely hooked. It was almost as if the bees compelled me to study them; to listen and to bear the challenge to bring their plight to light.

Immersion. The second phase of the Heuristic process happens once the question is discovered and its terms are defined and clarified. During this phase, the researcher lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states. It is always on her mind and she typically encounters related synchronicities wherever she goes. As I began to research the bees, I saw them dying everywhere I went. I had close encounters with specific bees that I intentionally and intensely tried to save; only to see the bee die literally in front of my eyes. I tried to honor them, bring their demise to the attention of others, understand the way they lived and died in a natural setting. During this phase, for well over two years, I never stopped noticing them, observing them, and finding myself in close contact with either the inner or outer nature of their demise.

Incubation. This process is one in which the researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated, focus on the question. Moustakas (1990), states, "Incubation is a process in which a seed has been planted, the seed undergoes silent nourishment, support and care that produces a creative awareness of some dimension of a phenomenon or a creative integration of its parts or qualities" (p. 29). It is crucial at this stage to let go and trust that the inherent natural intelligence in the universe will do its work. The seed can only grow in it's own time. Try as I might, for over a year since I first engaged, I just couldn't manage to finesse a quality account of the vanishing bees, nor my own reaction to it. Though I lived and breathed it on one level, I finally took a step back in the Fall of 2008 and entered a PhD program in Depth Psychology, giving myself the time

off from the project to pursue new interests and further advance my education. In the end, though I didn't actively write about the bees for over a year, they were always present for me, through the icons I wore on my person to the conversations I had with everyone I met. In the end, I truly believe it was the space I allowed that enabled them—and the ultimate insight and integration I obtained—to emerge.

Illumination. The illumination process is an awakening and adding of new dimensions of knowledge. This may involve corrections of distorted understandings or the disclosure of hidden meanings not perceived before. The illumination began just weeks before I began to write the project in all sincerity: as months and even years passed, I never left off thinking about the bees. Ultimately, even in the darkest hours of feeling frustration and fear, the bees emerged for me as the light at the end of tunnel. I saw them everywhere I went, no matter how quiet or rare they were. Eventually, the illumination phase took shape like a new dawn: a sun rising gently as the sky turned to rose in the East.

Explication. The purpose of the explication phase is to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning. Ultimately a comprehensive depiction of the dominant themes is developed. By the time I was finally ready to write, the project seemed to have reached critical mass, pouring out of me in a way and at a speed I never expected. Ultimately, it's almost as if all of the data, impressions, experiences, and emotions I encountered over those years of invoking and being with the bees came together in one fell swoop, and then unexpectedly, it gelled. Suddenly, I understood where the bees lived in me, what their dying off meant in my worldview, and how I must move forward to help others appreciate and understand the phenomenon as well.

Creative Synthesis. During creative synthesis, having mastered knowledge of the material

that illuminates and explicates the question, the researcher is challenged to put the components and core themes into a narrative depiction utilizing verbatim material and examples. It may also be expressed through poetry, story, art, movement, or by other creative forms. However, creative synthesis only comes when the time is right and the other work is done. Moustakas (1990) reminds us, "Knowledge of the data and a period of solitude and meditation focusing on the topic and question are the essential preparatory steps for the inspiration that eventually enables a creative synthesis" (pp. 31-32). In the end, it was the surrender that allowed me to move on to other projects while holding the bees in reverence and compassion that finally allowed the creative synthesis to take shape. As I returned from a few intense weeks of volunteer fieldwork on a Maya archeological site, a Buddhist meditation retreat, and a week of ritual in community with Malidoma Some, a West African teacher and elder, I suddenly came home with the inexplicable knowledge that the time had come to put what I had experienced into reality. Placing hands to keyboard, after nearly three long years, I sat down and finalized the bulk of the thesis project in less than two short weeks.

Investigative Methods

Accessing non-ordinary realms. The primary method I employed to garner insight into my inquiry is the practice of entering an alternate realm: a space radically different from the ordinary, everyday reality most of us experience. Carlos Castaneda (1969) coined the term *non-ordinary reality* to indicate a reality that is present in the same time and space as ordinary reality but invisible to us and best accessed through altered states of consciousness. Jung (1964) called it the *unconscious*, and later, the *imaginal* realm, believing it to be the place where the archetypes reside. Michael Meade (2008) refers to it as *mythic imagination*. Michael Harner (1980) anthropologist and contemporary shaman, calls it a *shamanic state of consciousness*, establishing

it as a cognitive condition as well as a transcendent state of consciousness. For some, it is the *spirit world*, or *dreamtime*. Regardless of its name, it seems clear that access to this realm can lead to valuable rewards in the form of experience, encounter, and insight. James Hillman, archetypal psychologist, refers to it simply as *soul*, declaring, "Soul is the imaginative possibility of our natures" (1989, p. 21).

Barbara Tedlock (2005), author and contemporary initiated Maya shaman, describes the practice as leaving the normal waking state and entering into a dream-like condition where "conscious and unconscious components blend together" (p. 105). She explains how the Maya access this realm through a practice known as "completing the dreaming" (p. 18), a state in which one is removed from the outer world and tuned in and receptive to the inner world to see what unfolds. Shamanic journeying or entering trance through ecstatic dancing, rhythmic drumming, and ingesting mind-altering plants or drugs are also widely used techniques to access non-ordinary states the world over (Eliade, 1974). In that realm, symbols and characters from nature, myth, or dream take on their own energies and it is possible to interact and dialogue with them to gain insight into the part of the psyche that is not conscious (von Franz, 1979).

Jung referred to the act of entering non-ordinary space and interacting with the energies there as *active imagination* (Jung, 1916/1958). He advocated it as the most important utility to bring the contents of the unconscious to light by intensifying them until they erupt spontaneously into the conscious mind. He also considered this realm to be the source for spontaneous fantasies, noting that individuals can, with practice, develop the capacity to allow fantasies to rise up freely at any time simply by reducing critical attention, thereby producing a vacuum in consciousness and encouraging the emergence of images waiting to surface (Jung, 1969). Emphasizing the value of this powerful method, Jung (1933) mused, "All the works of man have

their origin in creative fantasy. What right have we then to depreciate imagination?" (1933, p. 67). Regardless of the method of access, I have come to believe that powerful archetypes, symbols, myths, and emotions arise from this state and turn into fertile food for insight. Different approaches may work for different people, but the ability to partake of the richness it provides is a vital key to accessing transformative material.

Once I understood the concept of accessing the non-ordinary realm, I immediately began to use it as a tool to intentionally engage in dialogue with mythical or dream objects or characters, symbols that appeared in my psyche with compelling numinous energy. And, though I didn't consider myself a particularly visual person at first, throughout the timeframe leading up to and during this project, I experienced a number of interesting and intense visions as a result of either purposely or spontaneously entering an altered state simply through existing conditions or by intention. During that time I also discovered *Holotropic Breathwork*, a process meaning *moving toward wholeness*, which combines special breathing techniques, evocative music, and healing bodywork conducted in a safely contained environment. According to prominent psychiatrist and pioneer of Transpersonal Psychology, Stan Grof, who, along with his wife, Christina, established the technique, the objective of this powerful breathing practice is to change one's state in order to allow access to non-ordinary realms of perceiving and to remove intrinsic emotional blocks (Grof, 2000). This proved to be an extremely significant practice for me and it has unearthed some of the deepest and most fertile fodder my psyche can begin to comprehend. The dynamic images, entities, and archetypal motifs I have encountered in Holotropic Breathwork, including shamanic beings, indigenous elders, energetic healing, shapeshifting, magic, ritual, colonization, initiation, and moving epic stories and events of which I found myself a part introduced me to the deep realms of the unconscious where soul and story reside.

So deeply moving and transformational has this particular practice been for me, I am certain many of the symbols and narratives that have emerged from personal Holotropic Breathwork sessions will be with me for a lifetime.

In short, the *non-ordinary realm* contains myths, symbols, and *archetypes*: worldwide, cross-cultural patterns recognized throughout time and place without need for definition or explanation. These can all provide frameworks, storylines, foundations, or touchstones which are significant and relevant in one's own personal life or culture (Jung, 1963). In addition to accessing the imaginal, nighttime dreams provide a rich assortment of living images as does the natural world. My ongoing practice of journeying virtually always turns up symbolic images or mythical archetypes I don't expect or know about until I research or amplify them later.

Allen and Sabini (1997) assert that access and exposure to the imaginal realm allows healing to take place. According to them, the soul is designed to reveal itself to us and it is in this place we can see the soul along with its original wounding, thus allowing it to be addressed and healed. Each individual can learn to enter into direct dialogue with this realm as it is through numinous symbols that cannot be interpreted with the rational mind that we enlist the power of the sacred. Jung invested these symbols with such significance that he called them vital organs by which we apprehend meaning and reality.

In *Healing the Wounded God*, Raff and Vocatura (2002) venture to suggest the entities in this realm are autonomous and seek transformation of their own, which they achieve, in part, by interacting with us. If this is true, the work we do in the non-ordinary realm can initiate a wave of healing that will have a vast reverberatory effect. Thus, if I engage with the bees in this province, perhaps it can help them to heal alongside my own wounded psyche. In a later chapter, I recount definitive interactive work I did in the imaginal realm with Medusa of myth--a

powerful archetypal energy--and the transformational effect it seemed to have on both her and me.

Certainly, symbols surrounding the concept of personal myth, the idea that elements of one's own life reflect or represent similarities to a specific myth (Jung, 1961) became a valuable process for me when I encountered the Greek goddess, Athena, during a Holotropic Breathwork session. Through ensuing associations, I began to work with her archetype on an intimate level, which eventually led me to understand how aspects of her character and story closely represented aspects of my own. Ultimately, symbols or events associated with Athena became a permanent part of my psychic landscape, providing a framework in which to place other real or symbolic action that happened to me, leading to additional paths of exploration or meaning. For example, Athena's association with the spear, snakes, Zeus, Pegasus, and even Medusa led me to explore each of those symbols in more depth and to develop a relationship to the meaning they signify in my life.

Other breathwork sessions and forays into the non-ordinary realm were also surprising and valuable as they invariably revealed permanent allies that continue to aid me with energy and advice, showed me gifts that I did not know I possessed, and brought me face to face with powerful healing archetypes like the Divine Child. In one session, I discovered the power to channel healing energy through my hands. In another, I met the Egyptian goddess, Neith, who is associated with bees. Neith showed me how she and I were made of the same essence by changing first herself, then me, into a swarm of bees and we both witnessed the bees intermingling, knowing once we took our own forms back that some of her bees stayed with me, and mine with her.

Some of my encounters initially plunged me into darkness and left me angry, sad, or despairing, but always they ultimately transformed my consciousness in new and healing ways. Once I found myself held prisoner and tortured, eventually to death, by a violent tormentor whose consciousness had not yet begun to evolve; in another, I faced initiation through the Sun Dance, a grueling and physically painful ceremony practiced by the Native American Indians of the Great Plains. In still another, I felt myself as one of the Maya who abandoned my village to save myself from invading enemies only to be forced to witness from a distance the devastation and massacre of my community and family. However, each time I encountered a new character or underwent a new experience in the liminal realm, I learned and grew, developed insights and processed emotions, and integrated experiences from the ordinary world by gaining a new perspective or context. Ultimately, I was putting psyche powerfully in context through image and story.

Ritual. A secondary method I employed is ritual. The word “ritual” is generally defined as pertaining to routines, established procedures, and regularly followed methods connected to religion or ceremony, suggesting at a broader significance behind the physical action of repeating something (Dictionary.com, n.d.). As opposed to “rote”, meaning habitual and mechanical, ritual must be infused with attention and intention in order to assert the true power it carries (Campbell & Moyers, 1991). Ritual is an act which designates portals where the ordinary reality and the mythopoetic realms bleed together. It establishes boundaries which set apart sacred time and space, creating a container in which something is allowed to manifest, inviting potentiality, and setting the stage for spirit to enter in (Eliade, 1972). As I interpret it, ritual space allows intangible, numinous power to be translated into ordinary reality and form.

Joseph Campbell, writer and mythologist, believed the ritual enactment of mythic themes put the natural transitions of life into context, creating a fabric that held and supported events like birth, coming into adulthood, and death. According to him, ritual is not merely symbolic: it literally transports you to a non-ordinary reality. “The function of myth,” said Campbell, “is to pull you into accord with the rhythm of the universe” (McCarthy, 1988, p. 1). He adhered to the idea that myth and ceremonial rites enable the mind to be in harmony with the body and the way of life to be in harmony with the way wild nature requires (Campbell & Moyers, 1991). Pema Chödrön, Buddhist teacher, states, “Genuine heartfelt ritual helps us reconnect with power and vision as well as with the sadness and pain of the human condition” (1991, p. 78).

I have always loved ritual, finding something very magical and alive about it. Somehow, as an extension of that aliveness in my psyche, it inserted itself into my research work as a natural form of entreaty to the gods, universe, spirits, ancestors—and to the bees—for help and support to bring my inquiry into form and into eventual creative synthesis. From lighting beeswax candles when I sat down to write, to making offerings of honey and pollen to the spirits of the otherworld, I was consciously aware of the need and the desire to invoke sacred space in my quest for understanding. Sometimes, I used sage to fill the room with sacred smoke before I began to work, echoing the actions of beekeepers who, before opening the hive, “smoke the bees” to enchant and subdue them into a calm state. Equally importantly, I created an altar that continued to grow over the course of the project: it included honey, beeswax candles, pictures and objects of bees and hives, and even real dead bees that I seemed to encounter wherever I went. This altar served to amplify the sacred space where I wrote, conducted ritual, and communed with the bees, creating authentic form in the physical world that represented the

numinous energy emanating from the mysterious and powerful soul of the subject I was investigating.

In fact, for me, ritual served to enable what I call *invoking the bees*. Increasingly, I found myself wanting to immerse myself in the essence of bees, desiring to surround myself with their image and form at all times as a touchstone with which I could connect in order to feel closer to them and the issue at hand. Not only did I compulsively seek them out to watch them at work in flowers, bushes, and trees, over time, I collected several pieces of jewelry that featured bees—a bracelet, watch, necklace and earrings--and I have rarely removed them over the course of nearly three years, content to have them with me at all times.

Lee Irwin (1994), scholar of Native American vision traditions, iterates the importance of objects as physical representations of events or aspects of the dreamtime. Transforming symbols into form in order to bring the power of the dream realm into reality serves as a physical marker; a potent reminder of the other world and the spirits that manifest through the portal of time and space. The representative object is sacred because it is symbolic of a sacred event or essence. In other words, *the visionary event or numinous essence is encoded into the object*. As with conducting acts of ritual, the image or symbol also serves as a portal into the numinous—the profound reality of the sacred essence it represents. Thus, wearing the image of bees was an extremely vital aspect of ritual to me: to ceremonially surround myself with physical images and symbols of bees seemed to serve as a direct bond to the very soul of the hive and to usher in the life force and magic the bees represent. In the end, I even got a bee tattoo that I might make the image a part of me: it reminds me at all times of the urgency of my quest to understand them, and to honor and witness the significance they hold for me because of my sacred undertaking. In

short, acts of ritual ultimately served me well to immerse me in my inquiry and carry me through to a place of understanding and illumination.

Writing. A third, powerful method for delving into the work was the use of writing to explore and allow *mythopoeic* (also sometimes referred to as *mythopoetic*) meaning to emerge and take on significance. The term “mythopoeic”, based on *mûthos* meaning “story”, and *poieîn*, “to make” (also from which the word “poet” is derived), literally means “making myth” (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Scholar and storyteller, Michael Meade says of myth, “In the inner recesses of the human soul, where the facts of life mingle with the mysteries of eternity, myth means ‘emergent truth.’ In the long run...myth makes meaning” (2008, p. 64). Though not all writing may be considered a depth method, in this case, it is a practice that served me as a unique method to gain insight, derive hidden meaning, place myself in the context of something larger, and deeply encounter knowing. Exploring symbols through writing as a depth method is always a way into understanding the character or living essence of that into which I am inquiring. Sometimes, too, it brings hidden or related topics or symbols to light, almost as if, in the writing, I am peeling away layers like an onion, or shining light into the dark, unlit corners that enfold my topic.

Natalie Goldberg (2005) suggests that through writing you learn to “trust your deep self more” (p. 11). She advocates the power of listening in relation to writing, stating, “the deeper you listen, the better you can write” (p. 58). Indeed, throughout my foray into understanding the impact of Colony Collapse Disorder on my own psyche, I listened to the bees in many ways. I listened to them while they worked, their busy hum filling my ears with hope. I watched them falter and die, their sad silence equally profound as they spun desperate circles on the sidewalk, covered with dust, helpless and alone. I wrote dozens of accounts of what I saw, what I felt, and

what I heard; sometimes in poetry, sometimes in prose. Writing by listening takes on a quality that is otherwise overlooked, and it always seems to be transformational for me in the process.

Lynn Andrews (2006) articulates, “In creating a written page of words, which are actually symbols that mean many unexplainable things, a truth is coming to you and to those who read your words...your eternal dialogue with whatever is divine to you continues no matter what (pp. 46-47). Indeed, throughout the exploratory writing associated with this project, I found new truths coming to me, shifting my understanding of myself and the world around me, and allowing increasing trust in my deepest self: my soul.

Emergent Narratives

Before turning to the explication and results of my findings, it is important to share three significant narratives that had an immense fundamental impact on my psyche and my process during the course of my work with the bees over the past two years or more. Michael Meade (2008) declares that “every event, both inner and outer, has a hidden meaning waiting to be revealed” (p. 65); yet, only a story can reveal the meanings that lie beneath the obvious.

All three of these stories emerged in the earliest stages of this project and served, I believe, as crucial mythopoeic events, loaded with an emotional and spiritual essence that was compelling and almost painful; enigmas and challenges to be wrestled and grappled with, propelling me forward on my path toward understanding. All three of them represented conundrums that I couldn’t possibly solve; introducing and sustaining a tension of the opposites that was eerily reflective and, no doubt, symbolically significant of the earth-shattering transformational event that blew my personal worldview apart in October of 2006 just as the bees began to disappear. One account takes place in ordinary reality, and the others in the

imaginal realm. All three appeared to me as equally sinister, paradoxical, enigmatic, compelling, and real. Regarding narrative, Meade goes further:

Stories offer mythic contexts, psychic subtexts, and subtle backgrounds for viewing and interpreting the world around us and the inevitable dramas and tragedies that befall us. Two great dramas appear on the same stage: the endless story of the world and the ongoing struggle of each human soul to awaken to a sense of meaning within that tale. (2008, p. 65)

To be sure, each of these stories worked tirelessly on me during the course of my research, demanding to assert the meaning it was compelled to convey. The first, from the realm of image and archetype, takes place in the Underworld where I irrevocably found myself in an early escapade into non-ordinary reality in search of illumination about the dying bees. In fact, I was searching for the soul of my thesis, which I believed had become lost much as the souls of humans can, and which I believed I could bring back to restore to my work so the project could move forward and become complete. What emerged was surprising and disturbing, initiating in a period of paradox, anxiety, and mystery regarding the writing of this work and what it would ultimately become.

The Underworld

I'm walking in the depths of a dank, foresty swamp. Bare, dead trees scratch the dark sky with their bony fingers. The smell that greets me is vile, heavy, acrid. My footsteps make an odd, whispery, crunching sound, and looking down in the dim light, I suddenly realize I am ankle-deep in what must be millions—no, *billions* of dead bees covering the swampy ground. Here and there, human bones and skulls protrude in piles from amidst the decaying bees. In life, I realize, these were shamans and healers, tortured for their knowledge, their healing power, and their magic; persecuted as witches and evil-doers. Some were banished here for all time. Others fled here to escape, preferring to die alone and unmolested. I barely dare to breathe here: the decay, sadness, anger, and despair is palpable, hanging like dense smog in the stagnant air. Belatedly, I realize visitors are unheard of here; those who come don't plan to leave.

As I come to the edge of a murky body of water, I see an apparition waiting to greet me. She is white, mostly; her pale, gaunt face randomly and rapidly shifting from a white skull to something looking like the notorious “Scream” painting by Norwegian artist, Edward Munch; then back again, over and over. She is virtually transparent....With

growing apprehension, I understand this apparition IS the soul of my thesis. Eventually, she agrees to return with me; to be restored to the project so it can come to fruition and thrive. But, I wonder desperately how she can possibly be of help to me. She seems barely alive at all, fragile, weak, and ready to go the way of the other souls who have come here to perish. (Bright, personal journal, January 16, 2007)

The encounter with the Underworld in which the dead bees overwhelmed my senses and the thesis soul was reluctant to stay but also hesitant to come back with me, gave me a world of things to think about. My own willingness or inclination to venture into a locale where everything was dead or dying did not go unnoticed. I think my psyche was already compromised by the time I ventured forth; my ego set on staying numb while trying to survive and simultaneously resisting the call of something far bigger.

Another story synchronistically emerged around the exact same time. It came from a surprising and unlikely source: it is a true story that occurred in ordinary life to my own father. In spite of the fact that my mother told me my dad had shared this story dozens of times while I was growing up, I had never heard it before. Yet the narrative I got when I asked my dad about it directly was shocking to me, making me think in ways I had never engaged in before:

On the Run

Spencer scrambled over the dented tailgate of the rusty pickup truck, using all the power his five-year-old arms and legs could manage to pull himself up and over the edge. He grunted as he squeezed himself into a ball and curled up in a gap behind the wooden beehives, honeycomb racks, and galvanized buckets in back of the blue cab. His brothers were gathering their gloves, veils, hats and other protective gear so they could collect the honey from the beehives they kept in the midst of the purple blooms of the north alfalfa field for their Future Farmers of America project.

As his three big brothers exited the farmhouse and headed towards the truck, Spencer tried to make himself invisible. He was not supposed to be there; had asked over and over, in fact, to go along to collect the honey and was given an unequivocal “no!” by everyone, including his dad.

“Why not?” Spencer cried, when his dad forbade him to go.

“Because you’ll get stung,” his dad said firmly. “Those boys wear protective gear so the bees won’t get ‘em.”

But Spencer didn’t listen. He was too excited to go see how the honey was collected, wanting to be a big boy along with the others. And so it was that as the old

pickup truck coasted to a stop, kicking up dust at the top of the field in front of the hives, Spencer crawled out of his hiding place in the back of the truck and confronted his older brothers.

They were not happy. “You go home right now!” William shouted. “Those bees are gonna be mad when we take their honey and you won’t have an ounce of protection,” Reese warned. “You shouldn’t have come, you little sneak! Now you just run along home,” was Mark’s response.

The dusty road home was at least a good mile or two long—a big distance for Spencer’s short little legs--and he was not about to leave now that he had managed to get there on his own. As his brothers put on their thick grey elbow length gloves and pulled their hats down over their ears, Spencer jumped into the cab of the pickup, rolled up the windows quick as a wink, and locked the doors. Nobody was going to make him go anywhere now that he was here.

He watched as his brothers stuffed some dry weeds in the smoker and lit a match, aiming it toward the hive. The smoke was supposed to lull the bees into a relaxed state where, facing what they perceived as a crisis, they would binge on honey and make ready to flee, too fat and rigid to bend their bodies to sting.

The smoke didn’t seem to help all that much. Spencer flinched, safe inside the cab of the truck, as the bees poured out in a violent, ominous black cloud as his brothers forced the wooden lid off the first white wooden hive.

Two hours later as his brothers finished their work, Spencer started to stir inside the cab. Bored after an hour of watching the onslaught of bees as their honey was taken away and placed in the back of the truck, rack after vertical rack, he had settled down and dozed, forgetting the war that waged outside. Swarming around his brothers and the stolen liquid gold still lodged in the racks now stacked behind the cab were thousands of angry bees, buzzing their distress and rage like swarming black and yellow missiles.

At first, Spencer refused to budge, but finally his brothers succeeded in convincing Spencer to roll down the window just an inch so they could reach inside. The sheer number of bees that poured into the cab through that tiny space was beyond what any of them would have believed. Those bees were mad alright, and they were looking for fresh flesh against which they could defend themselves. Spencer no longer had a choice; staying in the cab meant certain disaster. He opened the door and ran for his life.

The bees followed in livid, winged pursuit. Spencer’s five-year-old legs were no match for the furious wings of a thousand angry bees. He screamed in pain and fear as they stung him over and over again, their chemicals calling more bees to join in the offense. He batted at his head, which was already swelling and howled as his arms, chest, neck and legs were pierced with vicious stingers, bee bodies dropping dead as their own insides fell away when the stingers latched onto him and stayed.

Running through a haze of agony and terror, Spencer spotted his salvation. There, fifty yards away at the top of the field, his Dad was doing the daily irrigation. Holding a shovel to dig out the corrugates that would carry water from the ditch to the part of the alfalfa field that needed it most, Spencer’s dad was an answer to his prayer. Spencer changed direction, screaming like his head was on fire, running toward help and protection. But Spencer couldn’t believe his eyes! His dad was waving the shovel, making violent threatening gestures in his direction.

“Don’t you come over here!” his dad yelled vehemently across the distance between them. “Those bees will sting me, too! I don’t want you over here!”

Spencer didn’t even slow down. The only thing he knew was that he needed his dad: his dad could save him and protect him. He continued screaming at the top of his lungs, legs pumping as he headed toward salvation, gasping for breath, knowing now he couldn’t outrun the infuriated bees.

His dad brandished the shovel again. “Don’t you run over here!” his dad shouted yet another time. And then, the words that changed his course, made Spencer falter; almost stop, in spite of the bees. “If you come over here,” Dad yelled, “I’ll hit you with this shovel. I don’t want you over here!”

As if in slow motion, Spencer changed his course, knowing now he was on his own. There was no safe haven anywhere. Spencer was all alone in a world of pain; left to fend for himself against the anger of bees, his brothers, his dad. It didn’t matter they’d told him not to go; they had betrayed him, and he would never be the same again.

Finally Spencer made it home, screaming his final agony into the house where his mother was making dinner, the last of the bees falling away to their death, stingers leaving giant welts on the welts that were already red and painful on Spencer’s neck, legs, chest, and arms. He collapsed on the floor in the kitchen where his mother ran to his aid with cold cloths and cries of sympathy and comfort, shocked and concerned at the scores of stings on the tiny boy’s body.

But Spencer was beyond the physical pain by now, lost in a newfound world of sadness and despair. His father and brothers had abandoned him in his moment of greatest need, and nothing would ever change that. From now on, Spencer was on his own and for days, as his damaged body struggled to repair itself, his consciousness fading in and out, he always had one awareness. He could never count on them again. Not ever.

Over time, as this inquiry into the disappearing bees progressed, I realized just how resistant I was feeling to being here in the material world; operating on the physical plane amidst a species that has fallen so far, become so inured to the devastation we seem to be wreaking all around us—on nature, the earth, on our fellow humans. The world in which my father found himself, as a helpless child, whose own father was unable to protect him is a world which, for me, is virtually unbearable. I, myself, have become so out of touch with my own physical body, the earth, and my instinctual nature that I seem to live my life in a disconnected state. One particular journey I made to the imaginal realm to gain insight into my own connection to the vanishing bees resulted in a profound and revealing experience.

Soul Sucker

I am lying in a mudpuddle in front of a modest Old West style house with a raw wooden fence. A horsedrawn wagon drives right up and over me. I float away, realizing I am out of my body, like a ghost. All the same, I see and know I am a girl dressed in prairie clothes. The men are wearing black coats and tall stovepipe hats, with bandola ties. They have a body in the wagon. I know its my father or father figure—maybe my mother’s husband. They go to the door. I drift after them. My “mother”, also dressed in prairie clothes, answers. They tell her that her husband has died and she begins to realize how much harder life is about to get as she tries to make her living alone. I realize my life will also get harder: I will have to work more to help and support her.

The men unload the body and take it into the house. I watch. Suddenly I notice the spectre of the man/father sitting up beside his body looking at me. We are in the same dimension, only his body is dead and mine is still living. I think of my body where I left it in the nearby woods. I have no desire to return to it. He keeps looking at me curiously. I don’t know if he realizes the context or what’s happened to him.

Then, without warning, he starts to draw my spirit essence into him. He is a soul sucker and he is gently but firmly sucking me in. I don’t really resist. Why not go? I don’t wish to return to my body. It doesn’t hurt to be sucked in by the soul sucker. I just experience it with minor curiosity and wonder what the purpose of a soul sucker is and why he is one. Finally when he is down to the last bit of my remaining essence, I resist a bit and instinctively shapeshift into a bee with my remaining energy and fly away. My mother sees the bee and opens a window so I can fly out.

I fly around and around, landing on flowers, drinking their nectar with my long tongue. It feels wonderful and tastes so good. I fly and fly. I’m in the woods and suddenly I come across my prone human body, lifeless-seeming, lying on the ground surrounded by flowers and leaves. I notice a tiny, tiny teardrop in the corner of my eye, and as the bee, land there to taste it like nectar. It’s bittersweet; delicious; sad. I load up and return with it to the nearby hive where I enter with the other buzzing bees and deposit the tear, which I mix with my own body fluid, into a prepared cell. I do this three times, filling and sealing 3 cells for later use for...I don’t know what. The other bees are aware on some level what I’ve brought back is something different; not the usual nectar. They let me work in peace.

I fly out again, around and around. I suddenly notice I’m over the ocean with no land in sight. I realize as a bee, I’m a messenger for the divine like the myths recount. Only I don’t know how to find the divine, so how can I take a message? I don’t even know where I am. I’m lost. I see how the sunlight sparkles on the waves below me like diamonds. Surely that is the divine. I fly into one of the brilliant white speckles of light and water washes over me like a tsunami. I will die in this ocean.

Suddenly, without knowing how, I am back in my body on the forest floor. I don’t want to be here. I don’t want to be in my body. I want to be back out flying around. I pop back out again. (Bright, active imagination, April 23, 2008)

This intense foray into the non-ordinary was a culmination of several experiences prior to the journey: the witnessing of hundreds of dying bees on a beach in Santa Barbara; the desire to

be airborne, retaking flight instead of being grounded to the earth in a terrifying world; and the exposure to a strange and sinister essence that seemed to be slowly but surely draining the lifeforce out of my life.

Summary of Methods

In short, Heuristic inquiry has proven to be a highly relevant and complimentary framework for my research. Jung insisted the use of analogy is a powerful tool to work with the images and archetypes that emerge from the unconscious, thus we can turn to mythological parallels to understand and place into context the powerful symbols that grip us (Edinger, 1972). If the depths are not explored, symptoms and symbols not investigated, and their contents not integrated into some kind of conscious meaning in relation to the larger psyche, individuation cannot occur. The Heuristic method truly provided not only a pathway and a process to listen to how my topic lands and lives in myself, but also a container in which to immerse myself in the material that emerged as I practiced the investigative methods—a sort of slow cooker where I could safely steep while allowing understanding to emerge. The longer I cooked, the more the process allowed the content to gradually unfold, slowly revealing a rich texture and flavor of which I was previously unaware.

Each of the investigative methods, in turn, provided rich and detailed energetic work that was channeled into a powerful trajectory, catapulting me forward to understanding and belief in a new and emergent insight. And as each individual image, dream, symbol, story, archetype or piece of data was added to the pot, it mixed and melded with my own psyche in this watery container. Eventually the elements began to coalesce—first, a couple here; then more over there—until they gradually formed into new cogent insight that had not existed before, an alchemical essence that seemed to emerge from the very bees themselves. Truly, the Heuristic

process, for me, was alchemical, and proved to work exactly as described, resulting in a creative synthesis that has forever changed my life. The methods, in turn, have proved to be tried and true ways to get to the heart of an inquiry and I am certain I will continue to use them at will.

The essence of this project is an investigative inquiry into the implications of one particular event that holds powerful energy for me: the sudden mass vanishing of billions of honeybees in what is now termed Colony Collapse Disorder. This crisis, combined with the emergent tension of despair over the human condition and a feeling of not wanting to be embodied in the physical world became the recipe that launched me into a challenging process that would irrevocably transform me and my way of looking at the world. In the course of the actual writing, I often found myself adopting a collective voice, one used by writers whose ideas about the plight of humanity and the world around us heavily impacted me, a voice often used by Carl Jung himself to explore and expound upon the nature of the psyche, of humankind and of our resulting condition. However, I want to be clear that, while I often use “we” to refer to the tendencies and traits of our culture or our collective humanity, my observations and feelings about the issues that emerged for me are highly personal, and the ways in which I have been in relation to them and continue to perceive, react, and interact with the symbols and symptoms I encounter are very personal as well. In coming chapters, I investigate why Jung contended that captivating events and images are manifestations of the *unconscious* and are imbued with *numinosity*. In the next section, specifically, I investigate the potential symbolic significance of bees in light of their mass disappearance and the way in which it relates to me and to our culture as a whole.

Chapter III – The Symbolic Perspective

Many ingenious lovely things are gone
 That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude,
 protected from the circle of the moon
 That pitches common things about. There stood
 Amid the ornamental bronze and stone
 An ancient image made of olive wood -
 And gone are phidias' famous ivories
 And all the golden grasshoppers and bees.

We too had many pretty toys when young:
 A law indifferent to blame or praise,
 To bribe or threat; habits that made old wrong
 Melt down, as it were wax in the sun's rays;
 Public opinion ripening for so long
 We thought it would outlive all future days.
 O what fine thought we had because we thought
 That the worst rogues and rascals had died out.
 --William Butler Yeats

By all accounts, Colony Collapse Disorder appears to be a symptom of a devastating turn of events in human history. Rather than simply one more species in a dramatic series of losses of which we have recently been made aware, the vanishing of the bees is a symbol of something much larger and more compelling: something which manifested in my own psyche as a mirror of an existential issue I was experiencing, but also a symptom which points a warning finger at a sinister and dire occurrence in nature and our culture at large. If we consider Colony Collapse Disorder as a symbol that has emerged from the world soul, the lost and vanishing bees appear to be a clear and urgent symptom that something vital has fallen out of balance and is affecting us all; threatening the human colony with a collapse of our own.

One of C. G. Jung's fundamental tenets that differentiated him from his mentor, Sigmund Freud, was to allege the existence of a *collective unconscious*, a province that includes all psychic material and systems that are not conscious, and which is vast and inexhaustible;

limitless, unknowable, and indefinable. According to Jung, the unconscious is made up of *archetypes*, autonomous instincts, patterns, or behaviors, which are common across all eras, peoples, and places. Archetypes organize the contents of the unconscious and connect it, at its deepest levels, to nature (1964).

Jung believed the language of archetypes, and therefore of the unconscious, is manifest in symbols and images, which entice us with their numinous power to enter into relationship with them. As Edinger (1992) iterates, “Symbols are spontaneous products of the archetypal psyche (p. 109). . . .To see the symbolic image behind the symptom immediately transforms the experience” (p. 116). The term *numinous* can describe an encounter with expressions of the unconscious in the form of powerful images and emotions. From this, we begin to gain a much larger sense of what Jung called the *Self*, an ordering, regulating harmonizing and meaning-giving agency of the psyche. The Self, according to Jung, is an inner guiding factor and the totality of the psyche. It is this central archetype around which we circumambulate and gain experience, instinctively seeking wholeness in the process of *individuation* (Storr, 1983; Smith 2007).

A *symbol* stands for something unknown; a mystery, which can never be exhausted in meaning but which is contextually significant to a particular individual. Jungian analyst Edward Whitmont (1969) contends that symbols allow the emergence of themes from the unconscious in an attempt to reconnect us with a mode of experiencing from which we have become disconnected. We experience both *external* objects, things we can see or experience with our senses and which have meaning for us in a specific context we have learned, and we also experience *inner* objects that we can’t necessarily know or recognize. Both are represented by images, and “the same images which present themselves to us as representatives of the outside

world are subsequently used by the psyche to express the inner world” (Whitmont, 1969, p. 29). Thus, the external object that represents some unknown inner object becomes a symbol, which is “the best possible representation of something that can never be known” (Hopcke, 1999, p. 29). Intuiting the meaning of this object beyond what we already understand it to be is the idea of *symbolic thought* (Whitmont, 1969). Ryan (2002) calls the symbol both the guiding force that opens the portal to the archetype as well as a vehicle to navigate the deeper parts of the unconscious. Jung (1964) strongly promoted living the symbolic life: that is, taking symbolic experiences seriously. According to Jung:

the powerful symbols emanating from this imaging faculty of the soul mysteriously attract all with whom they come into contact and, awakening them to the heritage of the collective unconscious, allow them to experience and express symbols with a similar numinous power of attraction. (Ryan, 2002, p. 80)

As I realized, my own mysterious fascination of the phenomenon of Colony Collapse Disorder goes far beyond initial material concern for the bees and our environment. It is, instead, a numinous symbol that awakened something in me, occupying my psyche like a presence, a harbinger from the soul, perhaps, of something monumental to come. While devastating reports seem to arrive on a daily basis of new and emerging threats to the natural world due to disease, pollution, and climate change, mysteriously, the disappearance of the honeybees impacted me in a way I had never known. Ryan (2002) explains that a symbol can seem “somehow previously known, something fascinating, inexplicably significant, and even fateful in its encounter” (p. 80). Quoting Plotinus, he refers to it as “something which the soul names as from an ancient knowledge and recognizing, welcomes it, enters into unison with it” (p. 80), and insists it transforms consciousness. In my case, it is almost as if I recognized Colony Collapse Disorder as a fateful event, and the honeybee as a symbol of something critical and vital deep within myself that I must engage without fail.

The Evolution of Modern Man

Many scientists contend that Colony Collapse Disorder is a result of individual bees becoming lost and disoriented, unable to find their way back to the hive. Honeybees are instinctively imbued with infallible navigational skills, visually memorizing landmarks, tracking the sun's movement across the sky, and orienting via the pull of the earth's magnetic poles to see them safely back to the hive (Fountain, 2003). Alone, they perish. Their very survival both individually and as a species demands that they be able to make their way home with their findings whenever they are ready, that they consistently fulfill their assigned roles, and that, above all, they never, ever abandon the queen who is the life-force of the hive.

Just as bees have the instinctual ability to find their way home, the capacity to think in symbols is a birthright of humankind. Primordial images are the language of the soul, but, according to Jung, in recent centuries, the *ego*, the conscious part of the self with which an individual identifies himself, has become overly dominant. As a result, we have lost touch with a deeper part of ourselves, severing the very instincts that call us forward on our divine, evolutionary path (Storr, 1983). He assesses our condition:

The forlorn state of consciousness in our world is due primarily to loss of instinct, and the reason for this lies in the development of the human mind over the past aeon. The more power man had over nature, the more his knowledge and skill went to his head, and the deeper became his contempt for the merely natural and accidental. (as cited in Storr, 1983, p. 390)

Our increased veneration of science, technology, and factual evidence have led us to lose sight of the worldview of our ancestors who considered themselves just one element in the vastness of the cosmos. Again, Jung lamented, "Western man is held in thrall by the 'ten thousand things'; he sees only particulars, he is ego-bound and thing-bound, and unaware of the deep root of all being" (as cited in Ryan, 2002, p. 63).

With our striving for domination and the belief we can control our circumstances and environment, we have placed ourselves at the top of a hierarchy that justifies manipulation of the earth and its resources for our own benefit, measuring our success through the ideals of progress and productivity. Consequently, though undeniably interconnected, we have lost contact with our wild nature, both inner and outer, as well as with one another, allowing our thinking, egoic personas, driven by fear and by greed, to run amok. Thus, we find ourselves dislocated in the fabric of being and disoriented in the process of living (Glendinning, 2007).

Jerome Bernstein (2005), Jungian analyst and author, agrees, equally citing our overspecialized, overly dominant egos as the mitigating force responsible for what he refers to as a massive split from our sacred roots in nature. He warns that we have gone too far, and alludes to the need for a colossal compensatory shift in evolution that will help us regain balance and wholeness, action that will pull us “back from the brink of self-extinction” (p. 13).

According to Bernstein (2005), in paleolithic hunter-gatherer societies, before humans learned to manipulate the earth to produce crops, wilderness was still a magical realm filled with potentiality and power, and nature was still imbued with the divine. A sense of the sacred permeated daily life. This feeling of connection to something more vast than one’s individual self provided order and meaning, understanding of where one was located in the fabric of life and how he related to every other element of his world. However, in modern society, Jung (1964) observed what he calls “an alarming degree of dissociation and psychological confusion” (p. 72), stating:

What we call civilized consciousness has steadily separated itself from the basic instincts. But these instincts have not disappeared. They have merely lost their contact with our consciousness and are thus forced to assert themselves in an indirect fashion. (p. 72)

Jung (1964) asserted that current western cultures have lost a sense of the sacred, and in so

doing have become dislocated and disoriented, losing meaning and vitality by losing contact with what he calls the regulating center of the soul. This condition of being out of balance is often referred to by so-called primitive people as *loss of soul*. Smith (2007) argues that a retrieval of the sacred is essential for retrieval of the soul.

As our rational thinking minds have evolved, man's identification with external objects has eclipsed his reverence and understanding of internal ones (Whitmont, 1969). As those outward objects in the material world have become more important, we have disregarded the deep inner instincts that enliven our existence. We objectify everything around us, turning it into a dead object with no energy or will of its own, depriving it of soul. We lose all awareness or thought of subjectivity, believing we can control, manipulate, and place ourselves above the elements around us. Jung further summed up our plight, saying:

Man feels isolated in the cosmos. He is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional participation in natural events, which hitherto had symbolic meaning for him. Thunder is no longer the voice of a god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree makes a man's life, no snake is the embodiment of wisdom and no mountain still harbours a great demon. Neither do things speak to him nor can he speak to things, like stones, springs, plants and animals. (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 79-80)

The growing and ongoing dissociation between the conscious thinking mind and the unconscious one, rich in myth and symbol, results in disorientation, despair, and a loss of context. Once this rich inner source of wisdom guided past civilizations and gave them the feeling of being rooted in something bigger, of a sense of the tapestry of the world soul into which we are woven. Now we have become isolated and alienated, trying to find meaning in the literal analysis and valuing of external objects, rather than in the soulful mystery of the unconscious. We appear to have slipped into pathology as a contemporary culture, substituting a manmade environment for the natural one, and becoming cut off from our instincts as a result

(Jung, in Sabini, 2005). I am suddenly, deeply aware of the profound sense of loss and longing I feel in my own skin and bones at the vast abyss that has opened up between myself and the stones, the rivers, and the trees of Jung's indication. It is painful and compelling, validating the sense of sorrow I feel at my own personal disconnection.

The Hive as Self

In modern western culture, the instinct that connects us to greater symbolic thought has been damaged. As a civilization, we have stopped residing in a sacred world; stopped believing in a dynamic living force that contains us. Nature is no longer a narrative, but is something to be analyzed, controlled, and plundered for the resources that benefit humankind in our ever-growing desire for acquisition and progress. Furthermore, our concept of a divine creative source as a living, organizing centering force has become a fixed, lifeless icon in religions that dictate blind obedience to authoritarian dogma.

Ancestral thinking holds nature as divine intelligence at work, a dynamic pattern that has intention and meaning in its cycles and systems. Correspondingly, the beehive, in scientific terms, is known as a *superorganism*: a whole and perfect system with a life and intelligence of its own, independent of its individual elements. Psychologically speaking, the human psyche is not so very different from the hive. According to Jung, we each are a product of our Self, a vastly intelligent, unified, self-organizing entity whose overarching intelligence regulates and eternally inspires us to always go in the direction of growth toward integration, to achieve our ultimate potential, a coming home to ourselves in the process of individuation. Jung called the Self the God within us, and individuation, the unfolding of the Self's plan for wholeness (Kalsched, 1996).

Differentiation

In spite of the consequences that the over-development of our rational egos has presented, Jung claimed, “the resistance of the conscious mind to the unconscious and the depreciation of the latter were historical necessities in the development of the human psyche; otherwise the conscious mind would never have been able to differentiate itself at all” (as cited in Ryan, 2002, p. 61).

In the beginning of a human life, there is no differentiation between the ego and the Self. Jung described the Self as the totality: both the center and circumference at the same time. In Biblical myth, paradise, too, was an undifferentiated consciousness, womb-like: all differentiation came with the Fall, which symbolized the beginning of consciousness when Adam and Eve recognized their nakedness and the difference between heaven and hell. Similarly, in early childhood development, an infant does not automatically know itself to be differentiated from its mother (Glen Slater, Unpublished lecture, Pacifica Graduate Institute, February 10, 2009).

Like Jung, analyst and author, Donald Kalsched (1996), believes in an authentic self that is, by nature, numinous, archetypal, and omnipotent. Also like Jung who believed in the importance of developing a strong ego in order to navigate in the world, Kalsched observes that the self must be gradually *humanized into* the physical and cultural realm it has entered at birth in order to survive, adapt, and grow. When we are born, we are sheer essence, he insists: our authentic self, at the beginning of life, "little more than the summation of sensori-motor aliveness" (p. 125). It is this kinesthetic felt sense of self alone that a newborn infant knows. In turn, then, we might assume a young bee has a similar experience: while she is encompassed by the sound, the scent, and the vibration of the living womb that holds her, the honeybee that has

never been outside the hive cannot differentiate herself from the eternal hum of the infinite hive itself.

During the course of her early life, a honeybee takes on a variety of roles inside the hive. Every few days, she shifts to a new and different duty including feeding the young, cleaning the hive, guarding the door, building the comb, making honey, or grooming the queen. Halfway through her lifespan, about six weeks if she is a summer bee and a few scant more if she is born in winter, she leaves the hive to forage for the first time, forgoing the dark warmth and safety of the community where everything works in perfect precision and unity. She works her remaining weeks of life on earth amidst the ranks of those who gather nectar and pollen to manufacture sweet honey, the lifeblood of the hive. She goes because she is called to go. She goes because it is the only way the hive can be nourished and fed.

A bee that braves the world to forage is protected by her instincts, spontaneously making use of her agile wings, sharp eyes, and sensitive antennae to steer her clear of immediate danger as she seeks the flowers she needs to secure precious nectar for the hive. In much the same way, as humans mature, the ego develops and specializes in order to steer us along, ideally growing gradually stronger and more knowledgeable with each new foray into life. Thus, we can consistently explore our expansive newfound world and deliver back firsthand experiences to our source, the Self, which is nurtured by our findings.

Michael Fordham (1993) hypothesizes that the self deintegrates in an optimal manner each time a new adaptation is needed; then reintegrates back into wholeness. In this way, the self navigates potential trauma by interacting fluidly with its environment and ensuing circumstances. Individuation begins as an infant deintegrates and incrementally gains consciousness as she reintegrates and differentiates herself from her mother little by little. Like the solitary bee that

leaves the hive to see and taste the world around her as she forages for the elements that sustain the hive, a human child, too, must experience vulnerability and solitude as a forager in the physical and psychical world of humankind. The stronger and more vibrant her ego grows, the better it navigates the gap between a *sense of self* and actual reality, coming back home again and again to integrate her findings. This concept is referred to as the *ego-Self axis* (Edinger, 1992).

What happens, though, when the ego becomes cut off, disoriented, inflated, or unable to reintegrate with the Self? What happens when we no longer return to the greater whole to integrate our experience and reconnect with a sense of soul, of the sacred, of the holding, centering, and regulating archetypes that push us in the direction of growth and wholeness? Like a lost bee, we suffer. It is when reintegration does not occur because of psychological trauma resulting in excessive or prolonged pain that splitting takes place (Fordham, 1993). Jung stated there must be recurring reunion between ego and Self if the integrity of the personality is to be maintained, or there is a very real danger “the vital connecting link between them will be damaged” (as cited in Edinger, 1992, p. 12). In our ever-extended forays from our own hive, the Self, our egos have become disconnected, out of touch with reality, and no longer able to see the bigger picture or even begin to understand the deep sense of loss and homelessness we may unconsciously harbor.

A single bee, far from the hive, lost and disoriented, has little chance to survive. Separation from the community for any extended period of time is always risky and becomes deadly by nightfall. Vulnerable to predators, changing weather conditions, and plummeting temperatures, she quickly loses energy and resources as the sun drops out of sight, no longer warming her wings to flight or identifying the location of the hive with its position in the sky.

She is divided from her shelter, her sisterhood, her vital role as a provider, and ultimately from herself as she can no longer take to wing and find the nourishment that awaits in the hive. In the growing dusk, rife with the shadows of her impending demise, defeated and alone, she is better off forgetting the glorious hum of a million warm wings, the taste of the honeyed air they fan, or the sublime and nourishing feast of golden droplets of mead.

The Empty Self

Jung lamented the loss of contact with the sacred and the disconnect from our instincts from the vast, deep energies of the natural world that sustain us, saying, “Modern man has suffered an almost fatal shock, psychologically speaking, and as a result has fallen into profound uncertainty” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 144). Psychotherapist and author, Chellis Glendinning (2007), believes we collectively carry out pathological patterns of abuse and addiction due to the fact that we live in an “extreme and untenable situation” (p. 122) due a “profound sense of homelessness” (p. 118). With the loss of the known, the sense of being part of something greater that sustains and protects us, comes denial and fear. Disoriented, instincts lost, we hunker down, and “turn on” all our defenses.

This disorientation, uprootedness, and sense of abandonment is often so traumatic, we try desperately to fill up the gaping sense of emptiness. As Jung said, “we rush impetuously into novelty, driven by a mounting sense of insufficiency, dissatisfaction, and restlessness” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 141). Rather than turning inward to find a sense of meaning and engaging with the archetypes through their language of myth and symbol, we look outward, desperately seeking something in the external, material world that will soothe us and bring us a sense of security and worth. Thus, as a culture, a species, even, we enter an inexorable downward spiral into despair and helplessness.

Two particularly useful defenses, *dissociation* and *objectification*, mastered over millennia, have been particularly effective for humans to ward off our fear. Dissociation, disengaging from emotion, body, and a sense of self, is initiated in the desperate hope that nothing can affect us while we are alone and vulnerable. Denying reality, as a species, it is our tendency to focus on recreating a world in which we can pretend we can survive. As night falls or difficulties emerge, we deceive ourselves, attempting to control the environment around us while at the same time cutting off our emotions and psychically numbing ourselves from the things that cause us fear and pain. We repress the ancient memories of the “two-million-year-old-man,” the part of our psyche that carries the collective memory of a more meaningful, harmonious world, that place we know as home, where we felt alive and in contact, significant in the success of the whole (Sabini, 2005).

In this moment, perceiving offense to be the best defense, human nature turns us to the use of objectification in order to feel more safe and powerful ourselves. In my own evolution of ego defense I know myself to be guilty of this, treating things and people around me as mere dead objects, turning life forms to stone like Medusa of myth, immobilizing and incapacitating any potential threat before it gets to me. Meanwhile, I distract myself at all costs from the silence, the oppressiveness, what I perceive to be the sinister sounds of the night while I am vulnerable. Glendinning (2007), articulates how, in the throes of fear, it is natural for our helpless egos resort to hypervigilance to provide a sense of security, and to hyperactivity to ward off fear and enable an illusion of value through productivity, a substitute for creative forces of magic and power with which we have lost all contact.

With the loss of instinct and the collapse of our sense of connection to community, the deprivation of our natural roles and the descent into despair, it is our common tendency to

increasingly seize onto knowing to lead us out of the crisis. We tend to look ever more desperately to reason and logic and to the influence of cause and effect to help us make sense and find a way out. We scan the darkness, give form to our fears, and turn to the world outside us for meaning; for rescue that cannot arrive. At this juncture in the shadowy landscape of my own experience, I notice a dawning realization that psychic understanding has abandoned me, leaving a haunting feeling of emptiness because I have lost touch with my inner reality. In this worldview, conflict polarizes us, and can only be resolved by doing one thing or another. Systematic mechanical thinking and idealism cast shadows that must emerge and be seen. Or, in our passionate plea for action, for direct experience from which we can garner some sense of feeling or meaning, we begin grasping at straws, substituting sensationalism as a compensation for lack of substance on the inside (Glen Slater, Unpublished lecture, Pacifica Graduate Institute, February 10, 2009).

This reductionary worldview results in a way of being in which knowledge and understanding become mutually exclusive (Jung, in Storr, 1983). Ever more desperate, we seek to know, believing knowledge can save us, but we do not understand the greater reality. We have forgotten that cycles of life and death have existed in nature's master plan since the beginning of time. We resist the idea that we must die; we refuse to surrender to the thought that we are only part of something bigger and that we have no control. We live our lives as tamped-down shadows of our true selves, in fear and isolation, deceiving ourselves into thinking we are where we want to be, or, if we're not, someone is at fault. We are split; torn in two knowing we cannot control our survival, yet we refuse or cannot look inside ourselves for the soul and meaning we have assigned to the limited view we can see from our pathetic perch on the leaf as dusk descends.

Jung hypothesized about an unconscious *Zeitgeist*, which “compensates the attitudes of the conscious mind and anticipates changes to come” (as cited in Storr, 1983, p. 402).

Enantiodromia, the concept that a trend in motion will eventually reverse itself in order to restore balance, opens a sleepy eye, awake and aware that the time is nigh. For centuries, our lopsided egos have revered science as God, giving over to the power, simplicity, and reason of one-sided thinking (Glen Slater, Unpublished lecture, Pacifica Graduate Institute, February 10, 2009).

Pushed too far, nature bites back. The compensatory dynamic kicks in and entire species, like everyday honeybees, begin disappearing overnight. The pendulum swings. Man keeps thinking he can fix it, if only he thinks hard enough. The world, and therefore we, via the collective unconscious, are experiencing soul loss of massive proportions as cultures, languages, species and habitats go extinct by the thousands in a colossal Colony Collapse of our own. Thus, we sink further into a loss of vital energy, understanding, and meaning, resulting in rampant disease, depression, and despair.

Ironically, in myth, bees have been represented as symbols of the soul. The fact that they are leaving the hives now and not returning is a direct metaphor for the massive loss of soul we are increasingly experiencing both individually and collectively. In place of our true home to which we can no longer return, we have taken refuge in secondhand shelters of egoic thoughts, judgments, labels, aspirations and activities which we desperately hope will stave off our fear at the sense of loss and disorientation we feel at finding ourselves cut off and separate from the hive.

Our ability to dissociate and objectify in an attempt to control and manipulate our environment leads to a pathological disorientation even nature may not now be able to repair. Honeybees find their way back home by memorizing the angle of the sunlight as they fly.

Scientists believe that even while foraging from flower to flower, they must constantly recalculate the direction of the hive (Fountain, 2003). However, in Colony Collapse Disorder, the automatic intelligence and instinctual capacity nature built in is suddenly no longer effective. So, too, with humans who have stopped paying attention to the source of the light and direction of home. Our renegade, out-of-balance egos may have finally gone too far to allow us to reconnect at all and find our way back to the source.

Jung, in a profound insight into our digression from the Self, our true home, asserted that once man assumes God is dead, man becomes victim to *inflation*. Through the negation of God, man himself becomes God-like and deified, and then, in increasingly blinded vision, believes he knows best what is appropriate and therefore required for man (Storr, 1983). Because we are no longer in relation to something larger than ourselves, the idea of God enters our ego and inflates it, resulting in a devastating loss of meaning, a drying up of our psychic energy, and a loss of connection to the instincts. We are left alone and self-important in our hubris.

Jung contended that the gods always punish hubris. We must consider that there may be a point where the Self has become so alienated, a new and different dynamic appears; one where our egoic fantasy of being in control and our denial of death have become so powerful and so perverse, even the Self can no longer break through to guide us and contain us. What if, like the individual hive in Colony Collapse, all corrective measures have reached a tipping point where we can no longer be in reciprocal relation to the Self and the hive is abandoned altogether?

A *symptom* is the psyche trying to bring something to consciousness (Harris, 2001). Decades ago, Jung (1957) postulated that there exists a “symptom and symbol of a mood of universal destruction and renewal that has set its mark on our age” (p. 402), a belief that might well explain the sudden loss of the honeybees as well as the increasingly vanishing (and

vanished) cultures, species, and habitats throughout the world over the last few centuries. Jung claimed, “This peculiarity of our time, which is certainly not of our conscious choosing, is the expression of the unconscious man within us who is changing. Coming generations,” he went on, “will have to take account of this momentous transformation if humanity is not to destroy itself through the might of its own technology and science” (as cited in Storr, 1983, p. 402). Jung warned, “The facts of nature cannot in the long run be violated. Penetrating and seeping through everything like water, they will undermine any system that fails to take account of them, and sooner or later they will bring about its downfall” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 128).

Colony Collapse Disorder, then, is a symptom of something gone terribly wrong: a warning sign that I, for one, must sit up and take notice of what has occurred. The rational, egoic part of me tends to turn attention to the symptom, tries to interpret it, analyze it, literalize it, and figure out how to eliminate it or fix it. Simply trying to get rid of symptoms without address the deeper significance beneath results in increasing emptiness and a lack of ability to get in touch with symbolic, sacred life.

Individuation

Jung defined individuation as “the process by which a person becomes whole” (Storr, 1983, p. 212). The first phase requires us to encounter reality as direct experience without the numbness or distance an external mediator would provide. In my case, as with bees, this is the encounter with the dark night: the direct experience of being grounded from flight, isolated, and divested of community and significance as an individual. It also includes the fear, shame, and anger I, and no doubt many of us, have inevitably felt on realizing what has occurred. This is associated with a *wounding*. Jung claimed the experience of the Self is always a defeat for the ego. To feel the pain of having strayed too far, lost connection, and become isolated and

incapacitated can seem unbearable, causing us to become dissociated, neurotic, pathological, to enter into denial, or to lash out or take radical action. But the wound and the symptom are not the same: a wound cannot be healed at the same level on which it is manifested or experienced. Therefore, endurance is required: tension must be held for something deeper to shift and begin the healing process at the root. Finally, then, revelation occurs in the form of transformation, be it death, initiation, or individuation (Storr, 1983).

Current world events are forcing direct experience through economic difficulties, natural catastrophes, hatred, violence, oppression, genocide, hunger, and disease. Through powerful contrast, differentiation, a sense of having and then losing, of identifying with and then separating from, transformation is initiated. If there is no differentiation, no holding of tension, no individuation will result. By avoiding direct experience, it is common to suffer or become stuck. Through opening myself to my work, by paying attention and listening to the deep stirrings of soul, I am gradually coming to the understanding that if I can hold the tension with consciousness and a true desire to reconnect back to the Self, Jung's transcendent function can emerge creating new consciousness and a restoration of soul. Only then do I begin to see the story that reality has to offer me, the narrative of nature in the vast array of symbols that surround me at any moment in time, and truly understand my place in it.

As a call from the unconscious, a symptom represents a deeper reality. It is vital to look more deeply into the profound depths of the soul, the *rhizome*, the root from where the symptom arises and discover how to address it in its own symbolic realm; in its own language of image, story, and myth. It must be regarded from a depth psychological standpoint. Only then do I begin to understand why the bees are being sacrificed and honor what is being given, shown, and offered up. The word "sacrifice" is etymologically connected to the idea of making something

sacred (Dictionary.com, n.d). Therefore, it becomes clear that I must offer up my own sacrifice in order to honor the sacredness emergent in the symptom and allow transformation to happen. In other words, how can I sacralize the dying of the bees to connect with meaning and authenticity?

Indeed, as Jung observed in the case of Job who suffered so greatly in Biblical lore, once we give up the desire to know, to fix, or to control a situation or symptom, power arises in a softer, more feminine manner based on creativity, intuition, and understanding. Opposing, dichotomous conflicts dissolve into night giving birth to the sun, allowing regeneration and transformation to occur. Even more remarkably, *God is also transformed* (Storr, 1983). Individuation, the impulse toward wholeness, then, requires access to the creative function which enables all things to be reconstituted, restored, *re-storied*, even, through the power and magic of symbolic thought. Indeed, in Colony Collapse Disorder, the queen still remains alive in the hive.

In the end, the colony collapse and death of billions of bees is simply one aspect of nature, a sacrifice to the dark, devouring mother that births all things and then brings them back home to her dark fold. As humans, we seek to make meaning when we suffer; when we experience loss, death, isolation, alienation and a sense of being cut off with no control over our lives or circumstances. We ask ourselves, as did Job, “Why do I suffer?” Jung’s answer is that we suffer to become more conscious; to bring what is unconscious into consciousness, to locate ourselves in the sacred fabric of reality, and to be transformed. And, the only way God can address the impulse to become more conscious is if we do (Storr, 1983). If our collective hive is indeed in the early stages of colony collapse, in order to heal, we must all go deeper into the pain and suffering, the death and darkness, the emptiness and isolation. As a conscious observer of the symptom, I must personally be willing to experience it, and thereby ultimately witness and understand it. The colony, like billions of bees already gone, may die, but transformation will

occur and the infinite creative force will continue to weave its tapestry of endless cycles of death and rebirth.

In Chapter Four, I look at the ongoing loss of honeybees from the hive from the shamanic perspective of soul loss in comparison with Jungian psychology.

Chapter IV: The Shamanic Perspective

Look how desire has changed in you,
how light and colorless it is,

with the world growing new marvels
because of your changing. Your soul

has become an invisible bee. We
don't see it working, but there's

the full honeycomb! Your body's height,
six feet or so, but your soul rises

through nine levels of sky. A barrel
corked with earth and a raw wooden

spile keeps the oldest vineyard's wine
inside. When I see you, it is not so

much your physical form, but the company
of two riders, your pure-fire devotion

and your love for the one who teaches you;
then the sun and moon on foot behind those.

-Rumi

Much has been written about the juncture where Jungian psychology and shamanism converge (Haule, 2009). Indeed, Jung, who developed the concept of *archetype*, might agree that both are instances of the same primordial image or instinctual pattern known the world over. Both shamanism and Jungian psychology acknowledge the importance of the sacred in healing processes. Both recognize how the sacred is manifest in wild nature and through the realm of the *imaginal*, areas where modern man has fallen out of consistent connection with wholeness. Both observe how loss of contact with the sacred results in loss of soul and understand that recovery requires initiation and successful integration of direct experience. And both, it would seem, would concern themselves with an alarming manifestation of nature like the massive

disappearance of the honeybees. In this chapter, I will review the commonalities of Jungian psychology and shamanism with a focus on soul and soul loss.

The Sacred

First, both Jungian psychology and shamanism focus on wholeness as a state of health. Shamanism defines health as being in balance with the sacred, and lack of health as violation of the will of the sacred. Smith (2007) establishes that Jungian thought identifies *health* as wholeness, and *pathology* or lack of health as lack of wholeness. He characterizes the sacred as an experience of something that evokes rapture, awe, exaltation, or ecstasy; something that is even dreadful in its intensity and power. As opposed to profane or ordinary, sacred is often perceived in contemporary culture as something alien or *other*.

Though indigenous and earth-based cultures of history likely made no distinction between the sacred and the profane, in my life, at least, I am increasingly aware that the sacred is not something I experience in my busy everyday routine unless I somehow slow myself to witness a sunset or feel into a sudden sense of longing or love. Only then, in the spaciousness of attention, am I aware I have generally tuned out the sense of something powerful and unknown. A thing that is sacred often invokes a feeling of mystery beyond the power of words to describe. As I touched on earlier, Jung often used the term *numinous* to connote the sacred: describing it as something which provides an experience or alteration of consciousness independent of human will, arousing, affecting, bedazzling, or blinding one to other realities. Both “sacred” and “numinous” are words connected to the idea of soul, the creative, sacred life force that imbues all things with energy and meaning.

James Hillman (1982) describes soul as not just an element, region, or dimension but rather, as a perspective: as deepening, noticing, penetrating, and insight. He seeks to extend the

soul beyond humanity to the world at large, to forms and objects around us, whether natural or man-made. Each thing, Hillman claims, has a spark of soul at its core. He challenges us to imagine a world soul, the *anima mundi*, as that particular soul spark that “offers itself through each thing in its visible form” (p. 77). Jung considered psychology deeply tied to soul; so much that he referred to psychologists as doctors of the soul (D. Bona, personal communication, October 8, 2008). Similarly, Smith (2007) states that the province of the shaman, as technicians of the sacred, is disorders of the soul. Eliade (1974) calls shamans masters of ecstasy, stating, “The shaman is the great specialist in the human soul; he alone ‘sees’ it, for he knows its ‘form’ and its destiny” (p. 8).

Smith (2007), noting the pathological conditions emerging in contemporary culture, posits that shamans would diagnose western societies not as having a breach in relations with the sacred, but as having no relations at all with the sacred. As individuals in modern culture, Smith asserts, we have repressed the contents of the unconscious and summarily forgotten it entirely, disregarding the magic and mystery there. Shamans and those commonly called *folk healers* rely on the power that issues from the sacred to conduct their healing activities, and the sheer lack of it in current times and culture epitomizes the tremendous precipice on which we perch as a result. Jung, sensing the enormity of the split between our conscious everyday lifestyle and the vast depth of the psyche, warns, “We do not understand yet that the discovery of the unconscious means an enormous spiritual task, which must be accomplished if we wish to preserve our civilization” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 145). According to Jung, the only way to address the deep loss of connection to soul that we are experiencing as a species is to reestablish our connection to the sacred.

Eliade (1974) reports the practice of shamanism has been around for millennia,

essentially as long as humans have existed, and is the oldest spiritual healing tradition still in use today. Though the word *shaman* emerged from Siberia via the Russian language, shamanism is historically found in virtually every culture in the world. Eliade emphasizes shamans cure like doctors and perform miracles like magicians. They manipulate the sacred, and, in fact, "have access to a region of sacred not accessible to other members of the community" (p. 7). Shamans are often linked to events surrounding life and death, healing and health, and spirits and the underworld. Not only are they responsible for the religious direction of a community, they also guard its soul.

The Sacred Manifests in Nature

The concept of the sacred is inexorably tied to an *animistic* belief system: the impression that the world and everything in it is imbued with life, intelligence, and spirit. Thus, in the physical or material world, the sacred manifests through wild nature as an infinite source of life and creativity waxing and waning in eternal cycles of death and rebirth. Shamans read nature, regarding and interpreting the elements and events that communicate through soul at all times and places (Eliade, 1974). Jung mourned the loss of the shamanic perspective; of contact between modern man and nature, and he identified our increasing analytic thinking and desire for progress through manipulation of the natural world as devastating to our well-being (Sabini, 2005).

Historically, in nature-based cultures, everything could be explained by the maintenance of right relations to the sacred, the divine force that holds the world together. When something went wrong in a family, a village, or a culture, it was obvious that something was radically out of balance with the world: the gods had been offended and equilibrium had to be restored (Smith, 2007). As Jung suggested, as modern man has increasingly developed causal thinking and has

pursued science and technology as our foremost religion, we have placed ourselves at the top of a hierarchy that relegates nature, wilderness, and the imaginal to lesser status and importance. Nature has become something we exploit and control, and the imaginal realm, something to analyze, define, or explain away as irrelevant fantasy. No longer do we turn to these dimensions to gain insight and understanding from the gods or the ancestors who came before, or to engage with them to re-establish balance. In fact, it never even occurs to us to try. Jung, grasping our plight, lamented:

There are no longer any gods whom we can invoke to help us. The great religions of the world suffer from increasing anemia, because the helpful numina have fled from the woods, rivers, and mountains, and from animals, and the god-men have disappeared underground into the unconscious. There we fool ourselves that they lead an ignominious existence among the relics of our past. Our present lives are dominated by the goddess Reason, who is our greatest and most tragic illusion. By the aid of reason, we assure ourselves, we have “conquered nature.” (1964, p. 91)

Jung speculated that our connection to nature is ancient and undeniable. At the most profound levels of the unconscious, everything becomes less and less differentiated until our ego no longer exists as a separate entity:

The deeper layers of the psyche lose their individual uniqueness as they retreat farther and farther into the darkness. Here they become increasingly collective until they are universalized, merging with the body’s instinctual and biological functions and eventually with nature itself. Hence, ‘at bottom’ the psyche is simply ‘world.’ (Jung, in Ryan, 2002, p. 26)

Jung went on:

Since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and moreover are in continuous contact with one another and ultimately rest on the irrepresentable transcendental factors ...psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing. (Jung, 1921/1976, p. 215)

Clearly, Jung discerned that there is no separation. Whatever the external landscape, the internal psychic landscape mirrors it, inhabits it, gives birth to it but also dies into it. The degree

to which we are able to perceive the sacredness of what is manifesting around us in nature is the degree to which we are able to believe in the divine aspect of we commonly know as our own human nature.

The Sacred Manifests in the Imaginal

Both Jungian psychology and shamanism engage with image and call on the imaginal realm for healing. The language of the unconscious is the language of the soul: image as living symbol. Jung stated that psyche is image and for Hillman (1982), as well as for the Greeks, soul is image, too. Ryan (2002) describes how the soul speaks for itself in images and how those images allow us to enter different dimensions of consciousness than the one we are used to in our profane, everyday lives. According to him, images reach into the deepest recesses of the psyche.

Cavalli (2002) asserts, “Healing is as much an imaginative process as it is one that relies on material manipulation of the body. Imagination, Einstein said, is as important as knowledge in understanding the universe” (p. 99). In fact, professor of psychology, Jean Achterberg (2002) asserts images literally interact with bodily tissues and conduct a dialogue with cells, organs, tissues, and ultimately with the central nervous system in order to effect change.

Imagery has always been central to the work of indigenous shamans. Ryan (2002) asserts, “the shaman everywhere is the great master of ‘thinking in primordial images’” (p. 41). Jung deemed the shaman as having a “direct line to the unconscious” (p. 41). A shaman requires access to images in order to see intrusive spirits that cause disease and to locate the disease in the body. Simply showing a patient an intrusive object that the shaman has extracted can have a powerful effect on the patient, just as patients in the western world are affected by images of an x-ray or a pill that might help them heal. “The shaman today, like his ancestors, is able to ‘see’ an invasion of foreign energy encased in his patient’s body, ‘hear’ the call of a lost soul, and

‘feel’ the brush of his power animal against his leg” (Gagan, 1998, p. 53). Smith (2007) describes the shaman’s effectiveness as a result of being able to enter a different reality, gain a new perspective, and return with it to change the patient’s *world image* or inherent belief system.

Image is the direct path to the unconscious in the opinion of James Hillman (1982). To be imaginative does not necessarily require what we traditionally think of as images, that is, actually seeing imagery; rather, we perceive images with the imagination: we imagine them. Hillman insists images are actually metaphors; thus poetry and music, as well as dream figures and felt experiences, also qualify as image because we perceive them with the inner senses of our psyche.

Depth psychology has adopted the term *imaginal*, coined by twentieth-century French philosopher Henry Corbin, to describe images through which the unknown expresses itself. Jung suggested we look within the psyche, the collective unconscious, to find the sacred, believing it shows up through access to the imaginal realm, the space of myth, dream, and symbol, of ancestors and spirits. Jung found these energetically suffused images to be numinous, instigating emotional resonance in relation to the psyche and self. He theorizes that archetypes, those autonomous, energetic blueprints that are common to all human beings, often show up as numinous images imbued with sacred power. Jung recommended the practice of *active imagination*, which enables us to engage with unconscious, archetypal, imaginal elements in a creative way (Hopcke, 1999).

In Jungian therapy, the analyst guides the patient to connect with images brought forth from the unconscious as dreams or symbols and then encourages him to hold the tension they bring until something begins to shift. Jung attributed the new perspective or worldview that emerges from the opposition as archetypal: a pattern that transcends a particular culture. These newly generated images or configurations interact with the patient at a deep level and allow him

or her to begin to shift into a new configuration or context, and therefore to transform. By accessing images and experiences in a dimension where magic and power reside, in which archetypes and entities have dreams, will, and intelligence of their own, we can develop our own relationship with the sacred. Encounter with the imaginal generates rapture, awe, and power; providing insight and growth when we personally interact with it through active imagination, movement, writing, art, poetry or other depth methods (Smith, 2007).

Both for Jung, in his world of the unconscious psyche, and for the shaman in non-ordinary reality, there is a cosmos equal to the physical world with its own landscape, made of images with energy and will of their own (Ryan, 2002). Our dialogue with and relationship to these living images is the source of soul. Here, Jung claimed, in the depths of the soul's interior, our mental functioning, connects to the *pleroma*, the deepest roots of our being, the origin or source. This is the realm the shaman also penetrates in his quests for healing and understanding. It is at the level of the *pleroma* where the shaman is endowed with the powers to cure and revitalize. This is also the transpersonal space Jung called the *subtle body* where the "symbol can operate to transform both body and mind" (Ryan, 2002, p. 41). Mazatec shaman, Maria Sabina asserts:

There is a world beyond ours, a world that is far away, nearby and invisible. And there it is where God lies, where the dead live, the spirits and the saints, a world where everything has already happened and everything is known. That world talks. It has a language of its own. I report what it says. (Halifax, in Sandner & Wong, 1997, p. 11)

Soul Loss

Studies in anthropology led Jung to adopt into psychology a concept prevalent in shamanic societies: that of *soul loss*. Typically recognized as a state of general malaise, soul loss provides another common thread between both Jungian psychology and shamanism. Soul loss is

a fragmentary sequence in which parts of the whole wander away, flee, or get split off, lost, or disoriented resulting in a loss of vitality or life force (Ingerman, 1991). In a shamanic worldview, the dislocated parts are carried away to the underworld; in psychology, they are said to recede into the unconscious. With the critical absence of vital parts of our soul, we are left feeling weak, empty, depressed, deflated, or anxious, and commonly trend toward mental or physical illness. Jung cited the loss of connection between our ego and the Self as the fundamental cause of soul loss:

There are two reasons why man loses contact with the regulating center of his soul. One of them is that some single instinctive drive or emotional image can carry him into a one-sidedness that makes him lose his balance...his one-sidedness and consequent loss of balance are much dreaded by primitives, who call it "loss of soul." (1964, pp. 228-9)

Hillman (1975) outlines five functions of soul: (1) it makes all meaning possible, (2) it turns events into experiences, (3) it involves a deepening of experience, (4) is communicated in love, and (5) has a special relation with death (p. xvi). For Hillman, as a result of these five characteristics, the soul represents the imaginative possibility of our nature, a possibility that is realized in reflective speculation, dream, image, and fantasy. If any one of these aspects of soul alone is lost, the repercussions are immense. As meaning dissolves and love and death become increasingly distant aspects of our experiential understanding, our lives are prone to becoming simply a series of events, which happen to us, one after another, and from which we are progressively more disconnected and detached.

Both shamanism and psychology seek to treat soul loss by retrieving and reintegrating vital essence that is missing. According to Eliade (1974), soul loss occurs for many reasons: one, as a protective measure, transpiring when we simply cannot sustain the distress caused by accidents, abuse, attack, or other sudden, devastating events. In this case, the soul flees in order to escape feeling fear, pain, or shock. On other occasions, pieces of our soul remain with other

people after relationships end or they depart with souls who have died. Additionally, invasive energies can attach themselves to, or are directed at, a person. This is commonly perceived as witchcraft or sorcery from a shamanic view and as a *complex*, or constellated, spontaneously activated, unruly energy triggered by past conditioning from a Jungian standpoint (Storr, 1983). Last, soul loss can occur from habitually refusing to listen to the guidance of the gods or spirits (Ryan, 2002). Indigenous cultures often relate illness, both of body and mind, to soul loss, believing the resulting illness, disease, depression, or malaise stemming from the loss of an essential part of the self can only be restored through shamanic intervention (Sarangerel, 2001).

In psychological terms, soul loss is dismemberment or dissociation: the loss of contact or connection with deeper, vital parts of ourselves associated with the Self. French psychologist Pierre Janet coined the term *splitting* to describe the defensive mechanism through which the human mind is able to distance itself from the effects of trauma by severing the connection to thoughts, feelings, and memories that are in excess of what it can process at that time (Smith, 2007). Kalsched (1996) states that dissociating is a normal psychological defense that allows us to bear pain that may otherwise be unbearable. Disengaging and dropping the part of ourselves that was most traumatized is the only way we can cope and move on. In each of these instances, we dissociate or dismiss the parts of ourselves that are vulnerable to the brunt of the trauma and banish them for either punishment or safekeeping. Ultimately, it is a default mode of sequestering and coping with unknown entities that threaten us.

Glendinning (2007) maintains that the ability to remove our consciousness around an area or topic that is too painful to bear serves an important function. According to her, dissociation is a brilliant method of self-preservation, a way to stave off or avoid threats, challenges, and difficulties we are unable to integrate. Dissociation is a kind of fencing off of our psyche, a

splitting, just as when we first fenced off plots of earth in order to manage them more effectively and accommodate our ongoing survival (as cited in Glendinning, 2007, p.113). These fenced off areas, once established, seem to freeze in place, holding the contents in the original untouched form, as if freeze-drying them to preserve the host from contamination. In psychology, these are what Jung referred to as the complexes, which are often spontaneously broken open when certain triggering situations arise (Jung, 1964).

Indeed, it is this loss of connection to which June Singer (1994), Jungian analyst and author, also attributes the core of our soul loss. Singer says when soul loss occurs, the soul has “ceased to be the connecting ribbon of a road between the conscious individual and the vast unknown and unknowable” (p. 39). She, like Jung, believes it is a necessity for the soul to provide ongoing intercourse between the ego and the unconscious.

Soul Recovery

It is the task of the shaman to walk between worlds as an interpreter or mediator of the spirit realm—including the province Jung referred to as the collective unconscious. According to Mircea Eliade (1974), one of the most vital functions a shaman performs is that of soul retrieval wherein the shaman’s spirit leaves the body to seek out souls who have lost their way, journeying into other realms to locate and retrieve the lost soul and re-integrate it into the person’s physical body. Similarly, psychotherapists also seek to re-integrate disconnected pieces of the soul, or psyche, but, in this case, the major difference from a shamanic worldview is that patients are encouraged to go in search of their own split-off parts. The therapist will then help the patient interpret the significance of her interaction with the imaginal and to frame her experience in order to reintegrate the parts (Haule, 2009). From both perspectives, healing can be

achieved through visions, dreams, and symbols, regardless of whether they are accessed first by the shaman or the patient (Roberts, 1999).

Ingerman (1991) points out that a significant difference between shamanism and psychotherapy is that in shamanism it is categorically apparent where the fragmented pieces of soul go when they leave. In traditional psychology, we understand there has been a splitting off resulting from trauma, but we don't think to ask where those lost parts reside. Smith (2007) rightly suggests that a shaman might consider most of the disorders defined in the *DSM*, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* published by the American Psychiatric Association, as symptoms with an underlying cause of soul loss, otherwise defined as loss of vitality or power. Regardless, healing, whether in shamanism or in Jungian psychology, results from gathering those parts and reintegrating them with the whole—just like bringing the lost bees home to the hive.

Collective Soul Loss

Modern times seem to find the increasingly global culture suffering from a spiritual crisis, a collective soul loss and a dismemberment of body, mind, and spirit (Allen and Sabini, 1997). Rampant dissociation characterized by inertia, loss of vitality, depression and disease pervades our everyday life. Daily we are exposed to new and ever more disturbing accounts and media stories of addiction, violence, rage, and intolerance. In order to prevent the discomfort and pain these events arouse, we must numb ourselves on an ongoing basis. Dissociation, a form of disregard, disrupts our connection to a universal, cosmic web in which we participate as equals with the greater whole of elements and life forms around us. It deepens the separation we have established between ourselves and what we see, and it intensifies our view that the outside world and everything in it is dead, justifying ever greater abuse and manipulation of the natural world,

the earth, and each other (Bernstein, 2005).

Our collective culture mirrors an individual who is suffering deeply from soul loss, manifesting in symptoms such as falling into conflict with the self, fragmenting into splinters in the pursuit of goals, interests, and occupations; and losing touch with his “origins and traditions...even losing all memory of his former self” (Sabini, 2005, p.182). Disregard, numbing, or not wishing to see or feel the distress and negative effects that soul loss brings also moves us ever further away from deep connection with soul and into a society where meaning is hard to find, compelling us try anything to fill up the gaping sense of emptiness that results. Jung correctly diagnosed our compulsive, cultural tendency toward hyperactivity, saying, “we rush impetuously into novelty, driven by a mounting sense of insufficiency, dissatisfaction, and restlessness” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 141). Rather than turning inward to find a sense of meaning, rather than encountering and engaging with soul to integrate the disparate pieces, we grasp at straws outside ourselves and further fragmentation ensues.

Jung also recognized that entire nations suffer from dissociation and soul loss, reminding us, "Modern man does not understand how much his 'rationalism' has put him at the mercy of the psychic 'underworld'.... His moral and spiritual tradition has disintegrated, and he is now paying for this break-up in world-wide disorientation and dissociation” (as cited in Allen & Sabini, 1997, p. 216). In fact, we are witnessing an ever-greater loss of soul at the planetary level as well. The *anima mundi*, the world soul, so rich and varied with her diverse multitude of cultures, languages, species, and habitats, is losing soul with increasing speed as each becomes endangered and then extinct. With every loss of heritage, home, or heart, pieces of soul drop away, leaving the world soul weak, listless, and disoriented, lacking needed vitality and energy to exist.

Initiation and Direct Experience

A final common and compelling component of shamanism and Jungian psychology is that each seeks to treat soul loss by retrieving and reintegrating vital essence that is missing. This must occur through direct experience; therefore, the underworld journey to retrieve the soul is one of necessity and initiation.

Jung believed symptoms of soul loss, such as disorientation, lack of focus, or feelings of powerlessness, exist because a portion of psychic energy that is normally available to the ego has vanished into the unconscious; becoming lost to the underworld. However, Jung realized when there is a depletion of libido, that life energy is not irrevocably gone; it continues to exist in the unconscious, awaiting the opportunity to resurface. The energy, equally powerful in the underworld as in our conscious life, continues to be busy as it manifests in images and symbols, the language of soul (Ryan, 2002).

The solution, Jung insisted, is for us to descend into the unconscious to engage with the missing libido through symbolic thought. This is what the shaman does when he or she journeys to other realms to garner insight, to do battle, or to retrieve a lost soul; and what the psychologist and patient do through dreamwork or active imagination. By engaging with the symbolic forms and entering into relationship with them in order to understand their significance in our daily life, vitality can be restored as the ego once again gains access to the energy it requires (Haule, 2009).

Though they travel in what some label invisible realms, shamans are no strangers to direct experience. Eliade describes a shaman as one who “has immediate concrete experiences with gods and spirits; he sees them face to face, he talks with them, prays to them, implores them” (Eliade, 1974, p. 88). Ryan (2002) insists that when a shaman, through ritual, vision, journeying, or dreams visits the realm of spirits, it is not figurative or metaphorical: he actually

encounters the archetypal realm and the landscape therein. Similarly, Allen and Sabini (1997) maintain that it is imperative that every individual learn to dialogue directly with the spiritual dimension through journeying or active imagination rather than relying on an intermediary as most religions have done for centuries. Direct interaction with the spiritual dimension can heal dissociation and dismemberment by re-establishing the link between the ego and the Self.

Overall, Jung believed, the most compelling and transformational direct experience is the descent. In Biblical myth, paradise was an undifferentiated unconsciousness. All differentiation and self-knowing came with the Fall which symbolized the beginning of consciousness when Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden and recognize their nakedness and the difference between heaven and hell. Similarly, a descent to the underworld, whether through shamanic initiation or through what Jung called a *night sea journey*, a dark night of the soul, gifts us with differentiation, growth, and ultimately, transformation (Ryan, 2002).

In shamanic initiation, symbolic dismemberment incurs direct experience of the sacred as ritual death and rebirth take place. The initiate is re-assembled and reborn as a new being: a shaman with power and potential. Shamanic initiation, Allen and Sabini (1997) agree, requires various and numerous stages of ascending and descending the World Tree, a central axis that provides access to the other realms, each time gaining greater consciousness of the unified reality of the transcendent dimension. In everyday life, we each must make a descent in order to gain experience, encounter deeper aspects of ourselves, and emerge again, transformed, in the process of initiation.

Jung believed the Self, the centering archetype, to be ego-transcendent, calling it the God within us. Because it has a preconceived blueprint for wholeness and knows what is best for the ego, it will nudge us toward the path of greatest growth. There is a *telos*, a destiny factor,

associated with the Self, then, that allows it to guide and regulate individuation, the unfolding of its strategy for wholeness (Kalsched, 1996). While we may not choose the descent to the underworld with our egoic mind, the Self may send us downward to our destiny because it is there where we will garner wholeness through direct experience of the challenges and conflicts life brings.

In spite of our current collective cultural crisis, Jung inferred that the loss of instinct, the loss of soul, which is the root of our pathology, can be restored through reconnection with the sacred aspects of the natural and imaginal worlds. Darkness is an aspect of nature. In our descent to reconnect with our roots in wild nature, the deep levels of the psyche, like bees that are lost from the hive, we may encounter destruction, violence, devouring forces, dismemberment, death, and decay. We may battle dark forces, pit our strength against demons, gatekeepers, and those who seek to destroy instead of create. We may navigate unknown territory, dark waters, and close, tight spaces. We may even enter in that impenetrable dark night of the soul where all hope seems lost. But Jung urged us to look for the seed in the darkness that will come to fruition and light, stating, “a civilization does not decay, it regenerates” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 183).

The hive is being dismembered through the loss of the bees, it behooves us to understand that dismemberment is the first act of initiation. What is broken into pieces can be re-membered and begun anew like the initiate who emerges as a powerful shaman. It is possible, through the process of descent to reconnect with the sacred earth, to restore our souls to their rightful wholeness, both individually and as a culture. By re-membering our roots in the sacred, by re-establishing right relations with nature and the imaginal, we renew our trust in the power of soul to help us find our way home.

In the next chapter, I outline the connection between our increasing rift with nature and the act of colonization, major contributors to the condition of colony collapse.

Chapter V: Between Honey and Pain: The Colonization of the Wild

Deep in the forest you
 shuffle up some tree,
 you rip the bark
 you float into and swallow
 the dripping combs
 bits of the tree,
 crushed bees---a taste
 composed of everything lost
 in which
 everything lost is found.
 --Mary Oliver

Some say the world began long ago in ancient Egypt when the goddess, Neith, emerged from the primordial waters and gave birth to Ra, the sun; then flew away in the form of bee. She established her sacred temple, called the House of the Bee, in the middle of the Nile delta in Sais in Lower Egypt where it still stands to this day (AB, 2009).

That bees would be connected to wild creativity, to sacred places; to wilderness itself, is appropriate. Pulitzer prize winning poet, Gary Snyder (1990) defines wilderness as a “place where the wild potential is fully expressed” (p. 12), associating it with richness, energy, Eros, chaos, ecstasy, and the unknown. He quotes John Milton, saying it is a site of abundance and “a wilderness of sweets” (p. 12). In the wild, he contends, imagination and the body rise unbidden, wild and otherly in nature—as is nature herself. In our primal bodies where fundamental instinct lives, I know it in the sudden, unexpected rush of adrenalin in the bloodstream that echoes the chaotic hum of a busy hive and in the unbidden sweetness of solitude at sunrise that mirrors the ecstasy of sipping sweet nectar from dew-drenched flowers, then in witnessing it transformed into the abundance of rich golden honey.

The opposite of wild is *cultivation*, says Snyder (1990). Cultivate, from the Medieval Latin *colere*, means to prepare and use for raising crops, to foster the growth of, to improve by labor, or to care for (Dictionary.com, n.d.). According to Snyder, something or someone that is cultivated has weeded out the wild from their nature. Our *culture* (based on the same root) considers this tempering of the wild a positive step, though it has not always been the ideal. It is a dilemma I know well, surfacing in bittersweet, disparate memories of hoeing the earth on the family farm of my childhood to rid it of wildflowers disparaged as *weeds*, and of befriending sweet baby calves or pigs as I fed them each day only to have them turn up on the family dinner table at a later date.

In the Neolithic age, somewhere around ten or twelve thousand years ago, the human animal first turned the earth with a sharp stick in order to plant a seed, to *cultivate* it, and wildness changed forever. A distinction, a *division*, arose. Just like the farm on which I was raised, wildness became something *else*; something other than what we could predict, control, or manipulate. What we could not control was labeled *wild*, was feared in its chaos and unpredictability. Wildness was not known; not familiar; not a friend, and therefore it became a foe. Wildness, *wilderness*, became *otherness* which we sought to improve, to control at all costs; even to colonize. Wild animals that could not be domesticated were fenced out, run off, or killed. Wild territories had to be conquered and tamed. Wild nature had to be cultivated, improved by laborious effort and the intent to reform and refine. No longer was wildness numinous, sacred, or inspiring awe; instead it seemed foreign, frightening, and strange.

As human animals, we set ourselves apart from Milton's *wilderness of sweets*, separating man from nature and mind from body. Now, divided from ourselves and our natural place in the original fabric of being, we fearfully observe and condemn the unexpected.

Unconsciously and perhaps unwillingly, I like many of us, stifle the wild, creative impulse, building instead an inevitable hierarchy where humans reign isolated and supreme: ultimately, a sinister trap. Rather than honoring the otherness, we fear it. We seek to change what we can to sameness and homogeneity, and we eschew the otherness, pushing it further from our view into wild darkness. As diversity disappeared, so did wild power, passion, uniqueness, honoring of otherness and mystery. Thus, with the loss of wild, we also lost the awe, and a sense of the sacred (Snyder, 1990).

Glendinning says cultivation of the earth has had devastating results, and Jared Diamond, Pulitzer Prize winning author, deems it “the worst mistake in the history of the human race” (as cited in Glendinning, 2007). Chalquist (2006) points out the first systematic ploughing of the earth led to "a sense of separation from Home that over time has overdeveloped into pathological estrangement--pathological for us as well as for the planet" (para. 7). Paul Shepard (1998) states:

Wildness, pushed to the perimeters of human settlement during most of the ten millennia since the Pleistocene, has now begun to disappear from the earth, taking the world's otherness of free plants and animals with it. The loss is usually spoken of in terms of ecosystems or the beauty of the world, but for humans, spiritually and psychologically, the true loss is internal. (p. 143)

That loss, Shepard asserts, “is our own otherness within” (p. 143).

Honeybees, one of the oldest forms of animal life still left from the Neolithic age, preceded humans by at least 10 to 20 million years. Primeval humans have gathered and eaten the honey of wild bees for millennia, an event depicted in Neolithic rock art uncovered in Africa and Spain dating as far back as 25,000 years ago (Jacobsen, 2008). Indications suggest honey played a vital function in cultures around the world, including Egyptian and Maya among others. Honey was the only sweetener available until the discovery and mass cultivation of sugar cane in the New World in the seventeenth century (Ransome, 2004).

Cultivating Colonies

Bees live in *colonies*, distinguishable localized populations within a species (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Ironically, the word *colony* stems from the same Latin root as cultivate: *colere* means to honor, cherish, worship; live in, inhabit; or till. Cultivation has given way to colonization. One of the first colonies established so that Britain could gain a foothold in the New World was commissioned by Sir Walter Raleigh, on behalf of Queen Elizabeth. Founded in 1587, the 90 men, 17 women, and nine children of Roanoke were dependent on local Native Americans for supplies and food. When times grew lean, the British colonists resorted to manipulation and threats to obtain what they wanted from the Natives, kidnapping and antagonizing them in efforts to gain information or to try to extort the food and supplies they demanded. Relations between the invading Europeans and the Native American Indians quickly became strained as human natures clashed.

In one deplorable attempt to terrorize and control the “untamed savages”, the British burned the Indian village Aquascogok. In response, the Indians disrupted and destroyed the colonists’ fish and animal traps, and all-out war broke out between the natives and the demanding newcomers (Markham, 1912). By 1590, when British ships finally arrived with supplies and fortifications, it was clear something had gone terribly wrong. The colony of Roanoke was completely abandoned with no sign of the former colonists, save the word “Croatoan” carved into a nearby tree. There was no indication of battle or foul play. No bodies were ever found. The invading colonists had simply vanished into thin air, leaving behind only a troubling mystery that was never solved. Centuries later, the mysterious collapse of the colony of Roanoke seems a dire foreshadowing of the vanishing of the bees in Colony Collapse Disorder.

Over millennia, human beings learned to cultivate bees as they did much of the rest of the natural world. The earliest evidence of beekeeping was discovered in 2007 in Tel Rehov, Israel, dating from the 10th to early 9th centuries B.C.E. Nearly 30 cylindrical clay and mud beehives stacked one upon another were uncovered in an excavation--along with pots for storing honey and fertility figurines, marking the site as sacred (Friedman, 2007).

Colonization of the Wild

Unfortunately, over time, as humans grew more and more divided from nature, we have lost touch with the sacred aspect of the word *cultivate*, associated with honoring and cherishing the thing we aim to develop. Methods of beekeeping from the Middle Ages show little evidence of tending or cherishing the bees that provided sweet honey to satisfy human desires. Previously, bees had been revered in many cultures across the globe. Associated with alchemy, the goddess, wisdom, and creative life force, their wild nature long inspired awe and respect (Ransome, 2004). In recent centuries, however, human beekeepers treated domesticated bees as expendable assets, often destroying the bees in their carefully cultivated colonies in an effort to harvest the coveted honey. In medieval Europe, bees were often suffocated, crushed, drowned in a tub of water, or poisoned to death in order to obtain their honey. In a brutal process called *brimstoning* practiced in Europe and elsewhere, colonies of bees were asphyxiated and burned by placing the hive over a fire billowing deadly sulfur, leaving the sweet golden honeycombs free for the taking (Ellis, 2004; Longgood, 1985; Bishop, 2005). At best, beekeeping was wasteful and cruel; a terrible casualty of our increasing fear of the wild and our attempts to tame it and reap the benefits for ourselves. Other aspects of nature fared no better as we have systematically manipulated and plundered the earth and its ecosystems in our ongoing thirst for *cultivation*, the quest to possess and improve, along with its harsh cousin, *colonization*, the urge to occupy and

dominate. Forests and sacred groves have burned as landowners around the globe practiced *slash-and-burn* farming, planting more and more crops to support burgeoning populations while mercilessly clearing land which can only be farmed for a few short seasons before it is sapped of its nutrients and left stripped and useless for years as farmers move on to find new earth to plunder. Also known as *swidden* farming, this practice eliminates native flora and heavily erodes and saps the soil (Diamond, 2005).

Evidence now shows deforestation took a heavy toll in Europe and Asia by the Middle Ages as humans chopped down, uprooted, or burned huge numbers of trees, destroying habitats and species in their wake, and forever eradicating the ecosphere along with countless facets of the world soul. In western and central Europe, forested land plummeted from 95 percent to current day figures of 20 percent, and in China, trees originally covered 70 percent of land ten thousand years ago, a number that has now dropped to five percent (Glendinning, 1994). With the loss comes mass destruction of native life. By the end of 13th century, for example, England saw the last of its bears, and as Europeans turned their eye on the New World in ensuing centuries, it became clear they had neither the values nor the knowledge to care for the land or the wild creatures that inhabited it (Snyder, 1990).

Colonization of the Other

The burning, drowning, disregard, and abuse advanced from trees and bees to humans. As the desire to dominate and possess continued to grow, suffering increased. The fear of other, of things unknown and unpredictable that swept the globe in the form of persecution and witch-hunts from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries mirrored the same unconscious cruelty with which honey was once harvested. Through fear and unconsciousness, the twisted face of human nature ruthlessly turned on our own species. With increasing lack of tolerance for anything that

diverged from the dominant culture, now heavily patriarchal and driven by reason, those who were different, marginalized, or who appeared to possess power that was not easily had by the majority, were considered suspect and were viciously tormented. Individuals tied to the natural world made easy targets due to their association with the wild.

A witch-hunt is described as an investigation or “intensive effort to discover and expose disloyalty, subversion, dishonesty, or the like, usually based on slight, doubtful, or irrelevant evidence” (Dictionary.com, n.d). Minorities and those at the margins of society--women, shamans, medicine people, or anyone who knew the old ways of herbs, rituals, and nature spirits--were accused, put on trial, and hanged, drowned, beheaded, or burned at the stake for their ostensibly evil acts. One way to know if a woman was in league with the devil, it was said, was to throw her in a lake and see if she drowned. If she did, she was innocent (but already dead), but if she survived, she was a witch and was condemned to death. All told, a moderate estimate is that 50,000 to 200,000 of people were put to death as witches (Pavlac, 2009).

Colonization of our Own

With the discovery of the so-called New World, the human lust to control the wild, to tame, and to possess multiplied as colonists set foot on previously unexplored territory all over the globe and claimed it as their own, disregarding the indigenous inhabitants that had flourished there for centuries and millennia before them. Memmi (1965) suggests colonization includes exploitation, usurpation of land, rights, customs, and culture, and the wresting of profit from others.

As our mounting urge to dominate and exploit the wild got the better of us, we witnessed a tidal wave of destruction in its wake. Stories of horror abound. In Tasmania in 1804, invading British soldiers opened fire on a group of weaponless Tasmanians, killing fifty men, women and

children who greeted them waving boughs as a gesture of peace. After an intense onslaught of violence and war, the last full-blooded Tasmanian male died in 1870. In Australia, Europeans decimated the Aborigines, demolishing their population from 750,000 in 1790 to only 70,000 just over a century later. In Hawaii, white settlers eradicated over ninety percent of the native population. Africa saw between thirty and sixty million of its people destroyed after being sold into slavery, while those lucky enough to remain in their homelands lived to see their culture, language, and traditions annihilated as colonizers took advantage of them on virtually every front. In the New World, Native Americans were slaughtered by the millions from virtually the moment the first white colonists set foot on dry land. Appalling accounts of violence emerged about soldiers and settlers who buried live infants up to their necks and then forced parents to watch as they kicked the infants' heads off in a game of sport, to stories of violation, rape, pillage, and ambush. Treaties were violated, natives were tricked and ultimately, deliberately exterminated (Jensen, 2000).

Europeans also brought diseases against which indigenous peoples had no immunity, sometimes intentionally by offering contaminated blankets or clothing as gifts. Chicken pox and measles, though common and rarely fatal among Europeans, often proved deadly to Native populations, as did the lethal smallpox. Waves of disease often preceded White scouts, wiping out entire villages. Some historians argue that more than 80% of Native populations may have died due to European diseases in a mass form of genocide. Again, the wild suffered. Along with tens of millions of original natives in the Americas, European colonizers oversaw the decimation of the world's largest mammal group, the bison, as well as fifteen million Pronghorn, and a good portion of their native soils and grasslands (Mann, 2006).

One aspect of colonization that caused terrible tragedy for the colonized native peoples became known as the *trail of tears*. In 1828, American colonists issued an ultimatum to Native Americans living in the territory of Georgia, including Cherokees, Creeks, and Choctaws, among others. This mandate forced the Indians to choose between giving up their nation and their sacred land to comply with colonial law, or to leave their homeland and move west to lands designated for them by the United States government. If they stayed, they would be second-class citizens at best, without some of the most basic rights Whites enjoyed (Page, 2003).

The men, women, and children who eventually undertook the westward march of nearly 500 miles, either voluntarily or after being forced out of their homes with little or no provisions, suffered a terrible fate. Many died of cold, hunger, illness, or in violent raids at the hands of white colonizers along the way. Those who survived arrived only to find resistance from existing tribes who already inhabited the land and did not welcome unexpected newcomers. The massive relocation was catastrophic, eliminating an estimated 25 percent of the Native Americans and setting the survivors up for additional trauma and suffering (Page, 2003).

Colonization of the Bees

In modern times, commercial beekeeping enterprises have continued to grow as mass crop production around the country and around the world steadily increases. In California, for example, the almond harvest has been lucrative for commercial beekeepers who are willing to ship their bees in on trucks to be onsite for the action. Almonds, a two billion dollar industry in California, require intense cross-pollination performed primarily by honeybees. An estimated 1.5 million hives, more than two-thirds of all the commercial colonies in the entire U.S., are currently needed in the area every year in order to achieve the target. In the process, pallets of bees are crammed onto trucks and shipped up to 3,000 miles over burning tarmac, in sweltering

temperatures, and through heavy traffic fumes. Some beekeepers admit it comes at a cost as they fully expect to lose 10% of their bees on the trek, a forced march that is their own trail of tears (Kolbert, 2007).

Once on site, bees are forced into unnatural reproduction so there will be enough worker bees to attend to the task of pollinating. To simulate an early spring, bees are fed corn syrup instead of the natural pollen they normally eat, a decidedly inferior, non-nutritious substitute. On site, exposed to a heavy dose of pesticides from surrounding fields, nearly half the bees in the country are massed together without regard for their individual needs. Parasites and disease can spread like wildfire to formerly healthy colonies, and it was here that the deadly varroa mite contagion which hit bees hard was first reported: within a few short years, it had spread to virtually every managed bee colony in the U.S. (Kolbert, 2007).

Colonized Labor

Treating bees as free labor without regard for their needs is an alarming echo of another blatant colonization. Just a few centuries ago, another cruel, even apocalyptic, forced journey also occurred in the quest to harvest something sweet. When Spanish conquistadors embarked at Jamaica in sixteenth century, the island's native Arawak Indians inhabited the island. Quickly enslaved and forced into harsh labor, the Indians were rapidly decimated by disease and abuse. Many are said to have committed suicide in order to escape the untenable conditions, and mothers to have murdered their children to prevent a similar intolerable fate of such horrific slavery (Floyd, 1979). By the middle of the seventeenth century, the pure Arawak race had been completely obliterated from the island (Carley, 1963).

With the demise of their slave labor, colonizers rapidly turned to African slaves to maintain the intense labor demands of the sugar cane fields. At the height of its production,

Jamaica imported around 5000 slaves per year from western Africa, rounding them up like cattle, shackling them, and shipping them across the ocean in cramped, inhumane conditions without regard for their origins, tribes, customs, languages, lives, or humanity (Carley, 1963). As a species, in our hubris and our loss of relation to the wild, we have tended toward dreadful and destructive behavior. The increasing dominance of our rational brains has outsmarted us, taken over our wild roots that connect us to nature—and to *human* nature--at the bottom of our soul. Finding ourselves in a lopsided state, as our connection to body and soul diminishes, our humanity does too. Dominance, hierarchy, and faculty for cruelty increase as it our capacity for compassion and connectedness decrease, leading us further down the path of loss, disconnection, and homelessness.

In medieval times, bees were considered expendable and were put to violent use as weapons of war, whole hives dropped over ramparts onto the heads of the attacking enemy. In modern day, bees continue to be ordered into service to the madness of mankind and our callous ways. Modern science condones the use of bees for experimentation, deeming them expendable and exploitable in the name of progress. Recent testing has proven bees can be trained to sniff out certain chemicals and indicate their presence by clustering around explosives and extending their *proboscis*, or tongue, when certain odors are detected. Additionally, lasers will bounce off clusters of bees revealing an accurate map of where explosives are located. Therefore, they are useful in locating chemical explosives or unexploded land mines that riddle a landscape, perhaps once sacred to ancient peoples, in war-torn nations (Jacobsen, 2008). Bees have also proven to be effective guinea pigs in research on addiction. In trials, researchers used an eyedropper to place liquefied freebase cocaine directly onto the backs of individual bees, allowing it to enter their circulatory system and brain. The bees responded by becoming addicted just as humans do,

encouraging scientists to plan further tests to learn more about the nature of addiction in humans (Belluck, 2009).

An additional cause of concern stems from residual efforts to manipulate certain biological traits in bees. Inbreeding has led to the loss of genetic integrity among honeybees in commercialized hives. Schacker (2008) refers to a “genetic bottleneck”, citing that currently all commercial queens now come from fewer than 500 breeder queens, resulting in a dramatic decrease in diversity and therefore of immunity and resilience against new threats. In nature, our advanced forays into genetically modified crops and insect-proof pesticides repel bees from plants that once were a staple for nectar and pollen (Benjamin & McCallum, 2009). Not only that, but massive colonization of the earth and nature has resulted in deforestation of natural habitats and the loss of many plant and flower species that were once favorites of bees. Increased pollution that coats the leaves and petals and hangs heavy in the air as bees wear out their wings in flight only serves to weigh them down, shortening their already limited lifetime, and blocking out the sun by which they typically navigate (Fountain, 2003).

The decline of the bees draws to mind images of the Classic Maya people of Central America who, after flourishing for over a millennium, purposely abandoned their vast cities around 850 A.D, disappearing to parts unknown. Like the vanishing of the bees, the mystery of the Maya remains unsolved, but centuries later, increasing evidence suggests heavy deforestation played a significant role in their collapse. As more and more trees were cut down to build enormous metropolitan areas and to clear land for farming, the ecosystem was deeply affected, resulting in heavy erosion and man-made drought. Eventually, no longer able to sustain itself, the civilization collapsed (Diamond, 2005).

All in all, evidence suggests between 90 and 99% of the Classic Maya population, estimated to be between three million and 14 million people during the height of civilization, virtually disappeared after 800 A.D. (Diamond, 2005). Only after the local human population was eradicated did the jungle return. Sadly, however, modern conditions reveal a disturbing truth: in the Peten region of Central America, the heartland of the Classic Maya, over half the environment is once again degraded and deforested. According to Diamond (2005), studies show nearly one quarter of the forests in Honduras were destroyed from 1964 to 1989.

Considering all this, how can we disregard thoughts of those who have been colonized everywhere, who have been forced to go underground, to relocate to parts unknown, or to surrender their own lives to avoid a fate worse than death? Images of the shadowy underworld where billions of dead bees whispered at my ankles and bony hands and skulls lie dormant cross my mind.

Myth has it that when Ra cried, his tears were bees (Seton-Williams, 1999). If bees are tears, then our tears are drying up at an alarming rate, and the primordial waters from which the goddess Neith emerged, the wildness, is receding as well. Potential drought has set in. The ecosystem is changing as deforestation of the collective psyche, the world soul, is taking its toll. The significance of the term Colony Collapse Disorder is not lost on me. The term is a sinister prognosis loaded with potential violence. Nature is no stranger to violence. Survival is a matter of life and death. A honeybee, whose primary instinct is to defend the hive, will sting only when threat occurs. Once her stinger engages with its prey, it takes on a life of its own, pumping venom into the target long after the fearless bee has pulled away and dropped to the ground, disemboweled; her entrails still attached to the pulsing stinger embedded in the victim's flesh. She dies an agonizing death, but one of honor and integrity, knowing she has fulfilled her role to

defend the hive and its precious contents, her sister bees, the honey, and the developing young brood who will be new bees soon.

It occurs to me now that there was a point when I, when each of us, had to make that same life and death decision. To survive, to defend myself as a tiny child in our collective culture, required the ultimate sacrifice: to eviscerate myself completely, giving my authentic self over to the onslaught of culture, conditioning, and dislocation from my roots in the ground of being. Berman (1989) refers to this moment as a rupture in the human experience that is crucial and devastating, a realization for a child that the way she perceives herself kinesthetically is not congruent with the way others see her or want her to be. In order to be loved and accepted on others' terms, terms developed and dictated by the culture in which we live, she is forced to give up her most basic way of knowing in the world, her felt sense of self, trading it in for a mask she wears for the world. Thus we are each inevitably compelled to move from an interior way of existence to an external or social way of being, shifting from an authentic self to one that is false.

I remember feeling even at a very young age that I was living a masquerade, not allowing my "real" self to be seen by others, ultimately eviscerating my interior self in a desperate defensive charade until I became an empty shade of what I once was as a bright-eyed innocent child. In the end, though I may have launched a stalwart attempt to defend the one last fertile seed, the final virgin territory against the very culture that would colonize me, it appears I have failed spectacularly, succeeding only in destroying my spontaneous, fearless, essential self or sending it so far underground, it makes rare appearances these days. Worse, I automatically project my own expectations onto others, assuming they must conform to fit the mold, and recreating the same dilemma over and over again. In this way, I re-enforce the cultural

colonization in which I am a cog in a perpetual, unconscious machine, becoming an unwary accessory, a colonizer myself.

Regarding colonization, Memmi (1965) declares, “to live without anguish, one must live in detachment from oneself and the world” (p. 26). But it is increasingly clear that I cannot tolerate that detachment any longer. I must fully engage by allowing the vast mystery of wild nature, that essence by which the hive exists, Jung’s archetypal Self, to emerge. Only by giving over, allowing the descent into shadow and pain, being willing to traverse the wilderness and brave the dark night with its unknown threats and terrors will I, and all of us, understand the impending rebirth: that ultimate moment when the great creative force emerges from the primordial dark waters of the night and gives new birth to the sun, allowing the re-dawning of the true self. Jung (1970) said:

If attention is directed to the unconscious, the unconscious will yield up its contents, and these in turn will fructify the conscious like a fountain of living water. For consciousness is just as arid as the unconscious if the two halves of our psychic life are separated. (p. 163)

The increasing separation of culture from nature may indeed lead to an arid existence as a species on a planet we have increasingly colonized. Some experts suggest that honeybees may be acting as the proverbial canary in a coal mine, foreshadowing the imminent demise of the human race as we plummet toward a colony collapse of our own. In his recent book, *A Spring Without Bees*, Michael Schacker (2008) muses on the mythical as well as biological implications of CCD, referring to it as a potential *Civilization* Collapse Disorder. I have simultaneously considered it potentially as *Cultural* Collapse Disorder.

To achieve significant change, transformation must begin at an individual level, by addressing the parts of my own self that have been left arid, dried out, or deforested. I must resolve to regard the unconscious, to reconnect the bond between inner and outer nature, so that

it will yield up the power and majesty that resides there. If I must choose between detachment and pain, numbness and wildness, let me choose the wild. Let me live the wild life of honey and pain, or let me surrender completely to defend and protect the last bit of wilderness that resides inside me: my true nature.

The days aren't discarded or collected, they are bees
 that burned with sweetness or maddened
 the sting: the struggle continues,
 the journeys go and come between honey and pain.
 No, the net of years doesn't unweave: there is no net.
 They don't fall drop by drop from a river: there is no river.
 Sleep doesn't divide life into halves,
 or action, or silence, or honor:
 life is like a stone, a single motion,
 a lonesome bonfire reflected on the leaves,
 an arrow, only one, slow or swift, a metal
 that climbs or descends burning in your bones. (Pablo Neruda)

Next, I delve into the link between the bees and the goddess in an attempt to understand how the increasing loss of the sacred feminine from our worldview correlates with the plight of the dying honeybee.

Chapter VI: The Queen Bee

What was I to do, I, born
 when the gods were dead,
 and my insufferable youth
 spent searching between cracks?
 It was my role, and because of it
 I felt so desolate.

One bee plus one bee
 does not make two bees of light
 or two bees of darkness:
 it makes a solar system,
 a house of topaz,
 a dangerous caress.

The first concern of amber
 is two golden bees
 and tied to those same bees
 each day's sun travels:
 I rage at revealing so many
 of my ridiculous secrets.
 --Pablo Neruda

Ninety-eight percent of a hive is made up of female bees who get two sets of genes from the queen bee and only one from the male she mates with; thus, they are more connected to their mother and sisters than to their fathers and brothers. The beehive is a feminine or *matricentric* society revolving around the powerful creative mother energy of the queen that lays up to 2000 eggs a day (Bishop, 2005). In human history, evidence suggests that the oldest societies were also matriarchal by nature, honoring a single Great Mother goddess for her divine power to create life. Baring and Cashford (1991) reiterate the natural parallels between the queen bee, nature, and the goddess, pointing to the hive as a symbolic representation of the womb, and perhaps, in its fertile darkness, as the underworld as well. Additionally, they speculate that the intricate cellular structure of the honeycomb is an apt representation of the interconnectedness

and harmoniousness found in nature: what is often referred to in shamanism as the “web of life.” Baring and Cashford (1991) inform us that the Greek word for “honeycomb” is *kerion* based on the root *ker*. Not so coincidentally, perhaps, in the Greek language, the words for “fate”, “death”, “goddess of death”, “breast”, and “heart” all include that same root, *ker*, pointing to a powerful and common link between those concepts.

Baring and Cashford (1991) also compare the role of the bees in pollinating flowers and gathering honey as analogous to the work of humans who had to continually plant and harvest crops in Neolithic times in order to survive. Like those cultures who revered the goddess in history, even the simple activities of daily life are based on the sacred power of the creative feminine, for it is the female worker bees who forage for nectar, bring it home to the hive, and make the honey. From the most ancient evidence we have, bees have always gathered nectar, built honeycombs, and cared for the queen at all costs. If the bees are not returning to the hive and are abandoning the queen, no longer revering or tending her, the natural cycle of death and rebirth is broken.

Bees in Myth and History

In ancient myth, the bee consistently appears as a symbol of the sacred. The *Rig-Veda*, the Hindu book which was written in Sanskrit between 2000 and 3000 BC speaks of bees with awe, while the deity Vishnu is often portrayed as a blue bee on a lotus flower, and Kama, the god of love, carries a bow with a string made of bees (Ransome, 2004). In early art, the Greek god Dionysus is depicted wearing a necklace of honeycomb and is crowned with bees (Monaghan, 1994). In Egypt, and later France, the bee was associated with royalty. The Celts linked bees with wisdom (Ransome, 2004).

Siberian, Central Asian, and South American Indian traditions saw the bee as the soul, coming and going through the mouth or ears, irrevocably linking them with death and eternal life (Eliade, 1974; Ransome, 2004). In Siberian cultures, the shaman places or re-places the soul into a patient in the form of a fly or a bee. Thus, bees were believed to move between the natural world and the underworld, linking them to shamanic practices and the province of the *psychopomp*, the one who escorts the dead to and from that realm. In fact, Apollo eventually gifted the three bee-maidens to Hermes: the only god with the ability to lead souls to and from the Underworld. Honey was also used in ancient Egypt to preserve the dead, and bees were often carved on tombs, while pots of honey were left inside (Ransome, 2004).

Virgil, among others, referred to the humming of the bees as the melody of the universe or the sound of creation. In virtually every culture that revered the goddess as the creative force, bees were thought to be sacred and were associated with sacred rites and temples. Neith, Aphrodite, Demeter, Artemis, Persephone, and Cybele, as well as others who all evolved as aspects of the archetypal Great Mother goddess, were inimitably linked to cycles of life and death, nature, and animals. The Goddess was often referred to in inscriptions on temples, statues, and ancient artifacts as the Mistress of the Wild Animals. As such, she has a natural association with the bee, and with the queen bee, the ultimate creative life force of the hive, in particular (Baring & Cashford, 1991).

Earlier, we referred to the creation myth of Egypt that portrays Neith, the Egyptian equivalent of Greek Athena, as the original creator who emerged from the primordial water and, after giving birth to the sun, flew away in the form of a bee, a symbol which adorned her temples in Lower Egypt for millennia. The Greeks literally called priestesses of Demeter and Artemis the *melissae*, the Greek word for *bees*. In ancient Eleusis, during sacred, mysterious rites centered on

fertility and initiation, priestesses were referred to as “producers of sweetness,” potentially in relation to their sacred role of helping bring forth the fruitfulness of the earth, the body of the Great Mother (Keller, 1988). The goddess herself was known as the *queen bee*. The Mycenaean culture who particularly revered the Mother Goddess, built tombs, called *tholos*, in the form of beehives (Ransome, 2004), connoting, some believe, the womb of the goddess and the cycles of life and death in conjunction with its creative powers (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Ransome, 2004). Additionally, the earliest human-kept hives found in Israel from 12,000 years ago were excavated alongside fertility figurines, alluding to some kind of significant relationship between the bees and the goddess (Friedman, 2007).

Once I became captivated with the bees, I sought out and visited locales around the world where bees were clearly significant. In Greece, Crete, Turkey, and Egypt, I viewed ancient artifacts in museums which evidenced their importance: a Minoan golden seal from 4,000 years ago found buried with the dead depicts the goddess and her priestesses, dressed as bees, dancing together; coins from Ephesus, in what is now Turkey, featuring bees; and a statue of the Ephesian Artemis goddess figure with bees carved on her clothing (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Ransome, 2004).

In many cases, the goddess herself was depicted as a bee. Anthropomorphic images on pottery, plaques, and jewelry uncovered in Rhodes show the goddess Artemis having a human body and bee wings and antennae; in others, she is seen as having a bee body with a human head and hands. In Crete, she was said to manifest at times as a swarm of bees. Wherever there were goddess cults, bees were never far away, and her influence even lasted well into the cultural shift toward patriarchy. In Greece, the oracle at Delphi who ultimately served Apollo was called the “Delphic bee” even long after the primarily patriarchal pantheon of Zeus was established. Homer

referred in his writings to three bees or bee-maidens who practiced divination in many ancient cultures and the Minoan bee goddesses are thought to be the three bee maidens who originally taught Apollo how to prophesy (Baring & Cashford, 1991). “Deborah”, the word for “bee” in Hebrew, was, perhaps not coincidentally, the name of the most well-known prophetess in Israel (Keller, Spring 1988).

Bees Eyes

As evidenced by their association with the goddess, bees were clearly connected to concepts of renewal and regeneration. In the Greek myth of Aristaeus the beekeeper, bees were observed to be born as new life out of bulls that had died, and, as the creators of honey, they were alchemical creatures who made an entirely new substance from the materials they foraged. Thus, the connection with wisdom, insight, and prophecy was tied to seeing in a new way: an ability to see from a divine perspective. Surely it is not a coincidence that the goddess has been depicted with a woman’s body and the antennae and eyes of an insect as seen in from artifacts found in Knossos on Crete (Gimbutas, 1989).

Bees have five eyes, two of which are made up of over six thousand hexagonally shaped lenses each, giving her what must be god-like vision that makes that of mere mortals pale by comparison. When she regards, it resonates within her thousands of times over, drawing her to the evocative patterns of specific flowers that beckon her to taste their nectar and pollen. Rather than simply seeing the flowers from which she will suck sweet nectar, she experiences them on multiple dimensions with her sight alone, only dropping down to taste their succulent beauty with her long tongue once she has revered them, exchanging greetings and compliments on their fair faces, and they with her.

The ability to regard on multiple levels of dimension may also have been the role of the ancient *eye goddesses* who made their appearance in the matricentric civilization of Catal Huyuk in Turkey and in other civilizations thousands of years ago. From the cult of the Eye Goddess, originating in northern Syria in the sixth millennia B.C., emerged thousands of goddess images and figurines with wide staring eyes, suggesting archetypal divine sight. The significance of the focus on eyes may also correlate with insight into another realm, reminiscent of shamans in trance as they journey into the realms of ecstasy for insight and knowledge (Noble, 2003).

The Eye Goddess and the Gorgon Medusa. One instance where bees and the eye goddess connection is clearly evidenced is in the mythical image of the Gorgon Medusa. Renderings of her frightening countenance appeared in ancient times over doorframes and gates and in paintings and images on pottery and walls. Mostly, she is portrayed as a hideous creature with large staring eyes, a protruding tongue, and snakes for hair. Every child remembers the myth of how one look from her can turn one to stone. But the monstrous Medusa of Indo-European lore was not originally the ogre she is to be. By all evidence, Medusa, whose name ironically means “queen”, was once an icon of the sacred feminine, the Mistress of Animals: a powerful goddess who sported bee-wings and surrounded herself with lions, cranes, or geese as depicted in one image from Rhodes (Baring & Cashford, 1991). Medusa’s frightening aspect, Marija Gimbutas (1989) suggests, may have been indicative of the goddess’ association with death; with nature at the end of its cycle before rebirth occurs. Indeed, one version of her story suggests Medusa was once a beautiful maiden, a Libyan queen, who was cursed by Athena after she caught Medusa coupling with Poseidon in her temple. Here, versions of the myth diverge: in some, Medusa was a willing participant in the act of passion, while in others, she was taken by force. Whatever the

case, Medusa was abruptly cast out by Athena and cursed with the hideous face and snakes for hair of myth.

This version of Medusa's tale may evidence the wild feminine aspect that was eventually repressed by patriarchy and ultimately demonized. One perspective iterates that Athena was the only female of three in Zeus' pantheon that was given due respect by her fellow gods. She fit in because she was a wise warrior with a rational mind, acting more like the male gods of the group than the other two females, Aphrodite and Artemis. Even at birth, Athena is said to have sprung fully-grown and fully armored from Zeus' head without the help of her mother, amplifying the attributes of male-centeredness and of logical thinking that seem to define her. Symbolically, then, it is possible that Medusa in the temple represented the wild feminine part that Athena repressed, and was banished: relegated to the dark aspect of monstrosity, the fearsome man-killer, she eventually became (Downing, 1999).

A patriarchal worldview evolves. Patricia Monaghan (1994) suggests a patriarchal or masculine worldview tends to place things at polar opposites: good versus bad, dark versus light, and so on. In a society where opposites are highlighted, a hero must emerge and conquer evil to provide a satisfactory ending. "The ritual object comes first: then the monster is begotten to account for it; then the hero is supplied to account for the slaying of the monster" (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 341).

Baring and Cashford observe that our culture, a society where standardized religions are patriarchal in nature, has evolved to reject a formal Goddess myth. Whether Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, each subscribes to a story in which a masculine god created the world without the help of the feminine. Thus, creation came from a male deity and not from the womb of the Mother, much like Athena leaping fully formed from Zeus' head without her mother even being

present. This concept, this new myth, resulted in a massive rupture in our worldview: a desacralization of the feminine and an ensuing demonization of women and nature and their fundamental creative power to give life. No longer was the collective worldview attuned to the powerful natural, instinctual, and creative forces of the sacred Mother Goddess. According to Baring (2005), religious conviction took the place of shamanic experience while ancient shamanic ways of connection were increasingly forbidden.

However, the creative, regenerative function cannot be suppressed. In the realm of the goddess, rather than opposition and antagonism, the sun dies each night into the dark earth only to be reborn again on the new day. Therefore, dark and light are simply aspects of each other, not opposing forces. When Medusa was ultimately slain by the hero Perseus' sword, the blood which spewed from her headless neck resulted in the birth of Pegasus, the winged white horse who is associated with magic and poetry (Downing, 1999). In paintings uncovered at Eleusis from the 7th century B.C., Medusa masks with glaring eyes are appended to the body of bees, and feature snakes in place of antennae and legs. Marija Gimbutas (1989), world-class scholar and archeologist, asserts the symbolic combination of snakes and bees refers to regeneration and cycles with life and death. A statue found in a cave in ancient Arcadia, shows Demeter, the fertile Mother Goddess whose bee priestesses presided over the sacred Eleusian rites, with a horse's head framed by snakes, potentially establishing yet another link to Medusa (Keller, 1988).

Indeed, Athena wears the head of Medusa on her breastplate, perhaps in homage to the Great Mother icon that once was, and it may well be that “the gorgon was once the nature of a *function* for all the goddesses” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 341)—the wild, instinctual, dark side; the devouring mother exemplified in nature. Clearly, a more and more negative and

disparaging image of the goddess evolved over time. This served to accommodate and correlate with the autocratic central male power perpetuated by the patriarchal worldview, as well as to balance out the archetype of the gallant conquering hero that was beginning to manifest in the world. But as we have seen, the dark side hasn't always been a bad thing: as the nature of a *function* of the goddesses, Medusa's countenance situated at entrances and doorways reveals a powerful role as a watcher: as one who sees, and as a guardian of the threshold. Her wings enable her to move freely as an intermediate between worlds. In the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, ancient images of Medusa with winged feet and wearing a healing caduceus of snakes on her belly while presiding over childbirth divulge a connection to healing, fertility, and the deep instinctual aspect of nature which was long ago turned into something to be feared and abhorred (Monaghan, 1994).

Certainly, the monster of myth that turned men to stone was a convenient justification for our emerging tendency toward disregard. Disregard may be defined as a turning away from something one doesn't want to see; an avoiding or a dismissal. It implies a choice, conscious or not, to devalue, deny, or relegate something to total insignificance. Disregard prevents our ability to see clearly or deeply and to focus. In western civilization, with our two human eyes, we have lost our divine sight, eschewed the gift of vision, and stoically looked away in our ongoing effort to protect ourselves. Over time, we have increasingly blinded ourselves to the inherent reality around us in order to avoid witnessing the horror that was emerging from our increasing separation from and colonization of nature and of the sacred feminine forces in the world. Indeed, as science and technology have taken hold, we have even devised man-made mechanical devices in the form of telescopes and microscopes to reveal the mysteries and secret depths of

nature, simultaneously placing a lens between us and the very thing we view, removing us even further from reality.

Disregard and Psychic Numbing

Earlier in this work, soul loss was investigated as a rampant cause of distress in our current culture. One of the obvious indications of soul loss, and of the need for a depth perspective, is the increasing presence of disregard. As established, Watkins and Shulman (2008) suggest it is impossible to be connected to a world we continually fail to see. Thus, we have severed our connection to a collective, all-pervasive web in which we participate as equals with the elements and life forms around us. It manifests in *dissociation*, the distancing or splitting off of affect, and in *objectification*, establishing ourselves at the top of a hierarchical structure where we become the doers and all else around us, the objects of our manipulations and our doing. Worse, it leads to a sort of affective anesthesia, a numbing or cutting off of the *feeling function* of the psyche, which, when severely deficient at a cultural level, allows the atrocities of Pandora's box to be bled out into the world unchecked and unmitigated.

Disregard leads to pathological violence: first as an affront to the victims of the dreadful situations we refuse to see, and second, to our own psyche that has had to amputate the sense of sight. This tendency ties to what has been called *percepticide*, the killing of our willingness to see, to hold, or to witness what is going on in the world around us (Shulman-Lorenz & Watkins, 2002). It is failure to look closely at a thing that is disturbing, to literally repudiate our very perception, because to see and acknowledge violence and atrocities would endanger ourselves. But, according to Taylor, this mode of defense traumatizes the person who enlists it because it "turns the violence on oneself. . . . [It] blinds, maims, kills through the senses" (Shulman-Lorenz & Watkins, 2002). Shulman-Lorenz and Watkins go on to say that when the practice of

percepticide pervades a culture, “watching-without-seeing becomes ‘the most dehumanizing of acts’” (p. 5). In modern times, it seems we have all become Medusas of myth; as surely as she turned men to stone, we have adopted a method that is equally dehumanizing, of looking without really seeing, that results in us becoming, at best, unengaged bystanders, incapable of deeply engaging with the world around us.

Watkins and Shulman (2008) reiterate the notion that this kind of psychological disenfranchisement extorts a heavy toll, declaring that passive bystanding, watching without seeing, and observing without engagement, is a sort of self-mutilation, an amputation of sight, and a “severing of the self” (p. 66). James Hillman (1975) suggests, “The eye and wound are the same” (1975, p. 107): the thing we refuse to see and the denial of that thing by the eye that does not see are both violent acts, which effect a trauma on the psyche of all involved. On the other hand, witnessing is an invested seeing, a connection with the thing that is being watched, an active desire or willingness to engage. Active witnessing is a healing process that works on many levels, individual, interpersonal, community and even the environment and the natural world – the world inhabited by honeybees (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

Dissociation. Jung postulated that dissociation is a normal function of the psyche that allows us to separate opposing faculties within our selves and then mitigate the tension that manifests between them; thus, it is literally a necessity which allows us to act within one function without being inhibited by its opposite. Indeed, our culture has tended so far toward the thinking function of the psyche that the feeling function has all but been lost, gone far underground into the conscious where it often only manifests in crises, erupting in psychotic or schizoid events (von Franz & Hillman, 1971).

Dissociating, then, enables us to feel safe by simply not feeling, to deplete the power of external or internal objects, feelings, sensations or emotions that are disturbing and that our psyche does not have the strength or capacity to endure. It is a practice that allows us to tolerate certain behaviors, acts, or mandates without being affected ourselves. It allows us to exclaim over the horrors outlined on the evening news at dinnertime without preventing us from enjoying our meal. It permits us to control, manipulate, and contain our environment at the expense of those around us. It keeps us all separate, cut off, lost, fearful, and capable of inflicting immense pain on each other and the world around us without evident consequences. After all, if I perceive the world as dead, there can be no feelings of loss, pain, grief, or violation.

Objectification. Richard Tarnas (2006) reiterates the shift between an ancient earth-based worldview in which everything appeared ensouled to a world that we control and objectify. According to him, by objectifying the world around us, we enable ourselves to believe that we can manipulate and determine our own existence, giving us greater freedom and autonomy. We feel safer as well. By imposing our own beliefs, desires, and values onto another that is devoid of soul, of the capacity to think or to have an opinion, implies we have the upper hand. “Objectification,” Tarnas contends, “denies to the world a subject’s capacity to intend, to signify intelligently, to express it’s meaning, to embody and communicate humanly relevant purposes and values” (p. 21). This attempt to assert control leads to an irrevocable contagion, a chain reaction which perpetuates objectification throughout a given environment or culture. I view this as a collective experience of the zombie archetype: in horror films, a zombie must turn others into a zombie at all costs in order to prevent being killed himself, and that new zombie must do the same, and so on and so on until every new threat has become properly disabled and is no longer perceived as a threat.

This illustrates an important point. Watkins and Shulman (2008) claim there is “a collusion between bystanding and perpetrating that is often difficult to discern” (p. 80). It is significant to note that Medusa, a fundamental archetype of the devouring feminine, is both a perpetrator and a victim of objectification. Though she unquestionably commits a terrible and destructive act when turning men to stone, most sources agree it was Athena who initially cursed Medusa to be the way she was. Athena, herself, was objectified in history by the modern Greeks turning her into a persona as a stanch, rational, and upright goddess, closer to a female Zeus than the instinctual, powerful Mother Goddess from whom she evolved. And that Athena, fearing Medusa with her deep femininity and powerful connections to the body, the senses, and nature, cursed Medusa to become a fearsome monster. Medusa, then, objectified and violated by Athena’s willful and deadly stare, had no say in the pathological turning everyone who met her own gaze to stone.

In the end, having to avoid the gaze of the monster Medusa, attempting to avoid being turned to stone, takes a heavy toll on our own way of perceiving the world, sapping our capacity and desire to truly look, and robbing us of the magic we gain by seeing through the illusion to the divine realms beyond. Perhaps the secret lies not in the avoiding, but in the shift of being willing to regard in spite of the consequences; of being willing to witness, even if it is disturbing and painful.

Regarding the Shadow. As I began to regard the phenomenon of the disappearing bees in Colony Collapse Disorder and to establish the correlation in the landscape of my psyche, my own gaze was drawn to how frequently and intensely I felt fear. Over time, I noticed a powerful tendency in myself toward hypervigilance, stemming from an overwhelming fear of my environment at any given moment. Perhaps, like a bee lost far from the hive, I did not feel safe

and sought to survive, relying on my own versions of dissociation and objectification in an attempt to subsist. And the more I recognized my own habits and tendencies toward psychic numbing and to the objectification and dis-ensoulment of people and things around me, I realized something even more profound and terrifying: the cultural capacity and extent that we, as human beings, have developed to disregard, is an inherent source of my fear. If everyone manages to feel as little and to attempt to control as much as I do, what horrors might we be capable of in our world? What atrocities do we commit upon each other, the earth, and our fellow human beings? And how can I ever feel safe? As I regarded this new and dawning realization without the habitual padding of dissociation, I began to see the reality of our situation. Indeed, the hive has become a distant memory in the collective culture in which we now find ourselves.

Walsh (2007) reminds us that when fear arises spontaneously, it symbolizes the *shadow*, a part of ourselves that has been repressed or disowned. Because that aspect is completely unknown to us, and not recognized, accepted, or integrated, we fear. Jung believed that confronting the shadow will eliminate fear and is an important step in the individuation process. Our shadow side must be embraced and integrated rather than banished to the Underworld with other dead and dissociated parts of ourselves (Jung, 1933).

In order to recover the fragments of our soul, we have to face our fear and regard it eye to eye. Staring our shadow in the face and surviving is difficult at best, especially since our default mechanism is to run away, change it, or suppress it. Regarding means holding the gaze, even when it's uncomfortable or difficult. Being able to stay with the discomfort or pain no matter what is the only thing that can transform it. And, as with Medusa of myth, we risk the fact that regarding our fear may turn us to stone, as I quickly discovered the first time it happened to me.

Regarding Medusa

The first time I encountered Medusa's regard, it was terrifying. It was a seemingly normal morning when a conflict escalated outside my closed door. Spontaneously, I froze, holding my breath and slipped immediately into an altered state brought on by my fear. The tension outside was building to an inevitable explosion. I knew what was coming, and I was terrified. I lay where I was and consciously breathed into the fear, feeling it course through my body as an endless wave running upward from my feet to the top of my head. Amplified by my regard, the fear intensified into something far deeper and more sustained than anything I had ever allowed myself to feel before. The wave just kept coming and coming and coming, like a tsunami. I felt into it, intending to allow it to run its course, and in so doing, to disperse it. I tried to give it a voice silently in the liminal realm in which I found myself by screaming and screaming in mortal terror as the current coursed through me.

Even with this potential release, the fear didn't abate one iota. It suddenly struck me, that immobilized like I was, rooted in place and unable to do anything about the real-life situation outside my door, the emotion and fear inside me was not immobilized at all but endlessly alive and streaming. Vaguely, it occurred to me that this must be what happens to those who look at Medusa and are turned to stone: they are only petrified on the outside, no longer able to act, fight, or run away; but they remain terrified on the inside, the emotion charging through them and corroding away their insides like battery acid or deadly electricity.

Suddenly, in the very act of thinking about Medusa, I invoked her instantaneously. And there, in the imaginal realm, meeting her gaze, I was rendered completely paralyzed; powerless in form, turned to stone, while the terror coursed endlessly inside me. This surely must be Hell, I realized. No wonder Medusa is so feared.

I stayed there, frozen, for what seemed like forever, just trying to hold the fear and regard it as it ran through me. I felt the electric current of the fear inside; felt my lack of ability to move, even a millimeter. I was completely incapacitated on the outside. There was nothing I could do. I had absolutely no control over anything that happened to me. I had no way to defend or protect my physical being. Anything could happen: even the worst of my fears. And once again, as suddenly as the thought arose, in that liminal space, it proved to be true.

Immediately, in my experience of the imaginal, big black spiders began crawling all over me. Since Medusa had turned me to stone, I couldn't move a muscle, even when they began biting me, evoking painful welts all over my body. Then I was attacked by a venomous snake, fangs dripping poison; I lost my sense of hearing, taste and touch. Over and over again, through a never-ending series of events, I experienced terror and violation with no way to defend or control. I was gouged and hacked into pieces by vandals, my stone skin crumbling to bits around me. I watched as my loved ones were attacked and stabbed while I stood by powerless. I was there, a grey stone statue, for years, decades, centuries, millennia. I lost everyone I loved as they died and turned to dust. I was cut, burned, slashed, bitten, violated, spit on, verbally abused, punched, kicked, dragged, and battered. I could do nothing except feel the endless stream of terror running like a flood inside me still.

After awhile, I drifted: the initial shock of the violation receding even as my immobile state remained. I wondered how Medusa came to be. When she was cursed, she turned from a beautiful maiden into a horrifying monster who turned everyone around her to stone. How terrified she must have been of the irrevocable change inflicted on her that was not of her doing, of the hideous snakes on her very head, of her ugliness and monstrosity. How often was she bitten by those very snakes, pursued or abused because of her monstrosity? How long did it take her before *her* fear of this Other she had become ran out? How long would it take mine?

Regarding it, facing it squarely, I realized in that state of stone, I had no more control over anything. There was nothing I could do. I had lost everything I had, over and over and over again. As that stone figure, cursed by Medusa when I had willingly, trustingly laid eyes on her, not believing it would happen to me since I was willing to regard her, I had lost everything.

I lost the Depth Program since I no longer showed up for classes. I lost my loved ones who died eons before. I lost any future security I might have had because, even if I came out of this state of stone, I would have nothing upon which to build, no head start on getting a job. I lost my dignity, my physical safety, my financial security, my job skills, my friends, my social status, my house, my car, my family. I lost my physical body, my ability to dance and run, to taste food, to sleep, to sigh. I was and would be completely and utterly defenseless. And even after all that, still the fear ran through me without waning.

I have never experienced anything quite the same way. Its power was immense, and there was no end to it. For a long time, there in my room, I allowed it to proceed, thinking if I watched and waited and endured, it would run itself out. It didn't. It never varied or wavered, even for a split second. I kept thinking if I could just get underneath it or find the source, it would shift into something else. I couldn't, and it didn't. I decided if I just surrendered to it, it would give up. It didn't. Finally, after a long while, I was interrupted and let it go, coming back to my physical body and ordinary reality where it abated considerably.

Even so, I was startled at the effect it had on me: half an hour later, in the kitchen having lunch, I was feeling the physical repercussions on my body—heart pounding, hands trembling, stress hormones raging through me as if I had been through a traumatic experience. Beholding my body response to the fear made it all the more real.

I ultimately realized the experience with Medusa was an invitation to regard my fear and the issue of objectification. Challenged by my thesis committee, I decided to dialogue with Medusa on a regular basis:

The first few times I approached her, she turned me to stone immediately and I was stuck at the mercy of the elements, the environment, the dregs of society. I would enter liminal space: call her name, seek her out, find her on a park bench or a beach looking out to sea, and she would turn her gaze to me and immobilize me into stone. Subsequently, I was repeatedly violated, beaten, scratched, and toppled over and over again; I was forced to watch the same thing happen to my loved ones, or to endure as they died from illness, disease, accident, or old age. Gradually, though, as the days of approaching Medusa wore

on, it took longer and longer to turn me to stone. Often, we would have a few moments of conversation; then she would get fed up or spiteful and just zap me. Finally one day, something shifted. On that fateful day, when she tried it, nothing happened.

I had seen Medusa angry and sometimes, not surprisingly, very, very sad. Her life was difficult; imagine turning everyone you see to stone whether you wanted to or not. The day she could no longer turn me to stone was life-changing for her. The fact that I could look at her meant she was being regarded for the first time, and this was transformational. She told me after that she had begun to think there may be others like me and wanted to seek them out and build relationships with them so she could have some semblance of her life back. I think the difference was that I was willing to regard her; even behold her with my heart instead of my head as had been my habit before, no matter the consequences to me. Something shifted in both of us through that beholding.

In the aftermath of my confrontation of Medusa, I realized the extent to which I had dug deeply within myself to stay with my fears, meeting them head on, and allowing and acknowledging the transformation that occurred as a direct result in spite of the difficulty. Facing the shadow is not just an important step: it's an initiation (Walsh, 2007). Indeed, engaging with Medusa felt like something of an apprenticeship to a very powerful force. In fact, Medusa has many shamanic traits. Her affiliation with snakes, a chthonic symbol, emphasizes her connection to the Underworld, to life and death, and signify her role as a *psychopomp*, an escort for the dead. Her ultimate beheading lends itself to symbolic dismemberment, a common event for initiates before being reborn as a shaman in a new body. Medusa is also connected to Poseidon who carries a trident symbolic of the *world tree* which shamans use to access the three worlds in their journeys (Monaghan, 1994). Medusa's intimate symbolic linkage with snakes also evokes images from Siberian shamanism where costumes are adorned by ribbons representing snakes and hair, and the mirror by which Perseus ultimately killed her, is integrated into shamanic garb in many cultures. Other connections link her to archaeological evidence of a sun-faced shamanic being surrounded by snakes that appear to emerge from its head (Monaghan, 1994).

Monaghan (1994) asserts, "In Medusa, we have a vestige of an ancient circumpolar figure whose religion we now call shamanism" (p. 243). She parallels the fact that in some

cultures, the shaman's mirror was often called the "white horse of the shaman" (p. 243) since shamans rode the mirror in journeys to other worlds. Historically, white horses are linked with shamanic sacrificial ritual evidencing that Pegasus, who sprung into being from Medusa's severed head, is "sired by a god who carried the Tree of Heaven and leaping from the neck of his dismembered mother" (p. 244).

Roger Walsh (2007) insists that the "confrontation with fear has long been central to shamanic training" (p. 60). He cites how ascetic practices like exposure to extreme cold, hunger, isolation or even psychedelics, have historically been central initiation rites for shamans often used by mystics and shamans lend themselves to confronting fear. He also reminds us, "Jung himself regarded shamanic imagery as an indication that shamans go through a process of individuation" (p. 219).

I believe regarding Medusa, an encounter with the devouring feminine, is one form of initiation on the path to individuation. By staring fear in the face, the experience of being turned to stone accomplishes two feats: it encourages surrender to all that is and it allows stillness and silence to create space in which to regard oneself. Once these are established, regarding Medusa becomes an exercise in understanding objectification and humanity, and how we are all ultimately rendered powerless in trying to control everything around us. It is only when we learn to release our fear, and with it, the tendency to manipulate and objectify, that we can truly surrender to what is, the true Self that is the source of all life.

On the morning of the very first spontaneous encounter with Medusa, my initial resolve was to stay with it in order to conquer my fear, to control it; to banish it forever. I thought I could just be that stone statue for eons until finally the fear gave way in the wake of my surrender, which would mean the end of fear. But lying there, regarding it-- while I could see where that

might potentially happen at some point down the road--it would take eons longer than I had in a lifetime, and I wasn't able to sustain the holding of it. Now I realize wanting to conquer it, banish it, or convert it to something else is just another way to disregard it. Fear, as an entity, is autonomous and intelligent. It is a part of the Self that I must regard if I want to be whole. It was my habit of disregarding it so skillfully that kept it hidden, waiting, biding its time in the realm of shadow. Allowing and embracing fear put me in contact with the creative source that enabled it to transform, equally transforming me in the process.

Beholding and the Transcendent Function. Holding the tension that arises even at the very thought of engaging with the things that terrify us, rather than giving in to disregard, psychic numbing, or objectification, is crucial. Bernstein (2005) describes the importance of not analytically seeking to interpret symptoms or issues when challenges arise—but rather of holding experiences, a sort of “holding one’s intellectual and rational breath for far longer than any of us can imagine doing” (p. 73). In this manner, he says it is “possible to come to knowing through wonderment” (p. 73). Jung, too, spoke of this concept as holding tension in order for something new to emerge, calling it the transcendent function (Jung, 1916/1958).

Medusa’s Transformation. Though Medusa was seemingly betrayed and violated on multiple fronts as she was objectified and cursed to the darkness, she found a way to surrender herself to what was for the greater unfolding of the Self. In my extended encounter with her, rather than focusing on the unfairness of what happened to her, I found she managed to be open to the fact that everything was happening as it should for her own individuation process. Like many of us who have been pinned down, indoctrinated, and effectively cut off from the essence of being, who have lost the parts of ourselves most vital for tapping into a shamanic perspective, Medusa, too, was cut off and effectively stopped in her tracks, decapitated by the swift sword of

the male hero Perseus of legend. However, in the true nature of the goddess, cycles of death and rebirth are required in order for renewal, transformation, and growth. The abrupt and ongoing disappearance of the bees in Colony Collapse Disorder may be a death that plays a role in a much bigger whole.

In the course of my work with Medusa, as she gradually began to soften from the terrible curse of turning everyone around her to stone, she also began to regain her power through the capacity to regard. In one powerful vision, I witnessed Medusa and Athena, the objectifying, fearful source of Medusa's curse, as former antagonists, regard each other with love and acceptance without either one cursing the other or turning her to stone.

It is my belief that in the end, Medusa surrendered to Perseus' sword of her own free will as a final intentional act of strength and surrender. In choosing death, she was granted new life. No longer the object of a fearful curse, no longer required to maintain herself devoid of feeling, anesthetic and numb, no longer the bringer of death and destruction who had no control over turning others to stone, Medusa was freed from lethal paralysis when the sword of Perseus fell. Perseus, still practicing objectification by using the shield Athena gave him as a mirror to defer direct regard, had no idea the power he unleashed with his single act.

Medusa's blood has the power to heal, and from her severed neck sprang Pegasus, new creative life which, translated, is also known as "poetry" (Downing, 1999). And, the story goes, through her death, all those she has turned to stone are released, completing the initiatory process and allowing them to be reborn, free of their own numbness and fear that has petrified them and haunted them. Like the teleological pull of an acorn to grow, incredibly, into a massive oak tree, or a caterpillar into a stunning winged thing, we each have wholeness encoded inside us. The key is to surrender to the process and allow it to unfold. It is no coincidence, surely, that in alchemy

there is an expression, *petra genatrix*, which means “out of the stone a child is born” (Hillman, 2005, p. 65).

In a disturbing turn of events, the bees have been grounded, finding themselves helpless and unable to fly, no doubt paralyzed by fear, lost and alone, disconnected from the warmth, security, and harmony of the hive, vulnerable to the perils of the dark night. But, Marion Woodman (1996) states, “rebirth to a higher level of consciousness is not accomplished by flying through the air. The ascent is balanced by the descent. The treasure is recovered through encountering the chthonic devourer, the dark side of the Great Mother” (p. 58). What if the grounding of the bees is not the devastating event scientists interpret it to be, but instead, a timely encounter with the Great Mother, the devouring aspect of nature that determines and presides over the birth and death of all things? What if, from the depths of the fear and the sadness the collapse of the bees instigates in my own psyche, I could find a way to regard it from an imaginal perspective, to actually *witness* the event instead of disregarding the treasure to be found in that dark night of separation, that promise of death and a fresh beginning, that promise of rebirth to a new way of being, whatever that may be?

In the final chapter, I review my findings about the symbolic meaning of Colony Collapse Disorder for my own psyche and reflect on the insight and transformation this project has wrought.

Chapter VII: Findings: The Shadow and the Light

A flavor like wild honey begins
when you cross the river. On a sandbar
sunlight stretches out its limbs, or is it
a sycamore, so brazen, so clean and so bold?
You forget about gold. You stare—and a flavor
is rising all the time from the trees.
Back from the river, over by a thick

forest, you feel the tide of wild honey
 flooding your plans, flooding the hours
 till they waver forward looking back. They can't
 return; that river divides more than
 two sides of your life. The only way
 is farther, breathing that country, becoming
 wise in its flavor, a native of the sun
 --William Stafford

What is significant in psychic life always lies below the horizon of consciousness, and when we speak of the spiritual problem of modern man we are speaking of things that are barely visible—of the most intimate and fragile things, of flowers that open only in the night. (Campbell, 1971, p. 478)

Summary

When I was first captivated by the phenomenon of the vanishing honeybees, I did not understand I was in a state of soul loss. As my inquiry into the significance of Colony Collapse Disorder progressed, I began to recognize the extent to which I identified with the isolated bee, the one who found herself far from the hive, alone in the night with no sense of safety, home, or place within a bigger whole. Something in my own nature cried out, resonating with the loss of each dying bee and amplifying it into a catastrophic and defining event. Not only was the unheard of collapse of entire hives in quick succession reverberating on an ecological level and affecting the anima mundi, the world soul, it also seemed to tap into the psychological wounding of my own soul, touching me in a place where I already suffered at a very deep and often unconscious level.

I found myself solidly relating to the work of Jerome Bernstein (2005) who, in a touching and groundbreaking book called *Borderlands*, observes the loss of our connection with nature and ourselves has brought about a “great grief” and a resulting tension created by an emerging attempt by sacred nature, inner and outer, to reconnect. According to him, nature seems to cry out to and through certain individuals who are sensitive to the loss, who experience profound but

irrational feelings that are extensions of what is going on in the world in which they live. Everything that exists, both animate and inanimate, he claims, “has within it a spirit dimension and communicates *in that dimension* to those who can listen” (p. 8). Since most humans are still living in a mode where they are unaware of this dimension and critical relationship with nature at all, those he terms *Borderlanders* are doing the work that most of us do not yet know how to do. Bernstein insists that, though the liminal or indeterminate space where chaos and order overlap might understandably cause fear and discomfort, it is a common Borderland experience as we make a radical shift from the profane to the sacred.

I only began to realize, as my inquiry into Colony Collapse Disorder took shape, the extent to which I felt desperately fearful and disconnected from a larger Self, a divine center, which would give my life hope and meaning. Mostly, in my daily life, I felt separate and fearful, dissociated and hypervigilant, even numbed and dead at the worst of times. Additionally, as I mentioned, through the synchronistic numinous experience that seemed to strike me out of the blue, I had just been exposed to the polar opposite: a felt sense, the tiniest glimpse of the soul in all its divine glory and fullness. That event constellated in me a devastating sense of despair over what we, as humans, had “done to ourselves”, all seemingly living similar lives of desperation and dread, psychically numbed, and with the ever-increasing capacity as a species to tolerate and even commit increasingly destructive acts ranging from small gestures of selfish defense to dreadful, purposeful violence.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1999), French philosopher and paleontologist, describes a man who undergoes a numinous experience similar to what I experienced, saying "In a flash. . . . he was a flood of energy. . . . omnipresent, unalterable in its truth, relentless in its development, untouchable in its serenity” (p. 43). However, after this dazzling unity manifested itself, like me,

that man also found himself in chaos, further divided from other humans. In my case, I saw and felt too clearly how far we have fallen, how great the gap between our true nature and the way we have come to accept as normal. Pema Chödrön (2008) refers to our condition as being in the *bardo* state, a transitional place between death and the next rebirth, and likens it to “being thrown out of the nest” (p. 93). “You’ve become homeless,” she says, “you long to go back, but there’s no way to go back” (p. 93).

Meanwhile, it was only as I began to absorb Bernstein’s ideas about the Borderland, the space in which the attempt at reconnection takes place, that a stunning revelation crept over me. I resonated with his theories enough to see that the dead and dying bees from Colony Collapse Disorder were the dead and dying parts of me, the parts that have fallen away or fled under the trauma of my own colonization. Like the souls they symbolize in mythology, the vanishing bees represent vanishing pieces of my own soul, parts of me that have been abducted to the Underworld, the land of the dead. There they await recovery, a return to the dimension of the living where they can be integrated back into my body with a powerful, final gust of breath from a healing shaman--like the gust of wind that will lift the wings of a single lost bee and bear her home to the hive.

Unfortunately, humanity seems to suffer the same fate. Grounded from flight, feeling isolated and alone in the dark of night, the majority of us have forgotten the big picture, become homeless and lost, no longer able to see the three dimensional view we once had as we flew, secure and joyous in the knowledge and memory of the hive we took for granted. Having lost the perception that there is more to reality than what we perceive through our five senses, we have no relationship to the mystery or the sacred symbolized by the dark power of the humming hive. No longer sustained, held, or nurtured; overwhelmed by the unknown mystery that surrounds us,

we hole up, set up defenses, and retreat into fear and despair. The universe is perceived as a terrifying, unfriendly place and not a loving, nurturing one where everything has its place and is unfolding in harmony with everything else at every moment.

Because we live in a world where we are not sustained by a recurrent connection to the sacred, fear abounds. Many of us go about our lives ungrounded, free floating, unfounded, feeling vulnerable because there is nothing rooting us to something bigger than ourselves. Feeling isolated and out of context to a bigger whole, it is easy to feel threatened, to trust neither others nor the world around us. In order to protect ourselves, we resort to disregard or psychic numbing. Now, from our tiny perch on a lonely leaf as the flowers around us close up, as the cold night airs saps the strength from our wings, we numb ourselves into oblivion so the fear won't make us go mad. We forget the larger lifeforce of the hive and we pursue our individual goals without the benefit of meaning or understanding.

The Two Million-Year-Old Self

Sabini (2005) speaks of modern man being “perturbed that inexplicable anxieties plague him” (p. 16). Jung said, “Are we not the carriers of the entire history of mankind? When a man is fifty years old, only one part of his being has existed for half a century. The other half may be millions of years old” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 196). Certainly, like the wisdom of the hive, there is a field of knowledge that exists wherever a colony of bees exist that is tens of millions of years old. It contains the knowing of survival and thriving, of the value of individual roles, of timetables, of what to eat, of how to gather nectar and pollen, of behaviors that have evolved and worked for generation upon generation.

Mankind, too, has unconscious and or automatic access to this same kind of knowing. However, with the increasing development of rational thinking, we have begun to generate new

ideas that override the ancient patterns, and the more we focus on those, the less connected we are to the information in the patterns. In the end, I have “thought” myself right out of the fabric of reality, that is, I no longer locate myself in the pattern that has existed since time began. As such, I no longer have roots nor do I see how I’m connected to the world around me.

The honeybees are a prime example: it’s virtually impossible for a honeybee to function independently. She goes out to forage seemingly alone, but she is still pursuing an activity that is as old as the history of bees itself, thus connecting her innately to all the other bees that have ever existed. When I “think” for myself, I am devaluing or throwing aside the history of mankind over two million years, creating false boundaries and a sense of independence and separation. I then act on that perception, further segregating myself.

Jung wrote about interconnectedness, stating, “My self is not confined to my body; it extends into all the things that I have made and all the things around me” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 155). The word individuation means “an at-one-ment with oneself and at the same time with humanity, since one’s self is part of humanity. . . . No man lives within his own psychic sphere like a snail in its shell, separated from everybody else, but is connected with his unconscious humanity” (Sabini, 2000, para. 4).

Jung trusted that our psyche would self-correct and our dormant instincts would return to restore the balance when crucial tipping points reached, saying "the wisdom of nature will intervene when needed to bring about balance" (Vuksinick, 1997, p. 109). That wisdom, contained in the deep recesses of the collective unconscious, emerges in visions, symbols, and dreams, powerful symptoms that disrupt our psychic state, catapult us into awareness and often chaos, compelling our imminent attention.

That balance must arise from holding the tension. Sabini (2000) affirms:

To experience both the modern mind and the primal, or original, mind will entail a conflict of major proportions. Jung encouraged us not to shake off or avoid the conflict, but to hold it in consciousness so that a new synthesis could emerge, declaring, “We should test the two possibilities against each other . . . the life we live and the one we have forgotten.” (para. 6)

Sabini (2000) goes on to say that establishing a living bridge between the primal memories contained in the psyche and the modern way of living our lives may be the evolutionary task of our time. Glendinning (1994) suggests we all exhibit symptoms of collective trauma, which occurs simply by living in the culture of stress and disconnect that we do today. Fortunately, according to Bernstein (2005), an alternative world often opens for victims of trauma, as we all are, that is mythopoetic, filled with powerful living archetypal images and energies that come to the defense of the traumatized self. A new relationship with nature may arise by integrating the interior and exterior world. Jung observed:

Walking in the woods, lying on the grass, taking a bath in the sea, are from the outside; entering the unconscious, entering yourself through dreams, is touching nature from the inside and this is the same thing; things are put right again. (Sabini, 2000, para. 6)

Jung noted “Nature is an incomparable guide if you know how to follow her (p. 219). . . . Modern man needs to return to nature, not to Nature in the manner of Rousseau, but to his own nature. His task is to find the natural man again” (as cited in Sabini, 2005, p. 125).

The knowledge of symbols is vital, Jung believed, because it is through symbols that the conscious and unconscious are united. He understands symbols to be complexes which activate constellated emotions that are up for healing, and it is through the wound that healing arises (1916/1958). This inquiry caused me to take a hard and thorough look at my own feelings of fear and despair; my powerlessness and desire to escape, to dissociate, and to psychically numb myself. I think of the journey in which I left my body lying on the forest floor, a young girl delighting in the liberation of disembodiment, of flying away, risking my very soul because I

was loathe to return to what Marion Woodman (1996) refers to as “this dark heap of flesh” (p. 36). Only now, do I begin to understand the extent to which this symptom from nature, the phenomenon of Colony Collapse Disorder, was unconsciously mirroring my own unconscious. At a very deep level, due to the implicit sense of despair I felt at the human condition, my own included, I didn’t want to be here. Everything made that clear. By not wishing to be here, I willed my life away, never feeling fully alive or engaged.

The work on this project seemed to usher in a period of despair. Once my inquiry begun, I encountered dying bees virtually everywhere I went. I experienced a profound sense of hopelessness and powerlessness: many times I tried to save a flailing bee by setting her on a flower or plant, only to return hours later to find the ants already dismembering her lifeless body. It was never to any avail. As I related more and more consciously to the dying bees as a symbol for self, I slipped into disorientation. I couldn’t save the bees, and I didn’t feel I could heal myself; there was no hope for humankind. During this time, my active work on the thesis came to a grinding halt for several months. Deadlines came and went but I couldn’t seem to work up the energy or concentration to write. I felt listless, disoriented, and immobilized, taking on the very characteristics of the hapless bees I was studying.

But, though my energy dropped off, unbeknownst to my conscious mind, the process was still intact, running through me like a deep river, working like bees in the deepest, darkest recesses of the hive. Honey is an underworld food. It is clear to me now that I had to enter the underworld for a while, sink into the swamp, live as the thesis soul had lived in her self-incarcerated state where the soul could unfold. No wonder I was resistant to writing, to interpreting. The dark night was upon me, and I couldn’t see the dawn.

What changed during those long months of involuntary exile?—those eternal dark moments of alternately feeling the fear and numbing it; of despairing and dissociating? As Jung so eloquently put it:

To confront a person with his Shadow is to show him his own light. Once one has experienced a few times what it is like to stand judgmentally between the opposites, one begins to understand what is meant by the self. Anyone who perceives his Shadow and his light simultaneously sees himself from two sides and thus gets in the middle. (Jung, 1957, p. 463)

The change, then, was instigated by my increased capacity to hold the pain, discomfort, and despair of my own life, the dying of the bees, and the tragedy of the human condition in general. Jung identified this transformational element as the *transcendent function*, saying:

The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing...a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation. The transcendent function manifests itself as a quality of conjoined opposites. So long as these are kept apart—naturally for the purpose of avoiding conflict—they do not function and remain inert. (Jung, 1916/1958)

Judith Harris (2001) insists that when we are not grounded, not connected to our roots, terrible psychic issues occur, leading to feelings of intense fear and anxiety. Of the elements, Jung identified that earth holds the exact central point between the tension of two opposites. According to Harris, feeling grounded in the earth results in feeling held by the Great Mother, nourished, nurtured, and whole. The center is the eternal, and all that is contained within it is represented by the archetype of the Self, which contains the totality of the psyche. The center, she says, implies stillness, and in the stillness there is space for something new to emerge. When we connect to the sacred center, the earth, “the deep-seated origins that existed thousands of years before us brings healing at a profound mystical level” (p. 76).

According to Jung (Harris, 2001), when we go down, we connect with the collective unconscious which includes the past. We go back in time, and in so doing, we touch all the

unfulfilled lives that have been lived before us, allowing them to be lived out, redeeming them. This alignment with the center, the earth, the archetype of the Great Mother, allows us to discover the miracle of creativity. When torn between the opposites, chaos results, and we are literally torn in to—unable to stand, to move, to bear the confusion while still be drawn further into the chaos.

When sufficient energy moving in one direction accumulates, it will always ultimately be reversed in order to prevent one-sidedness. The age-old motif of descent, or dark night of the soul, carries with it the theme of a quest, an initiation, a purification that will lead to liberation, renewal, and rebirth (Harris, 2001). The forager bees that know flight, that have tasted the air, have risen to the greatest heights, are now plummeting to the earth and staying there.

I see now I must surrender to my fear. I must descend to the earth. Like the grounded bee, I have to hold the tension, the grief, and the pain, abandoning myself to the downward journey to make contact with the soul of earth and night. Hillman (1989) says, “The dimension of soul is depth...and the dimension of our soul travel is downward” (p. 22). I have to be willing to pause and witness the fall of night, the darkness that makes its cold nest all around me, cutting me off from the hive. There can be no regeneration until I can do so. Jung asserted, “It has forever been the aspiration of mankind to fly like a bird, to become a wind, a breath; and it can be done, but it is paid for by the loss of the body, or the loss of humanity, which is the same thing (Conger, 1988/2005, p. xix). Until we all are willing to reconnect with our roots in Mother Earth, to take on the darkness and embrace it, to reconnect with the body and be fully in it, witnessing, regarding, *being here*, we will continue to colonize, to disregard, and to suffer. And though we may die in the very process, we will be set free like Medusa whose blood gave birth to the creative word.

Returning to earth which bore me, to wild nature, letting go of my thoughts and desires; giving over to the call of the Mystery that manifests in the natural world around me may ultimately bring me home:

Trees and soils, streams and skies, animals and instincts are coparticipants—subjects in their own right with their own precious needs and freedoms to preserve. If willing, they can be our partners in reestablishing a healing sense of belonging and homecoming in a world riven by displacement...the uprootedness and angst of not feeling at home anywhere on Earth. (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009, p. 20)

I have to stop and think as I write this. I write it because somewhere within me I believe it. I understand in holding the tension of the opposites, a miracle occurs. The transcendent solution that arises is tangible; real. If I can just be aware; behold the process taking place so I know when to be still. I feel myself surrounded by bees suddenly, swarming me, crawling under my clothing and fanning my face with their wings as they come and go. I am not afraid; even if they sting me, I must hold the tension and just be.

I think about Spencer then: as a tiny four-year-old child nearly stung to death by bees. Was he, too, required to hold the tension, to stand still while the bees took their anger out on him, stinging him again and again for his brother's crimes? No, he was too young—his fragile ego still required building up to have the strength to hold the tension then. But his father, on the other hand: had his father had the awareness and the capacity to hold the tension, to bear the stings and not react in fear when his young son came running toward him for protection, things would have been very different at home. Had my grandfather been able to hold his ground, take root, love his son no matter what, witness that the bees were dying in pain even as they stung him, perhaps the Great Mother energy of the earth would have flowed through. Perhaps Spencer would have had that as his own legacy, that capacity to be, to hold the tension in a frightening situation where it seemed like the world would end: to nurture and cherish. Instead, he inherited the same fear, the tendency to disregard, the same propensity for objectification that I have

today—having received it from him while I was growing up. How many generations back does this go? How did my ancestors live on the earth, in their bodies, with their sense of self? Where does the buck stop? Must all the bees die in a desperate signal that something is gravely wrong before we begin to regard them? How can we make their courageous deaths worthwhile?

Jung suggested a symbol is the expression of a complex that the conscious mind has not fully apprehended (1916/1958). According to him, “The symbols of the self arise in the depths of the body and they express its materiality every bit as much as the structure of the perceiving consciousness. The symbol is thus a living body, *corpus et anima*” (Conger, 1988/2005, p. xxi). I am aware I don’t want to be here: not like this! Not isolated and alone in the black night. Part of the reason, no doubt, is that few of us in our modern world are willing to embrace the dark earth, the deep, devouring feminine that insists we surrender and be purified. We are all milling around like zombies, infecting each other and generation after generation of rootless, homeless beings who are lost from the hive, fearful and alone: “wraith-like, ethereal, unchained and imaged beings” (p. xx). Where do we begin? If I am not able to start, there is no hope for the world. It must begin with me. I must take on that dark night. I must stop the frantic buzzing of my useless wings and allow the night to wash over me, silent and still as I embrace it, as it engulfs me and devours me. I must hold the tension, trusting that something bigger exists, releasing the attachment to the notion that I will ever see the hive again, but knowing that the earth is so much bigger. By beholding, I am also held and supported by dark living earth, the fertile ground of substance that brings new life, loving the seed until it bursts forth into verdant vitality.

The world has not changed over much during the time of human existence, but humans and our relationship to it has. We used to be “humble participants” (Glendinning, 1994, p. 205) in relationship to our environment through communion and interdependent association, but now

our perspective has completely changed. Like disoriented bees that find themselves grounded, unable to soar and get their perspective of the divine and our place within it, unable to see the map of the landscape in which we exist, we have forgotten even that there is anything more than our day-to-day existence. We operate on limited perception, not understanding there is so much more. We don't consciously remember that things used to be different. We have lost all memory of participating in a vibrant joyful enterprising unanimity, a *superorganism*, a world in which we are all irrevocably connected with each other and every thing in it, in which every individual is part of a whole in a way that is undeniable and innately divine.

Martin Prechtel, contemporary Maya shaman, says that if a culture is not willing to make offerings, there will be arbitrary sacrifices (Unpublished lecture, San Rafael, CA, September 10, 2009). As long as we resist the descent, the bees may continue to fall. Michael Meade (2008) reminds us that if we do not assign and value meaning to every individual life, then death becomes meaningless as well. In myth, Ra's tears were each a bee, falling to the earth. We must witness and mourn each and every one, recognizing what it means to us: the sacrifice that is being made.

There is no way to know what the vanishing of the bees really means. The bees are simply following a mysterious call from Nature herself. Perhaps we cannot save them: that may not be the calling here. Perhaps we cannot even seek to heal it for that is not necessarily the goal. But we can be aware of it. We can witness it. Being willing to stand on the threshold of the abyss and behold it makes it meaningful so it's not in vain. As we now know, moving from passive bystanding to active witnessing inspires a healing process (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

Witnessing requires holding of the tension, balancing the opposites and the discomfort that arises

from the conflict. Witnessing plus holding results in *beholding*: holding with surrender and an engaged heart. “Bee-holding”.

Shadow. Surrender. Rebirth.

Ultimately, Jung has associated the wound with rigidity, causing lack of ability to open oneself to enjoy life. He illustrates this theme with a letter from a woman who has learned to accept life as it comes. Having given up her former attitude of resisting what she did not want out of fear of being overcome, she is now "more alive" and appreciates "the game of life" in which "sun and shadow [are] forever alternating (Haule, 1992). Ursula King and Teilhard de Chardin (1999) assert, "To see more and to feel more means to be more, to live a fuller, richer life, a life of plenitude and wholeness. . . . To see or to perish is the very condition laid upon everything that makes up the universe" (p. 27). Pema Chödrön (1991) insists, "To be fully alive, fully human, and completely awake is to be continually thrown out of the nest" (p. 89).

I witness further transformation in a final episode with Medusa:

I find Medusa on a bench and we regard each other warmly. Her snakes are vivacious though she looks tired around her eyes. She is on an intense search to find others like me who are either willing to regard her infinitely or whom she can no longer turn to stone. Her search is difficult and exhausting, but its taking shape. I check in with my mind, feeling into her energy; her essence. She is no longer 100% stone inside either. Part of her inside is soft, alive, light-filled, writhing like the snakes on her head. Part of me feels like that inside as well, so no wonder she can no longer turn me to stone. This essence is too vibrant to be immobilized: nothing can overwhelm me in this condition.

Our sustained connection, our willing beholding of each other, now is palpable, concrete. We both smile. She says I am like a daughter to her; have helped her. I see a sudden flash of Medusa, young, vibrant, beautiful with apple cheeks and a glowing countenance. This Medusa is wild and sensuous, rolling on the floor of Athena's temple with Poseidon. Consensual or no, it was for this—this essence—that Athena supposedly cursed Medusa to be the hideous deadly and dead monster she became. I realize it suddenly! If Medusa is the part of Athena that was sensitive, feminine, sexual, and creative—and that's why Athena cursed her, cut her off the same way I have cut off that part of myself from an early age--that aspect still exists. They are one and the same. It simply couldn't be abided. It has been hiding underground for a long, long time, both in the history of my own life, but more broadly, in the history of humanity. That is what the deep earth holds! Athena is the rational masculine warrior part and Medusa the beautiful,

wild, feminine enchantress. Athena objectified Medusa out of fear by turning her into an object with no possibility for interaction. The healing can now begin to happen as the two opposites come together and unite: two halves that make a whole. (Bright, Journal entry, January 7, 2008)

In the end, I took one last needed journey. Jungian scholar, James Hollis, writes:

There are swamplands of the soul where nature, our nature, intends that we live a good part of the journey, and from whence many of the most meaningful moments of our lives will derive. It is in the swamplands where soul is fashioned and forged, where we encounter, not only the gravitas of life - but its purpose, its dignity, and its deepest meaning. (Hollis, 1996)

Heeding Hollis' words, I knew I must encounter the Underworld again, braving the dead bees that lapped at my ankles in whispery horror, that place where the brittle bones abound. This time I had an intention in mind: I was going there to hold the tension, and to witness the horror I found.

As we reach the shores of the swamp and encounter the layers of crunchy dead bees up to my ankles, I am determined (I have intention) to regard. Medusa and I begin to prepare for a ritual, sweep a clear space for a fire, surround the pit with skulls and bones from skeletons nearby. It's eerie, quiet. Death is everywhere. Even the dead trees appear to scratch the sky like bony skeleton fingers.

I turn my attention to my heart. I let it do the regarding. There is no effort to it. It is as if my heart simply has eyes and it looks at all the billions of bees and the skeletons and the dead trees and scarred, parched earth. It looks and looks for a long time, just beholding each. I realize, in my head, I sort of expected things to come back to life through this practice, this beholding, but they don't.

Instead, however slowly, I begin to feel a sense of acknowledgment, a realizing that beholding is witnessing and by witnessing the death all around me, it all becomes meaningful and significant and therefore a thing of great beauty. They are no longer dead objects, but beautiful essence: "essential," needed, because they are seen and held and witnessed and not judged for being dead, distasteful, or ugly. By beholding, therefore, we make everything alive, take on meaning; nothing is insignificant.

After a long, long while, I suddenly notice the sky is getting slightly lighter in the East. It's dawn! I wonder how long it's been since the sun rose here in the underworld. I hear the water lapping at the edges of the swamp and realize the water is stirring to life. As orange streaks appear in the sky, I look at the dead, black, bony trees and see one tiny bright green leaf on one tree. Beholding creates new life! Witnessing the birth, the awakened forces of nature, the sunrise, the water, the movement and growth: these things are alive because they are witnessed and beheld.

As dawn arrives, I understand it is time go home and I ponder my exit from the underworld. Training dictates that I return the same way I came in. Suddenly, I realize—I

don't need to leave. I *am* home. The boundary between this world of sorrow and my world has dissolved. They are one and the same and I can stay right where I am and be just fine.

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