

EASTER EGGS FROM THE MALLARD:  
*PROCESSING GRIEF IN A THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP*

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## Abstract

### Easter Eggs from the Mallard: Processing Grief in a Therapeutic Relationship

by

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This experiential project explored the specific experience of grief over the death of therapist, Sara Halprin, Ph.D., through the story of a client's relationship with her therapist and experience of grieving her therapist's death. This project describes the client's experiences before and after the therapist's death, as well as how process-oriented grief work facilitated the client's grieving process. Summaries of process-oriented work with the grieving process and description of the client's last session with the therapist are included.



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

By joining in the act of storytelling, we formulate a new relationship that allows us to explore the roles in depth, and go to beyond any one role in our understanding of the whole story. (Halprin, 1995, p. 273)

### *Prologue*

#### *On Lunar Eclipse Day 2000*

Once upon a time . . . on lunar eclipse day, a woman from Japan who had just arrived in Portland was sitting in a cozy apartment room on the third floor and watching the show occurring in the darkness of the universe. It soon awoke her from her jet lag and drew her into the beauty of the Moon. She realized for the first time in her life that even with the Moon being in the shadow of the Earth and with no direct solar radiation, she still could see the moon vividly and a tiny sepia-colored view could bring contrast and a sense of relief. Barely sensed delicate light between herself and the moon shortened the distance between them. Watching this cosmic show brought her into a dreamy and meditative state wherein she started to have an interest in things which usually did not get direct light and also the idea of dreaming behind things. Admiration for and closeness to the lunar beauty captivated and motivated her to learn more and open up, to get to know the unknown parts of herself which had usually not been paid attention to so seriously, nor explored so much. A few days later, she went to see a process-oriented therapist, Sara Halprin, Ph.D. It became the first therapy session in her life, which has been followed by more than 100 therapy sessions as a student of Process Work.

Sara Halprin, Ph.D., my first process-oriented therapist, was also a great storyteller. When she started to say in a session, “*Midori, let’s make a story from here, Once Upon a Time . . .*,” her softly hoarse voice and slow tempo instantly brought

me into a dream-like world. Her curiosity and openness to whatever I explored and expressed helped me to swim in the fantasy and befriend my unknown parts.

*On Easter Day 2008*

I was thinking about my final project. At first, my ideas were about humor and/or *flirts* as my project topic. I was interested in humor from flirts, dreaming, people's unconscious behavior, and thinking about exploring how a sense of humor and working with flirts could help facilitate awareness and processing things by bringing humor to even difficult and challenging moments. I felt that a sense of humor would transform things, let light into the field, and make connections with what Process Work describes as three levels of experience—*consensus reality*, *dreamland*, and *essence*. (Process Work Terms such as these are explained at the end of this chapter.) So, I was very curious about this and about exploring such a topic.

To write my final project proposal on this topic, I was looking around my room to see what caught my attention . . . then, an Easter egg flirted with me. As I unfolded it, I started to think that I wanted to write about Sara for my final project, not about humor and/or flirts. Sara had become a mallard, a bird, in her *dreaming process* before she flew from her physical body. (I introduce the Mallard story in Chapter 2.) I remembered that there was a lot of laughter in her funeral and at the gatherings after her death. She wanted to have laughter and music in her ceremony. Since her death, I had thought that I might draw, write, or create something for her memorial, and this time, I decided to do it as my final project.

When I decided to write about my experiences around Sara's dying process for my project, I felt a bit of grief about my previous project topic, humor and/or flirts, and I choose to explore my grieving process around Sara's death because I felt that my energy and feeling level went up when I found and decided on this. I noticed that

this process of exploring humor and flirts for my final project was very helpful and also needed for me since I was working on quite a heavy issue before this project. Because Sara loved humor and flirts, I thought that what I was interested in would be unfolded in this project, too. I also hoped that processing this project would involve and could also be a part of my grieving process, and that the spirit of Sara would be both respected and revived through my writing.

### *About This Project*

#### *The Purpose of the Project in Consensus Reality*

This is a story drawn from some of my experiences, and especially on my grieving process prior to and after the death of Sara. I dedicate this thesis to her.

The purpose of this project is to explore the specific experience of grief over the death of a therapist through the story of my relationship with Sara Halprin, Ph.D., my experiences of grieving her death, and also to explore and document how process-oriented grief work facilitates the grieving process. I delve into my therapeutic relationship prior to and after the death of the therapist, and explore how Process Work was used to support the grieving process.

There are no prior written accounts of the response of a Process Work client to the terminal illness and death of his or her therapist. This project is the first one of its kind, and as little has been written about process-oriented grief work, I believe that my project contributes to the field by adding to the literature in this area.

#### *Limits and Approach*

Stories, summaries, and illustrations of sessions and my therapeutic relationship with Sara Halprin, Ph.D. in this paper are based on my subjective experiences and from my perspective. Since I am not able to check my writing with her at this moment, I would like to emphasize that how I illustrate my therapeutic

relationship with her is from my own experience based on memory as closely as I remember, detailed notes taken after some sessions, and sometimes tape recorded session data. I also believe and appreciate that getting comments from Herb Long, Th.D., her partner, as one of my study committee members supports this paper's accuracy and helps to verify the validity of my reports. Without his presence, I would not have been able to explore this topic, nor in such depth.

In this project, there is also a description of my experiences and learning from sessions with six other process-oriented therapists. The number of session times is different for each therapist. Most of the sessions were videotaped or tape-recorded. Some parts I transcribe are from that data. In some of those sessions, my intension was working on my grieving process. In some other sessions, my intension was not especially focused on that, but I found they helped me to think about this topic. In each chapter, I also include notes as to my findings regarding how process-oriented grief work facilitates the grieving process.

### *Audience*

Primary audience of this project is my study committee, the Process Work community, and others interested in grief and the therapeutic relationship. Anyone who has known Sara and would like to know our relationship may be others.

### *Process Work Terms*

A central concern of Process Work is an interest in facilitating awareness of our wholeness as individuals and communities. Process Work concepts and methods aim to cultivate attitudes, awareness and skills needed to facilitate an interaction among all parts of ourselves. (Mindell & Mindell, 2008b)

Some Process Work terms are used in this paper. I explain them here and offer some theoretical description.

*Flirts.* These play an important role in communication.

We use the word “flirts” in the most general sense of something trying to catch our attention. A flower for example, may “flirt” with us (and vice versa!). The flirts happen so quickly that we usually pass it by or forget it. Yet in communicating, the flirt plays an important role as the predecessor to signals, and potentially difficult communication situations. (Mindell & Mindell, 2008a)

*Three levels of experience—consensus reality, dreamland, and essence.* In

Process Work we think of three levels of experience.

1. *Consensus Reality (CR) level:* the everyday world of time and space that is generally agreed upon as “real” and is perceived through everyday awareness, like facts, issue, history, conscious problems and ideas and diversity of people.
2. *Dreamland Level:* the world of the dreams, various figures, feelings, projections, fantasies, roles and ghost roles. *Ghost roles* are those things or people that are spoken about but not directly represented by anyone in a given group. In dreamland, roles are *non-local*—that means, spread out everywhere in the universe at any given moment—and belong to all of us.
3. *Essence Level:* the non-dualistic level of experience that connects all of us and which gives birth to everything else and the common ground of each dreamland figure and behind everyday reality. From this viewpoint, there is only oneness. (Mindell & Mindell, 2001-2009a)

*Dreaming process.* The dreaming process is the pattern that underlies our everyday experiences (Mindell, 2002).

*Metaskills.* Metaskills are the feeling qualities or attitudes that bring any other learned skills to life and make them useful (Mindell & Mindell, 2001-2009b). They show up in the way an intervention may be implemented, as well (Mindell, 1995).

*Edge.* An edge is literally a boundary. It is the realm that separates our known identities (called primary process) from unknown experiences or identities (called secondary process), where challenge, nervousness, excitement, or discomfort are often felt because new parts begin to emerge.

*Dreambody.* “Mindell named the mirroring of physical experiences in dreams the ‘Dreambody.’ He described the Dreambody as a dreamlike, unifying field that gives expression to body symptoms and dreams alike” (Diamond & Spark Jones, 2004, p. 6).

Awareness of this reflection aids in the unfolding of dreams and body symptoms.

*Entanglement.* This is a metaphor borrowed from quantum physics. It names an individual or group experience in which parts are connected not only directly, but through magical and nonlocal means (Mindell & Mindell, 2008a).

*Big U.*

The Big U is a system mind concept. U stands for Universe, or the biggest part of a group or of a person. A system can be the whole world, or a group, or an individual, or even a particle. In any and all cases, the Big U connects to the piloting-guiding function of the system's mind (or more exactly, its quantum mind). It is experienced as a kind of dreamlike organizer of the system and includes all of the parts, people and situations involved. (Mindell & Mindell, 2008a)

The big U leads us to necessary eldership in order to appreciate all roles, feelings, vectors, and people's characteristics involved in relationship (Mindell, 2007, p. 176).

*Vectors.* Simply stated,

Vectors are the mathematical term for arrows. We use vectors to mean your subjective or dreamlike sense of earth-based direction. The earth pulls or moves you in certain directions at different times. When you walk and follow the direction or vector of any experience, you may feel a sense of energy, power, and rhythm, which may tell you about the meaning of the path. (Mindell & Mindell, 2008a)

*Earth Based Psychology.* This is both title and topic of Arnold Mindell's most recent book.

Earth Based Psychology centers on people's ability to associate feelings and dream experiences with directions, and use them to interpret dreams, and find their "way" through inner life and outer relationship situations. Earth Based Psychology was derived from a combination of Richard Feynman's theories about how particles move, and Australian Aboriginal and shamanistic Native American abilities to know when and where to move, at a given moment. (Mindell & Mindell, 2001-2009c)

*Processmind.* The topic of Mindell's newest book now in press is the concept of Processmind.

This is the deepest part of ourselves, can be associated with a part of our body, and the spirit of an earth location. Just as the earth underlies all forms of human

and natural processes in the biosphere, the process mind is the dreaming intelligence behind all our experiences. The “PM” is a key all facilitators need to work with all worlds and peoples. (Mindell & Mindell, 2001-2009d)

*Worldwork*. This is a process-oriented approach that looks at groups and organizations as systems.

Worldwork (WW) is a small and large group method that uses Deep Democracy to address the issues of groups and organizations of all kinds. To resolve reality problems and enrich community experience, worldwork methods focus on employing the power of an organization’s or city’s dreamlike background (e.g., projections, gossips, roles, and creative fantasy). Worldwork facilitators listen to the land, do innerwork, practice outer communication skills involving role consciousness, signal and rank awareness to enrich organizational life. WW has been successfully applied to the analysis of, and work with multicultural, multileveled, Aboriginal communities, universities, small and large international organizations, city hot spots and world conflict zones. Worldwork awareness requires access to the Processmind. (Mindell & Mindell, 2008a)

*Deep Democracy*. This is key to successfully implementing WW.

Deep Democracy is a philosophy and a metaskill: The basic idea is that reality and dreaming, verbal and non-verbal deep states of consciousness, are all equally important. We need to represent all the different peoples and issues and as many of the equal value and important of all parts, peoples and levels of experiences. (Mindell & Mindell, 2008b)

#### *Notes*

I find that bringing in a sense of humor as one of my *metaskills* while exploring and writing about this process itself in an atmosphere of remembering Sara is helping me in the grieving process. I realize that it has also brought a sense of cocreating something together with Sara. Creating something out there in consensus reality as a memorial seems to be helpful, because I feel that my feelings around this process begin to flow more.



## Chapter 2: Sara Halprin, Ph.D.

In this chapter, I introduce Sara. Drawing from her own self-introduction, my personal experiences with her, as well as her last Process Work session with Arnold Mindell, Ph.D., I offer illustrations.

### *From the Website of Sara Halprin, Ph.D.*

Firstly, I offer how she introduced herself in her website. Soon after I came back from Sara and her partner Herb's house on November 11, 2006, 1 day after her death, I copied her website pages and sent them to my email address. I wanted to keep her memory and writings with me as much as possible. I remember that I was crying and seriously copying those in my apartment room in Portland until late at night. Today, in 2009, when I click her website address, those pages are no longer present. I knew it would be like this, but this makes tangible her absence from this reality and makes me feel emptiness in front of my desire to see them. It also increases my sadness about missing her.

I feel happy to introduce Sara here through her own words, as I can feel like she is alive through her words, hear her voice in my mind, and imagine her facial expressions which sometimes reminded me of Minnie in Disneyland. The following two quotes are from her website HOME. Her other website pages are in Appendix A.

I live and work in the home I share with Herb Long, overlooking the Willamette River in the city of Portland, Oregon, where I write, teach writing workshops, give phone consultations and have a private practice as a process work consultant. My focus in each of these activities is on following and unfolding the creative process that lurks shyly behind our most troublesome problems and blocks. Sara Halprin, Ph.D., Certified Process Work Therapist, Teacher, Author. (Halprin, 2005)

She also mentioned that

Sara Halprin, Ph.D. is the author of *Look at My Ugly Face! Myths and Musings on Beauty and Other Perilous Obsessions with Women's*

*Appearance* (Penguin, 1996); *Seema's Show: A Life on the Left* (University of New Mexico Press, August, 2005); and co-editor of the anthology *Alternative to War: The Creative Aftermath of Worldwork 2004* (Changing Worlds Press, 2005). She is a Certified Process Work therapist and teacher at the Process Work Center of Portland, and she leads workshops that explore the interface between process work and writing. (Halprin, 2005)

### *Encouragement and Support*

How Sara described her focus in each of these activities, such as “following and unfolding the creative process that lurks shyly behind our most troublesome problems and blocks” (Halprin, 2005) still makes me teary because that was how I really felt during our sessions. Her way of holding therapeutic space and being together with my shyness was very supportive to explore something creatively beyond my primary identity. I always felt her encouragement in the sessions. She was super good at making me feel like, “oh, I would like to try that. I would like to explore this part of me.”

For example, in terms of drawing pictures, I had a big critic and shyness in me that said, “Midori, your drawing is terrible. You still draw like a kid. You should not show any pictures to anybody.” Then, Sara said to me, “Oh, I love your drawing very much, Midori. They are like cartoons. You could draw a kid's book. They would love your drawing, and me, too. You think you are small and you can not do this or this, but your dreaming is big and you are a very strong person, so follow your dreaming and express it. Draw your dreaming in your own unique style!” When Sara said those things, I forgot my critical inner voices. I could really feel the power of dreaming and its emerging from within myself.

Sometimes from the view point of my everyday mind, I felt, “How about me?” and I noticed my hesitation to integrate my unknown parts. I realized my enjoyment in creativity had been underdeveloped because of strong inner critics and a belief and

value system which limits my identity. She recommended that I give myself time to explore those parts in me and I really enjoyed doing that.

If I would name what I really miss about her, it would be her supportive attitude and encouragement, not only in terms of drawing but also in many different ways. I can still see her smiling and hear her voice saying, “Midori, it is wonderful. You can do it.”

### *Writing and Nature*

As a writer, Sara published many books and taught writing workshops. The themes of her writing workshops that I participated in were quite edgy and challenging ones for me. They were *Dreambody Writing on Death* and *On the Sensual and the Sacred*. In the workshops, she encouraged people to notice which part in you was writing, notice body experiences and get specific sensory grounded information through what we see, hear, smell, taste, and feel in our bodies. She invited us to notice and work with resistances and *edges*. Her teachings showed me how to use the essential energy of flirts and disturbances, and write with minimal action. She also suggested that people send their critics on vacation and try to write without stopping no matter what. When I felt stuck in writing my final project for a prior masters program, Sara suggested to me personally that I should write anyway, because she knew that I would try to include other people’s suggestions, and that would diminish my writing energy.

Now, I am reviewing her teaching as I write this thesis. To me, writing itself is not easy at all. I recall what Sara told me when I was struggling with writing in my second language, English. She said, “Midori, you have limited vocabulary in English, but you could express what you want to write in a few words, like Haiku. I think you are good at that. You can express the essence of your experiences.” I felt this went along with her encouragement to me in writing in my second language and also her teaching

about minimal action in writing. She mentioned about minimal action, not-doing, or doing the least amount needed to accomplish an effect, and encouraged people to believe in nature and interfere as little as possible with natural processes. I hoped to integrate her teaching in my process of writing this paper and enjoy writing no matter what. Indeed, it feels like following nature is coming through writing as it is.

As this thesis is on death and my grief process, I offer two poems that I wrote during her workshop on death, which Sara seemed to like very much when I read them there.

### The Gift

What could be the gift from me before I leave?  
 My possessions?  
 Memories with you?  
 Lovely creatures?  
 I will leave all of them here for you.

But what I really want to give you before I leave is  
 the word  
 “Thank you.”  
 Even if I become unable to speak,  
 I remember the word and I am saying it in my mind.

You might feel that you are not the one who can  
 receive it.  
 You might feel shy to receive it.  
 But please accept this word “Thank you.”

Please don't hurt anyone, even yourself, because of  
 my death.  
 Please don't feel that you were wrong or  
 you could do something better  
 for me.

I feel that this is the time for me to die.

Remember when you were in your mother's womb,  
 dark, narrow, unbreathable space.  
 And imagine that you have to go back to that space  
 now.

Can you do that now?  
 No, you can't.  
 But you were able to be there.

Of course,  
 I sometimes feel fear of death,  
 but at that time,  
 I remember what I've experienced before,  
 in my mother's womb  
 and when I was about to be born.  
 As I was born from the mother's space,  
 I just believe I will be able to go to the next.  
 So don't worry about me.  
 Please don't feel sorry or sad about my death.

Thank you very much for being with me.  
 I love you  
 and I am always with you.

Did I say "Please don't do that and that" to you  
 too much?  
 Oh, please excuse me.  
 Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Buddha

You took me to see a statue of Buddha.  
 It was a big and shining golden statue.

After hundreds of stairs needed to be climbed,  
 I was happy with watching the statue.  
 But you were happy with looking behind,  
 seeing the world like Buddha did.

### *Radical Teacher*

Sara had shown me different ways of looking at myself and thinking about various things. Another one I thought very radical as a teacher to say and which I loved to hear came before the intermediate exams, when I was telling her that it was very difficult for me to read books in English. She said to me that maybe I did not need to read those books at that moment and that it was not time for me to do that. Instead of

that, she suggested that I follow my interest, for example, when I go to a bookstore, pick up a book that caught my attention and open the pages. I felt that it was a very radical suggestion. I noticed that I had a certain belief system and image of how to study and it was that I needed to read recommended books before those exams. I also thought it was great to read those books and once I read them, I loved reading them. However, what Sara told me at that time made me feel so free and I felt less stress and even joy in studying. I really loved her freedom to speak like that and I felt excited to learn in a more creative way.

### *Mother Figure*

Sara was my therapist from January 24, 2000. Although I have just written “was,” I feel that it is not “was” in my heart nor in my life. Sara is my first main therapist who left her physical body and still lives in my heart and around.

I met her in classes, sometimes privately, and more than 100 times in sessions by phone or in person. When I saw her, my relationship with her was in the context of teacher therapist and student client in the consensus reality level. In that role, I noticed my hesitation to ask her a lot about personal questions although she knew my personal stuff in detail probably more than anybody else. I imagined that this was how it would be in a therapeutic relationship. Also, when I saw her in therapy sessions, I wanted to work on myself and our focus was on exploring my issues. Naturally, I knew less about her personal life than I wish I could have known. So, when I read her website, I was very interested to know her personal history, experiences, poems, and thoughts.

In the feeling level, Sara was also my Portland mother figure. I felt cared for, paid attention to, and my soul felt nurtured and reeducated and raised by another mother figure. My biological mother loves me a lot and I have a good relationship with her, but how I felt from Sara was something different from how I felt from my

biological mother. From Sara, I felt encouraged to connect more consciously with my deeper parts and enjoy expanding my identity fluidly and freely.

*The Mallard*

The following two quotes are from a booklet created by Herb and given out at Sara's memorial gathering in 2007. They introduce the report of her death by her Process Work teacher, Arnold Mindell, Ph.D., and of her last session with him in which she became a mallard.

*The Death and Life of Dr. Sara Halprin, November 10, 2006*

We are sad to report that Dr. Sara Halprin dies early this evening. At 6:30 PM, Portland, Oregon time, November the 10<sup>th</sup>, our good friend, best author, wonderful teacher, exciting filmmaker, amazing colleague, creative therapist, inquiring student and spice being – Sara Halprin – has died.

After her death, we dreamed she wanted to “be useful” to the public; as a result, we decided to publish her final words, as they included her interest in being of use to all.

Thanks to Herb Long, her best friend and husband, for being with her and helping to facilitate the following interaction. He did this in so many ways throughout the period of her eight month illness and death.

One of her (semi) verbal exchanges occurred as she tracked altered state experiences that finally led to her becoming a magical bird. She called it “The Mallard.” We think she might like it if others knew of her experience, and her bird.

~ What follows is a record (thanks Amy) of Sara's transformative process (as close as we can remember) ~ (Long, 2007)

*The Mallard: Sara's Session with Arnold Mindell, Ph.D.*

Herb: Arny, I'll put the phone near Sara's ear. Go ahead and speak, she will hear you.

Arny: Sara, so good to be with you . . . to hear your breath . . . your voice.

Sara: Yes. Perhaps I should get more therapy.

Arny: Why not . . . What would you do with your life if you could?

Sara: I want my life to be a useful one, for everyone . . .

Arny: The best way to make your life useful in the moment is to track your experiences; very few people are able to do that and give it to others.

Sara: (Barely audible but mumbling, gasping a bit) OK. I can't breathe too well, my heart is racing. My hand is jittering, jittering.

Arny: Herb and Sara? Perhaps Sara can try to sit up just a bit, not too much; that may ease the strain on your breathing and heart.

Sara: (Breathing easier) Ah, that is better.

Arny: Sara, make little hand motions that go with that jitter.

Sara: Ohhhh, mmmm. Now I feel relaxed. (Quiet)

Arny: What do you notice now?

Sara: Ohhhh, the neck, Arny, it is moving, jittering . . . now I'm falling away . . . falling backwards, like nothing . . . falling into empty space . . .

Arny: If you fell somewhere, where would you like to fall?

Sara: I am falling . . . into nothingness.

Arny: Sounds OK . . . You can choose where you'd like to go. That might be your best medicine.

Sara: (After a few seconds) . . . I can make a choice as to where I want to go? . . . Now I'm losing my senses, I'm free and floating.

Arny: Just feel that.

Sara: I don't know, I'm disappointed . . .

Arny: If you're disappointed, that means you know where you want to go and aren't. Would you like to go into the arms of something taking care of you? The seashore? Or to Mars?

Sara: Somewhere I'm needed.

Arny: You are very much needed. . . .

Sara: OK, I'm falling backwards again, falling out and . . . I'm a nobody and . . . there's a bird, the water's edge.

Arny: What kind of bird?

Sara: It's a pigeon, no, it's a duck. Ahhh, it's a mallard! It's a mallard!

Arny: You're needed as a duck floating on the water.

Sara: Ohhhh.

Arny: Would you like me to sing you a duck song?

Sara: Yes, please.

Arny: ([In Swiss German] "Alli mini Entli schwimmed uf em See, schwimmed uf em See": translated approximately into English) "All my little ducks, swimming on the lake, swimming on the lake, put their little heads in the water, and their little tails up high." That's a Swiss children's song. Did you like it?

Sara: Ohhhh, YES!!

Arny: Well, you are a duck, a mallard at the water's edge.

Sara: Ummmm. Yes! And its head is moving back and forth. It's amazing.\*

Arny: Enjoy being a mallard; it was so good being with you.

Sara: Oh yes! Goodbye.

(Everyone is silent)

Herb: Thanks Arny, and goodbye.

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\*Thinking back upon the experiences of this amazingly wonderful and lucid woman, we can say that what began as a hand-arm-body tremor was, from the inner viewpoint, the beginning of The Mallard. (Long, 2007)

### *Notes*

Sara represented many roles in my life. As a process-oriented therapist, she was able to follow my process and help me be aware of my unknown parts and supported me to discover and live with the new parts. Also, she introduced me to

diverse viewpoints towards many things in life which helped me to go beyond my personal culture. As for being in a therapeutic relationship, I felt her suggestions were not general advice but a very personal model just for myself at the moment, like a magical cloth almost always just fits my body and changes its size and color when my body changes size and condition. It was a very nice feeling to have someone right next to me coming along with my challenges and growth and witnessing with very supportive eyes. So, losing my main therapist was also like losing all of those experiences I had, and starting to wander around with no cloth.

It was wonderful to know her dreaming process of being a mallard. It made me dream into a fantasy world of mallards and play with it. When I see them on the river anywhere around the world, I remember Sara and it makes me feel close to her. Also, in the past, many people told me that I was like a duck. So, when I heard that Sara became a mallard in her dreaming process before her death, it really brought her so close to my own personal fantasy world.

According to Australian indigenous culture, the past “Ancestor Spirits and their powers have not gone, they are present in the forms into which they changed at the end of the ‘Dreamtime’ or ‘Dreaming,’ as the stories tell” (Dreamtime, 2009). Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005/2007) mention that wonder about an afterlife and what it will be like is common. “Some think the importance lies in the answer. But just the question is enough. What does seem to be important is that the bereaved are comforted by the thought and feeling that their loved one still exists somehow” (p. 114).

The image of the Mallard is very helpful for me. Through it, I can feel close to her *dreambody* as well as her dreaming process.



### Chapter 3: My Last Session with Sara

One month before her death, I had a session with her. It turned out to be our last session. In this chapter, I describe my experience on that day.

#### *Night Time Dream*

It was a warm day as it was fall season. Outside of my apartment, I saw a neighbor sweeping up dead leaves by using an electric air sweeping machine. In Japan, I have never yet seen such a big and loud electric air sweeping machine. It reminded me that I have come from another culture.

I took a bus to go to downtown to transfer to another bus to Sara and Herb's place. When I was thinking about my sessions on the bus, I saw my friend waiting at a bus station a few minutes from my place, then, she rode the same bus. As I saw her, I remembered that she had appeared in one of my dreams that morning.

In that dream, she said to Sara that she would support Sara's dying process. Then, Sara wept and her eye mascara all went down her face.

In another dream, Sara was already dead, and it was her funeral. Her family and relatives said good-bye to her body and then after that condolers were saying good-bye to her. I was wearing a white gown on a suit of black clothes and staying near Sara's dead body in a coffin. I was in close relationship with Sara in that dream and condolers also gave me hugs. It seemed that I took a certain role in her funeral.

I told my friend about those dreams and mentioned that I was wondering what to do with these dreams in my sessions with Herb and Sara on that day. She advised me objectively that if those were not something like predictive dreams, then it would be nice to work on how my friend's figure in me could support my dying process as Sara's figure. I noticed that I had been hoping that those would never be predictive

dreams. I imagined that Sara might say, “All figures were you, Midori.” I understand as a Process Work student that all dream figures were parts in me, but I felt strong impact of those dreams. It swept away all of my feelings that I had before that day.

It was hard for me to acknowledge but I noticed that I had felt frustration and even anger toward Sara because, from my viewpoint, she was not taking good care of her body. She traveled there and there in the midst of her treatment. She said that she wanted to see her friends and relatives there and find a nice place for Herb. I felt angry because it sounded like she was accepting death and caring about her loved ones and not having any hope to live longer. I wanted her to have hope and live longer.

However, my dreams about her death completely changed my state. It put me into being willing to go into a deeper level and face the seriousness of her health condition which I still did not want to believe . . . .

It was really a beautiful fall day. On the way to their house from the bus stop, I saw another man sweeping the walk clean. Sara’s garden in front of the entrance was full of ripe late tomatoes on their vines. I hesitated a bit to open the door when I saw a little spider’s net there but without cleaning it, I just went into their waiting room.

#### *Session with Herb*

I had a session with Herb first. I told him that I wanted to work on my tendency to stay in a certain mood after I had a dream with a lot of impact on me and how to deal with the mood. The dreams of that morning were fully occupying my mind and I even felt disturbed by those dreams. I did not want to bring huge sadness when Sara was ill. I wanted to bring hope. I was denying the death coming close.

Herb asked me what kind of dreams would make me stay in a certain mood. I noticed that I had a huge edge to mention the dreams I had in that morning. I also

wanted to bring him hope. So instead of bring in those dreams, I brought my childhood dream in which someone had told me that my mother had died. I noticed that even bringing that dream in a session with Herb was edgy for me, however, I could not think about any other dreams with a lot of impact on me at that time.

We picked up some figures in the dream like my mother, the river, me, and the one who said my mother had died, and unfolded those parts. While unfolding, there was a figure that was quite detached and just kept walking along the river while whistling and another figure that just wanted to take time in that mood and explore the feelings.

We finished our session knowing that we could also do vector work with these figures. When I left the session room, I wondered if Herb also had such kinds of feelings inside, but I could not ask him about it. It was too sad for me to talk about.

During the lunch break, I went to a park along the river near their house. I saw a very pretty squirrel following me and not following me whenever I had stopped walking. She or he wanted a piece of my corn bread which I bought after my lunch. It made me feel relaxed and playful in the midst of the quite serious mood I had had that morning.

### *Sara and Midori*

In the early afternoon, Sara appeared in the waiting room wearing her black high neck sweater and a red bean colored long skirt. It was obvious that she had lost a lot of weight and gotten skinny. Because I gained a lot of weight since I came to Portland and was feeling heavy, I wished I could have lost my weight like her, but I did not say that because I thought loosing weight because of one's health condition was a big issue for her.

We started to have our session in the waiting room as Herb was using the session room on that day. I asked her about her health condition. She laid herself down on the couch saying that she easily got tired unless she lay down. The play of sunlight through a big tree in front of the waiting room glinted on her eyes radiantly but her eyes looked very clear and calm.

*Sara: Midori, I am dying.*

I wondered how this session would affect her body so I asked her.

*Midori: Is it really okay for you to do a session with me today?*

*Sara: I find that I feel fine when I am talking with you. How are you?*

*Midori: You look calm. But I am sad to hear that you feel dying.*

I noticed that I was trying not to cry and I could hardly speak out. I replied to her question with a small voice.

*Sara: I will be around.*

Sara and I smiled. I noticed that my heart was full of tears and I almost burst into tears.

*Sara: I feel calm. When my medical doctor found that I had a cancer, he was upset.*

*But I felt calm.*

I could not say anything.

*Sara: What part of me do you think you miss?*

I smiled while crying, touched to know that she still had taken her role as my therapist in such a health condition and was taking care of my feelings that I might have after her death. I had a big edge to face her death, but she brought it directly into our relationship. I could not marginalize it any more.

*Midori: Attention . . . ? Support. Your supportive attitude. I will miss your supportive attitude.*

*Sara: Yes, do you remember, when we first met each other at a Thai restaurant? I said to you that you were very strong. You have become strong and I think you already notice your strength in yourself. I have been supporting you. Now you have to find me in you and support yourself.*

I cried again and again, burst into tears.

*Sara: What could I do to support you now?*

I smiled and cried again. I felt so sad to know how her health condition was and at the same time I felt so touched by her caring about me. She was helping me whose main therapist had been dying in front of her. I started sobbing. I noticed that a part of me did not want to cry because I did not want to accept this situation of her dying and did not want to accept it in front of her because I was not sure how she felt if anyone would cry for her dying when she was still alive. But I could not stop sobbing.

I was saying in my mind, “Please support me to cry now . . . .” But I could not say it at that time. My tears did not stop and my cry gradually got bigger.

I could only say to her at that moment, “*Could I just cry?*”

*Sara: While you are crying. Notice what you would like to say.*

I felt awe to notice that Sara was still occupying a therapist role in this situation. I was answering her question in my mind saying, “Help me find you in me. Please help me to find you in me.”

*Sara: Seems like your thought is expressing something else, too.*

She said, and I agreed with that. I got a little bit calmed down and told her,

*Midori: Please help me find you in me.*

*Sara: How do you think I could help you?*

At that moment, I noticed her warm right hand had been softly on my left knee since I had started to cry. I realized that she had sometimes patted my knee affectionately.

*Midori: I remember your warm hand and I remember you. Thank you.*

I put my right hand on her left hand. Then, she gently put her right hand on my left hand.

*Sara: You are very good at proprioceptive channel. You remember this feeling. And I like how you write using your proprioceptive feelings.*

She was still in a role of a therapist.

*Sara: When you are crying, I was watching your hair. Your hair was beautiful, shining like a rainbow because of the light. I am not a painter, so I don't know how to paint, but maybe you could draw a cartoon or something. I like your cartoon. You could draw a cartoon, like "Midori and Sara."*

She smiled and looked as though she was both joking and serious. I felt honored to hear what she mentioned and I nodded. It also sounded like her will to me.

I checked my watch. It was 20 minutes to the end of this session. Sara suggested that I ask anything that I think I should not ask her about. I took a moment to think about it.

*Midori: Do you want to die or live?*

*Sara: That is a big question. I would like to live until I die. And I would like to die when I die. But I would like to do something more. Like I would like to travel, I would like to write more. Being ill made me to do minimum things. I do what I really want to do. But I don't want like thinking this is the last day. I had a good life, I was privileged and I enjoyed my life. I am not afraid of dying. But I would like to do more.*

I felt glad when Sara had said that she would like to do more because I wanted her to live. I asked her if she was interested in Japanese alternative treatment which one of my family members did and recovered from similar illness which she had. I told her that people around the patient would need to get a little training but basically it was a

really easy method, and what the patient had to do was just relax and receive the treatment. Sara was going to get some advice, have her bones examined, and get her head's MRI done in about a week. Sara worried about her resistance to disease and her strength declined through medical treatment. But she was open to do whatever she could if it was not a difficult thing to do for her body.

Then, she asked me a question.

*Sara: What do you like most in your life?*

That question made me think that at this moment in my life I was not sure what my answer would be and if it would be the answer to the question, but what I could say was that my heart would like Sara to be recovered. I thought that that was what I liked most in my life at that moment. I wondered how I could say this to her. Relationship with other people? It would be too general and did not fit to my feeling.

*Midori: I am searching it.*

I answered further and said,

*Midori: But last night, I was thinking of you and I thought that it would be okay for me to be absent from school to take care of you. I could spend time to support you.*

*Last night, I asked my partner what I could do with you, and wondered if I could inform you of Japanese alternative medical treatment or not?*

*Sara: What did he say?*

*Midori: He said that as you were a Process Worker, I could talk to you about it and then respect your decision.*

*Sara: That is a good answer. (She smiled.) He should come here, too, and make me noodle soup! (He cooked her noodle soup when he was a student in Portland.)*

*When Seema died (in 2006), I was not so sad. (Sara wrote a book, *Seema's Show: A Life on the Left*, in 2005.) I had spoken with her 2 days before she died. We spoke of*

*everything we wanted to talk about, so, I did not feel so sad when she died.*

*When you meet me, think about anything that you think you should not ask. Bring and ask anything that you feel you should not ask. I feel happy if you ask me what you want to ask.*

I felt that Sara was encouraging me to go over my edge to express my feelings and thoughts more fluidly and authentically because I tend to be introverted and have conversation inside of me and just find an inner solution without relating to other people about things. It was a long-term edge for me.

I thought that I would have a session with her next week, but I noticed that I would not have it until I came back from my visit to Japan for a few weeks. I took her photos with my camera for alternative medical treatment test and asked her if she could also give me a few hairs from her head for the test, and she gave me those. A flickering desire to take my photo with her came up in my mind but I did not bring it because it sounded like the end of meeting her in this physical realm. I mentioned that I would bring many hot patches from Japan for her. The alternative treatment is called “Comfortable Treatment” and I really like that treatment because it is gentle to one’s body.

*Midori: I feel very happy when you live comfortably.*

*Sara: People will like someone like you and people will come to you.*

I smiled but could not say anything because I felt strong love from her and could not say anything at the moment. My heart was full of receiving love and sadness.

Already 1 hour passed. As a client and also to take care of her body, I mentioned that it was time to end the session and leave. I returned a cushion to the next session room and handed her the session fee.

*Sara: Thank you.*

We hugged. I noticed her slim waist and sensed faint energy around her. After the first hug, I asked her to hug again and then I could not stop crying although I wanted to end this session just like other sessions. At this moment, I felt that this might be the last moment to see her in this life. I said to her, “Thank you and please take care.” I could not say, “See you” nor “Good bye.”

When she turned her head and went into the inner room, her profile made me feel that she had drooped over. I wondered how she had felt when I had cried with grief in front of her, and I thought I would ask her next time when I would see her. At the same time, I had a strong motive to keep a record of this session in detail because I wanted to remember not only just my memory and learning but also what she said and how it was. I did not tape record the session, so I wrote as much as I could remember of this session on that day, and indeed, it turned out to be our last.

I had the last session with Sara in early October, 2006. The following poem was written by Sara in the same month, 2006.

#### Sara’s Sonnet For Fall

Fall equinox—my bed is like a tree  
 that holds me pinioned, dreaming in its roots.  
 Gnarled, arthritic, strong boughs to climb and see  
 stars, rain, the many other trees, green shoots  
 striving for the sky that spreads so far, free  
 of pain and trouble, wide canopy mutes  
 sounds of town and roads, surrounds, protects me  
 from all intruders in my dreams and suits  
 my need for freedom, silence, solitude.

This illness, cancer, death approaching fast  
 or slowly, seems to me at night a rude  
 guest who outstays his welcome, takes my last  
 chance to think a brilliant thought and write it,  
 then plucks a star, for me, unrequited.  
 (cited in Halprin, 2007)

### *Notes*

I have a lot of memories and feelings around this session. Especially what she told me about making a cartoon of “Midori and Sara” had been staying in my mind since then. It might have just come out of her mouth, but I felt very welcomed and took those flirt-like words seriously. I am feeling that my exploration of our relationship and grief process is a way of making a cartoon of “Midori and Sara” for her and for myself in a different way. Also, it is a part of acknowledging our relationship and a part of my grief process for me. However, instead of drawing a cartoon, “Sara and Midori,” I am writing Sara and Midori’s story here.

After she was diagnosed with cancer, she gave a writing class at her house. She mentioned that it would make her feel happy if people were writing at her place while she was leaving her physical body. So, although it is not her house, I would like to write this, feeling myself at your house.

In this session, she was keeping herself as a therapist and caring for me even in her serious health condition. I really appreciated her bringing her death so directly into the session although it was so sad and difficult to face. Because of that, I was able to express my feelings around her death and feel connected and supported even after her death. She modeled and encouraged me to bring the issue directly and go over the edge and talk about it.

Also, she helped me to be aware what I would miss her about the most and to integrate her psychologically. It made me feel Sara *nonlocally* in me and with me even though I do not see her body in this reality anymore.

## Chapter 4: Entanglement in Relationship

In this chapter, I describe relationship *entanglement* in different levels. Then I reflect on how it has affected my process prior to and after the death of the therapist.

### *Relationship in Different Levels*

#### *Boundary and Dilemma*

When Sara discovered her illness, it was very shocking to me and I immediately started to feel that I would want to support her in that process, however I could. Then, I noticed that I was not her child nor family member in the consensus reality level. I realized that I had a dilemma in myself and wondered how I, as one of her clients and students in consensus reality, could offer my desire to contribute myself to support her in her recovery process. If I were her child, family member, I could have just gone to see her and told her how I thought and felt and done whatever it seemed good for her in that situation. However, I was not, and I thought that I should not. That was a very difficult boundary issue for me. In my feeling level, she was like my mother, so I wanted to do anything I could for her.

One day when I saw her in session, I brought up my feeling around this a little bit. I imagined that she had a lot of emotional and spiritual support as well as the medical support which she chose to take. So, I asked her if I could do anything for her and if she would be interested in, for example, body treatment which helped organs be vigorous by warming up each one? I had learned alternative natural body treatment in Japan when my biological parents were very sick, so I thought it could also be helpful for her. She knew the stories of my parents' sickness and their recovery and that that treatment requires nothing from patients, they could just relax and enjoy receiving it.

Sara said that she was open to receive that treatment from me. After the next session, we made some time for that. I really appreciated her willingness and openness to receive treatment from me. I noticed that that treatment was not only to take care of her but also of my feelings. My feeling a sense of being helpful and useful in the midst of her process of facing death was healing for me because I had a strong sense of sadness, worry, hope, and loyalty which was difficult for me to process by myself at that time.

Noticing my therapist in front of me a few minutes ago was now a seriously ill patient and feeling that her vital energy was becoming delicate through her illness, I felt my tears were about to come through my eyes but I tried not to cry because I thought it might disturb her feelings, and if I cried, I would burst into tears. I focused on my attention to give her a comfortable time and treatment in the moment instead of focusing on my teary feelings. I noticed my big hesitation and confusion to show my feelings at the moment.

This dilemma related to boundary in relationship continued throughout Sara's terminal illness. I had a session appointment with her a few days before her death, which was cancelled due to her being hospitalized. I got that notice from Herb in my telephone voice mail and I could feel that it was a serious situation. I wondered how she was and wanted to go to the hospital to see her. As it was difficult for me to hear the pronunciation of the hospital name from the voice mail, it took me some time to find the hospital until I saw the hospital's sign near my apartment on my way to school. I had just known that building as hospital but I did not remember the name of it. I found that where Sara was in treatment was very close to where I lived!

Now I knew Sara's hospital, then what to do . . . ? I thought if I would visit her, it would be better to tell Herb about it and ask for permission first. I had been out of

Portland for weeks and I had not met with her for about 1 month. I really wanted to see her. At the same time, I wondered about the boundary around this. Also, I considered how Herb was, maybe he had been in the hospital and/or had been busy connecting with family and friends. I felt myself confused in this situation.

Anyway, to make sure about the hospital, I went to the reception and asked if Ms. Sara Halprin was there. At that point, at least to know if she was in that hospital or not was important for me although I noticed another part of me said, so what? The receptionist told me yes, Sara was there and which room, but no visitors due to her condition.

Knowing that I could not meet her, even so my body took me to the elevator to go up to her floor and just come down. I noticed that I had a little hope to encounter Herb in the elevator or in the hallway, but it did not happen. I went back home and I prayed for her, imagining her in that hospital, and my heart was there until I heard about her death.

Receiving the news of Sara's death from the school community mail string, I felt a great loss and was so sad . . . crying. I wanted to meet her before her physical body would be buried.

I had questions about personal and cultural differences around the time of one's end in the physical body and funeral. In Japan, relatives, friends, and community people visit the deceased at a wake before the funeral. It depends on the deceased's family, but in general visiting the dead at a wake is supported by culture. People usually get information about a wake and funeral through a community network. This time I got news of Sara's death, but I did not know if I could visit her when her physical body was still there. I hesitated for a while but I called Herb and asked if I could visit. He kindly told me that I could, before the mortician came.

*At Sara's Physical Body's Farewell*

When I arrived at Sara and Herb's place, there were a few friends and family staying there. It seemed that already her friends and spiritual teacher had come and had a ceremony for her. I condoled with Herb on her death and went up to the second floor where Sara was.

I had gone to many funerals in my life but it was the first time for me to see a dead body as Sara was because in Japan the face of the dead was covered with a white cloth and the body was laid down. Sara was sitting on her bed and I could see her eyes and mouth slightly open and facing towards the river by their house, and it was as if she was still enjoying watching nature outside. I was a little bit shocked by the cultural difference and afraid of meeting Sara dead. I noticed a lot of different feelings, like fear, curiosity, shock, sadness, loss, appreciation, and respect, in me pulled my emotional expression into various directions and I felt like calm with tears.

As her family had something to do down stairs, I was with her for a while on the second floor. I sat by her and walked around her. I started to feel relaxed being with her dead body. Then I noticed that my body felt some kind of spiral movement from her upper body going up to the direction of southern sky. I moved my arms and body with that movement tendency and felt as if her spirit has been departing over the sky. It was a very soothing experience for me because I felt it was as if her spirit is free from her dead body and flying into eternity.

When two morticians came, I was the person to let them into the house. I asked them if they could take off their shoes because there was a sign at the entrance to do so. They said no due to their regulations and went upstairs to do whatever they needed to do. Everything I saw while the morticians were there was new and shocking to me and beyond my cultural expectations. I needed to let my Japanese traditional

custom and belief system go. I realized how I had been influenced by cultural behavior and belief system, and how I had been biased.

While the two morticians were there, one of her friends and I were in Sara's room humming songs together for her. The friend said that Sara had wanted to have music when she died. So, I was praying for the soul of Sara and humming until her body was taken to the morticians' car. I felt grief and at the same time honor to bid farewell to her body and had a feeling of temporarily settling down after crying on parting.

A few days later, at Sara's funeral, I was crying and smiling because there was a lot of humor and jokes and music in that atmosphere. I heard that Sara wanted her funeral fun. Someone joked that Sara had liked pinewood which was used for her coffin, and people smiled and cried. I felt warm in my heart although I was already missing her. I felt sadness, grief, and at the same time, disappointment and anger because she left her body so soon. A lot of feelings were welling up inside.

### *Nonlocality and Mythical Aspect*

#### *Egyptian Mummy*

I was a distant student until the spring of 2005. So, most of my sessions with Sara until then were telephone sessions. I usually had sessions in the early morning on Japan time because of the time difference between Portland and Japan. I often felt half awake and half still in my bed although I was out of my bed because the work I had those days created physical tiredness and also I suffered from jet lag.

One morning, I worked on my issues around body symptoms and whether I would have surgery or not. Sara asked me to make an energy sketch of my body symptom and surgery and then we also brought flirts into our unfolding process. Then, suddenly the image of an Egyptian mummy came up in my mind. Doctors are doing

surgery to the mummy and it brought bright light into the mummy's life. Mummy was awake and could see the bright light. The surgery was successful. We were talking about that process at the end of the session, and just before we say good-bye and hang up, Sara said to me that she was going to have eye surgery. I felt that when we were unfolding the process, Sara's curiosity level was stronger than usual and I could feel how exciting that process was to her. So, when I heard about her eye surgery, I felt that we were working on our shared issue and entanglement in our field.

I wanted to have sessions in person. At the same time, I enjoyed doing telephone sessions because I could feel our connection and nonlocality in relationship by exploring movement at a distance, imagining a fantasy together and finding that both of us were on the same track, sometimes making same movements without knowing how the other was doing, sometimes exploring the other's dreaming process like the Egyptian story, without knowing what was going on in Sara's life.

### *Two Women Laughing*

Sara's session room was full of interesting things; masks from probably Southeast Asian countries and from somewhere like Italy, varieties of puppets, like very tiny dolls to a very big teddy bear, with cushions and chairs in many different colors and styles and a white paper board for lecture and creativity. In that lovely room, I always flirted with a photographic poster in which two people dressed like Tibetan monks were standing in front of a house door and laughing merrily. I did not work on that flirt in my sessions with Sara. However, I discovered later that it was like our deepest relationship atmosphere.

One day after Sara's death, I met a psychic person in Portland and asked about my life and my study. She mentioned that spirits around me were very supportive of me, and also that Sara was there in my apartment where I was having a session with

that psychic person. I was fascinated to hear that the psychic person had seen Sara in my room!

The psychic person said, *“She is here. She is very supportive of you and sees you very clearly. She said, “Do not get caught up in thesis.”* (I was thinking about a different topic for my thesis at that time.) It made me laugh, and at the same time, made me feel that it was Sara because I could feel what I had just heard would be just like what I would hear from her.

The psychic person: *“Now she sees from where she is that you can flow through thesis, not become burdened by it. She is laughing. And she said that you do not like thesis. She is telling me that you struggled with thesis.* (I had written a prior thesis for another masters program when I met the psychic person. Sara knew how I struggled with it and I had difficulty in writing my thesis.) *She is telling me now it is because you are much smarter than thesis. You can express yourself without thesis. She is a guide of yours and she says that you are one of her favorites. You have been sisters before. She has tremendous love for you. And she is very happy that in this moment that you have been able to hear how loved you are and how much love you carried. But she will help you even though you would be upset in thesis. She said, “Write from your heart not your mind because your wisdom is already there.” So for you to not struggle so much with what to write but instead, allow yourself without thinking, to write your thoughts. And she said, “It will flow through you.” But you can talk to her and send questions. She is funny.* (The psychic person and I laughed. I knew that Sara liked humor.) *She will send messages but right now she is handing you a silver sword. And she is saying, “For you to cut through all the burden, cut burden, cut your feeling of burden attached to thesis.”*

The psychic person said that I was in Tibet in my past life and Sara and I were once sisters in our past life. This session with her made me feel that the photographic

poster of two Tibetan monks (I found out later that they were nuns), carried somehow our mythical dreaming. In this life, in this consensus reality, we were a therapist and a student client, but in my dreaming, our relationship seems not only that but also we are like those two nuns in that photographic poster.

### *Notes*

In Process Work, a therapist's intuition and feelings are considered as signals in the field, like other signals from a client and from the outer world. When I met the psychic person, I noticed that I was giving very positive feedback to her psychic intuition that touched very close to my heart. I, as a person who thinks reincarnation happens, felt more close to Sara beyond this time and space limitation in our consensus reality. We are in different forms now, one has physical body and another does not any more, but I somehow feel it is a temporary difference and separation from the viewpoint of spirit world and nonlocality. Our relationship myth and *big U* still continue nonlocally.

I do not have psychic ability to see or hear her so far, but like I was feeling nonlocality by telephone sessions, I somehow have a sense of nonlocality with her also after her death. I need to say that I want to believe that sense, even though I do not have any proof from anything. This kind of mythical way of seeing our relationship helped me to find deeper relationship between Sara and myself. Also, it helped me to accept her death from a wider perspective and brought infinite feeling in the relationship.

## Chapter 5: Working on Night Time Dreams

### *Influence of the Dreams*

As I wrote in Chapter 3, just before the session that turned into our last one, I had night time dreams in which Sara had appeared. It impacted me a lot emotionally, and put me facing her death very seriously, meaning not avoiding talking about it but engaging with that topic with myself when I was with Sara. I felt deeply grateful to have had those dreams because it helped me to feel my core of emotional feelings and be congruent and authentic with myself at the moment when she was just being herself as she was at the moment.

About 1 week later, I worked on the dreams in my session with another process-oriented therapist because it was quite difficult and uncomfortable for me to hold those dreams in myself. I knew that sometimes people died in dreams and they were still alive in reality, so I tried to think of those dreams like that. However, the seriousness of her health condition and Sara saying that she was dying made me feel very upset about those dreams and those dreams stuck to me.

Here is the brief description about the dreams . . .

In one dream, one of my process work friends said to Sara that she would support Sara's dying process. And then, Sara wept heavily as her eye mascara all went down her face.

In another dream, Sara was already dead. And it was her funeral. Her family and relatives said good-bye to her and then after that condolers were saying good-bye to her. I was wearing a white gown on a suit of black clothes and staying near Sara's dead body in a coffin. I was in close relationship with Sara in that dream and condolers gave me also hugs. It seemed that I was taking a certain role in her funeral.

### *Working on Dreams*

Working on those dreams, I found that my whole myth of Process Work was connected to Sara because without her support and encouragement through our sessions,

I probably would have lived a very different life and I would not ever have come to Portland nor be studying Process Work. To me, Sara also represented strength and dignity because especially when I saw her in the last session, she was great in the midst of having serious physical challenges. I found that dreams were somehow telling me that I was ready to integrate Sara's qualities which I had associated with her and do that for myself and that the outer support was somehow finished.

As another dream figure, like me wearing a white gown on a suit of black clothes, was unfolded, I felt I was spiritually contacting her at the moment and closely connected in the way with tough power in the back ground. The therapist commented that when a special teacher died, she lived on in her students. I remembered that she said to me in the last session that she would be around after death. While I was working on my dreams, I felt that she was already in me.

The dream figure turned into a very powerful, tough guy figure, like a boxer, who said to my everyday self that identified with someone needing support, "You could build muscles and what you would need might be support for how to practice and how to build muscles by yourself." Also, I found that that figure was outside very spiritual, but inside, it was like a spirit that needed direct contact.

I realized that it was very challenging for me to identify that part of myself. I identified as a little bit shy and polite person when I communicated with other people, but I somehow noticed that sometimes I had been unconsciously tough and direct with other people which was not unlike the impact that the boxer had on other people. Finding the essence of the toughness, which was centeredness, helped me to make contact with toughness, which I sometimes confused with violence.

It seemed to me that Sara was not so shy to bring her feelings and thoughts into relationships. I knew that Sara was also a quite spicy character. In this session, I found

that integrating Sara's qualities and living with them was very challenging for me, because I had been projecting those things outside and not owning by myself yet. At the same time, that image of having and /or wearing her qualities like clothes gave me a sense of togetherness with her even until now.

After the session, I found my uncomfortable and upset feelings I had had towards the dreams somehow turned to different feelings, like togetherness and contacting with her. I still worried about her condition but my disturbed feelings from those dreams were transformed.

#### *Notes*

Having such dreams during the experience of someone dying was very scary and powerful. It impacted my emotional and intellectual standpoint, helping me to interact with her more directly, and I felt engaged with her. I think dreaming of more direct contact which I discovered from the dream work was already manifesting in the last session with her.

Working on integrating Sara's qualities psychologically helped me to have a sense of togetherness in myself. Also, I found that her spirit was alive in many community people, as they are thankful to her encouragement to write and experiment creatively. Working in the dreamland level and finding what the dreams were about helped me to feel coherent in my dreaming process when I was feeling lost in losing my main therapist.

#### *Computer*

I would like to share a short story here. When I was writing up the part which described Sara's qualities, my computer screen started to act unusually. It partially blinked and automatically changed the way of the clock on the screen which basically needs to be done by using a password. I felt really surprised and even a little scared.

Then I remembered Sara's trickster and sense of humor. I still do not know why it happened. In dreamland level, it was as if she was playing with me through my computer.

## Chapter 6: Letting Go of the Fixed Role

In this chapter, I describe my experience of change in my grief process, how it happened, and what I found from that experience. To me, it happened along with my personal growth and it was like a paradigm change.

### *Paradigm Change*

#### *Sara's Role as an Encourager*

As I mentioned before, Sara had occupied many roles in my life: as a therapist, teacher, mentor, and cross-cultural connection to Process Work.

Behind all of these roles, I felt a very supportive and encouraging role in her and that was what I missed the most when she died. I talked about this in the last session with Sara and at that time she said, *“You become strong and I think you already notice your strength in yourself. I have been supporting you. Now you have to find me in you and support yourself.”*

When I felt hopeless in studying Process Work and with other difficulties in life, I sometimes remembered Sara and became supportive of myself and encouraged myself. That was very helpful and heartwarming to me not only because of being able to motivate myself but also to feel Sara in myself.

#### *When My Body Relaxed . . .*

Generally I was enjoying exploring Process Work but sometimes I was feeling very challenged and even hopeless about mastering Process Work skills. One day, after one supervised exam, one of my supervisors mentioned that she received very good feedback about me from that examiner, and she praised me for my work. That was the first time for me to get clear praise from any examiners so far.

Then, I noticed that I could hardly get excited receiving such praise. Rather than that, my body had started to relax. Something like praise after feeling so much stress gave a strong impact to my body reaction. My body could just relax by getting positive feedback. It was like there was nothing to hold onto at the moment, nothing like all the fear of failing, all the inner and outer pressure and expectation. I could just let my body know that there was nothing to hold onto.

When I was able to relax, I started to feel physical pain in my muscles. I also felt emotional pain from having studied in such tension. I had not realized how much pain I was in, nor under such tension in which I felt that I had to do things.

In that relaxed state, I could just let myself feel that “everything is okay,” and I could say to myself that “I am learning, I am learning step by step,” instead of “oh, I have to study and learn.” When I felt relaxed and observed myself from that point of view, my body relaxed even more. I felt more strength from the core of my body and felt more balanced overall.

### *Two Paradigms*

This experience made me notice that my way of being and dealing with things had changed from one to another. In the first paradigm, I was feeling small and having low self-esteem. There was a challenge or something that I felt I had needed to overcome or climb, and that role in me needed support and encouragement because it seemed impossible to overcome those challenges.

In the next paradigm, my experience was that I would just follow my path and interest, and that I just do so even without getting encouragement. Feeling strong or weak was not an issue. Rather, when I noticed that I was not learning a certain thing and I needed to learn it, then I would just learn it. The role of encourager was not



was happy with being released from the fixed role of encourager, and happy for me that I came to a new paradigm. I felt as if she was just looking at me, smiling.

### *Feeling Grief of Second Loss*

#### *No Grief Is Grief*

I discovered in the first paradigm that I had needed encouragement, and as I found another paradigm in my personal growth, there was no need of an encourager. In the new paradigm, I felt great to be in the new way of thinking and experiencing more ease in my life, but at the same time, I felt slightly sad and uncomfortable in terms of my relationship with Sara, as I somehow released her from the role of encourager.

I felt a kind of second loss because I also felt the temporary loss of the incredible joy in admiring her for her encouraging me. Strong appreciation and connection like an attraction was not in the new paradigm like it was before. Having a more detached feeling toward an encourager was a little bit empty, yet in an adequate way. There was less grief in the second paradigm, and that also became my grief.

I go back and forth from time to time between those two states. I knew my feeling of loss of that joy in appreciation was a temporary thing. However, I felt grief because of the second loss with its sense of a slight deadness there.

#### *Appreciation to All Parts*

Then, as I worked on going deeper into detachment, I went to the radiant state where everything was there. That was a kind of *Processmind* state. I found myself sometimes close to my Processmind which is able to flow back and forth between all parts of me and the state of being identified only with my everyday mind. Actually, I then realized that I needed to use my Processmind to flow more into my little you, give it more attention and say “I need support and encouragement!”

I felt disturbed by that conflict, but when the therapist mentioned that my little you was doing its great job and that was why it was little you, that made me laugh. I became more friendly to each part of myself and the wholeness of myself, and it became easier to dance those parts.

### *Notes*

The Hospice Foundation of America noted that we never fully detach from those who have died and most people learn to live with loss over time (Hospice Foundation, 2009). My own experience echoed this observation.

This paradigm change experience was as if I started to walk the vector that was the sum of an encourager and someone who needed encouragement. Every part was for other parts, so when I did not identify with someone who needed encouragement, I did not need an encourager role. So as I walked the sum of them, there was no vector of encourager but I had that energy in me. Therefore, how I started to feel her was not the same as the first paradigm. At first, I associated her with a kind of fixed role of encourager a little bit, but in the new paradigm, she was released from that role.

Amy Mindell (2002) wrote about transference and positive feelings toward a therapist that “It is crucial to help the person finally get to know and integrate that projected characteristic inside himself or herself” (p. 266). I felt that my positive feelings toward Sara were integrated into a much deeper level. As I had changed, the role that Sara represented at an earlier point released. I felt that was a part of my grieving process.

I learned that the term grief is associated with misery, sadness, and missing that person, but that the whole process of grieving is so much a larger process of one’s whole relationship with and about that person. Changes in the grief process happen to the person who has been alive over time. From this experience, I found that the grief process was like finding Processmind or Big U in relationship with the dead person. So, one can feel one with the dead person, and feel aloneness rather than loneliness.

I liked the strong sense of admiration and joy in the first paradigm and also the sense of Processmind state in the new paradigm. Appreciation and admiration for all parts was very soothing in both paradigms for me. I remember that Sara taught me that “All the figures in a Mandala are like all roles in *Worldwork*.” I love to see a Mandala remembering Sara and her love of Processmind and everyday mind parts. Grief is a natural thing and all the feelings coming up in the grieving process are like the figures in a Mandala.

## Chapter 7: Working on Unprocessed Feelings

Nearly 2 years after Sara's death, I still remembered that I had uncomfortable feelings when Sara was diagnosed as having cancer and went into her terminal illness. As I described in Chapter 3, I felt a kind of anger and frustration at that time, but because it was difficult for me to even admit those feelings much less bring them up when she was in a difficult condition, and because of the dreams I had just before the session in which Sara had already died, those feelings were pushed aside. I found those dreams very helpful because I could go deeper in my feelings, and I could talk with her on a deeper level. However, I was still feeling uncomfortable remembering such feelings. So, I worked on them in a session.

### *Going Deeper into Unprocessed Feelings*

I already knew that I had those feelings for two reasons. One was that I wanted her to take care of herself more and not be traveling because I thought it was not at all good for her health condition. I wanted her to have hope and live with hope. Another reason was that I wanted her to meet me not just physically but also feeling wise because during our sessions, I sometimes had felt that she had been a little bit gone and not completely with me. I hesitated to share my thoughts and desire with her because I believed she was doing whatever she wanted, that she knew what would be good for her, and was doing the best she could. So, I had an internal conflict.

As I went deeper into those feelings in session, I noticed that I also wanted Sara to be with me until I finished the program. She was the main person who connected with me at first, and since then, her great support and encouragement was very helpful for me. So, I wanted to both be thankful to her and to celebrate my process together. Also, she was the only person who had known and witnessed me in

detail like how I was, how much I had grown, and how much I had changed. I had a lot of edges to follow the dreaming process, befriend my dreams, or change my life by integrating dreaming. I moved to Portland and had been studying Process Work, but from the viewpoint of the person who first met Sara, I was really different. I came through a lot. Many things helped me to do that, and without Sara's support, I would not ever have come to this place.

So, I found that I was feeling a mixture of feelings of a sense of sadness about death and her leaving physically, and a secondary loss of my fantasy to celebrate together. Part of me was crying and part of me was celebrating myself in my fantasy, many things were happening at the same time. Then, I noticed that I also felt oneness simultaneously, a sense of nothing to cry about, a bigger sense than sadness and celebration. I felt strange to experience all those feelings at once. I was both crying and smiling with sense of love for oneness.

*"Process Itself Is Love"*

Then, a question came up in my mind. It was difficult for me to put it into words, and then before even beginning to formulate words for the question, I had an insight—"Process itself is love."

I recognized that I noticed it through the interaction with people or things or with anything, or with oneself, or through processing things. I also felt the experience of love through interactions with people, synchronicity, spontaneous happening, dream, and nature. Sometimes we needed a bigger time frame and viewpoint to see the process. I had felt love was like a person or fixed state, but from this insight, "process itself is love and everything is love."

The therapist told me, "So the title of your thesis could also be similar to Love Story. You wanted Sara to be able to appreciate the process, and it is about love for you.

It has not stopped yet. The love story has not stopped yet except consensus reality element of Sara is missing. Sara is still dreaming you. Everything is love, Sara is love and nature is still using Sara to dream you. It uses Sara, I mean other things, too.”

It was very touching to hear and fascinating to see the process in that way. Then, I suddenly noticed that what the therapist had said right now was the answer to my question. It was interesting to say but the question got clear after I had gotten the answer. The therapist helped me to formulate the question, “How does process teach Midori?” The therapist also said, “You said that the experience of love was through the interaction with people, synchronicity, spontaneous happening, dream, and nature. Nature just creates the experience of love in you and through you.”

In the beginning of the session, I wanted to work on my anger and frustration, and then, as it was unfolded, I was feeling love from inside and from outside. I felt that the primary feelings of anger and frustration had transformed and I was celebrating life itself at the moment.

As I was leaving the session room, a photo of a pink rose with drops of water flirted with me. It was a very lovely photo. When I saw it and felt the energy of the flower, I realized that the dreaming of Love Story was there from and through that photo and also continuing with a different therapist. I felt as if my heart was like the lovely pink rose flower with drops of warmth as water. On the way back home, I noticed that there was a full of love heart in town, for the upcoming St. Valentine’s Day.

*“Here I Am. This Is Me.”*

After this session, I was feeling a kind of pressure on my chest as if a lot of emotional feelings were inside. As I worked on the pressure, it encouraged everything to express itself. In that process, I brought all my feelings, thoughts, and ideas out, for

example, in the big paper for my thesis (this one). When I let the experience speak from itself, I said, “Here I am. This is me. This is what I deeply felt and thought and who I am. It is all out there in this paper. Sara, this is me.”

In this work, I reconfirmed that with her wish to be useful in life, she had been being useful through my coming out and showing myself and talking about my process with her, and talking about all of my feelings in this paper. I am feeling that I have been being helpful to come out as well.

### *Feeling of Duty?*

I was enjoying working on this thesis because of a sense of feeling I was cocreating this together with Sara and with other therapists. However, I slightly started to wonder if I was doing this because I was feeling a duty to do this or what? So, I worked on this in a session.

I strongly felt that I would like to honor her like this and offer my love and share my memories of my deep experiences with Sara. For example, as I have already described, when she said that she was dying, I was amazed when she stayed in the role of therapist, took care of me crying, and did it until I said good bye. She took care of her client even though her own body was dying. Her dignity impacted me a lot on both my personal and professional levels. She gave me a lot so I wanted to give to her by honoring her in this way. Then, the therapist mentioned to me that I was doing this not as a duty but as an act of love. I was a little bit shy to admit it, but I felt it was true.

### *Notes*

#### *Unfolding the Feelings*

Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007) write that “Grief is the internal part of loss, how we feel. The internal work of grief is a process, a journey. It does not end on a

certain day or date. It is as individual as each of us” (p. 115). They frame the journey of feelings that people might have as being composed of five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These are not linear, and one may revisit them often in the overall grieving process, just as one may not go through all or in a certain order. They state that grief is a time when we try to find our wholeness again after all has been lost (p. 151).

Further, Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007) also stated that

People often think of the stages as lasting weeks or months. They forget that the stages are responses to feelings that can last for minutes or hours as we flip in and out and then another. We do not enter and leave each individual stage in a linear fashion. We may feel one, then another, and back again to the first one. (p. 18)

Worden (2009) placed the phenomena of an acute normal grief reaction under four general categories: feelings, physical sensations, cognitions, and behaviors. Regarding feelings, he represented sadness, anger, guilt and self-reproach, anxiety, loneliness, fatigue, helplessness, shock, yearning, emancipation, relief and numbness as normal grief feelings.

I found such research in mapping the different phases people go through, helpful because I could feel that I had a kind of overview of what I was experiencing. I found that process-oriented grief work helped even further by unfolding the feelings and helping to find the deeper process beyond the feeling that I was experiencing at each moment, and helped me to have more awareness around it. Also, since the basic concept of process-oriented work is following signals and following the person’s own process and deepening it, although I was not focusing on how I moved in and out of different feeling stages, the feeling I had in each moment was deepened and it was transformed to many dimensions.

In this session, I noticed that being able to express and go deeper with my unprocessed feelings and thoughts was very helpful for me. At first, I experienced anger and frustration as disturbing thoughts, but as we did role play, Sara and Midori, and explored what was in the deeper levels, those feelings were transformed to sadness, celebration, and love.

Also, picking up flirts from an unnamed internal question together with insight from outside (like the photo of the rose) deepened the process. It helped to unfold in the essence level. A sense of continuance and nonlocality of Love Story and a sense of entanglement with Sara through nature made me feel appreciation and connection to everything, and imagine that we were all in a soup dreaming each other.

In my personal process, staying close to deepest self and loving myself was my focus in those days. So, I felt Love Story was happening on many different levels.

As I was processing my anger and frustration, I felt it was also relevant to quote from Mindell (2002a):

One of the paradoxes of relationship processes which I have stressed in this work is that the “lowest” drives of human existence, namely, jealousy, competitiveness and anger become the door to something we could call infinite or divine love, once the conflict which they create has been processed. We are always fearful of entering into conflict, and it is truly shocking when this love and deep connection with other people emerges from the neglected, secret recesses of confirmed hopelessness. (p. 133)

### *Dreambody*

Mindell (2002b) writes of his research with the dying that

Right before death, dying people often feel that they have recovered and feel well again. They try to leave their beds, leave the hospital, and want to go downtown. Some dream and later believe that they are healthy. (p. 111)

The dying person trying to get out of bed is in the dreambody and does not realize that the real body is no longer capable of doing what he feels like doing. (p. 112)

Learning of these phenomena at the edge of death that Mindell describes brought me to an acceptance of and surrender to what Sara was doing when I felt angry about her traveling so much in her terminal illness. I started to feel that it might not be just because she wanted to see her relatives and friends and find a nice place for a beloved one, but also, her dreambody probably wanted to get out of bed and took her traveling. Also, remembering that she became a mallard in her session with Arnold Mindell, Ph.D., my frustration and anger toward her travelling totally transformed. I started to think that probably her dreambody as the mallard was already traveling in such moments.



## Chapter 8: Going with the Wind

I have described the nonlocal and mythical aspects of several stories in relationship with Sara in Chapter 4. One was what I felt while I was having a telephone session and another was a story from a session with a psychic person. In this chapter, I describe a session that shows how the quality of the dead person could appear nonlocally in my body movement and how it helped my grieving process as it had unfolded. I also include my findings related to mythical aspects from this session.

### *The Spirit of Wind*

In the session, the therapist asked me what was important for me about Sara. I answered the therapist, “When I had low self-esteem and felt myself very small, Sara saw my wholeness and encouraged me to follow my path. She said to me, ‘Follow your dreaming.’” At that time, the therapist noticed that my hands had been moving forward as if those were pushing me gently to go forward and my lips were pushed a little bit. The therapist mentioned that Sara had appeared in that moment first in my hands and then in my mouth. Sara was nonlocally appearing through movement and in the shape of my mouth.

We explored the hand movement I made when I was responding to the question, as I made the movement bigger and added the sound to it, then it became like wind, the spirit of the wind. I felt that when I got stuck, it would say, “Follow your dreaming because wind will carry you.” The therapist commented that, “Wind is invisible energy. You cannot see the wind. But you can see the effect of the wind. Wind is very special because it is an invisible energy. And it is a spirit’s energy. In many cultures, wind is a symbol of spirit because you cannot see the power of the spirit but you can see the effects. Its effects are magic.”

My being wind process was unfolded further and it was like being invited to be more open and expressive. Being like wind, I started to appreciate the beauty of life and everything including myself. Then, I became shy and emotional with both a smile and teary feelings. I was feeling a lot, happiness, pain, sadness, and at the same time, tried to think about feelings. Then, being as wind, I learned I could just accept and have all my feelings like wind just flow through me. Simply, it would make my life more dimensional and richer.

### *Invisible Things*

In this session, I also noticed how important the invisible things are for me. In the case of relationships, it is like a sense of sentient connection. I realized that there would be diverse ways in how each person may feel very connected to the other person and that for each person, the importance of the existence of this invisible connection would be different. This process taught me that I would be able to be interested in sentient connection, be the spirit of wind, and be expressive, like feeling the sentient connection and talking to people about it, expressing a lot of deep feelings that I have. I could feel that Sara was with me, and now was saying, “Express yourself, go for it. Be your beautiful, sweet, and spicy self.”

*The Spirit of Wind, Creativity, and Myth*

It was so interesting to discover the spirit of wind and the great importance of the invisible things for me because invisible things, death, and ghosts were parts of my two childhood dreams. In one's childhood dreams can be found much information about one's life, considering them as a picture of tendencies and patterns represented symbolically. I realized my strong interest in the spirit realm and its connection to my myth.

The therapist suggested to me that I allow the wind energy, and my creativity to blow through me. My creative energy and my expression were part of the deeper process as they had much wind energy behind them.

*Notes*

Finding that Sara was nonlocally appearing in my movement and working on that helped me to feel that I was cofacilitating my process together with her. I could feel as if her spirit was still nonlocally in this realm and with me, even though her physical body no longer functions in consensus reality.

In the session, it was absolutely fascinating to discover the mythical connection between the spirit of wind and my personal myth. My mind is feeling awe about the experience and connection to my own personal myth, and I started to feel the deeper connection to Sara because the spirit of wind manifested as Sara at first nonlocally through my hands. Mindell (2007) said

Thus on one level projection refers to something coming from one person going out to another; on another level projection refers to a sense of connection, a dreaming together. From the view of sentient awareness, there is a nonlocal field between us even though we experience this field in our awareness and everyday consciousness as images, projections, and the "other." Yet, from the sentient viewpoint, no person or thing is doing anything. Events just happen between us. When awareness first arises, it arises not from one or the other, but from the universe, the serpent. Sentient awareness, then, is spread out in the whole universe. (p. 38)

It may be different from within which level I talk about how my projection or what I felt about Sara could be explained. However, from my experience in the session, discovering the connection that is related to my mythical aspect was deeply fascinating and a very surprising finding to my everyday self, and it probably would be how it is to the Processmind's perspective.

Also, it was absolutely fascinating to discover the mythical connection between the spirit of wind and my personal myth. I started to feel the deeper connection to Sara because the spirit of wind manifested as Sara at first nonlocally through my hands. Joseph Campbell (1988/1990) wrote

Myths come from where the heart is, and where the experience is, even as the mind may wonder why people believe these things. The myth does not point to a fact; the myth points beyond facts to something that informs the fact. (p. 21)

Neimeyer (2006) emphasizes the importance of meaning reconstruction and meaning making in the process of grieving because a person needs to redefine the self and learn how to develop a meaningful life without the deceased. In my grief process, I did not intend to do meaning reconstruction nor meaning making. However, it organically manifested to me as very powerful personal stories through the processing of my feelings and experiences.

#### *What's with Wind?*

It is interesting to realize that now I am studying and learning about feelings and I used to fly a lot in the sky as my career. In both of them, wind is a very important factor, as feelings come like wind and we fly with wind. Then, it is fun to imagine what other things involve wind? Sara might be enjoying flying with wind as well, as a mallard . . . .

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusion

### *Summary of the Notes from Each Chapter*

I have presented some of the findings throughout this project in each chapter's notes. Here, I will briefly summarize the findings and provide responses that usefully reflect back to my research questions: What is it like to experience the death of one's main therapist? How does process-oriented grief work facilitate the grieving process?

### *My Experience of the Grieving Process*

#### *Therapeutic Relationship and Boundary*

In the therapeutic setting, notions of boundary and limitation stand as ethical boundaries between client and therapist. Boundary and limitation are not just in the therapeutic setting, I think, as they can be found in any relationships. However, as the depth of sharing and exploring with a therapist created something beyond the usual daily life connection with someone, it was a difficult issue for me to deal with when I was facing the dying process of my main therapist. I felt very sad and confused because one of my closest persons was dying and I did not know how to process the grief of not being able to be close to the person when she was dying. Maybe I could have asked another therapist for help to work on it, but at that time, working on the boundary issue did not occur to me nor was I clear about my situation. As I mentioned earlier, I felt anger and frustration about her terminal illness and I think those feelings are somehow related to boundary issues because I hesitated to say or ask her directly something personal about her process and about how I thought about it. In the last session, she encouraged me to say whatever I thought I should not say to her. I was thinking about what to bring, but it did not happen, so I felt a kind of grief not to have that opportunity to explore it with her any more.

I realized that my grieving process had been more like a client-centered process. I mean, it was mostly about how I felt in this situation, and how my feeling towards her was. It was not so much about how Sara, the therapist, might have felt or how I imagine how she would have wanted to do because I have less information about her personal stories or her personal issues. For example, when my grandmother died, I felt and tuned into her, and I thought about her life history and stories and had a lot of feelings about her life, not only my feelings towards her. In case of my grieving process with Sara, my experience of tuning into her and feeling grief about her life from her was not much. I think that was also because I did not feel so many conflicting thoughts from Sara about dying when I asked her about it in my last session with her. After that, I heard about her session with Dr. Arnold Mindell. I felt somehow she had peacefully transformed to the next realm in her journey.

So, it may well be different for each therapist and client relationship. However, from my experience, I thought it was an interesting and slightly sad process that I found while working on grieving because I realized that I had not known much about her life and personal stuff. In the therapeutic setting, my deep longing for being seen, understood, and loved was satisfied and as I was processing grieving, I felt sad to accept that as a client, it was mainly a one way experience, at least in consensus reality level.

#### *Integration and Transformation*

As a client, I found that sometimes I had felt Sara's holding of my wholeness and her sense of acceptance toward me was more than I had toward myself. It seemed that my inner critical voices and unconscious parts about myself had stopped me from accepting the essential wholeness of myself. Exploring myself in sessions helped me to start to know about myself more, negotiate, and integrate my unknown parts. So, facing the death of my main therapist was like losing that supportive developmental process

of contacting my deeper and unknown parts as well as feeling sadness and appreciation toward those kinds of roles which Sara occupied as a therapist, such as accepting, supporting, and being with my process, and seeing my wholeness.

Throughout the grieving process, integrating those roles psychologically through working on them in sessions and by noticing my personal growth played a large role in the process. As I described in Chapter 6, as my attitude towards myself changed, my relationship with the role, like the encourager who Sara represented, also changed. My fixed relationship with that role has transformed. I had a slight grief when I experienced that process, but having a nonlocal feeling of her presence in my life and cocreating something like this project were helpful to transform my grief into a new phase.

The most unexpected and fascinating feeling during my experience of this grief process is that I have been feeling that Sara has been teaching me through this process. Probably in consensus reality level, I would say that I am learning about myself and about grief while exploring my own grieving process. Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2007) stated that sometimes grief could hold healing not only for the loss but also for you as a person by providing the opportunity for an even greater healing. I feel that my whole process of grieving has been but one portion of a much larger process of integrating my whole relationship with Sara. Because this process is based on my grieving process about Sara, I feel that both my personal growth and path have been intimately connected with this grieving process. In it, I feel that Sara is still teaching and helping me in my life.

Mindell (2007) mentioned, “In principle, every moment, every relationship, and every relationship situation comes with a guide. . . . The U is a guide, a wave, a vector, and a dream or relationship myth” (p. 194), and “Every relationship situation is a

chance to learn more about one's relationship to the universe" (p. 200). This process itself is helping me to know my relationship to the universe and the universe within. Through this project, as I described in Chapter 7, it gave me the feeling that "process itself is love." Sometimes it is difficult for my everyday self to feel it, so this experience became like a temporary experience and sometimes it became like a hope. However, to me, this feeling and experience of this was the gift from this process. I deeply felt spiritual and psychological healing power in this grieving process.

#### *How Process-Oriented Grief Work Facilitated the Grieving Process*

Here, I would like to gather my findings on how process-oriented work facilitated my experiences of my grieving process. There is so much more I seek to know about the grief process than is written about, but in terms of my own experience and in terms of my Process Work knowledge at this point, the following is how I am looking at this and I describe it in two parts: one is inner work and another is relationship.

#### *Inner Work: Deepening and Facilitating the Feelings*

I found it very helpful to focus on and deepen the feelings I had had at each moment. It also helped me to have awareness around it. Through acknowledging and having openness to the grieving process, seeing it as a natural process, and deepening all the feelings rather than trying to get over or pathologizing them became a kind of healing and learning experience. Other roles like the dead, my inner critical voices, and missing roles were also brought out, and I worked on all those voices as I went back and forth to deepen the process.

Working on the night time dream in which Sara appeared was also very powerful and helpful. In the middle of her terminal illness, bringing the other

perspectives from the dream itself facilitated my feeling reaction to the dream and also broadened my awareness around myself and the process.

Tapping into an *Earth Based Psychology* as well as the perspective of *Deep Democracy* was also helpful because all different energies and qualities we might call sadness, joy, anger, and so forth in the feeling level are neither good nor bad. Simply, they are all neutral from the viewpoint of nature and the earth's field.

Being in the experience, even if it is temporary, of Processmind, a nondualistic intelligence like omnipresence of the gods, was very powerful. Since the Processmind is way beyond life and death, it seems that if we go deeper into ourselves and find our Processmind in relationship when we are alive, we could say that we are already doing the grieving process because we are already deeply with that person with the things we share. It is a nondualistic experience and the feeling of not really being separated from that person is in the Processmind.

*Relationship Part: Entanglement, Nonlocality, Myth, and Cocreating*

In the grieving process, what fascinated me most, brought warmth, and helped me to stay internally connected to my therapist was to find and bring in nonlocal aspects and entanglement experiences in relationship with the therapist. Death is a loss of the physical body. However, it is not a total death and loss. As dreaming continued, to experience feeling connected in different ways was very soothing and helpful.

Although I miss the therapist and have lost contact in consensus reality level, my longing for connection continues in the dreaming level. So, the idea of dreaming and actively engaging with the process rather than just striving to overcome the reality of the loss of the relationship was very helpful in the process of grieving. Throughout all of these different incidents, I learned about how a client can be tangled with the therapist and what effect being in the entanglement had on the grief process. Here are

some summaries of findings around this point. I present each of them separately but I believe each finding is linked with each of the others.

*Death is beyond the loss of one's physical body, time, and space in consensus reality level.* To think about her dreambody and her dreaming as the Mallard gave me an eternal feeling of her. In my process of learning to live with physical loss in consensus reality level, a sense of the eternal presence of the dead and seeing our relationship in different levels helped me to accept her death from a wider perspective. It also gave me a sense of infinite feeling, continuing story, closeness, and even oneness in relationship.

*Dreaming in relationship continues.* I worked on Sara's qualities (e.g., encouragement and supportive attitude), and integrating those in me psychologically. Also, I worked on her quality which was manifesting in my movement nonlocally and unfolded the dreaming behind the movement.

*Cocreation.* In consensus reality level, exploring and writing this paper while bringing in her atmosphere and metaskills gave me a sense of cocreating something together even after death. It helped me to digest this process and accomplish what we could have created together as a memorial service in my own way and brought me peace through acknowledging this relationship. I had the sense of cocreation in different levels, too, like when I shapeshift into her to integrate her qualities psychologically and mythically into myself and my life, and start to identify with something unknown in the new paradigm in which her qualities are added. Also, I found that something like the universe taught me through this process, at first by creating a flirt with this topic. Then unfolding this process gave me a sense of dreaming together and cocreating together with all the flirts and the universe.

*Entanglement.* Finding mythical entanglement at the whole field and sentient levels was very powerful in the grieving process. Processmind, like the sentient being of her, is independent of one aspect of her role as a therapist or encourager, and its entanglement in relationship appeared as a sense of love, a spirit of wind in this process. Unfolding, creating, and understanding the mythical elements reminded me of being in the Tao/universe at each moment and held me in the place of joy and happiness with closeness to her even after her death, and made me feel that this feeling can still continue in my life.

### *Conclusion*

In the grieving process, I found that it was helpful to see it in dual perspectives: one is actual separation and loss, and another one is the continuity in relationship. From my own experiences and my process-oriented counseling knowledge, I would say that the grief process has the whole transformation process within it, and that it was like the process of finding Processmind and myth in relationship. So in a way, as we work on our relationships and find deeper connection and myth in relationships when we are alive, it is already a grieving process in each moment. I was amazed to learn of the healing and transformative power in the grieving process, and I felt that processing grief itself is love. As I am closing this thesis, I hope that others may find something of use and value in my exploration of a process-oriented approach to the area of grieving.

### *Limitations*

This project focused on my subjective experiences related to the death of my first main therapist, so examples were limited to my own experiences, memories, and my experiences of process-oriented grief work. Since the basic concept behind process-oriented grief work is to follow the person's grief process, there will be varieties of experiences depending on who is working on a grief process. As each person's grieving

process is individually unique, additional research would enhance further understanding of process-oriented grief work as well as one's experience in this area.

### *Future Studies*

I believe that there are different methods to facilitate grieving processes in process-oriented counseling. In different settings, there would be relationship work, group process, and subgroup process, perhaps along with other methods such as vector and direction work, finding relationship myth and exploring in a creative way, Processmind work, imagining the dead person in a room and shapeshift and/or talk to the person, etcetera. It would be helpful to study such approaches to this topic.

It would be interesting to study the feelings that a dying person has and that other people around have, and whether they are linked or not. Identifying roles and ghost roles in the field, and also studying how finding the big U, Processmind, and life myth in their relationship could potentially be useful in facilitating the dying process.

Loss and grieving are huge influences in a war situation. So, for further study, it would be useful to unfold and explore how the grieving process could impact on facilitating war conflict and how it could contribute to stopping war.

On a different scale, more research on how the death and loss of one's therapist influences former clients and how to support and / or to facilitate their experiences would be helpful in a therapeutic relationship and setting. It would also be helpful to study the interface and comparison between process-oriented grief work and other modalities.

### *Epilogue*

About 1 year has passed since I began this project. At first, I had never expected that this grief process could be so closely entwined with my personal growth and challenges. So in a way, Sara has been around in my life, as she mentioned in the

last session, “I will be around, Midori.” Throughout this project, I have felt as if Sara had been coming along with me gently, witnessing my eggs, taking care of their hatching, and teaching me how to do it.

As this thesis comes to a close, I feel that in each chapter, eggs of thoughts and learnings have hatched. Baby birds have started to walk on the ground and swim in the river. Now, it is time for the birds to fly in the sky and play with the wind. Indeed, I hope that another aspect of Sara and I has taken wing in consensus reality through this project.



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Appendix A: Website of Sara Halprin, Ph.D.

(Following are some of the pages from the website of Sara Halprin, Ph.D. Retrieved November 11, 2006, from <http://www.sarahalprin.com>)

*HOME*

Sara Halprin, Ph.D. is the author of "Look at My Ugly Face!" Myths and Musings on Beauty and Other Perilous Obsessions with Women's Appearance (Penguin, 1996); Seema's Show: A Life on the Left (University of New Mexico Press, August, 2005); and co-editor of the anthology Alternative to War: The Creative Aftermath of Worldwork 2004 (Changing Worlds Press, 2005).

She is a Certified Process Work therapist and teacher at the Process Work Center of Portland, and she leads workshops that explore the interface between process work and writing.

I live and work in the home I share with Herb Long, overlooking the Willamette River in the city of Portland, Oregon, where I write, teach writing workshops, give phone consultations and have a private practice as a process work consultant. My focus in each of these activities is on following and unfolding the creative process that lurks shyly behind our most troublesome problems and blocks.

Sara Halprin, Ph.D. \* Certified Process Work Therapist, Teacher, Author.

*AGING: A WORDQUILT*

Original Message -----

Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2003

Dear Friends,

Gulp. I'm writing to say I'm going to be 60 very soon. I'm shocked at how difficult it is for me as I approach this birthday. So, instead of throwing a party, for which I don't have the heart or the energy just now, and which many of you couldn't anyway attend as you are far away from Portland, I'd like to ask you to write something brief, about aging. What is it for you?

What is the best or the worst, or both?

A sentence or at most a brief paragraph, coming from your heart, will be precious to me, and I'll weave my gifts of words together into a patchwork quilt for my website.

Thanks and much love, Sara

...and now, six weeks later, I have received a wealth of messages from old friends and new, family and colleagues, from each decade except the first and the eighth, with my youngest respondent my eleven-year-old friend Robin, and my oldest, my ninety-one-year-old aunt May. My ninety-seven-year-old friend Seema is unable to

write, but she said on the phone, “You won’t feel any different the last night of being fifty-nine and the first day of being sixty.” Then she laughed, paused a moment and said, “I know it’s a big threshold.”

I’d like to present this wordquilt, arranged according to the decades, by saying that listening to my friends is one of the great pleasures of my sixties, and I hope to do a lot more of it.

SH, Portland, OR, 3.11.03

Sara Halprin, Ph.D. • Certified Process Work Therapist, Teacher, Author

### *Biography of a Name*

I am the proud bearer of my great-grandmother’s name. Sarah Mayashe Halprin emigrated to New York from an East European shtetl with her youngest child, my grandmother Rebecca, in the late 1890s. She worked plucking chickens on the Lower East Side, sending money home to bring over her other children, one by one. Sarah’s husband, my great-grandfather Nathan Halprin, was beaten by Cossacks as he stood to defend his home and his blacksmith’s forge, and he died soon after. I honor the fierce and gentle enduring spirits of my great-grandparents.

Sara Halprin is my fourth legal name. I was born Barbara Joan Sakofsky in 1943 in New York City, up in the Bronx, where my grandmother lived on Harrison Avenue and my mother was staying with her while my father was stationed on an Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. “Barbara Joan” was the closest my mother could come to “Benjamin,” my grandfather, whose Hebrew name was Ben Zion, “son of God.” My Hebrew name is Bas Zion, “daughter of God.” (My older cousin Sara was already named after my great-grandmother, and my grandmother Rebecca was still alive, as were both of my father’s parents, so I couldn’t be named after any of them, according to Jewish tradition.) As my mother didn’t like the name Barbara, she called me “Bonnie,” which she considered an endearment, not a “proper” name. That family nickname clung to me for many years.

When I was three, after the war, my family moved to Denver, Colorado and opened a clothing store. We changed our last name to Saks, less obviously Jewish, even so the store didn’t do well. However, as both of my parents worked in the store, for three glorious years I attended Peter Pan Nursery School, where I acquired a lifelong love of learning. Each morning I went off joyously to the big house with a magical opening in the back hedge leading into a park with stately trees.

I went to school from the age of three straight through age twenty-seven, when I was granted a Ph.D. in comparative literature at Columbia University. By then I was married and teaching at the University of Toronto in Canada, and my name was Barbara Martineau. I was happy to discover that Harriet Martineau, the English feminist and eccentric traveler, was related to my husband’s Scottish family, and that his family, like mine, had fled religious persecution; they were Huguenots who left France in the sixteenth century.

When I started to publish articles on film and feminism, I signed my name Barbara Halpern Martineau, taking my grandmother's maiden name as it was spelled on some family documents, according to the recommendation of a radical feminist group who issued a Womanifesto encouraging women to break with patriarchal conventions.

In 1982, when my husband and I divorced, I took a new name which was really an old name, and as I already had a body of film work credited to Barbara Halpern Martineau, I made a short film, "Namechange," to mark my transition to Sara Halprin. I also moved to California to be near my son, lost my U.S. citizenship and entered the tortuous path of immigration followed by my own family and many others for whom the torch of Liberty seemed more ironic than welcoming. It was complicated to deal with immigration, a process which took years, with all the changes in names, but I was glad I had made the change before I realized the difficulties it would entail.

When I married Herb Long in 1988 in Hawaii, I was surprised when he asked, shortly before our simple ceremony, if I wanted to take his name. Why would I do that, I wondered. Did he want to take mine? Of course not. Well. Then. Some things had changed, for me, between 1966, the date of my first marriage, and 1988. Sara Halprin I am and plan to remain. The one thing that bothered me was that I hadn't seen my cousin Sara Mae for many years, and I wondered how she would feel about me usurping her name. In 1995, on tour with my book "Look At My Ugly Face!" I phoned Sara Mae when I was passing through Boston and she came to meet me at the train station. It was a joyous meeting, and we called each other Sara with no self-consciousness, sharing family photos and childhood memories.

I've always admired my older cousin, and when I realized she had, at the age of sixty, jogged to the Boston train station all the way from her home in Cambridge, on a hot day in July, I was deeply impressed. She was the second woman to complete the Boston Marathon, and she and Larry are dedicated athletes. I wrote about Sara in my recent book *Fit for What?* chronicling my own path to physical fitness and all the questions it raised for me as a woman, an intellectual and a Jew, to become physically strong as I approached the end of my sixth decade.

Great-grandmother Sarah was about sixty when she died, an old woman, sweet-tempered as my mother remembered her, a bedridden invalid smiling at the camera in the only photo I have of her.

"In my family, the men were rash and the women endured," I wrote in "Look At My Ugly Face!" thinking of great-grandfather Nathan, of my "no-good" grandfather Benjamin, who died before I was born, of my gentle grandfather Abraham, who died when I was a little girl, long outlived by my grandmother Ida. Recently, in a seminar led by Arny and Amy Mindell, as part of an exercise designed to find meaning in family history, I summoned the spirit of my great-grandfather Nathan. The experience was profound, even shocking, as I felt a spirit larger and far beyond my own experience enter into me, like a great bird spreading his wings, inspiring and challenging me to live up to his legacy.

My name Sara honors my greatgrandmother, who endured and was kind and loving. My name Halprin honors my greatgrandfather, who died standing up for all he loved, his family and his work. Their lives and deaths are part of me now.

Many women have had more than one name. Often all the women in a family have different last names. If you have a story about your name and would like to share it, I would love to read it. Please send it to me at ---, and let me know if you would like to have it posted on this website.

### *WRITINGS and PUBLICATIONS*

I learned to write at Peter Pan Nursery School, in Denver, Colorado, where I lived with my family from age three to six. I loved Peter Pan School, and I loved learning, reading and writing, dancing, singing, even early lessons on the piano. Writing was just as exciting as being able to stand up on the swing that hung from a big tree in the back yard, and reading, oh, reading meant getting a library card and checking out book after book filled with fairy tales.

When I write, I begin in my notebook, a composition book with a cardboard cover, and I write with a fountain pen in black ink, covering pages with scribbled words. I love the way ink flows and thoughts flow when I write, even when they don't make much sense, or any sense. Later, I reread and rewrite, but in the joy of first writing I put criticism aside and just write.

In writing classes I encourage people to read aloud just to hear the sound of our own voices, reading what we have written, often in languages other than English. No criticism in these early moments, just listening and appreciating the sound of language.

Sara Halprin, Ph.D. • Certified Process Work Therapist, Teacher, Author

### *FILMS AND VIDEOTAPES*

*Films For A Woman in El Salvador, Speaking*, 16mm film, 8 mins. 1985. Selected for the American Film Festival and the San Francisco Film Festival.

*Name Change*, 16mm film, 1 and 3/4 mins. 1984.

*Keltie's Beard: A Woman's Story*, 16mm film, 9 mins. 1983. (Distributed by Filmmakers Library, New York, and the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center, Toronto) Selected for the Nyon Documentary Film Festival, Switzerland. Selected for Gay & Lesbian Film Festivals in Toronto; Portland, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; Paris, France; and Montreal.

*Heroes: A Transformation Film*, 16mm film, 23 mins. 1983.

*Tales of Tomorrow: Our Elders*, 16mm film, 22 mins. 1982. Blue Ribbon, American Film Festival.

*Good Day Care: One Out of Ten*, 16mm film, 28 mins. 1978. Distributed by the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center.

*Video Tapes About Process Work* (produced through cable access television in Portland, Oregon)

*1991: Illness and Life Myth*. A four-tape series with Arnold and Amy Mindell (available from Lao Tse Press)

Tape One: A Man Diagnosed HIV+ Works on Sensitivity in His Environment  
 Tape Two: A Woman Finds A Connection Between her Chronic Asthma and her Experiences in Racism  
 Tape Three: Leukemia Challenges a Woman to Voice her Power and Set Boundaries  
 Tape Four: Through focusing on her Sense of Fate After a Car Accident, A Woman Discovers her Rebellious Spirit

*1990: Process Works*. A Three Tape Series with Arnold and Amy Mindell and Nisha Zenoff (available from Lao Tse Press)

Tape One: Part 1 Chronic Smoking/ Part 2 Working with Someone Living on the Street  
 Tape Two: Working with a Woman in an Extreme State Diagnosed Manic Depressive  
 Tape Three: Process Work Colleagues' Organizational Development Issues

Other video tapes concerning Process Work produced through Portland Cable Access

Town forums on Homophobia, Racism, Homelessness, and the Future of Democracy

*"When It's In Your Face: An Intimate Conversation About Living and Dying,"* with Leza Washington, M.D. (co-produced by Sara Halprin and Stanford Siver)

### EDUCATION

Diploma, Research Society for Process-oriented Psychology, Portland, Oregon, 1992.

Ph.D. Columbia University, New York, Comparative Literature, Dissertation topic: Storytelling, 1970.

M.A. Columbia University. Comparative Literature, 1965.

M.A. University of Edinburgh, Scotland. English and Philosophy, 1964.

## *TEACHING*

I learned to teach the same way I learned to ice-skate, towed out to the middle of a frozen lake by two other kids, I somehow found my shaky way back to shore. Whether it was literature, film, women's studies, or film production at universities in Canada and later in California, Hawaii and Oregon, I taught what I wanted to learn, forging a collaborative relationship with students.

These days I teach process work together with my husband and partner Herb Long at Lewis & Clark College in Portland and in learning communities elsewhere. I also teach at the Process Work Center of Portland, and in Yachats on the Oregon Coast, focusing on the process of writing and other forms of creative expression, and I consult with individuals and groups on writing, research and film projects.

### *Teaching Experience*

1993-present: Process Work Center of Portland, Master's/Diploma program: focus on teaching writing and process work, nationally and internationally.

1997-present: Lewis & Clark College, Oregon, Master's CORE program.

1990-95: Marylhurst College, Oregon, Communications Dept, Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies program.

1985-87: University of California at Santa Cruz, Theater Arts Board: Filmmaker in Residence.

1986-87: Cabrillo College, Santa Cruz, Early Childhood Education: Trained staff and produced a video documentary on family day care.

1981-85; 1976-77: York University, Toronto, Canada, Film Department: Associate Professor; Atkinson College for Continuing Education: Adjunct.

1978-80: Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, Film Department, Assistant Professor, left to produce independent documentary films.

1967-75: University of Toronto, Canada, Scarborough College, Humanities Board: Assistant Professor; tenure granted in 1975. Coordinated first women's studies program at the University in 1971-72. Left to pursue independent interests.

## *PROCESS WORK*

My discovery of process work was an instance of serendipity, when I seized upon the happy accident of having Army Mindell's first book, *Dreambody*, fall off a shelf in a Santa Cruz bookstore one day in 1986. I read that book, and the next and the next, all he had published at that time, and when I met him in 1987 I decided to study process work under his mentorship. To my experience as a university teacher, writer, film maker and mother, process work added an element that first shattered, then helped integrate my previous history. This was the deceptively simple process of following

and unfolding subtle signals from the realms of dreams and dreaming. Process work, rooted in depth psychology, field theory, quantum physics, Eastern philosophy and aboriginal shamanism, was being developed by Arny and a group of Swiss and American colleagues as a way of working with individuals, couples, families, and groups.

Soon after I became a student, process work expanded to address large groups and volatile world issues. My impulsive nature took me into the heart of some very heated scenes, and, as I learned to ice-skate, to teach, to make films and to write through difficult experience, so I learned to survive the fire of large group process. I was enormously relieved when Arny and Amy Mindell began to focus on ways of using awareness in deep, subtle ways to facilitate, or make easy, the conflictual scenes of individuals and groups in the world, and this recent work with the essence of everything feels like coming home to me. An article by Amy Mindell about the newest developments in process work can be found at Arny and Amy Mindell's website. See also "So Much Depends On A Red Hook: The Essence of Writing," *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*, Winter, 2001/02.

### BOOKS

*Seema's Show: A Life on the Left* by Sara Halprin

Foreword by Marge Frantz

"This telling of an extraordinary old woman's love affair with the American twentieth century--her unheralded vital place in its art, her delight in its diversity, her lifelong Left activism, eyes-wide-open to both blessings and bummers--is a tonic for existential despair. We need this wonderful book." --Ronnie Gilbert, *The Weavers*

At seventeen Seema Aissen got her first job drying prints in a photo-finishing lab in Boston and joined the newly-founded Young Communist League; at thirty-three she was hired by Ansel Adams to run his darkroom in Yosemite; at thirty-seven she married the writer Jack Weatherwax and devoted herself to supporting his work; widowed at seventy-nine she began a new life; at ninety-five she had her first photographic exhibit. Sara Halprin began recording interviews with Seema in 1986 and took the title and narrative frame for this book from that first show.

*Seema's Show* follows Seema's life from her birth in 1905 to radical Jewish parents in Czarist Russia, emigration to England, then Boston and Los Angeles, where she joined the Film and Photo League, began her lifelong work for racial justice, and formed enduring friendships with artists and political activists including Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, and Woody Guthrie. In 1984 Seema moved to Santa Cruz, California, where she became a central figure in progressive culture and began, in 2000, to show her own work.

"Like my grandmother, Imogen Cunningham, Seema Weatherwax tells it like it is. This astonishingly candid biography vividly brings to life the great twentieth-century

California art photographers--Adams, Weston, Cunningham--as well as left-wing activists/politicians--her husband Jack Weatherwax, Woody Guthrie. If we had National Treasures, Seema would be one." --Elizabeth Partridge, author of *Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorothea Lange*

*Alternative to War: Creative Aftermath of Worldwork 2004*  
edited by Sara Halprin and Ursula Hohler

Changing Worlds Publications,  
ISBN 0-9724300-7-5, 79 pages, paperback

"Sara Halprin and Ursula Hohler's collection brings together the creative work of some of those who attended Worldwork 2004 on the Oregon coast. The range of contributions reflects the extraordinary scope of world work and of process work itself.

The pieces move from strong prose descriptions of unearthing and expressing the feelings, the histories, and ultimately the raw energy at the root of war, through to gentle poetry expressing connection and liberation. They give voice in a graphic and personal way to the experience of unfolding the unknown and the discovery of new and creative directions which might indeed provide an 'Alternative to War' . . .

The contributions are visual as well as verbal, with a powerful cover painting and a number of striking and beautiful drawings and photographs. A personal favourite for me was a piece of writing which deals with the challenge of communicating the experience to those who were not there, and would never imagine themselves there.

In this book personal memory and family stories are braided with interviews with other women, fairy tales, myths, and process-oriented ideas about women, appearance and racism, exploring the deep roots of beauty and ugliness and the ways these roles can flower into powerful creativity."

#### ARTICLES

*On process work and related topics*

"So Much Depends On A Red Hook: The Essence of Writing," *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*, Winter, 2001/02.

"Serendipity Doodah: Using Happy Accidents in Process Work"

"Creating A Learning Community," "At Work: Stories of Tomorrow's Workplace," March/April 1997, VI, 2. (Using process work and open space technology to teach a graduate class of psychology and education students.)

"Preparing for Death and Planning to Live," *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*, Fall/Winter 1993. (An interview with Marianne Pomeroy.)

“Art and Politics,” *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*, Fall/Winter 1992.

### *On film*

From 1970 to 1983, under the name Barbara Halpern Martineau, I wrote numerous articles on documentary film and video, popular films, and women’s media which appeared in the following journals: *Cinema Canada*, *Film Quarterly*, *Jump Cut*, *Take One*, *Women & Film*; I also had anthology pieces in *The Canadian Film Reader*, *Cartoon Animation*, *Show Us Life*, *The Jump Cut Reader*, *The Broadside Reader*, *Women and the Cinema*.

*In the early 1980s, for several years, I wrote a regular film column in Broadside, Toronto’s feminist newspaper.*

### RECENT MANUSCRIPTS

*From Fit for What? Alphabetical Reflections on Life, Death and Dreaming Bodies*

Age. My aging body is a difficult ally. It got me into a gym following a casual remark made by my friend Carole, that her trainer worked with people who had arthritis.

For several years I’d been living with fierce, burning pain in my knees, not quite so bad as childbirth, but next on the list. The orthopedic surgeon I consulted said I had lost cartilage in my kneecaps from osteoarthritis and I could never replace it, unless I had surgery to put in artificial caps.

One day in June 2001, I walked nervously into a commercial gym. I had often passed this former factory with a sepia mural on its outside wall depicting muscular men at old-fashioned exercise machines. Inside, where several young, fit-looking women and men in purple jumpsuits hovered at the counter, I asked for Bob. Big and bulky in his purple jumpsuit, Bob greeted me with a goofy, gentle, trust-inspiring smile.

There could have been no better guide than Bob Spaulding to introduce a nervous, aging, overweight woman with bad knees and a fear of exercise to the alien, intimidating culture of a commercial gym. I followed him meekly through the impressive post-industrial space, to my first encounter with a weight machine.

Ten minutes later, as I pushed with feet and legs, moving a heavy metal plate while Bob watched the alignment of my knees and ankles, I realized that for the first time in many months I had no pain in my knees. Bob explained that the exercise was bringing blood to the muscles around my knees, which were then able to support and take pressure off the joints.

“Come on, give me five more,” he coaxed in a cheerful tone, confident that I could and would make the effort. And I did. I was hooked. I’ll always be grateful for his simple assumption that I would grow stronger, and for his intent focus in helping me to do that.

“Awesome,” Bob would say, after I’d pushed twenty or thirty pounds, and I would know that he really meant it. No matter that he could push ten times that weight-what I had done was awesome for me. He praised me lavishly and at the same time he was relentless, demanding that I do more.

“Come on,” he’d say, the stress on the first word, “Come on-you can do it. Give me ten more now, nine, eight, seven, six, yes!” And I would do it, even though I was convinced I could not, even though I was straining, grunting, and breathing hard and would, on my own, have stopped long before, with Bob’s patient and persistent encouragement, I did it. Over and over again.

By the end of my first summer of training, I looked and felt at least ten years younger, and I was the strongest I had ever been. Not for the first time, I realized that the experience of age is relative.

My grandmother, born poor in the Old Country, worked hard most of her life with no time or opportunity for exercise and died in her early sixties, worn out. My mother, born in New York, better fed and educated than her mother, never exercised; she struggled with obesity and high blood pressure and suffered the pain of arthritis as she grew older. Shortly before her death from cancer at seventy-five, she displayed a resurgence of youthful energy that had nothing to do with physical fitness, a shining forth of spirit that inspired everyone around her.

My aunt, a determined, successful businesswoman, began jogging when she was in her sixties, completed the Boston Marathon in her seventies, and was still walking long distances at ninety. When will I be old? There is more than one way to calculate age. I look at my friends’ wrinkles and white hair affectionately, but these visible tokens of aging disturb me when I see them in my mirror. Longing for wisdom and eldership, I am troubled by signs of deterioration.

Perhaps the clearest symptom I associate with aging is missing the past. It is a mythical past that I miss, a yearning for something I need to do now-to inhabit my body, to grow acquainted with its potential and use it fully.

### *Poems*

This poem was written in an afternoon gathering during worldwork ‘04 where we discussed and wrote about our experiences of aging, ageism, and the creative spirit.

#### *Time*

Oh, my body wants to fly! Age pins me to my chair, aches my knees, roots my feet in the ground, but my shoulder blades pull together. My chest expands as wings sprout on my back.

Caught between flying and growing roots, I open my heart to the unknown vastness of stars calling across a void.

Tasting salt in the wind, I soar in the face of death; love catches me as I fall. Dying, I am blinded by the colors of life.

“Alternative to War: Creative Aftermath of Worldwork 2004”

*A Call To Poems by Sara Halprin*

The poems are massing at the border,  
arriving daily  
from the hills, from valley towns and desert hideaways,  
from mountains, plains and beaches,  
from all the urban and suburban places,  
from cafes, malls, park benches, public libraries and rv camps.

Sent off with a wry grin or a sigh of relief  
by poets with or without  
beards, curly hair, tattoos, tweed jackets, do-rags,  
shawls or spectacles,  
veterans who turn to the next poem, shy newcomers  
sending out their babies,  
poets who are also teachers, waiters, fishers, loggers,  
forest rangers,  
therapists, secretaries and postal clerks,  
even a few, maybe three who earn their living as poets.

A few strong poems,  
honed,  
poems that slice cleanly to the bone,  
are placed to take the frontal waves of attack,  
while the youngest, tenderest poems  
Take shelter behind the vets, poets  
used to the hazards of their work.

Festooned with garlands,  
in full camouflage,  
typefaces smeared with grease,  
helmeted, booted tough guy poems,  
barefoot, painted poems that grow from the ground,  
their only shield the knowledge of pain,  
the poems are massing at the border.

They come armed with words  
to celebrate life and sacrifice,  
to pay tribute, homage, respect,  
to laugh, rage, argue,  
meditate, deflate, reflect,  
to offer telling details and broad visions, everything  
except silence, except denial, except glibness.

The poems are massing at the border  
between war and recognition,  
come to say that the Other is Us  
that I am You,  
that we will all die in the end,  
that the way we take is the way we give  
meaning as well as love.

(Published in *Oregon Poets Against the War . . .*)