

The pact of Zariel Deer and Tarak Hawk: A youth Zoom group journey

Marion Gordon-Flower

*...One day whilst in the thicket she heard flapping wings overhead
And a gentle, kind voice said, "Don't be scared little deer."
She looked up with wide, startled eyes.
The eyes of the hawk-bird that looked down into hers showed compassion.
He said, "I am going to name you Zariel, Lion Princess,
then you will have a brave heart..."*

Abstract

'The pact of Zariel Deer and Tarak Hawk' is a story written by the arts therapist while working alongside youth in a Zoom group. The arts therapist hosted the group from her studio and participants connected virtually from the transient space of a mental health respite unit, and from their own residences post-discharge. The story took on archetypal dimensions when it was requested for retelling over the course of several weeks. It became a part of the glue that held the group together and gave it form; and it has been a focus for questioning, pondering and deep reflection on practice.

Keywords

Mental health, gender, archetypal, animal guides, multimedia

Overview of arts therapy context

The youth respite facility is a four-bed unit situated in Central Auckland within a mental health NGO. The client group is 14–24 years of age and referred through the District Health Board Community Mental Health clinical teams. Prior to Covid-19 lockdown periods, most of those referred stayed for a maximum of one week, sometimes returning periodically. Longer-term therapeutic relationships developed post-discharge through a day programme, which could be attended for up to three months, with extensions in special circumstances.

Before Covid-19 lockdowns, the arts therapy group had taken place on Fridays as a part of a day programme, which on other days was facilitated by a social worker in crafts, sports and community visits. The usual art room was to the side of the front door of the old, restored villa, with a large, central art-making table, well-resourced shelves, and walls covered in vibrant canvases that had been a part of recovery journeys. The room was open for use by

respite residents around the clock, seven days a week, and was well utilised at night. The wall display included posters of the Arts Therapy 5-Pt Star Model (Gordon-Flower, 2020, p.23) and the concept of the open studio. This helped to differentiate arts therapy from other day-programme activities that had a craft-product focus. It provided a shared understanding for all involved of therapeutic approaches that were applied in the arts therapy sessions. The room comfortably accommodated six participants, the arts therapist and one or two additional staff; however, the dining table was frequently moved into the lounge when a larger space was needed. Holding the space in an open environment proved challenging and was achieved through role clarity, intentionality and the approaches used in sessions (Moon, 2002; Prasad, 2016).

The youth client group

From a clinical perspective, diagnoses of the clients included: psychosis, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm, and alcohol-and drug-induced mental health disorders. Also, anxiety and depression were present as secondary conditions of autism spectrum disorder and gender dysphoria, with the primary symptoms often being a focus for the youth in the arts therapy sessions.

In describing the presentation of youth in the arts therapy setting, words such as courageous, inspiring, intelligent, creative, humorous, receptive, shy, subdued, defiant, avoidant and capable come to mind. These words attribute the active power to the youths and fit well with the organisation's Māori health model, Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 2001, p.174). They are reflective of an empathetic arts-therapeutic relationship of phenomenological alignment through conscious and unconscious processes (Desombiaux-Sigley, 2022; Durie, 2001; Eberhart and Atkins, 2014; Kristel, 2013; Moon, 2002).

Gender identity has been the subject of personal exploration for many of the youth clients in the arts therapy group, who created artworks symbolic of LGBTQIA+ culture. A significant number was also involved in tertiary education, particularly in the health and arts fields, with changes in direction being a focus of the youth during the arts therapy sessions. Art-making opened the way to uncensored discussions and informal mutual peer-counselling, which could be extended by the arts therapist. The discoveries and decisions made through arts therapy reflections contributed to their goal planning and outcomes which were facilitated by the multidisciplinary team. These included pathways to more supportive social contexts, new living situations, new study and career pathways, better relationship dynamics, and ultimately improved *oranga* (well-being).

Responding to Covid-19 restrictions: Zoom



Figure 1. Marion Gordon-Flower, *Swimming in a sea of possibilities*, 2022, mixed media on paper, 595 × 420mm

For the youth client group, the arrival of Covid-19 brought significant new challenges of uncertainty, social isolation and reduced opportunities, and for the arts therapist in how to deliver services. In transitioning from groups centred around the arts therapy table to those on Zoom, session duration was reduced, and circumstances dictated new ways of working and reprioritising. However, the arts therapy and open-studio approaches were retained, which also usually included the option of a more structured activity (Moon, 2002, pp.117–118). In the art room, there had been a wide choice of media available. In transitioning to Zoom, home-based art packs were provided, with some choices in contents, but with significantly less variety than had been possible in the art room.

In both youth and adult Zoom forums, collaboration with other staff was essential in creating and holding the space, troubleshooting technicalities and encouraging participation. Some participants began their Zoom journey wanting to remain visually and audibly anonymous, communicating with their support staff via phone to give their input, while also participating as an audio/visual observer and through chat. Staff contributed as participants in a round-

table approach of ‘he waka eke noa – all being in this together’, which boosted the group energy and further encouraged participation.

In the youth Zoom sessions, the arts therapist, the intern and those who had been discharged from respite were home based at different locations, whilst the respite unit residents and staff connected from the group art space using one laptop. The arts therapist’s spaces were well considered and set up to demonstrate processes and to model participation in art-making. “An effective art therapy studio fosters a belief in the ubiquitous nature of creative ability... [and] serves as a creative sanctuary whilst also maintaining an intimate connection with the world” (Moon, 2002, p.98).

Working in a Māori context

When considering how best to structure an approach with and for young people in a weekly Zoom programme, the first consideration was the overarching cultural kaupapa (framework) of the organisation, which was Māori.

The notion of ‘the sacred web of creation’ underpins Māori Indigenous knowledge, which has had a strong movement for revival and reinstatement within Aotearoa New Zealand and has had the support of the Ministry of Health, recently renamed Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand. In my extended role as arts therapist within the health and social housing NGO, I have been active in promoting opportunities for Māori to reengage with traditional forms of healing through tohunga (shaman), rongoā (Indigenous plants remedies), mirimiri (traditional deep-release massage therapy), pūrākau (culturally based stories) and taonga pūoro (Māori musical instruments). My involvement has taken place through being a staff trainer, programme planner and group facilitator. I have also attended te reo Māori (Māori language) classes with my colleagues, which are key to understanding Māori concepts, in addition to cultural awareness training for health practitioners with a tohunga. As an organisation, all staff participate in karakia (prayer), waiata (singing) and mihi (culturally aligned speeches) each morning as a part of a way of life that is Māori.

It is notable that there have been similar initiatives taking place within counselling and therapies in North America (Roberston, 2021) and Canada (McGinnis et al., 2019), and more broadly (Kaimal & Arslanbek 2020).

There has been a strong relationship between Māori and First Nations Peoples of Canada, and Native Americans, particularly through international Indigenous conferences. Tūhoe leaders have been regular presenters and participants, and there has been information sharing in post-conference forums that I have been involved in. Covid-19 had reduced the world to a global community affected by a pandemic, united through television broadcasts, the internet, social media and through Zoom. The relationships between the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada and North America were influential on the lens used when exploring

notions that had contemporary global appeal and that were archetypal, and where animal spirit guides came to the fore as a topic.

Guardianship: The archetypal notion



Figure 2. Marion Gordon-Flower, *Child part*, 2022, air-dry clay, 85 × 60 × 90mm

At the beginning of the nine-month Zoom journey, the archetypal notion of guardianship came into focus through the recognition of a need for the arts therapist to foster self-parenting within the context. Some of the youth attending had been subject to emotional neglect and abuse in childhood, and had already severed ties with parents. They had also not yet developed the capacity for self-parenting to the extent that would be needed to survive independently, which was evident in the frequency and scale of self-harming behaviours. Covid-19 restrictions were a further isolating factor, and stressful uncertainty was having an impact. Others had been referred to respite for longer periods during lockdowns, which provided the routines, nurturing and security they needed, resulting in a reduction in the crisis factor.

When puberty thrusts the child toward the next step in physical growth, a simultaneous intrapsychic realignment also becomes effective... In this process the youth must give up attachments to parental figures and their protective position.

Adolescents turn their attention to the unexpected, uncomfortable changes they are experiencing physically and in their perceptions of themselves. (Riley, 1988, p.43)

The aspects of adolescence described above were more complex and a source of significant distress for some who were in the process of gender questioning, and for others proceeding with the physicality of gender affirming procedures or social and/or medical transitioning. This can involve hormonal therapy and surgeries (Magalhães et al., 2020; Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand Mauri Tū Mauri Ora, 2022), factors that would not have required consideration by Riley in 1988, when she stated: “A move from a strictly narcissistic involvement to care for another is one of the essential tasks accomplished during the adolescent developmental period” (p.43). When parents have not made a successful transition in the process of individuation to reach this second developmental goal, family dynamics thwart adolescent children in their developmental process. “Both child and adult are experiencing emptiness and distress which often is handled through impulsive actions that serve as a distraction from the pain” (p.44). In the cases of some of the youth attending, “distraction from the pain” had taken on extreme forms.

Zappa (2016) states: “A ‘traditional’ [read: normative, Western, legitimate, rational] family is regarded as cisgendered heterosexual, white, middle-class, Christian parents, who co-reside with their cisgendered children (p.50)... Cissexist, heterosexist, colonial, and racist assumptions are inherent... in the constructed idea/ideal of family” (p.51).

“The premier challenge of adolescence is the struggle to form a clear sense of identity... Identity achievement is associated with higher self-esteem, greater security, and a variety of other healthy traits” (Weiten, 2004, p.454). Pressures to establish identity where ideals of the dominant culture and/or own culture of origin cannot be met impacts on whānau mana (family standing) and can create significant added stresses.

The open art-therapy studio approach provided a safe, supportive, accepting space for self-exploration and creative experimentation, which promoted identity formation through holistic, phenomenological pathways. A “general tone of fun and pleasant interchange experienced during the accomplishment of various tasks” was integral to the success of therapeutic goals and skill building (Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006, p.124).

The ethnicities within the group of young people were Māori, Pasifika, Chinese and European, including those with connections to Australia and the USA. We offered young people opportunities to connect with specific symbolism drawn from their cultures of origin. However, the knowledge that for First Nations Peoples of Canada and Native Americans, animals could be spirit guides held greater interest for the young people than similar associations with European cultures (Lusebrink, 1988) and other relevant cultural concepts of

guardianship that we researched and presented, such as manaia in Māori culture, turtles in Pasifika cultures, Superman in American culture and the dragon in Chinese culture.

This is similar to what was observed by Hiimäe (2019, p.118), where the majority of research participants saw “the contemporary Estonian concept of spirit-animal or power-animal [as] mostly connected with the Native American (Amerindian) cultures”, rather than with the animal guides of Estonian folkloric traditions. Hiimäe (2019) offers an insight into this, noting that the boundaries between human and non-human realities can be understood as culturally established and fluid, rather than fixed, enacted through “imagined, lived, and narrated social interaction” (Hiimäe, 2019, p.116).

Hiimäe has highlighted the role that imagination has played in contemporary therapeutic notions of animal spirit guides.

Imagination has become an important research concept in the social and human Sciences... In the twenty-first century, the concept of power-animals or spirit-animals... has been shaped [through imaginings of how indigenous healing approaches historically took place. This has found] resonance in circles much wider than the New Age subculture, offering to the experiencers of this novel animal–human relationship an empowering pillar of identity and life history narrating. (2019, p.16)

We agree with Kaimal & Arslanbek (2020, p.4) that:

Non-indigenous therapist(s) should gain cultural competency, learn about trans-generational history, recognize social values and create culturally safe spaces in order to provide best practices... [and guard against] misappropriation of Native American spiritual and shamanistic practices in art therapy... [highlighting] the need for culturally informed and respectful practices.

We attempted to balance this ethical responsibility with an acknowledgement that from a post-Jungian perspective (Teixeira de Menezes & Boechat, 2022), animal guides appear in similar and different ways in the ontologies of many cultures, and have moreover entered popular contemporary Western culture.

The concept of inner guide has universal manifestations in images in the fairy tales, myths, and religions of different cultures. Jung explored this concept intuitively first as a child, later through his method of active imagination. The most common images of inner guide are protective animals and beings, safe and special places, and light and sound images. (Lusebrink, 1988, p.99)

Further, the kinship between Jungian thought and pre-modern world views may offer a way of transcending binaries (Teixeira de Menezes & Boechat, 2022).

In working with Te Whare Tapa Whā, a Māori model for health as an overarching framework (Durie, 2001; Manaia, 2017), we concur with Garai that holistic approaches “counteract splitting and fragmenting tendencies [identified in the use of medical models] by placing the emphasis on the harmonious integration of body, mind, and spirit and creating a mutually satisfying interaction between the individual and his natural ecological environment” (1984, p.76). The decision to work with animal spirit guides supported these objectives.

We were guided by the notion of “being aware of...[our] own cultures, biases, and worldviews when engaging in cross-cultural interactions with... [the youth], and in taking into account different aspects of their... experiences” (Keselman & Awais, 2018, p.79). Also, we acknowledged that “learning from the... [youth] about their culture [was] an important aspect of building cross-cultural relationship[s]” (p.82).

The guardianship journey through Zoom

Finding animals with therapeutic resonance through Google

It was important that the process of finding spirit guide animals utilised technologies familiar to the young people in the group that could be easily and independently replicated by group participants at a future date, if this was something they wished to revisit. The process used to create the PowerPoint presentation was that of accessing information through Google search engine using the terms ‘animal spirit guides’ and ‘animal totems’, and also conducting searches for information related to specific animals that were known to hold the archetypal dimensions of spirit guides. The information was acquired from a number of different websites with the focus being on how well the information resonated with the notions of guardianship and therapeutic effectiveness. Definitions from more than one source were blended and paraphrasing took place.

Introducing guardianship and making intuitive choices

The qualities of positive guardianship were discussed as a part of the presentation – what we might look for in a guardian figure, and how we could become a guardian figure to others and ourselves. This was a means to fostering notions of protection and self-parenting, which had been identified as needing development for some youths to live independently and flourish. How these guardian figures might be understood and brought to life in the group was itself a collaborative process that gave priority to young people’s choices.

When presented at the first session in a series, the option of choosing an ethnically aligned, culturally based symbol was not taken up by anyone, the call from the animal spirit guides

proving stronger and louder, which remained the trend going forward. The suggestion was made that participants might choose intuitively through connection with an image and then we could explore the narrative together to see if it resonated. The act of choosing intuitively required self-trust, which appeared to take place without hesitation, bringing participants into active therapeutic engagement with the unconscious. “Often in adolescence fantasy is a primary theme of both storytelling and imagery... fantasy and creativity as critical tools for increased ego strength during adolescence” (Isis, 2007, p.28). “Attaching imagination to attainable goals mobilizes diverse internal and external resources” (Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006, p.119).

Participants chose one or two guide animals to take into the next stage of arts-based exploration. Some of the choices made by participants were as follows:

Participant	Ethnicity	Symbols
A	Māori, Tongan	Owl and Dragon
B	European	Dragonfly
C	Māori	Wolf
D	Chinese	Butterfly and Cat
E	Pakistani, European	Butterfly and Bee
F	European	Owl

Table 1. Ethnicity of participant and symbol(s) chosen.

As can be seen in Table 1 above, there was no immediately obvious relationship between ethnicity and symbols chosen. The choices were made through personal or intuitive associations, which were held privately. Each participant found a way to begin working with their chosen guide animals, some using art materials and others beginning to write a story. At the end of the session, we opened the space to further share what each had been working on and the significance that it had, and to encourage further engagement in the process during the week ahead. Some artworks were shared through the Zoom lens and some were retained, deemed to still be in progress and not ready to be shared.

Arts therapist as participant



Figure 3. Marion Gordon-Flower, *Life is art*, 2021, mixed media on paper and black rock, 300 × 420 × 30mm.

I had taken up story writing in support of the group process and had chosen the deer and the hawk as my symbols, which had strong presence within my childhood environment. There was a visitation from the writer's muse in my own process, and at the end of the Zoom I was compelled to continue writing to complete a story to share at the next session, both with those who were returning to the Zoom group and with newcomers.

As an arts therapist, I am mindfully aware of the need to hold a careful balance between engaging authentically in my own process and remaining present to the primary role of holding the space for the participants. Moon (2002, pp.197–238) explores the perceived risks in taking up the role of art-maker alongside participants. These include that the visual-arts process can be narcissistic, and it might become a distraction from client responsibilities. Also, it could intimidate clients who might evaluate their creative output as being less competent or worthy. Moon concludes that, although there are some circumstances in which the therapist would need to refrain, “the use of our own art making in sessions ought to be cultivated as one of our most significant and potentially effective contributions to therapeutic work” (Moon, 2002, pp.237–238).

Writing in the session held risks of becoming self-consumed and distracted from the Zoom group members; however, the words arrived in an easy and playful flow, and when I continued after the session I was able to engage more deeply into the unconscious process.

Arts therapist's background and process

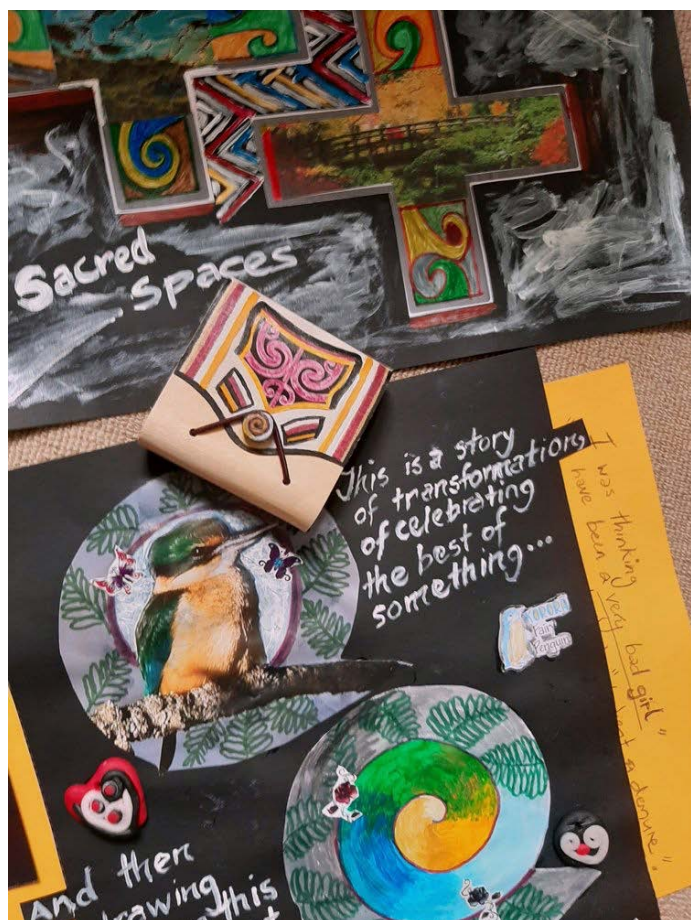


Figure 4. Marion Gordon-Flower, *Expressions of identity*, 2022, digital photograph of mixed media compilation, 1060 × 800mm.

In my childhood environment in Aotearoa New Zealand (Wiri, 2001) I developed a deeply appreciative relationship with nature. Our family lived on Ngāti Whare hapū (subtribe), Tūhoe iwi (tribal) land, which had been designated as an agricultural training farm for Māori youth. My father was an agricultural tutor and each morning I walked to school with both Māori and European friends in a shortcut across iwi land near the house of the rangatira (Māori chief). This land had previously been cleared and was mostly a mānuka (tea tree) plantation. However, our little valley was on the verge of Te Urewera, an expanse of untouched native bushland that stretched to the heights of the ranges behind the communal farm and our house, and lined all of the winding roads that led outward.

Jane (2022, p.6) describes a similar context in Australia in presenting her art-based research created on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, the unceded land of the Djaara people of the Kulin Nation:

The land here is rich with beauty and wisdom, from beneath the forest floor to the canopies of the tallest trees, and above... I am privileged to call this place home and

honour the First Nations people and the interconnected systems of life that depend on and interact with this land: the plants, the animals, the elements, and the people, as well as the stories of place.

My formative years were spent in very close play in and observation of nature, whilst also being privileged to share the pūrākau (stories) of Tūhoe iwi, which included animals as tiramaka (omen) and patupaiarehe (fairies) that lived in the bush nearby. During my primary schooling I was awarded two books for achievements by my Māori teachers, one relating to the study of nature (Saunders, 1964) and the other of European fairytales (Holmes, 1950s). Both resonated strongly with my psyche and have remained companions in my bookshelf to this time.

My chosen animal spirit guides of the deer and the hawk were both prominent features of the landscape and the lifestyle of my childhood community. Deer hunters came to Te Urewera from other parts of Aotearoa New Zealand to hunt, for sport and for meat. Deer were also the frequent cause of car accidents on the narrow gravel roads at night. I was once given an orphaned baby-boy deer to hand rear, which was successful until the time of the seasonal roar, when he began to lose his spots and became a ferocious fighter. My parents thought it was perhaps a blessing when he was tragically accidentally shot by a mortified hunter in the paddock alongside our house, still tethered by his collar. His deer eyes had glowed in the darkness of night, attracting a gun. In terms of the hawks, these could be seen majestically soaring through the sky overhead, then swooping down to chase prey or to land on the carcasses of dead animals. Frequently these were possums that had been mesmerised by vehicle headlights.

Despite these somewhat brutal associations, the deer and the hawk brought fond memories of childhood and were an immediate spiritual connection to Tūhoe and Te Urewera. Interestingly, in contrast to what my childhood experiences had been, the qualities gleaned through internet searching were as follows: Deer – sensitive, highly intuitive, achieving a balance of confidence and success, and gentleness and grace. Hawk – perspective, ability to see things from all sides, extremely compassionate and empathetic. Perhaps it was due to the circumstances that we were all facing in the Covid-19 climate, in which we were using Zoom as an escape from reality, but the disparity added further appeal to the selection.

Sharing the story at the next Zoom session

...The draught was a warm breath that ruffled the newly named Zariel's hair.

"Do you have a name?" she blurted, and then blushed.

"Not as yet," came the reply.

"Then I will name you Tarak, which means morning star, because when I looked up, your eyes looked like stars."

Tarak was so excited by this his wings made a big push down and he went upwards as fast as a rocket...

When I narrated the story at the beginning of the next Zoom session, it was greeted by all as something that resonated with them and that they had found pleasurable to hear. There was feedback from two of the newcomers in the respite setting that it expressed things they had experienced on an inner level, which had been difficult to put into words. It was evident that the story had sealed a bond of confidence in the arts therapy space and a commitment towards continued attendance post discharge. In contrast to my own first expectations in wondering about the age level for the writing, participants were comforted, sheltered and inspired by what the story held. Going forward, the story became a point of familiar connection for those now attending independently, and an opening for those attending from respite for the first time. In developing the PowerPoint presentation, I had not foreseen it remaining as a process for more than two or three weeks. However, the interest in the notions of guardianship and animal spirit guide archetypes remained active for ten weeks, with the story of Zariel Deer and Tarak Hawk being continually requested and revisited.

Although the storyteller is telling the story, he is not the essential storyteller. The story itself is the essential storyteller. The story itself is telling the story... the story is a surprise for the storyteller, and this is known to all storytellers. (Knill, 2017, p.36)

Dunne and Madrigal (2022) have described the significance of Indigenous oral narratives as being mediatory more than literal and medicinal within the time (p.48). This is evident in Māori culture where pūrākau (stories) have been handed down orally through the generations. They are rich in metaphors and remain largely unchanged in the retelling, however, are applied in different ways and situations at different points in time with a view to providing wisdom and healing the collective psyche. The archetypal characters of my story had arrived through the Indigenous cultures, and the oration of the story, which focused on guardianship relationships, proved both mediatory and medicinal within the time.

The story as catalyst for multimedia approaches

*“Yes, from now on, I will stay nearby, even when I am touching the clouds.
From there I can see in all four directions, the bigger picture, which I will share with you.
And can swoop down in a flash, should there be any danger.”*
Zariel responded in kind, her heart did now feel much braver.
*“And then I will tell you Tarak, morning star, young hawk,
things I sense and know that others don’t.*
Your realms of possibilities will be expanded and unspoken riches discovered.”

Over the course of the ten weeks, there were further animal spirit guides chosen, and paintings, sculptures and stories created. Cakes were even baked and decorated in their

forms. With the open-studio approach, other self-directed projects also took place within the sessions. The depth of sharing about process and reflections tended to be minimal, which was to be expected when the group was transient, inconsistent, and always had some strangers present. On the other hand, those who attended regularly shared some of the weekly challenges they had encountered: isolation, worries, how they were managing their time, other art they had produced. Clearly the social connection was highly significant in managing wellbeing in challenging, isolating circumstances. In most sessions there was the sense of everyone being involved in their creativity while easy, spontaneous conversations took place, with companionship being a poignant factor.

The continuation of the process was driven by shared ownership of the story, in which the group members requested that it be included in each session, and their peers be given the opportunity to select and work with animal spirit guide symbols. The pronouns ‘he’ and ‘she’ were used in the story, and some of the youths were using the pronoun ‘they’. In the space of suspended reality, the pronoun use was embraced; however this could be a more considered aspect in a future process. I visited the characters through various forms of media over the ten-week period during and between sessions: sculpting media, paint, photography and Photoshop, leading to a multimedia video. This provided a progression of visual materials and encouragement for participants to experiment in different media. The digital modes appealed to a youth audience, some of whom had backgrounds in studying digital arts and film.



Figure 5. Marion Gordon-Flower, *Multimedia grid from video presentation*, 2021.

Evaluation: Therapeutic significance of the story

Parisian (2015) describes the search for identity in adolescence as “a call of the wild to find their tribe and manage the rite of passage into adulthood” (p.130). The story of Zariel and Tarak was one in which several acts took place that have been identified as relevant to

meeting challenges in the transition from adolescence towards adulthood. Also, the story mirrored some of the stated complexities that the youth in the respite unit faced:

- isolation was overcome
- courage was created
- a friendship was formed
- there was an honouring of each other through esteemed naming (a traditional form of initiation into adulthood in some cultures)
- each brought their gifts to the assistance of the other
- there was a balancing of masculine and feminine, or anima and animus, qualities (von Franz, 1999)
- partnership, trust, safety and equality were created
- life had new and greater purpose through relationship
- the animals became guardians of each other and, in doing so, each found their strengths

At the same time, the story was reminiscent of childhood spontaneity and innocence, as it had taken on dimensions of a fairy tale through the naming of the deer Zariel Princess.

Von Franz (1999, p.76) states that “Fairy tales are concerned with... the ‘rightness’ of action.... With their abstract approach” they reflect on the essence underlying reality.

Jung (1964, p.207) has offered an observation which resounds with the Canadian First Nations and Native American underpinnings of the animal spirit guides, and in the cultural context of our Zoom forum, which was Māori:

The Self is often symbolised as an animal, representing our instinctive nature and its connectedness with one’s surrounds. (That is why there are so many helpful animals in myths and fairy tales). The relation of the Self to all surrounding nature and even the cosmos probably comes from the fact that the “nuclear atom” of our psyche is somehow woven into the whole world, both outer and inner.



Figure 6. Marion Gordon-Flower, *Trust* (detail), 2021, acrylic and paper cut-out mounted on round canvas board, 505mm dia.

To the youth, the arts therapist presented in the role of parent and guardian through the reading of a story, which was akin to a fairy tale. The arts therapist also held some of the participatory roles found in Moon's "continuum of roles" (2002, pp.209–238) for the duration, which included: "role model", where the arts therapists "create art about their own lives in order to demonstrate how art can be used to deal with life as it is, in all its painful, challenging and rewarding moments" (p.223); and "artist-in-residence", where "the artwork is created over a period of time and clients, staff and/or visitors are able to view the work in progress" (p.230).

The creative responses to the deer and hawk symbols unfolded in a range of different media through the course of the ten weeks. This would also seem significant to the outcomes.

The youth participants had arrived at the respite unit through profound expressions of woundedness, and the properties of the story combined to create a soothing balm. Perhaps, also, both the vulnerability and playfulness expressed through the Zariel and Tarak characters announced that we were in a safe space together, capable of transcending any alienating and distancing qualities presented by Zoom.

Conclusion

The youth Zoom forum was the coming together of parties from multiple locations in a virtual space, some located in a youth respite unit and others post-discharge in their own residential settings in the community. The support and encouragement of staff who attended online was significant to the success of the group processes. Careful consideration was given to the Māori context and our collective identification with global concepts through the impact of the Covid-19 worldwide pandemic. This led to a process that centred on animal spirit guides as guardian figures, and which was contextualised within the kinship and strong existing bonds between Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, the First Nations Peoples of Canada and Native North Americans. This notion resonated strongly with the youth, who, after an intuitive selection process, made arts responses through media of their choosing. The intervention was designed to foster self-parenting abilities of youth who had been in crisis.

‘The pact of Zariel Deer and Tarak Hawk’ was a story that arrived spontaneously while the arts therapist was participating in creative exploration alongside the youth during the first Zoom session. The story became a catalyst for an ongoing group process, which continued for ten weeks. The arts therapist’s own writing was shared with the group to inspire the confidence to share their own work. However, it unexpectedly took on the dimensions of the archetype, becoming ‘our story’. It served as a welcoming, bonding and settling-in process, where those who attended regularly encouraged the new participants to engage in the established arts therapy processes.

The surprising outcomes became the subject of research and deep reflection in seeking to understand the phenomenology of the story in relationship to the young people who attended. Upon examination, this story had archetypal qualities related to animals and fairy tales. It indirectly addressed some of the challenges that the youth were facing, including forming friendships and creating courage, and the rite of passage into adulthood. The characters became guardians to each other and brought out each other’s strengths. Notions of parenting and guardianship were also present in the act of the arts therapist reading a fairy-tale-like story to the group. The initial story had arrived through modelling the creative process, which evolved into an artist-in-residence role of building upon this in various media over the course of the ten-week period. Each and all of these factors might have been significant in how the story took on a life and influence of its own; yet some of the magic phenomenology of ‘how and why’ will remain in the realms of the unconscious.

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