Narrative Fiction and Depth Psychology:
A Path Toward Growth and Discovery

by
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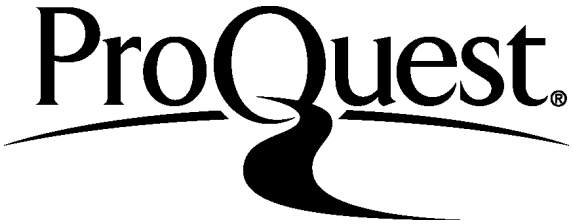

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Abstract

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The cultural movement toward abbreviation and multitasking detracts from the desire and also, potentially, the ability to begin engaging in deep reading. This is problematic, considering that the deep reading of narrative fiction has many potential benefits. Through the use of both heuristic and hermeneutic methodology, this thesis takes a look at the psychological and scientific literature that explores the relationship between reading narrative fiction and an increase in both empathy and theory of mind skills; how the art of reading narrative fiction can be viewed from a depth psychological perspective; and the author's personal experience with reading narrative fiction. This information is then utilized to explore how these components can be applied within the psychotherapy process through the use of bibliotherapy, as well as how it can be a valuable tool for one's own personal growth and exploration outside of a therapy setting.

Acknowledgments

The process of writing this thesis has been challenging, yet rewarding, and I could not have done it without the help and backing that I received from those around me. I want to convey my vast gratitude and love for my family who have always supported me and without whom I would not be where I am today. I specifically want to give thanks to my Mama and my Papa Bear who have encouraged me in everything that I have done, including my imagination and my love of reading. I want to thank my Aunt Barbara for her willingness to help me in my editing process without any hesitation.

I want to express my gratitude towards my best friend Mel for being here for me throughout this process, only a phone call away. I wish to thank Marsha for encouraging me to always embrace my "createtress." I am indebted to both Jemma and Angie for helping me to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and always believing that I would make it. I cannot even begin to express the immeasurable gratitude that I have for my cohort and everything that I have gained by being in relationship with such phenomenal people. To Candi in particular, I never could have chosen a better partner to help me through this journey. There are so many others that I owe this accomplishment to, and so, I say thank you to each of you.

Dedication

To the children in my family, near and far:

May you never grow out of your vivid and wild imaginations,

Always have a deep love of stories,

And know that through reading, we are all connected.

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Chapter I
Introduction

Area of Interest

Books are a surprisingly wonderful source of information, entertainment, solace, hope, and support; the right book can open the door that leads to the rest of the world. This thesis explores the benefits and importance of deep, emotionally connected reading. In particular, it explores these ideas in regards to narrative fiction from a depth psychological perspective, and discusses how the utilization of narrative fiction can benefit a clinical practice.

This area of inquiry intrigues me because I have found ample benefits of my own avid reading habits throughout my life. I have long been a novel enthusiast, but have found a deeper and more meaningful appreciation of my reading when combined with a depth psychology exploration, which I was exposed to through my master's program at Pacifica Graduate Institute. I have always felt passionately about the importance and benefits of reading, but did not have grounded knowledge of the effects of reading on others, outside of my own lived experience. I knew in what ways reading had played an important role for me, but I wanted to know if and how others might experience similar instances of growth and enlightenment through the written word.

It became increasingly evident to me as I continued through my graduate program that I already had an incredible amount of unrecognized exposure to the depth psychology material through my love of reading, and that this might be more important

than I had previously realized in my own development. I also found that the more understanding that I gained of various depth psychological concepts, the deeper appreciation I developed for the narrative fiction that I was reading for enjoyment and as part of my own self-care regime. My thesis topic grew and developed out of a love for reading narrative fiction, and my heartfelt belief that reading has had a profound impact on my own development.

Guiding Purpose

There are multiple purposes that I hope to accomplish with the research presented in this thesis. First, I hope to convey the value of deep, slow reading so that others in Western society can begin to understand its importance, and potentially feel encouraged to begin their own practice of deep reading. As I show in the literature, "Individuals who become fully immersed or transported into a story experience high levels of imagery, cognitive engagement, and emotional involvement" (Johnson, Cushman, Borden, & McCune, 2013, p. 306).

Second, I want to establish the benefits of reading narrative fiction to help dispel the myth that individuals who regularly read narrative fiction are bookworms, or "nebbish and unfashionable individual[s], wearing spectacles, whose demeanour is largely characterized by the social awkwardness one might expect from someone who has chosen the company of print over peers" (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, Paz, & Peterson, 2006, p. 695), and highlight the fact that they in fact show improved levels of empathy and theory-of-mind abilities (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Fong, Mullin, & Mar, 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Mar et al., 2006).

Third, I wish to explore the relationship between reading narrative fiction and depth psychology through the discussion of archetypes, the personal and collective unconscious, individuation, and active imagination in order to present a deeper view of the benefits and value of reading narrative fiction; each of these concepts is defined and explored in more depth later in this thesis.

Fourth, I plan to demonstrate how these concepts can benefit an individual through the use of my own story as a personal case study. My intention is that through the utilization of my own story to illustrate how these various ideas and concepts can combine successfully, they will begin to take shape and make more sense as a whole network of interconnected ideas that, when utilized in concert, can have a profound effect on an individual.

Lastly, I intend to explain how these ideas can be utilized in practice to help encourage personal growth and transformation, both on the part of the client seeking psychotherapy, and to aid therapists in furthering their own personal journey.

Rationale

This thesis topic is worthy of exploration because there is a cultural movement toward abbreviation and multitasking that detracts from not only the desire but also, potentially, the ability to engage in deep reading, sometimes called slow reading (Rosen, 2009; Wolf & Barzillai, 2009). It is an attitudinal shift that "our willingness to follow a writer on a sustained journey that may at times be challenging and frustrating is less compelling than our expectation of being conveniently entertained" (Rosen, 2009, p. 48). This shift toward multitasking and detached reading makes it more difficult to fully

engage with the book at hand. David Mikics (2013), author and English professor at the University of Houston, stated,

> Slow reading is an active discipline. The more you put into it, the more worthy and absorbing you will find it. The more seriously and actively you read, the more you will be inclined to return to the same books, reconsidering and reevaluating them, and reevaluating yourself too. Walt Whitman wrote that "reading is not a half-sleep but, in the highest sense, a gymnast's struggle. . . . Not the book so much needs to be the complete thing, but the reader of the book does." Reading with the high, earnest energy Whitman recommends will complete you, make you whole and strong, as much as anything can. (p. 3)

It is imperative that we, as members of Western society, recognize and begin to value the importance of the art of reading now, when it can be brought back from the brink of devaluation.

The topics discussed throughout this thesis are pertinent to our time, and incredibly valuable to the fields of depth psychology, professional clinical counseling, and marriage and family therapy. They provide an emotionally and mentally stimulating vehicle with which to discuss difficult topics and promote personal change: reading narrative fiction. They also offer a way in which therapists can enter into their own personal practice of growth through the use of narrative fiction as well. The use of a depth psychological lens when entering into the reading of narrative fiction also delivers a means of delving deeper into the meanings and structures of the reading in order to gain a more profound experience of personal growth.

Methodology

Research problem. There is a growing societal shift with the advancement of technology toward multitasking and the abbreviation of information. This has a potentially negative effect not only on individuals' desire to engage in the art of deep

reading, but also the ability to maintain the level of focus necessary to engage in the art of deep reading (Jacobs, 2011; Mikics, 2013; Rosen, 2009; Wolf & Barzillai, 2009).

Research question. The core research question that is at the heart of this thesis is: What are the benefits of reading narrative fiction, and how is it valuable from a depth psychological perspective?

Methodological approach. The methodology utilized throughout this thesis is qualitative in nature. This general methodology approach is employed for studies that are "descriptive, and rather than proving or disproving a hypothesis, they explore some aspect of human experience in depth. A description of some behavior (e.g., a therapeutic strategy or approach) is offered as something described, not as a proven approach" (Pacifica Graduate Institute [PGI], 2014, p. 52). Specifically, I use both hermeneutic and heuristic methodologies to explore the various aspects related to looking at reading narrative fiction from a depth psychological perspective.

The hermeneutic methodology examines the relationship that exists between two different objects or ideas.

> Traditional hermeneutics involves the search for meaning in and between different contexts including texts, stories people tell about themselves, films, and art. Hermeneutic methodology places concepts in dialogue with one another to look for deeper meaning through exploring their relationships to each other and involves the comparative study of various source materials. (PGI, 2014, p. 53)

It is through this methodology that I look at the relationships among deep reading, the benefits of reading narrative fiction, and the depth psychological perspective.

The heuristic methodology utilizes information gained from the lived experience of the researcher as valid data to be incorporated into the research.

> Heuristic research encourages relationship and connectedness rather than detachment. In heuristic research, a particular phenomenon in the researcher's

> personal experience is explored over time. The approach is more autobiographical than found in phenomenological research, and the researcher usually is personally called to the topic. (PGI, 2014, p. 54)

This methodology allows me to utilize my own experiences of growth and transformation through reading narrative fiction as part of my exploration of the benefits of reading narrative fiction from a depth psychological perspective.

Ethical Concerns

I do not foresee any ethical concerns in regards to the research being conducted throughout this thesis. No human participants will be utilized in this research process, outside of my examination of my own lived experience, and as such should not produce any ethical issues. The remainder of the research conducted is an exploration of information presented in various published sources.

Overview of Thesis

In Chapter II, I lay out the foundational research that grounds this thesis, exploring the effects of reading narrative fiction, specifically in regards to increasing empathy and theory of mind (Fong et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2013; Keen, 2006; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006). In order to understand the concepts presented within that exploration, I also define a variety of ideas, such as: deep reading (Jacobs, 2011; Mikics, 2013; Wolf & Barzillai, 2009), the challenging relationship between reading and technology (Mikics, 2013; Rosen, 2009; Wolf & Barzillai, 2009), empathy (Keen, 2006; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015), theory of mind (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Mar et al., 2006), transportation (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006), and narrative fiction (Fong et al., 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015).

In Chapter III, I explore a depth psychological perspective on the art of reading narrative fiction (Keen, 2006; Mikics, 2013; Russo, 2008), including exploring the concepts of archetypes (Hillman, 1989; Russo, 2008; Samuels, Shorter, & Plaut, 1986; Stein, 1998), the personal and collective unconscious (Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998), individuation (Brookes, 1991; Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998), and active imagination (Jordan, 2015; Samuels et al., 1986). I also present my own personal experience with reading narrative fiction, and look at it through the lens of depth psychology in order to illustrate the way in which all of these ideas discussed in both Chapter II and Chapter III can come together. Finally, possible clinical applications for the research presented throughout this thesis are discussed (Duffy, 2010; Levitt, Rattanasampan, Chaidaroon, Stanley, & Robinson, 2009; Pehrsson, Allen, Folger, McMillen, & Lowe, 2007).

In Chapter IV, I summarize the research presented in both Chapters II and III. The implications of this research are explored, including how it may impact the clinical practice of psychotherapy, as well as how it could influence individuals within their own lives. Finally, this chapter is utilized to discuss possible further research that would increase the understanding of the benefits of reading narrative fiction from a psychological perspective.

Chapter II
Literature Review

Overview

Although the idea of reading is a generally understood activity, it has the potential to mean many different things. The specific material and way in which a person reads changes the way that the brain processes the information, and as such creates vastly different experiences. In this portion of the thesis, the idea of deep reading is explored, as well as looking at the benefits of reading slowly. The value of reading narrative fiction specifically is also discussed, and the evidence that reading narrative fiction increases empathy is presented. Ultimately, this information is utilized to help explore the first portion of this thesis's research question: What are the benefits of reading narrative fiction?

Deep Reading

Deep reading is an art form in and of itself, but it seems to be a dying art. To understand the ideas behind the potential benefits of reading narrative fiction, one must first understand what is meant by the term *deep reading*. It is also important to be aware of some of the challenges currently present that make the practice of deep reading difficult.

What is deep reading? Reading has the ability to transport an individual into a new experience, a new emotion, and even a completely different world. This is an almost magical aspect of reading, but can only be experienced fully when the reader is engaged

in deep reading. The idea behind deep reading, sometimes referred to as slow reading, is both a simple and complex one. Researchers in reading, language, and child development Maryanne Wolf and Mirit Barzillai (2009) described deep reading as "the array of sophisticated processes that propel comprehension and that include inferential and deductive reasoning, analogical skills, critical analysis, reflection and insight" (p. 33). Mikics (2013) described it more simply, stating, "Reading for information is not the same as slow, deep reading, reading for pleasure and understanding. Slow reading is as rigorous as it is full of unexpected delight" (p. 1), and later as "slowing down so that you can let a book take possession of you, and so that you can get to know it better" (p. 33). However one chooses to look at it, deep reading is a process that has the ability to consume and transport the reader. It is a process that encourages, if not demands, active consideration of the text. It is not a passive process, but rather one that reaches into people's thoughts and emotions with a profound presence and expands their awareness. Deep reading requires a level of trust and openness—a willingness to see ideas from a new perspective. Deep reading encourages self-discovery and growth. Mikics wrote, "What we get from even a single good book, slowly and carefully read, is an education" (p. 32).

Just as with a formal education, deep reading takes time to develop ease and good technique. As Mikics (2013) stated,

> Slowness and concentration are needed to learn to do anything well that is worth doing well, from fly-fishing to electrical engineering to playing the violin. The same is true of reading. Slow reading, as an increasing number of commentators have recognized, is the only way to truly experience a book. (p. 16)

This is an interesting concept to consider, as the idea of learning how to read is often only associated with the act of being able to comprehend the written words on a page.

Mikics's idea of learning to read well, or learning the art of deep reading, implies that there are various levels of ability in being able to read slowly. This is an idea that is supported by neuroscience research as well.

In their article "The Importance of Deep Reading," Wolf and Barzillai (2009) gave a brief explanation of how the brain functions as an individual is learning to read. They wrote, "Fascinating differences exist between expert readers and novice readers, who are just learning to set up their reading circuits" (p. 34). They explained that there are not preset pathways, or circuits as they call them, in the human brain to process the written word. The brain utilizes many parts to process the information, including all of the various sensory cortexes. This means that the expert reader's brain is processing the information as if she or he were in fact experiencing the written descriptions firsthand. Wolf and Barzillai (2009) stated,

> By the time the expert reader has comprehended a text at a deep level, all four lobes and both hemispheres of the brain have contributed significantly to this extraordinary act—a neural reflection of the many processes involved. What we read and how deeply we read shape both the brain and the thinker. (p. 34)

Author, scholar of English literature, and literary critic Alan Jacobs (2011) also discussed various research done on the reading brain in his book titled *The Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. He expressed his astonishment at discovering that the brain processes the information being read the same no matter the language. He wrote, "Whether you're reading from left to right or right to left, whether your language is alphabetic or (partially) ideographic. None of those distinctions matters to the text-processing brain" (p. 28).

Reading and technology. There is an enormous discussion currently taking place around the issue of reading in the current technology-saturated Western culture. It is a

discussion that would be impossible to flesh out within this thesis, but is an important point that needs to be mentioned when discussing the idea of deep reading due to its ever-present existence, as well as its impact on the cultivation of a deep reading practice.

The concept of deep reading used to be one that was prized and encouraged as a valuable scholarly pursuit. It was practiced not only as a personal activity, but was also utilized within a social forum to be discussed and debated; to be looked at from different perspectives in an effort to flesh out the ideas laid down in print. Mikics (2013) explained that,

> from about the year 200 CE on, rabbis and commentators argued about the Bible's characters and stories. Often, the rabbis' debates revolved around small turns of phrase or particular words: no feature was too minute for their often contentious consideration. (p. 33)

Mikics lamented the loss of socially valuing the labor and time-intensive process required to read slowly and deeply. He wrote,

> The casual, makeshift sentence is now prized as more vital than the adept, finished one. Eloquence and careful elaboration seem mere time-wasters belonging to an older, less wired generation. Could Proust, who cherished the rewards and punishments that time affords the soul, have borne the Era of the Tweet? (p. 9)

Society has shifted its drive and encouragement for deep reading into a desire for condensed and abbreviated forms of information. The world is fast-paced, where interactions that do not garner immediate results are viewed as arduous, laborious, and inconveniently time consuming. Individuals are not only having trouble devoting time to the art of reading, they are having trouble devoting significant time to any task. Society seems to be one that now encourages speed, and by proxy, the concept of multitasking (Rosen, 2009; Wolf & Barzillai, 2009). In the article "In the Beginning Was the Word,"

author and senior editor of *The New Atlantis: A Journal of Technology and Society* Christine Rosen (2009) wrote,

> We live in a world of continuous partial attention, one that prizes speed and brandishes the false promise of multitasking as a solution to our time management challenges. The image-driven world of the screen dominates our attention at the same time that it contributes to a kind of experience pollution that is challenging our ability to engage with the printed word. (p. 51)

Rosen noted that people have become accustomed to constant distraction through the continuous pull of technology. In many ways technology has led to incredible innovations, but the pull to distraction that has come with it has altered individuals' ability, or possibly just their tolerance, for dedicating themselves to a single task in the way that deep reading requires. Wolf and Barzillai (2009) posited,

> From a cognitive neuroscience perspective, the digital culture's reinforcement of rapid attentional shifts and multiple sources of distractions can short circuit the development of the slower more cognitively demanding comprehension processes that go into the formation of deep reading and deep thinking. If such a truncated development occurs, we may be spawning a culture so inured to sound bites and thought bites that it fosters neither critical analysis nor contemplative processes in its members. (p. 36)

Mikics (2013) also echoed these sentiments in his statement, "We are primed to scan and skim, to get the gist of an opinion and move on; we are obsessed with speed" (p. 7).

All of these ideas lead to a concerning picture in which the art and value of slow, deep reading are undermined. If society does not maintain its dedication and appreciation of this incredibly valuable skill, then it will continue to become increasingly more challenging for individuals to engage in this enormously beneficial activity. Technology has the potential to aid and enhance the deep reading experience if utilized in a productive and thoughtful way. Wolf and Barzillai (2009) wrote, "Online reading has the potential to mold a mind adept at effectively finding, analyzing, and critically evaluating

and responding to information across several modalities" (p. 36). These are valuable and helpful skills that have the ability to enrich a deep reading practice, if individuals can learn not to be constantly distracted by the continuous pull on their attention.

As Rosen (2009) stated, "Our need for stories to translate our experience hasn't changed. Our ability to be deeply engaged readers of those stories is changing" (p. 52). Human beings still crave stories. They want to hear and see and experience the magic that is present in the act and art of storytelling. They crave the activation of their imagination. Rosen wrote,

> Books are a gateway to a better understanding of what it means to be human. Because the pace is slower and the rewards delayed, the exercise of reading on the printed page requires a commitment unlike that demanded by the screen, as anyone who has embarked on the journey of an ambitiously long novel can attest. What the screen gives us is pleasurable, but it is not the same kind of experience as deeply engaged reading; the "screen literacy" praised by techno-enthusiasts should be seen as a complement to, not a replacement of, traditional literacy. (p. 53)

Setting the Stage

Since the time of Aristotle there has been an ongoing theory that narrative has the capability to increase an individual's ability to empathize with others (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). More recently, this has been specified to reading narrative fiction (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Fong et al., 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006). At times, this belief in narrative's ability to affect empathy was merely theoretical, as the technology to measure such responses was limited. In many ways this is still true, although various studies have come out recently attempting to prove more accurately this relationship (Keen, 2006). To fully enter into the conversation taking place in the next portion of this thesis, it is important to understand some of the terms being discussed, including: empathy, theory of mind, transportation, and narrative fiction.

Empathy. Empathy is a multilayered concept. Author and professor of English at Washington and Lee University Suzanne Keen (2006), in her article "A Theory of Narrative Empathy," wrote, "*Empathy*, a vicarious spontaneous sharing of affect, can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition or even by reading" (p. 208), or more simply, "we feel what we believe to be the emotions of others" (p. 208). It was originally translated from a German term into English by psychologist E. B. Titchener in the early 20th century, usurping a meaning previously attributed to the word sympathy. Now, it is generally understood that these terms are interrelated, but have an important distinction from one another. Whereas sympathy is generally feeling some form of supporting emotion for another person, empathy is personally experiencing what one imagines the other is feeling with that person. Empathy is accepted within the psychological community to be both a cognitive as well as affective, or emotion-based, process (Keen, 2006; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015).

Theory of mind. Theory of mind, often written as ToM, is a concept that has close ties to the idea of empathy, but is slightly different. Authors and researchers in social psychology David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano (2013) defined ToM broadly as "the capacity to identify and understand others' subjective states" (p. 377). Theory of Mind is also broken down into affective and cognitive distinctions. According to Kidd and Castano, affective Theory of Mind is "the ability to detect and understand others' emotions" (p. 377), whereas cognitive Theory of Mind is "the inference and representation of others' beliefs and intentions" (p. 377). In other words, while empathy focuses more on an ability to feel what one believes someone else to be feeling, Theory

of Mind is an ability to better and more fully understand that person, including his or her feelings, actions, and intentions. In their article "Bookworms Versus Nerds: Exposure to Fiction Versus Non-Fiction, Divergent Associations With Social Ability, and the Simulation of Fictional Social Worlds," authors and psychology researchers Raymond Mar, Keith Oatley, Jacob Hirsh, Jennifer de la Paz, and Jordan B. Peterson (2006) also noted, "a review of the neuroimaging and lesion literature found that the areas commonly implicated in narrative comprehension and production include a network of brain regions often associated with theory-of-mind processing" (p. 698).

Transportation. Transportation is an idea that has some links back to the practice of deep reading. Researchers of human behavior and social psychology Matthijs Bal and Martijn Veltkamp (2013) defined transportation as "a convergent process, where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative" (p. 3). In other words, transportation is when one becomes absorbed by a story. Professors of human communication and humanities Eva Maria Koopman and Frank Hakemulder (2015) mentioned that, "the involvement with characters and events has been given various names in the literature, including narrative engagement, absorption, transportation, and narrative emotions" (p. 90). Elsewhere, narrative engagement has been described as

> the manner in which stories draw in and capture their readers. . . . Once transported, that reader experiences thoughts and emotions predicated on the fictional context. Such thoughts and experiences are not merely a form of entertainment, but have lasting real-world consequences. (Mar et al., 2006, p. 695)

No matter the name that is given to the concept, it is when the outside world seems to fall away and all of that individual's attention and focus becomes, for a time, dedicated to the imaginative creation and experiencing of that tale alone.

Narrative fiction. Writing is broken down into a vast number of categories based on the subject, genre, and style of writing. In their article "What You Read Matters: The Role of Fiction Genre in Predicting Interpersonal Sensitivity," authors and social and personality psychology researchers Katrina Fong, Justin Mullin, and Raymond Mar (2013) wrote, "Literary genres are made up of texts that share similarities with respect to their use of language, purpose of communication and stylistic elements" (p. 370). With the technological advances that Western society has seen in the last 20 years, these categories have grown significantly to include online writing subsets as well. Writing can be categorized in broad groups, or become increasingly more specific and defined in its categorization. That being said, the human brain does not necessarily process all writing in the same way. For example, the human brain does not respond the same way to reading factual writing as it does to reading fictional writing (Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). It is for this reason that it is important to specify the type of writing being examined, and therefore the type of reading that is being discussed in this thesis.

Fong et al. (2013) discussed the fact that relatively little research has gone into looking at the effects of various genres of literary writing on beneficial or detrimental long-term outcomes. When exploring the differences in outcomes between different literary styles, most research focuses on the broader categories of narrative fiction in contrast to expository nonfiction. Narrative texts are more focused on storytelling,

including character building and plot lines. Expository texts are more focused on relaying specific information, but not in a storytelling manner. Mar et al. (2006) wrote,

> Stories contain depictions of the actual world replete with intentional agents pursuing goals to form plot, whereas expository texts in contrast, share no such parallels with the actual world. The processing of narratives, then, shares some similarities with the processing of our real social environment. (p. 695)

Reading Narrative Fiction Increases Empathy

Following the examination of the concepts of deep reading, empathy, theory of mind, transportation, and narrative fiction, it is possible to explore the intricate and interconnected way in which these concepts are linked together.

Mar et al. (2006) stated that, "frequent readers of narrative fiction, individuals who could be considered 'bookworms,' may bolster or maintain social-processing skills whilst reading stories, although they are removed from actual social contact during this activity" (p. 695). This may be due in part to the fact that narrative fiction, as described earlier, seems to have many similarities with real-world experiences. Fong et al. (2013) wrote,

> One intriguing difference between narrative fiction and expository nonfiction is that readers may have the opportunity to engage in simulations of real-world social experiences via fiction but not nonfiction. Over time, exposure to these simulations could lead to the reinforcement or maintenance of social skills. (p. 370)

In their article "Potentiating Empathic Growth: Generating Imagery While Reading Fiction Increases Empathy and Prosocial Behavior," professors and researchers in the Psychology Department at Washington and Lee University Dan Johnson, Grace Cushman, Lauren Borden, and Madison McCune (2013) discussed a similar experience of simulating real-world experiences through reading narrative fiction. In that article, the authors expressed the idea that,

> To engage in simulation one must see what the characters see, hear what they hear, that is, experience what they experience. While the readers experience the events of the story along with the characters, they are learning about subtleties of interpersonal relationships, drawing inferences about plot, and becoming emotionally impacted by the story. (p. 306)

This experiencing of another person's life is one of the main reasons that researchers believe that reading narrative fiction produces a broadening of an individual's view of the world. That individual is given the chance to see the world from a different perspective; asked to live for a time in another person's shoes, and to gain intimate understanding of someone else's experiences, motivations, and possibly even a deeper knowledge of her or his fears. It gives one the opportunity to recognize the sameness of an individual who may have initially appeared to be very different than oneself. Johnson et al. (2013) wrote, "One primary consequence of this other-focused perspective-taking is growth in an individual's ability to feel for another, termed affective empathy" (p. 306).

Although it could be argued that this process of shifting perspective should be similar for any narrative text, regardless of whether or not it is fictional or factual, there is some evidence to support the idea that individuals engage differently with texts that are believed to be fictional. Koopman and Hakemulder (2015) stated, "There is evidence from neuropsychology that texts that are presented as fictional are processed differently than when the same texts are presented as factual" (p. 88). They went on to say,

> While non-fiction appears unchangeable, readers of fiction seem to be involved in a process of constructive content simulation, inclined to mind-wandering, considering what might have happened, or could happen. The authors suggest that these simulation processes must involve perspective-taking and the generating of relational inferences, leading to co-activation in brain areas related to theory of mind and empathy. (p. 88)

Whereas Keen (2006) takes a slightly more conservative stance, she stated, "Readers' cognitive and affective responses do not inevitably lead to empathizing, but fiction does

disarm readers of some of the protective layers of cautious reasoning that may inhibit empathy in the real world" (p. 213). Both of these ideas suggest that reading narrative fiction, specifically, allows individuals to feel safe to let down their natural guards against being overwhelmed by the emotions and experiences of others, and engage more fully into the experience being presented in the text, allowing for the potential to increase their empathic responses. Similarly, Kidd and Castano (2013) argued that,

> Just as in real life, the worlds of literary fiction are replete with complicated individuals whose inner lives are rarely easily discerned but warrant exploration. The worlds of fiction, though, pose fewer risks than the real world, and they present opportunities to consider the experiences of others without facing the potentially threatening consequences of that engagement. (p. 378)

They later posited that, "Readers of literary fiction must draw on more flexible interpretive resources to infer the feelings and thoughts of characters. That is, they must engage ToM processes" (p. 378). This deeper and more open experiencing of the characters in these settings is what allows for the perspective broadening that allows for increased understanding of others. In other words, this is one of the mechanisms that allows for increased empathy and theory of mind.

The importance of transportation. Another factor that seems to be of importance in the development of greater empathy through reading is transportation. Bal and Veltkamp (2013) explained it by saying, "The mental journey elicited by transportation makes it possible for readers to change as a consequence of reading fiction, because it elicits various processes, including emotional involvement in the story and identification with the characters" (p. 3). In the discussion of the findings from one of their studies, Bal and Veltkamp (2013) presented the finding that the level of transportation that a reader experiences is important, stating, "fiction readers become

more empathic over the course of a week when they are emotionally transported into the story, while lowly transported fiction readers became less empathic over time" (p. 5). Bal and Veltkamp discussed the idea that readers who are not transported into the fictional narratives that they are reading may become bored, distracted, frustrated, or uninterested, which may ultimately lead to disillusionment and therefore to a decrease in empathic responses towards others.

Koopman and Hakemulder (2015) stated that in some instances, "participants who reported higher transportation also reported higher sympathy with the character and were more likely to engage in pro-social behavior" (p. 90). One thing that Koopman and Hakemulder pointed out is that although there seems to be some form of correlation between transportation and an increased sense of both sympathy and empathy, the causation of this relationship has not been determined (p. 91). In other words, it is documented that there is a relationship between transportation and increased sympathy and empathy, but it cannot be proven that the increase is caused by the reader's experience of transportation.

Regardless of this unknown causation fact, it seems logical to want to increase the chances of reader transportation, which is where the idea of deep reading comes into play. Deep reading and transportation share many similar qualities. In fact, one could argue that transportation is indeed an aspect of deep reading, as they have both been described similarly as being absorbed or lost in the story (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006; Mikics, 2013; Rosen, 2009). Thus, the practice and dedication of deep reading is one that needs be employed to help ensure the process of transportation.

Research difficulties. It is important to recognize the challenges that this research poses. The most obvious challenge with this research is the overall difficulty in determining causation of increased empathy with regard to reading narrative fiction. Much of the research looking at the relationship between empathy and reading narrative fiction recognizes this challenge. It is evident that individuals who read more narrative fiction tend also to score higher on empathy scales, but it is still challenging to determine whether this is because reading narrative fiction does indeed improve empathy, or that individuals who already tend to be more empathic enjoy reading narrative fiction more than the average individual (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Keen, 2006; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006).

Another challenge to gaining a more clear understating of this topic is the fact that not enough research has been done to date on the specific effects of different, more clearly defined, genres or subtypes of narrative fiction. Limited research has begun to delve more into this area of interest, suggesting that there are different outcomes for specific genres and subtypes of narrative fiction, but not enough research has been done to have a clear picture of these variances (Fong et al., 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2013).

It is evident that researchers are only beginning to understand the relationship that reading has with empathy, and that more research is needed to further define these grey areas in current comprehension. It does seem to be safe to say that reading and empathy have a strong bond, of one kind or another, and that there is still great value in encouraging and developing a deep reading practice of narrative fiction.

Chapter III
Findings and Clinical Applications

Overview

Similarly structured as Chapter II of this thesis, this chapter begins with brief explanations of a few key concepts that will play an integral role in the discussion of how depth psychology and the deep reading of narrative fiction are related. This discussion informs the development of my own personal relationship with reading and narrative fiction, as well as the foundation for my appreciation of some of the key concepts found in depth psychology. Ultimately, all of these explorations will play into the conceptualization of how this knowledge and perspective can be utilized in a clinical setting.

Introducing the Characters

Archetypes. Defining the concept of archetypes is extremely challenging, as they have so many various facets. Any one definition seems to be lacking to those who understand the complexity that these terms represent. In their book *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis*, authors and Jungian analysts Andrew Samuels, Bani Shorter, and Fred Plaut (1986) described an archetype as "a hypothetical entity irrepresentable in itself and evident only through its manifestations" (p. 26). In his chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* entitled "A Jungian analysis of Homer's Odysseus," classics professor Joseph Russo (2008) defined archetypes, stating that,

> Archetypes are best conceived of as patterns of energy with image-making potential, and may be compared to the innate releasing mechanisms discovered by

> ethologists to be part of the physiological structure and thus the biological inheritance of the animal brain. (p. 254)

On the topic of archetypes, renowned psychologist and author James Hillman (1989) wrote, "They tend to be metaphors rather than things. We find ourselves less able to say what an archetype is literally and more inclined to describe them in image" (p. 23), later stating, "Let us imagine archetypes as the *deepest patterns of psychic functioning*, the roots of the soul governing the perspective we have of ourselves and the world" (p. 23). He also utilized metaphors to attempt to further illuminate the idea of archetypes, describing them as "patterns of instinctual behavior," "the *genres* and *topoi* in literature," "the recurring typicalities in history," and "the worldwide figures, rituals, and relationships in anthropology" (p. 23).

One fundamental aspect of archetypes is their overwhelming connection to individuals' emotions (Hillman, 1989; Russo, 2008). Hillman (1989) wrote, "One thing is absolutely essential to the notion of archetypes: their emotional possessive effect, their bedazzlement of consciousness so that it becomes blind to its own stance" (p. 24).

Although people do not interact directly with these fundamental patterns of energy, entities, or potentialities, they do engage with them through archetypal imagery. This imagery can be seen as characters that are encountered in dreams, be they dreams taking place while asleep, or as one's mind wanders during the waking hours of the day. They can come in the form of characters in a story, fairytale, myth, movie, or book. They are characters that seem to carry with them a strong presence, and an emotional charge (Hillman, 1989; Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998). Samuels et al. (1986) stated,

> Whereas, especially late in his life, Jung delineated between the archetypal image and the archetype *per se*, in practice it is images which stir the beholder (e.g. the dreamer) to the degree that he is able to embody or realize (make conscious) what

> he perceives. According to Jung, the image is endowed with a generative power; its function is to arouse; it is psychically compelling. (p. 73)

Personal and collective unconscious. Psychotherapist and founder of analytical psychology Carl Jung began the cultivation of his awareness of what he called the unconscious in 1909 after a profound dream called his attention to the potential of a wealth of material existing within each individual that that individual is unaware of (Stein, 1998, p. 89). Throughout his life, he continued to explore the realms that he believed belonged to the personal unconscious, and deeper, the collective unconscious. Jung (1954/1969) wrote,

> A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. (pp. 3-4 [CW 9i, para. 3])

He believed that the personal unconscious held information about that particular individual of which the individual was not aware. It was in this personal unconscious that an individual's complexes and personal conflicts could be found. It held the shadow material, facets that the individual found unacceptable about himself or herself. The shadow represents aspects or characteristics that are not acknowledged due to the fact that these qualities do not fit in with how people see and think of themselves (Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998). The shadow is explained in *Man and His Symbols* by Jungian analyst Joseph Henderson (1964), who stated, "The shadow cast by the conscious mind of the individual contains the hidden, repressed, and unfavorable (or nefarious) aspects of the personality" (p. 110). It is later mentioned in that same book by Jungian analyst

Marie-Louise von Franz (1964) that "the shadow is not the whole of the unconscious personality. It represents unknown or little-known attributes and qualities of the ego—aspects that mostly belong to the personal sphere and that could just as well be conscious" (p. 174).

The collective unconscious, on the other hand, Jung believed to lie even deeper within the psyche. He attributed the collective unconscious to the realm of archetypal images, and human beings' basest instincts. Henderson (1964) stated that

> the human mind has its own history and the psyche retains many traces left from previous stages of its development. More than this, the contents of the unconscious exert a formative influence on the psyche. Consciously we may ignore them, but unconsciously we respond to them, and to the symbolic forms—including dreams—in which they express themselves. . . . Some of the symbols in such dreams derive from what Dr. Jung has called "the collective unconscious"—that is, that part of the psyche which retains and transmits the common psychological inheritance of mankind. (p. 98)

This is the realm that he was the most fascinated with. It is from this space that he attributed the artistic drive to produce archetypal imagery, both internally through dreams and fantasy, and externally through artistic creation (Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998). Samuels et al. (1986) stated that Jung believed the unconscious to be "the repository of man's psychic heritage and possibilities" (p. 32). They also recognized that "the contents of the collective unconscious require the involvement of elements of the personal unconscious for their manifestation in behaviour" (p. 156), and as such the two are woven together in a complicated dynamic.

Individuation. Individuation might most easily be understood as the lifelong process of becoming wholly oneself. Author and Jungian analyst Murray Stein (1998) explained that,

> People develop in many ways throughout their lifetimes, and they undergo multiple changes at many levels. The total experience of wholeness over an entire lifetime—the emergence of the self in psychological structure and in consciousness—is conceptualized by Jung and called individuation. (p. 171)

When discussing Jung's conceptualization of the idea of individuation, author and psychiatrist Crittenden E. Brookes (1991) stated,

> It bears some similarity to Maslow's self-actualization concept but is more complex since it depends on a broader definition of the psyche than the one used by Maslow. . . . Jung's concept of individuation involves an identity for the individual separate not only from the parental imago but also from the dictates for identity, that is from the rules, regulations, and values supplied for identity by the individual's culture itself. (p. 307)

He later noted that "the individual who is involved with the individuation process shows the quality of marching to his or her own 'drummer,' and will at times put personal considerations before cultural values and dictates in deciding a course of action" (p. 307). Stein (1998) defined individuation as "the process of psychic development that leads to the conscious awareness of wholeness" (p. 233). Samuels et al. (1986) described it as

> a person's becoming himself, whole, indivisible and distinct from other people or collective psychology (though also in relation to these). . . . The person becomes conscious in what respects he or she is both a unique human being and, at the same time, no more than a common man or woman. (p. 76)

The process of individuation will never be complete because, as Brookes (1991) wrote, "individuation is a process and not an end point" (p. 307). It is the challenging process of integrating the material within one's personal unconscious, including shadow material, with one's ego and active sense of who one is as an individual. This requires deep contemplation and self-reflection, as the nature of the material in the personal unconscious being unconscious makes it difficult to recognize and integrate (Stein, 1998).

Active imagination. Samuels et al. (1986) described active imagination most simply, stating, "Jung used the term in 1935 to describe a process of dreaming with open eyes" (p. 9). They continued by elaborating on the idea, saying,

> At the outset one concentrates on a specific point, mood, picture or event, then allows a chain of associated fantasies to develop and gradually take on a dramatic character. Thereafter the images have a life of their own and develop according to their own logic. Conscious doubt must be overcome and allowance made for whatever falls into consciousness as a consequence. . . . Active imagination is to be contrasted with day-dreaming which is more or less of one's own invention and remains on the surface of personal and daily experience. Active imagination is the opposite of conscious invention. The drama that is enacted appears to "want to compel the viewer's participation. A new situation is created in which unconscious contents are exposed in the waking state." (p. 9)

This process of allowing for the unconscious material to enter the conscious awareness gives space for archetypal images to engage with the individual doing the active imagination.

In her article "Active Imagination: A Passport to the Soul," author and Jungian analyst Molly Jordan (2015) explained,

> In order to really benefit from active imagination, it has to come alive through a genuine encounter with the *other.* This is more difficult than we might imagine because we're up against a cultural imperative to avoid the whole activity in the first place. It's just not okay to talk to invisible beings. (p. 213)

In her consideration of the challenges that one might face when attempting to engage in active imagination, the "other" that she talks about could be interpreted as an encounter with an archetypal image. As discussed earlier, it is those archetypal images which produce such emotional activity, and which are so psychically compelling (Samuels et al., 1986).

The Main Characters Meet: Depth Psychology and Reading Narrative Fiction

Now that some of the key depth concepts have been discussed, the relationship between depth psychology and the art of reading narrative fiction can be explored. In his book, Mikics (2013) asked an interesting question:

> Why do we read? We want to break away from our lives, to lose, and find, ourselves in a foreign and intriguing realm. Enchanted by a good book, we abandon all sense of time. With our book in hand, we find that whole days can be happily swallowed up, in what Joseph Epstein describes as "that lovely, antisocial, splendidly selfish habit known as reading." Bowen, though, reminds us that we read not just to escape, but to remake our lives, to feel our landscape marvelously transformed. The more slowly and carefully we read, and the more we combine the child's absorption with the knowing skills of the adult, the more marvels we encounter. (p. 50)

Mikics is talking about the meeting place of the depth psychology concepts that have already been discussed and the practice of deep reading of narrative fiction. The relationship that exists between depth psychology and the reading of narrative fiction, in many ways, is as natural a relationship as there is. It is reasonable to believe that this is in part due to the magnitude of the fundamental relationship between the unconscious and its archetypal images that get expressed to and through human imagination, and narrative fiction itself. Narrative fiction is not historically true; it is created from the imagination. The unconscious and archetypal images are one of the driving forces of imagination. Therefore, one could conclude that the unconscious and archetypal imagery are fundamental to the creation and existence of narrative fiction. Russo (2008) wrote,

> We often employ symbolic thinking in our quest to represent some of the mystery and power that we feel in the world around us. Such symbol-making can be unconscious as well as conscious, and finds especially congenial vehicles for its expression and artistic elaboration in dreams, myths, and storytelling. Hence it is no surprise that literature in general, and in particular those literary genres that are closest to the fantasy structures of myths and dreams—that is, folktale and epic—yield themselves easily and successfully to symbolic readings. (p. 253)

Through the imaginative process, the characters in narrative fiction are brought into creation by the author. These characters could be based on individuals that the author knows in the real world, or they could come from a deeper well of imagination and creative energy. They could be created from an archetypal image. Keen (2006) discussed the process of developing characters in a story from the author's point of view. She wrote, "Fiction writers report looking at and eavesdropping on their characters, engaging in conversations with them, struggling with them over their actions, bargaining with them, and feeling for them: characters seem to possess independent agency" (p. 221). Although it seems as though there may be a marginal number of authors who engage in this practice during the process of creating their characters, Keen (2006) also pointed out that,

> In a remarkable study of fifty fiction writers . . . 92% of the authors reported some experience of the illusion of independent agency (IIA) and that the more successful fiction writers (those who had published) had more frequent and more intense experiences of it. (p. 221)

In this instance, it is apparent that these authors had tapped into archetypal imagery to create their characters, and that they were indeed engaging in a form of active imagination with these entities. Russo (2008) wrote,

> Literary artists instinctively mold their narratives around characters, situations, and dramatic sequences that carry a high "payload" of emotional or spiritual impact. We may well say, in fact, that the greatest creators of literature are those who have the best combination of intuition for invoking major archetypes and skill in manipulating them effectively. (p. 254)

It would then be conceivable that these archetypal images were working towards enacting material found in the collective unconscious through the medium of the author's fictional story.

Through this engagement with the collective unconscious, individuals who then read this story are able to gain insight into some of the fundamental aspects of life and human nature. It is likely this aspect that allows for greater empathy, compassion, understanding, and insight into the human condition when reading narrative fiction (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Fong et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006).

There is also another aspect of potential positive growth that can come from engaging with this material, and that is the potential to move toward one's own individuation process. This increase in empathy and understanding of the human condition naturally lends itself to be incorporated into the individuation process, as this process requires a development of this understanding already. There is also the possibility of the personal insight that one can gain from deeply reading literature that is imbued with such psychically activating material to begin with. Mikics (2013) argued that, "The book you yield to may disorient or bewilder you, but such lostness will allow you in the end to recover a truer version of self" (p. 7). In reaction to the sentiments that author and literary critic Harold Bloom wrote about, Mikics (2013) reflected:

> Bloom points to the truest reward of reading: becoming ourselves. We can reach this goal by facing honestly our own reactions to books, and trying to know why we react as we do. In other words, we must do some deep, slow reading. (p. 40)

In order to travel upon the road toward individuation, individuals must be open to becoming conscious and aware of the parts of themselves that they have previously been blind to. This means that they must utilize some means to examine their reactions to the world around them and be willing to accept potentially distressing aspects of themselves that they have no wish to acknowledge. Observing their reactions to the archetypal images present in narrative fiction can provide them with that mirror necessary to become

conscious of these and other aspects of themselves that they were previously unaware of. This, as well as the deepening understanding that it offers of the world around them, has the ability to potentiate their personal growth, and aid individuals on their path toward individuation.

Personal Experience

I can look at my life, at the road that has led me to where I am today, from any number of angles. I can see the fundamental impact that my family has played in my development, and how different experiences with friends throughout school helped to shape my path. I can look at my life from a standpoint of all of the accomplishments and positive experiences that I have known, or I can look at the challenges and darkness that I have withstood. In this instance, I want to explore the role that narrative fiction has played in helping to bring me to where I am now, and how the depth psychological perspective that was just discussed has had a hand in the development of my own story.

The back story. I have had a deeply intimate love affair with narrative fiction since I was a young girl. Ever since I can remember, I have loved stories. I did not care if they were real or made up; I craved stories. I loved to use my imagination to play out the tales in my mind as I was hearing them, and I would make both my mother and my father tell them to me to no end, until they could tell no more for that sitting. I would then delve into my own imagination and lie in bed telling myself stories. As I got older, I loved to be read to, but did not enjoy reading myself due to the fact that I had a mild form of dyslexia. This challenge turned reading into a difficult and arduous task that took away from my ability to fully enter into a story and give free rein to my ambitious imagination;

then I found the story that hooked me, and ignited my true passion for reading: Harry Potter.

On a family vacation, my mother and aunt began to read a newer series to me about a young boy, around my age at the time, who found out that he could do magic. I was transported, completely and entirely. My imagination was captured. I spent the entire vacation wanting nothing more than to be read to day and night. It was this story that drove me to conquer the daunting and onerous task of improving my reading skills. This story was such that despite my exceedingly slow reading speed and the challenges that I had with deciphering certain words, my mind was still fully captivated. So began my lifelong journey as a voracious reader of narrative fiction.

Depth psychology and my story. There are an infinite number of ways that I can demonstrate how the depth psychological perspective can be utilized to examine my own life story, but I specifically want to turn that lens toward my love of reading narrative fiction. I want to utilize my own journey through the world of books as a sort of personal case study to help further meld the ideas of depth psychology and the benefits of reading narrative fiction. Because my personal history with narrative fiction is somewhat extensive, I will focus primarily on one book series to help demonstrate my ideas more clearly. I will also focus on the four depth psychological ideas that have already been defined: archetypes, the personal and collective unconscious, individuation, and active imagination. I shall now take a look at the beneficial effects of the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997-2007) on my personal development, from a depth psychological perspective.

Harry Potter and me. I grew up reading the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997-2007), and interestingly for me, I was around the same age as Harry was in the books, as the books were being published. This gave the books a remarkable poignancy as I was reading them. Although they are not the only books in my life that have had a profound impact, they will always hold an important place on my internal bookshelf, and I have learned much from reading them.

To look at the books from a depth perspective, they are imbued with such strong archetypal imagery that it is no surprise to me that I was so transported into the stories. With Harry I can identify the Hero and the Orphan archetypes. Ron embodies the Companion. Hermione holds the energy of the Scholar as well as the Maiden. Dumbledore radiates the archetype of the Wise Old Man. Voldemort claims the role of the Villain. There is also evidence of shadow present throughout the series in the connection between Harry and Voldemort; the unwanted bond between the Hero and the Villain. I could easily go into depth about the various archetypes present in these books, but I will suffice it to say that they are ever-present and strongly depicted. Without being aware of it, the Harry Potter series was helping me to become acquainted with these fundamental aspects of human nature. I was able to gain an awareness of the fact that although each aspect seemed to have some positive quality, they also had negative or undesirable qualities as well. The well-defined characters of this story, in other words, the archetypal images, began to show me that various traits that we as humans can portray have both light and shadow attributes.

Becoming an adoring fan of this series also exposed me to one of my first true experiences of the collective unconscious. Something in the Harry Potter series (Rowling,

1997-2007) caught fire within the collective unconscious, and it has yet to die down. J. K. Rowling had captured, not only my imagination, but had practically enslaved my emotions. I felt that I was part of a worldwide tidal wave that was hooked on Harry Potter as though it were a drug for what I now know is my psyche. This nearly incomprehensible uproar, be it in adoration or in revolt, of this book was remarkable to me at the time, and has continued to astound me since then. It was not only the books themselves that fascinated me, but the response to the books around the world. This unseen connection that I felt with individuals on the other side of the planet, people that I had never and would never meet, helped me to realize that we are all the same on some fundamental level. We can all be caught up in the same story, feel the same emotions, and fall in love with the same characters. In that sense, I was no different than anyone else, and that was an astounding insight.

Harry Potter helped me to realize and grasp a sense of my fundamental similarity and human-ness to the world around me, yet it also helped me to realize some aspects about myself as an individual. I became aware of how much I valued and encouraged the self-sacrificing qualities portrayed by some of the characters, but that at times I also viewed those characters as being somewhat frustrating in their inability to stand up for themselves. When I realized that I saw myself as being more similar to the self-sacrificing characters, I also had to come to terms with the fact that I too possessed that undesirable trait of rarely standing up for myself. After many years of struggling with this Shadow aspect within my own psyche, I found that once I was more accepting of this trait, it was far less controlling of my actions; I was able to stand up for myself when I felt that it was necessary, but did not make myself feel bad when I chose to remain silent.

This is only one small step in my own path towards individuation and personal growth that I can attribute a thread to the teachings of Harry Potter.

Harry Potter ignited my imagination and captured my emotions, and I developed a deeply personal relationship with the characters. They visited me in my dreams, and their words spoke to me on occasion throughout the day. I imagined what my life would be like if I had gone to Hogwarts. I imagined what house I would be sorted in to, and who I would have become friends with. I tried to envision which classes I would have excelled at. I even imagined conversations that could have taken place between myself and Harry, Ron, and Hermione. I allowed them to come alive in my mind, and in turn, felt myself come alive in their story. In this way, I was beginning to develop the necessary skills for active imagination.

The last idea that I want to look at in my own personal growth and development process from a depth psychological perspective is how these books affected my empathy for others. Looking back on the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997-2007), one of the things that I appreciate the most is how relatively well balanced the main characters were. Although they all tended to lean towards what we might identify as good or bad characters, they nearly all possessed both positive and negative qualities. J. K. Rowling also did an impressive job of illuminating previously distasteful characters' back stories, which helped to explain their reasoning behind why they were the way that they were. This, more than anything else in the stories, helped me to recognize that we all have a story and a reason behind why we are the way that we are. Even individuals who seem to be unkind and selfish have experienced circumstances in life that have led them down that path, even if I never know what those circumstances may be.

Mikics (2013) wrote,

> Any book, not just the Bible or Koran or other sacred volume, can become an individual scripture and offer sustenance: a source of trust to the individual who feels compelled to reread it. If you want it to, any book can become part of your personal canon. Such a book nourishes the reader's selfhood, even if he or she rereads only a few pages of it. (p. 49)

Harry Potter, in many ways, became a sacred series for me. With the three main characters in this series, Harry, Ron, and Hermione, I experienced love, loss, adventure, and heartache. I learned the importance of friends and family, and that people can be so much more than they seem. I laughed regularly, and I cried so hard that I could no longer read the words on the page. I became friends with these characters, and it is still a friendship that I cherish to this day; it is a friendship that I return to every so often, because I know that it will always be there.

My Relationship With My Thesis

How I came to this topic. My topic began as a paper that I wrote for a course in the first year of my graduate school program at Pacifica Graduate Institute on identifying the various archetypes present in the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997-2007). Just as my imagination was ignited by the series itself, taking a deeper look into the series through my newly acquired depth psychological lens was fascinating. For the short eight-page paper that the course required, I found that I had compiled significantly more notes and research than needed, yet I felt that there was still so much to say on the topic that I could not fit in my paper. Thus was born my intention to delve in depth into this subject for my master's thesis, but my interest became piqued after reading an online article published by *Elite Daily* titled "Why Readers, Scientifically, Are the Best People to Fall in Love With."

This article presented the idea to me that readers were shown to be more empathetic, wiser, and more understanding. The author of the article, journalist Lauren Martin (2014), wrote,

> They have access to hundreds of souls, and the collected wisdom of all them. They have seen things you'll never understand and have experienced deaths of people you'll never know. They've learned what it's like to be a woman, and a man. They know what it's like to watch someone suffer. They are wise beyond their years. (para. 12)

Although I had never heard someone state it this way, in many ways this statement and the article in general pulled to me. I found myself looking more into the research that Martin had presented, which sent me further on to other research done around these ideas. I quickly realized that my thesis topic had made a shift, and that while the archetypal importance of Harry Potter was still influential, I now wanted to look at the broader picture of reading in general.

My experience of the research. Reading was an activity that was not only accepted but encouraged within my family, but it was also an activity that I was often teased about, albeit jokingly as I got older. I found that I read more often than the majority of people around me, and that others regularly did not understand my extreme love of literature. I often had to seriously debate whether I wanted to go out and spend time with friends, or stay at home and continue to immerse myself in the book that I was enthralled with at that moment. When I read the sentiments of Sophie Freud (2004), author and granddaughter of the renowned founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, I felt an immediate kinship. In her article titled "The Reading Cure: Books as Lifetime Companions," she wrote, "I lead two parallel lives, one my so-called real life, and the other my literary life, which is sometimes the more compelling one" (p. 77), then later

stated, "I read books for companionship, for enjoyment, for solace, for information, for distraction, for self-improvement, for self-knowledge, for understanding, for enlarging my world, for enhancing my compassion and empathy with totally different others" (p. 77). This, along with so much of the research that I read, helped to put into words the sentiments that I had always felt to be true about the value of reading. This research process has both validated my own experiences, and, if possible, made me an even bigger advocate for the value and importance of reading.

Clinical Applicability

There are many ways in which the information that has been presented on the benefits of reading narrative fiction, especially when approached from a depth psychological perspective, can be applied clinically within a psychotherapy practice. Two of these options are discussed within this thesis: utilizing bibliotherapy with clients in a psychotherapy setting, and utilizing narrative fiction as a resource for psychotherapists.

Bibliotherapy with clients. To begin looking at the concept of utilizing bibliotherapy with clients, one must first understand what bibliotherapy is. Professors of counseling education Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, Virginia Allen, and Wendy Folger, with the help of professor of research Paula McMillen and doctoral student in counseling education Imelda Lowe (2007) defined bibliotherapy as "the use of books, literature, pamphlets, play scripts, narratives, journals, poems, songs, and stories adapted from cinema and television for the purpose of promoting therapeutic gain" (p. 410). Authors, professors, and researchers Heidi Levitt, Woraportn Rattanasampan, Suwuchit Sean Chaidaroon, Caroline Stanley, and Tamara Robinson (2009) noted that "within counseling, bibliotherapy is a longstanding tradition in which therapists encourage clients

to read stories of relevance to their lives with the hope of stimulation personal change" (p. 328). They also commented that, "Therapists often find that bibliotherapy aids clients in developing self-awareness, emotional adjustment, and self-control" (p. 329). This therapeutic intervention can be utilized in many ways, but the way in which this thesis will emphasize the use of bibliotherapy is along the lines of how professor and counselor Jason Duffy (2010) described his use of bibliotherapy: an approach that he termed "hero's quest bibliotherapy" (p. 2). Duffy explained that

> this form of therapy is based primarily on a combination of fiction-based bibliotherapy with the concepts of the collective unconscious and archetypes explicated by the psychologist Carl Jung and the mono-myth and hero's journey espoused by mythologist Joseph Campbell. Drawing upon these elements therapists can facilitate a process in which clients re-conceptualize the identified stressor(s) or transitions in a more positive and self-empowering perspective through the lens of archetypal hero's journey—instilling hope, imparting meaning in the present pain/suffering, and lessening the severity of symptoms that may lead to, or have led to a diagnosis of AD [Adjustment Disorder]. (p. 2)

Whereas Duffy is focused primarily in how this type of bibliotherapy can be utilized to treat Adjustment Disorder, a relatively common diagnosis in the United States, it is easily conceivable that the combination of archetypal psychology approaches combined with bibliotherapy could be beneficial in treating a number of psychological disorders (Duffy, 2010).

Although not all bibliotherapy is based on the use of fictional texts, as it can also utilize self-help books and other factual resources, Duffy (2010) explained that

> fiction-based bibliotherapy logically incorporates the connection people already have to fictional stories and characters to enhance the therapeutic process when applicable. The use of fictional-based bibliotherapy is a form of therapy that may resonate strongly with clients because fiction taps into emotions, which appears to draw people to this type of text as compared to a self-help book. (p. 3)

The experience that Duffy is describing can also be looked at from a depth psychological perspective: that these fiction-based stories utilize archetypal imagery and are therefore more emotionally provocative. Duffy (2010) outlined an important role of his form of bibliotherapy:

> When people allow their lives to be defined solely by powers external to them, they relinquish their ability and responsibility to define and author their own lives. When clients place their stressor(s) and symptoms within the context of the archetypal hero's quest, it has the potential to allow them to regain control and authorship. (p. 7)

This regaining of individuals' authorship of their own lives and how they choose to interact in their lives can be an enormous benefit to clients seeking psychotherapy. This type of depth approach to bibliotherapy can also help to enlighten clients to realize new ways of behaving or thinking about the challenges that they are facing (Duffy, 2010; Levitt et al., 2009). As Duffy (2010) stated,

> Whether Odysseus or Harry Potter, Scout Finch or Frodo, Cinderella or Luke Skywalker, Nora Helmer or Siddhartha, all have faced the foundational struggles inherent in life and through their struggles mapped the way for all of us to conquer our own metaphorical demons, dragons, evil wizards, and evil empires. (p. 7)

Bibliotherapy for psychotherapists. Given all of the literature presented that highlights the benefits of reading narrative fiction, both in one's personal life and in the more directed environment of a clinical setting, it is not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that there are worthwhile benefits for psychotherapists to read narrative fiction as well. The benefits of improving a psychotherapist's qualities of empathy and theory of mind skills are evident: those are both necessary and important qualities in the art of psychotherapy. Psychotherapists can also utilize narrative fiction to help them gain a better understanding of a culture that they may have been previously unacquainted with,

which will naturally help them to become more sensitive to diversity differences between them and their clients. It is also important to recognize that psychotherapists are human also, and as such can benefit just as much as any other individual from the knowledge and potential personal growth that narrative fiction has to offer, especially when approached from a depth psychological perspective.

Chapter IV
Summary and Conclusion

Summary

In Chapter I of this thesis, the general subject of interest was introduced: reading narrative fiction. The concern over the societal shift toward multitasking and the desire for more condensed and easily understandable forms of information was briefly discussed. It was this concern over society's shift away from deeply contemplative reading that ultimately led to the research question that drove the inquiry represented in this thesis: What are the benefits of reading narrative fiction, and how is it valuable from a depth psychological perspective?

In Chapter II, concepts relating to reading were explored, including: deep reading (Jacobs, 2011; Mikics, 2013; Wolf & Barzillai, 2009), empathy (Keen, 2006; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015), theory of mind (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Mar et al., 2006), transportation (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006), and narrative fiction (Fong et al., 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015). The research that demonstrated the relationship between reading narrative fiction and an increase in empathy and theory of mind skills was presented (Fong et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2013; Keen, 2006; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015; Mar et al., 2006). Also discussed was the importance of experiencing transportation when reading (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015).

The first half of Chapter III was concentrated more on taking a depth psychological approach to the idea of reading narrative fiction. First, concepts pertaining to depth psychology were defined, such as: archetypes (Hillman, 1989; Russo, 2008; Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998), personal and collective unconscious (Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998), individuation (Brookes, 1991; Samuels et al., 1986; Stein, 1998), and active imagination (Jordan, 2015; Samuels et al., 1986). Then the overlap between these depth psychology ideas and the art of reading narrative fiction was explored (Keen, 2006; Mikics, 2013; Russo, 2008).

The second half of Chapter III was utilized in the most part to explore the author's personal experience with reading narrative fiction, including how this experience could be looked at to incorporate the depth psychological concepts discussed earlier in the chapter and the author's experience throughout the researching process involved in the creation of this thesis. In conclusion of this chapter, the potential clinical applications of this research within a psychotherapeutic setting were explored, for both the client seeking therapy and the clinician (Duffy, 2010; Levitt et al., 2009; Pehrsson et al., 2007).

Clinical Implications

This research demonstrates the potential benefits of reading narrative fiction. Utilizing the information presented on the art of reading narrative fiction, as well as the vast benefits of combining this practice with the depth psychological ideas explored within this thesis, the experience of engaging in a deep reading practice with narrative fiction can become a transformational process. This can be utilized as a tool within the psychotherapeutic container, or it can be utilized in an individual's own private self-exploration. Incorporating the type of deep reading of narrative fiction, including the

process of transportation, that is encouraged within this research has the potential to lead one not only towards a deeper understanding of themselves, but also a deeper understanding of those around them, and of the collective unconscious that connects all things together.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are a variety of ways in which new research can further various areas of the discussion that have been laid out within this thesis. These include, but are by no means limited to: further research exploring the more precise function of reading narrative fiction on increased empathy and theory of mind skills; and research on how depth perspectives can be utilized in concert with bibliotherapy in a therapeutic setting to improve client functioning.

As stated at the end of Chapter II, although there is some research that suggests a relationship between reading narrative fiction and an increase in empathy and theory of mind skills, there is not enough information collected to fully understand the function or specifics of this relationship (Fong et al., 2013; Kidd & Castano, 2013). This is why it is imperative that research continue to explore the connection between narrative fiction and empathy.

There is also a great need to explore and research the potential benefits of combining a depth approach with the use of bibliotherapy to aid in the psychotherapeutic process. As mentioned by Duffy (2010), "To date, there is little empirical research available that has tested the use of fiction-based bibliotherapy in psychotherapy, and none in regard to hero's quest bibliotherapy" (p. 14). This indicates that not only does research need to be conducted on the outcomes of utilizing approaches such as Duffy's "hero's

quest bibliotherapy," but significant research needs to be done looking simply at how utilizing fictional books and stories as the material for bibliotherapy with clients affects their improvement.

Conclusion: Epilogue

Writing this thesis has been an incredible journey; one of the most challenging academic experiences that I have gone through, but also one of the most rewarding. I have had the opportunity to become consumed with a discussion and topic that I am passionate about, and I hope to be able to share this passion and knowledge that I have gained with those around me, both in my personal life and as I continue down my path towards my vocation as a psychotherapist. Jacobs (2011) wrote, "So the books are waiting. Of this you may be confident: they'll be ready when the whim strikes you" (p. 25). The books are waiting for me, calling to me, and I look forward to a lifetime of answering that call. I do not know what adventures and discoveries lie around the next corner, or in this case page, but I am ready to find out.

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