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### Opus Archives Grant Recipient Preliminary Report

My project, a full-length nonfiction book entitled *The Transparent Myth: Science and the Sentient Universe*, approaches the evolution of the mythic imagination through time from a Complex Systems Theory perspective. It suggests that the way that human beings imagine their myths has evolved from at least the Lower Paleolithic era to the present era in a series of discrete “phase epiphanies” reflective of what Chaos Theory and Complex Systems Theory refer to as “phase transitions” in the emergences of self-organizing systems. The import of this project is to demonstrate how, due to recent paradigmatic revolutions in the field of Complexity, both the “hard” and social sciences, across the board, are now embracing a paradigm for the nature of reality by which science itself has become a viable candidate as an emerging new mythology in its own right. By applying the principles of complex systems theory to an overview of world mythology from early prehistory to the present day, *The Transparent Myth* will both demonstrate and elucidate the application of this theory to the study of myth itself.

During my time in the opus research archives, I explored the work of Marija Gimbutas, Joseph Campbell, and Christine Downing in search of essential references and unpublished work regarding changes in the nature of mythology in the Paleolithic and early planting cultures, in the Sumerian Revolution, and in terms of science as the new mythology, respectively. I was particularly interested in possible unpublished sources and

related references from the rich research and fundamental archaeological perspectives in Gimbutas unpublished work. I was interested in the opportunity to view Gimbutas' preliminary research findings in the archaeology of the early planters. Because of Joseph Campbell's extensive scholarship regarding the Sumerian, it had been my hope to find more extensive research notes and perhaps personal perspectives on that subject which may not have reached publication. Moreover, I had hoped I might find in Campbell's personal notes a hint as to his method of working with the vast panorama of world mythology that was his playground. Although I did not know it at the time, Christine Downing's work was to be among my most rewarding surprises because of her unique approach to science as the new mythology, especially in her lectures on that subject in the late 90's at Pacifica Graduate Institute.

My research took several unexpectedly gratifying turns, as I delved into not only the preliminary archaeological research of Gimbutas, but some of her personal and professional correspondence with less well-known and sometimes unpublished scholars whose work I might otherwise never have found. Most interesting was the link Gimbutas established—through numerous sources in her own lecture and unpublished notes—to Alexander Marshack's work on the earliest recorded indications of a consistent language model for mythological construction predating the lower Paleolithic. I was familiar with Marshack's *The Roots of Civilization*, but had not the connecting evidence to perceive the thread of shared symbols which linked his explorations of pre-Magdalenian culture with that of the early and late Neolithic. While some of these links may require further research for scholastic support in the form of outside verification, Gimbutas has effectively established a reasonable theoretical connection between Marshack's work and

a linguistic continuity running up through the Neolithic which gives credence to my theoretical concept of a singular perennial mythical line of thought, the product of what I am calling the mythic imagination.

My research into the Campbell's work yielded less surprising but equally helpful insights and information, gleaned in part from Campbell's class notes reaching back to his days at Sarah Lawrence College, were little gems that every scholar loves to find in a major authorities unpublished work the yield fresh and vibrant take on the authorities early work. Most helpful for me as an engaged scholar in Campbell's work over the past 30 years, however, was the encouragement that I received in Campbell's own words for taking a second and more serious look at his last grand production world Atlas of mythology. Having read most of Campbell's other more popular works but not being familiar with this massive and brilliantly illustrated tome of three volumes, I was delighted to find precise and well documented maps of the dispersion of basic mythic themes through time. Being able to see the patterns of which I am speaking, and especially those created by a scholar with whom I share considerable theoretical interest was not only rewarding for myself as a scholar but personally. This was heartening to me because I hope to publish *Transparent Myth* for the general public as well as a dissertation topic; seeing Campbell's success trying such a thing was encouraging as well as immeasurably helpful.

I had originally intended to access only the Gimbutas files and the Campbell files, because I was somewhat familiar with both of their writings and I knew that, for Gimbutas in particular, they were likely to be treasures which might be buried within her research, particularly into older cultures that may have not found their way into her

published work. My findings in the archives did not disappoint and, in fact, led me far deeper into the subject than I might have gone following my own line of reasoning.

The Campbell files on the other hand were less helpful than I would've thought, primarily because I was hopeful that I would find his preparatory notes on works such as, for example the *Masks of God* series or *The Inner or Reaches of Outer Space*.

Unfortunately, it appears as though Joseph Campbell was in the habit of destroying all of his notes from whatever he wrote once the book was published. This was really the only disappointment I experienced among a plethora of delightful surprises in my work in the Opus Archives, as one of my primary expectations and hopes was that I would learn something from Campbell, a master, about how to manage and organize massive amounts of archaic material into a homogenous form with continuity and flair.

One of the wonderful surprises that I hadn't considered going in, is the rediscovery of several lectures by Christine Downing, offered Pacifica Graduate Institute near the end of the 20th century, on science as the new mythology. This is a course that is no longer offered within the mythological studies program, and some of the specific scientific data was of course dated at this point, those lectures having been given over a decade ago; the science with which I am working was just coming to the fore at the time that she was making his lectures and wasn't readily available to readers outside the scientific community. Yet in her approach to the subject matter, which carried her characteristic flair for presentation and integrity of scholarship, I did discover several authorities on the history and evolution of science that may have been much more difficult to access had I not both listened to some of her lecture tapes, and had access to the somewhat extensive notes that she made for those classes.

A great deal of the value of my 40+ hours spent in the archives will extend far beyond the direct resources that I found. Indeed it has given me a fund of new research materials of my own to pursue which will most likely take up a fair amount of my time over the next several months. That is to say it's not only in what I was discovering in terms of the work of the authors in question, but their vast familiarity with the references and other scholars connected with the history of myth and the study of science as our culture's ever-evolving story about who we are to each other, to ourselves, to the cosmos at large, and to the enduring *Mystery* beyond what can be known with the rational mind.

The exposure to new research sources, and the encouragement in my own theoretic which I found in the works of these three, as Campbell might say, mavericks, provided vital encouragement and validation for following the thread of myth which speaks to me personally. As anyone who has entered into serious scholarship over a prolonged period of time knows, isolation can be the enemy. I found in the archives my elders, my forbears, my companions in this special journey.

There is another authority—one of vast erudition and encyclopedic knowledge of myth, philosophy, archaeology, psychology, and other related subjects—whose name is not listed as an archive contributor. Richard Buchen, Special Collections Librarian, was a constant source of erudition, insight, and sound critical thinking throughout my research at the archives. He was able to cast subtle light on many of the more obscure and arcane subjects to which I was addressing myself. It was very much like having a research assistant at hand who had, from his own study and catalogue-like memory, was able to provide an endless flow of interesting side notes and clarifications. It is now my opinion that Richard is one of Pacific's most underused and most valuable treasures, a

metaphorical Rosetta Stone of many scholarly languages—the mythic, the anthropological, the historical, and even in terms of the personal lives and experiences of the great masters of our art was archives are held in the Opus Research Library. I found Richard engaging, friendly, and happily available for conversations on any subject relevant to our research, and one whose own insights and personal excitement for the subject matter was at least as inspiring as anything else that I found in my very worthwhile hours spent in the archives themselves.

In summation I would say that not having been to the archives before I did not know what to expect. I knew that Gimbutas had been a scholar of impeccable research whose sociopolitical issues had drawn some criticism. I did not realize what a wealth of community in connection I would find in following the trail of her thought and her research and published and unpublished work. Likewise, as I mentioned above, I had hoped to find more guidance from Campbell regarding how I will organize a book that takes in the entire history of human mythology as it relates to our age in the postmodern era. The surprise came in his work in the form of some wonderful quotes from his notes as a college professor, and a new, more wide-ranging appreciation for his last published work, his opus, *Historical Atlas of World Mythology*. The resources offered Christine Downing's earlier lectures on science as the new mythology that offered as I mentioned above, direct and and connection of invaluable service to me as I undertake the research of the history of science in support of my thesis for my major project *The Transparent Myth*.

As might be apparent to this point, my 40 hours in the research library Opus was, for the most part, a matter of finding and opening the less common doorways to

knowledge and understanding which that large and growing body of work has to offer of scholars such as myself. That being the case I intend to make several more visits to the Opus Archives, both to pick Richard's brain and to follow loose threads for which time and energy was not available earlier. While time did not permit, given my commitments at the time to full-time job and a full-time academic load, not to mention the time constraints and limitations necessarily placed upon research and response requirements for Opus grant recipients, I intend also to return to the research archives to look more deeply into the work of James Hillman and his archetypal psychology as what now appears to me as a potential forerunner to the recognition of the importance of archetypes and archetypal images as self organizing systems. I would not be at all surprised given my experience so far to find myself drawn into avenues of exploration by contact with the vast and largely unpublished scholarship available there.

And finally a word to the impatient. Research in the archives is not at all like reading a book, outlining passages, and taking a few notes; although I have learned that extensive note taking is particularly helpful in approaching this kind of material. Yet there can be long hours of pouring through handwritten notes and references which, evidently, were never intended for anyone except the writer to see and so appear to lead nowhere. That aspect of the research is a bit like a treasure hunt; you can be fairly certain the treasures there, but you cannot know beforehand what it will be or when you might come upon it. For the serious scholar, however, the hidden gems there, including rewarding relationships with the archives professionals, and their assistance is well worth the effort.

Lastly, I express my sincere appreciation for Dr. Safron Rossi, whose inexhaustible patience and kindness came, especially in the last legs of this winding journey, with a special grace which exhausted scholars struggling with mountainous deadlines rarely receive. Thank you, both Richard and Safron, and to the Opus Archives for this opportunity to swim in the waters I love.