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There’s a lot going on on the planet today, much of it disturbing if you follow the evening news. With so much technology around us providing instantaneous access to information and events around the world, it’s easy sometimes to feel overwhelmed and lose a sense of center and self.

According to recent conversations I’ve had with others, I don’t think I’m the only one who feels that time is speeding up and globally, things are spiraling out of control on many fronts.

However, this is why I continue to believe so strongly that depth psychology offers us the opportunity to maintain our reflective center and to look beyond the surface of everyday events. Paying attention to how the inner world mirrors the outer—and vice versa—is such a powerful tool for insight and growth, both personally and collectively.

It is in this spirit of opening to what is hidden, forgotten, lost, abandoned or invisible in the self—even as we reel from disquieting events in the outer world—that I hope you will enjoy the wisdom and beauty of the works offered in this issue of Depth Insights.

Huge thanks to the contributors, selection committee, and especially to editor Rebecca Livingston Pottenger for coming together to make it happen.

~ Bonnie Bright
Eros and Psyche

When I was a boy Sunday afternoon dinner was always a school day for me. Outside the official classroom it was a day for education, a word whose loveliness is so apt here because it was the day when, unknownst to me, I was being introduced to and seduced into my life. This education was not about facts that had to be memorized and mastered. Nor was it about ideas or opinions about the events of times. Rather its lessons unfolded through stories told within the context of a ritual space and time. Seated between the power of words well-spoken to create sacred space differentiated from the ordinary, quotidian world. Sitting back in his chair, taking a slow, deep breath, my Irish mother and Ukrainian father, I was being invited with my two sisters into a school education, I was being formed to be who I have become and am still becoming.

The stories were always variations on the central theme of exile and homing. Of course, I did not know that these stories belonged to my parents were archetypal. But the stories, with their images and moods dipped in the flowing rhythms of the spoken voice, fascinated me. My Sunday day education was one of enchantment, an education in the power of words well-spoken to create worlds. Seated between these story tellers, neither of whom had a high school education, I was being formed to be who I have become and am still becoming.

Those Sunday afternoons were a long time ago, some 60 years as measured by a calendar, where time as a matter of mind stretches along a line without depth from a past to a future until it snaps. But time measured by the heart is a spiral coiling back upon itself at different levels, gathering those Sundays into the present as I imagine and am drawn into a future. Now as I approach my eighth decade my love affair with psychology and with being a psychologist is starting over. In this new beginning I am taken back to those Sunday days of education, remembering my origins and being re-membered by them, re-collecting the lessons learned there, and preserving those lessons by transforming them as I fall in love again with the psyche. In the tale of Psyche and Eros we are told that the union of love and the soul produces Joy and it is joy that I experience in starting out again to learn the ways of soul. Joy and also not a little trepidation!

Love and its Shadows

The tale of Psyche and Eros is not naive. Psyche suffers in learning how to love and my love affair with psychology has had its full measure of the shadows of love. I have been at times an impatient lover of soul, trying to discipline soul within the forms of psychology. I have also been a disappointed lover, unsatisfied with the refusal of soul to be confined within the discipline and at other times deeply unsatisfied with the intransigence of psychology to yield itself to the seductive ways of soul. But perhaps most of all I have felt homeless and orphaned in this love affair, deluded by an expectation that in psychology I would find a home for the longings stirred within my heart on those Sunday days of education.

"The virtue of the backward glance is that through it one might get a glimpse of the pattern that has been lived and in doing so might find the vocation to continue by starting over"

Indeed, the gnosis of the heart was a fruit of those Sunday lessons, a lived though not articulated awareness that soul work is as much a matter of the heart, of being moved and quickened, as it is a matter of the mind being awakened. Those tales told at those Sunday dinners stirred the depths of soul because they touched the surface of mind. Telling tales and being touched by them also taught me how to listen and to appreciate those small and often unnoticed shifts in tempo and pace marked by pauses, acting as it were as a mark of punctuation, a comma or perhaps, if one’s ears were finely tuned, a semi-colon or even a colon, and to the slight alterations in emphasis and tone, signaling like an exclamation point that one should take notice. As the meanings of the words being spoken were carried on the tides of breath, and even shaped by them, I learned on those Sunday days that soul work was homework so that later, as I grew older, I imagined that psychology would be a way home.

In all the roads taken since those Sunday days, in all the books read, the classes taken, the lectures written and given, the conferences attended, the papers and books published, I have been living in the gap between the discipline of psychology and the epiphanies of psychological life, between the well formed words of the discipline and the whispers of soul. The virtue of the backward glance is that through it one might get a glimpse of the pattern that has been lived and in doing so might find the vocation to continue by starting over. It is what I am attempting now in new work whose intention is to take up again that pattern that has held together the arc of my life in psychology. It is a pattern woven of three connected and enduring questions:

-Is psychology psychological?
-Is the discipline of psychology inimical to soul?
-Can one be a psychologist and live a psychological life in service to soul?

These questions span the arc of my life in psychology. Already in the title of my first book Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor, there was a dim apprehension of these questions. The title suggests a shift not just in words but also and more pointedly in terms of the context of psychology. To move from science to metaphor is to situate psychology not within a discipline but within discourse and moreover within a style of discourse that is indirect and is a figure of speech. While I could appreciate then that the indirect style of metaphorical discourse alludes to a meaning that remains elusive, it would take me a while to catch up with the deeper implications.
Becoming a psychologist was not a rational conscious decision. As I wrote in a recently published essay, ‘I only ever wanted to be a bus driver.’ But through dreams, symptoms, synchronicities, encounters with the numinous splendor of the natural world, fateful circumstances and meetings with others, I was drawn into becoming a psychologist. Psychology was a vocation before it ever became a profession and in the gap between the two I was increasingly educated into a difference that is at the root of my love affair with soul. That difference, which is expressed in the three questions cited above, could be reframed here in terms of a distinction Jung has drawn between the spirit of the times and the spirit of the depths. Psychology as a profession is in service to the spirit of the times; as a vocation it is in service to the spirit of the depths.

My love affair with psychology has unfolded within the tension of this distinction and the stories I tell in this volume are an account of this affair. They are simple and quite ordinary tales, which suggest to me that the ordinary occasions in a life harbor seeds of what might become extraordinary. That, for example, I would spend the early morning hours of my summer vacation days watching in fascination an army of ants marching across a brown patch of dirt to disappear underground through a small hole, would seem inconsequential to my becoming a psychologist. But, like so many other ordinary moments, it has lingered and in its returns has revealed a miracle at the heart of the ordinary.

There are times when this new work seems like a foolish quest, times when it feels as if it matters only to me. Perhaps that is or will be the case. Nevertheless, I am starting again because the bus I am driving across the gap between the profession of and the vocation to psychology has had its routes mapped out by something other than me. I am beginning again because I feel an obligation to make a place for this gap and for the ordinary moments that do shape the making of a psychologist. I feel an obligation to make a place for the spirit of the depths in the formation of psychology within the spirit of the times.

I thought that my service to psychology was finished. But as I wrote in the final sentence of my last book, The Wounded Researcher, the work is finished but it is not done. So, I am following again as I have followed before the footprints of Psyche imprinted in sand before they are washed away by the tides or covered over by the wind.

**Fireflies in the Night: Elements of a Psychological Life**

Fireflies in the night! They bedazzle us. They come and go indifferent to our summoning them. But in their brief elusive appearance, they bring a light to the darkness and call forth from us a response, even if it is only a gasp or the pointing of a finger that says, “Look, over there. Do you see it?”

Fireflies in the night is the image that holds for me those epiphanies of soul that shine from the depths. Those sparks of psyche are for me elemental qualities of soul. Indeed, what if we imagine soul itself as elemental, as elemental as air and water, fire and earth? As elemental as flesh, which is Merleau-Ponty’s final understanding of the lived body, which he says has never before been thought of that way in philosophy? What is elemental is basic and essential, a stark simplicity, the ‘thereness’ of a force of nature itself. We have taken the elements apart, analyzed water and air into their chemical signatures, explained and harnessed the combustible character of fire, and made the matter of earth matter as an inanimate resource for our use. We have done the same with soul. In the spirit of the times we have measured, calculated, explained and lost sight of soul in the process. The love song that psychology sings in this spirit has put soul to sleep where it lives in dreams.

**Fireflies in the Night** is a wake up call. Soul as elemental is as fundamental as air. Just as we breathe this elemental force and not its chemical signatures, which are already one step removed from the living reality of air, we live within the elemental reality of soul, awash within its magical epiphanies. The sparks of soul attended to in this volume are the many ways in which we are moved by soul.

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*Footprints in the Sand: On Becoming a Psychologist*

We imagine that we chose the paths that mark the journeys of a life, but we do not, or at least we are as much agents in service to something other that calls us into a life, as we are authors of a life. I never chose to become a psychologist.
Fireflies in the night is the image that invites me to let go of the ways in which the spirit of the times has shaped psychology as a profession, an image that is a subtle, elusive seduction to remember what is forgotten in the day light consciousness of psychology as a profession. Look! There it is and then it is gone. A brief shining in the night that asks me to give up psychology for a moment for the sake of being psychological, a summons to fall again madly in love and begin again the love affair with Psyche in the darkness of night made bright for a moment by an elusive light.

As an elemental psychology, Fireflies in the Night is perhaps even a new introduction to psychology, a different way of imagining an introductory text into psychology, which re-balances the spirit of the times in psychology with the spirit of the depths. Or, perhaps, it is a farewell for me to the spirit of the times in psychology and my way of un-becoming a psychologist.

What it is or will become, however, is not for me to decide. All I can say at this point is that this volume is an attempt to describe how in these past 40 years or so I have responded to psychology as a vocation, to the spirit of the depths that companions the spirit of the times in psychology as a profession. As such it is the continuation to volume one, to those footprints in the sand which led me to psychology as a profession and to the point where the spirit of the times in psychology might be renewed by the spirit of the depths, as it was once more than a hundred years ago at the origins of depth psychology.

Each of the eight parts that compose Fireflies in the Night is another way of responding to the elemental epiphanies of soul, a way of wooing soul to tarry just a bit longer before it slips away. Taken as a whole they are a chorus sung in praise to those sightings of soul that, like fireflies in the night, have for a moment shed some light on the depths that have given a pattern to my life, those elusive, elemental and epiphanic moments that re-collected now have transformed the outer skin of events into the bones of experiences. What I offer below is a description of the flow of these songs and a brief description of the mental quality each of them addresses.

Fireflies in the Night is a

A Portrait in Dreams—we are such stuff as dreams are made on, made between waking and dreaming, on that edge, pivot, threshold, our waking lives and its events stitched together through and with the threads of dreams—

An Unfinished Life—where the Orphan is that archetypal figure who remembers for us in times when we forget that soul work is homework and who lingers and waits for us to recollect what has been—

Left by the Side of the Road—where the companions who hold the unfinished business of our lives also wait and linger—

during our

Inner Journeys in the Outer World—

"Perhaps the most significant discovery at the origins of the spirit of the depths arising with depth psychology out of the spirit of the times is the recognition that at the heart of our activity is passivity"

where the work of soul making is done before being re-collected, where the world is the vale of soul making—

In the Company of the Dead—who hold the threads of an unfinished life that ties our lives to theirs, and who as companions feed us and demand of us a ritual sense of living—

and

In the Shadows of the City—where the byways, detours, alleyways bend and twist the straight lines of the ego mind—

while

Leaning toward the Poet—who cultivates in us the qualities of a poetic basis of mind to counterbalance calculative ways of thinking and who opens the heart as another way of knowing—

And drawn to the

Epiphanies in Dark Light—to that aesthetic presence of the world as image, where the filament of the invisible hides and shows itself through the visible, through those moments like sunlight filtered through a green leaf that open us to the splendor of the world and its seductive enchantments

Closing time

In these two volumes I am trying to be receptive and responsive to those conditions and circumstances that have molded the ‘I’ who is telling these tales. Is this attempt a memoir? If it is then it is an inverse memoir. As such it is not unlike Jung’s Memories Dreams Reflections, a memoir not only of the outer events of my life but also of the patterns of which I have not been the maker, patterns woven by soul in the chiasm of outer events and inner experiences. In this inverse way, this work is a soul history of one becoming a psychologist in the gap between the spirit of the times and the spirit of the depths.

But if the ‘I’ who tells the tale is the ‘I’ who has been made by the tale, the inverse character of the telling plays on the edge, in the gap, at the threshold of the chiasm of activity and passivity. Indeed, perhaps the most significant dis...
covery at the origins of the spirit of the depths arising with depth psychology out of the spirit of the times is the recognition that at the heart of our activity is passivity. It is, however, a passivity that is not the opposite of activity, or its negation. On the contrary, it is a passivity that in its receptivity is itself active. It is the receptivity of the soul embodied, the receptivity of our human embodiment, of the body one is, as the foundation for the body one has; an embodiment in which one is simultaneously the one who touches and is touched, the subject who sees because he/she is seeable. This understanding of embodiment is itself a thread that early on led me into phenomenology and to the forty year dialogue between depth psychology and phenomenology in which I have been an eavesdropper, picking up bits and pieces from that conversation.

Footprints in the Sand and Fireflies in the Night are tales of an eavesdropper, bits of gossip, if you will, about the conversation between a psychology informed by the spirit of the times and the whispers of soul from the spirit of the depths. Along the way it has occurred to me that the place of the eavesdropper is neither inside nor outside. The eavesdropper occupies a threshold place and from that place the telling of what is overheard has a special mood to it. It is the mood of reverie, which, as Gaston Bachelard reminds us, is a mood that for a moment liberates one from the burden of his/her name, frees one from the burden of an identity. Reverie is therefore the appropriate mood of this inverse memoir because reverie uncouples one from the tyranny of the ‘I.’ It inverts ‘Cogito ergo sum’ into ‘Cogitor ergo sum,’ an inversion from the ‘I think therefore I am’ as the active author of thinking into ‘I am thought therefore I am’ as the recipient of a thinking thinking itself through the ‘I.’ In the mood of reverie between activity and receptivity, the ‘I’ who thinks and the ‘I’ who is thought impregnate each other with their presence. In the mood of reverie the memoir is made in that place between the ‘I’ who thinks and tells the tale and the ‘I’ who is and has been thought and told the tale.

Two other significant features of this inverse memoir need to be mentioned both of which flow from the mood of reverie. One is the obvious implication of the deconstruction of memoir as an account of a singular life, a deconstruction of the tale told from the point of view of the logical, literate and linear ‘I’ of mind who overlooks the events and circumstances of that life from some distant place above it. In this respect this inverse memoir is a series of memoirs, tales of plurality made and told between the one who has lived the life and the ones who have stitched the threads and woven the patterns of that life.

"Psychology fashioned in the spirit of the times privileges the active voice of the ‘I’ who thinks and speaks when it translates language from the spirit of the depths"
The other significant feature of this inverse memoir is that of language. As the remarks on reverie indicate, these inverse memoirs make a needed place for the forgotten and ignored passive voice of verbs. Psychology fashioned in the spirit of the times privileges the active voice of the ‘I’ who thinks and speaks when it translates language from the spirit of the depths. For example, one dreams at night and upon waking declares, ‘I had a dream last night.’ Such a way of speaking betrays, however, the phenomenology of the experience of dreaming and in doing so builds a psychology of interpretative and reductive moves in terms of the spirit of the times that turns away from the spirit of the depths where the dream had me, where the ‘I’ who has had the dream has first been dreamed. So, while so much of these memoirs employ the active voice, the passive voice, which even my computer prompts me to change to the active voice, lingers and waits for its moments. Indeed, the eight parts that make up Fireflies in the Night are experiments in translating the spirit of the depths into different ways of saying soul.

To bring this first saying of these memoirs to a close, it is the poet who addresses me:

‘Catch only what you’ve thrown yourself, all is mere skill and little gain; but when you’re suddenly the catcher of a ball thrown by an eternal partner with accurate and measured swing towards you, to your centre, in an arch from the great bridgebuilding of God: why catching then becomes a power—not yours, a world’s.’ (Rilke)

In these memoirs I am trying to be the catcher of what has been thrown toward to me.

Notes


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“In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order”

~Carl Gustav Jung, Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious

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**virus**

**art by Staci Poirier**

**poem by Rick Belden**

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**Special thanks to Staci Poirier for the cover art, “virus” - acrylic mixed media which incorporates a branch from a tree, plastic worms and fish, worry dolls, mirrors, wire mesh, and a photo transfer. The piece is 20 x 26 inches and was inspired by the 2008 poem “virus” by Rick Belden (also featured on this page at right).**

According to Staci, the artwork is about ending the cycle of child abuse and preventing it from becoming a generational issue. If you read the painting from left to right, it goes from death, shame, destruction, shattered self to a story filled with potential hope and wholeness which reflects the movement of the poem. Staci completed the piece in June 2012. Fragments of “virus” appear next to the titles for each essay in this issue.

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**About the Artist/Poet**

**Staci Poirier** was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and is a self-taught artist. Proud of her rich, Mètis heritage which informs much of her art work, she has focused primarily on acrylic painting and working with mixed media since 2002. Recently, she has begun incorporating her dreams, and giving them conscious expression. Staci holds a B.A. from the University of Alberta in History of Art, Design, and Visual Culture. Staci’s art works can be viewed at www.facebook.com/stacipoirier71

**Rick Belden** is the author of *Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood*, widely used by therapists, counselors, and men’s groups as an aid in the exploration of masculine psychology and men’s issues. His second book, *Scapegoat’s Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within*, is currently awaiting publication. He lives in Austin, Texas. Excerpts from Rick’s books, poetry, essays, and video are available at www.rickbelden.com

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**Copyright © 2008 by Rick Belden. Excerpted from Scapegoat’s Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within.**
In the dream, I wield the bow in my left hand and the arrow in my right. It’s not exactly an arsenal, but it will suffice. Besides, I’m not really hunting in the strict sense; this is more of a quest, though I don’t really know what my target is. I’m here alone in a deserted cityscape, definitely seeking something.

I begin by fitting the notch to the string, raising the bow and letting the arrow fly. It sails a distance and falls to the pavement. I run after the arrow, retrieve it, and shoot it again. I do this three or four times. Then the arrow lands near a dead heron that is lying on the ground. I run up to the arrow and see yet another dead heron, not far away. Then another. I run from heron to heron as if following a trail, soon arriving at an opening in dense shrubbery. It is a narrow tunnel, in fact, but tall enough for me to stand upright. I enter the tunnel.

Two more dead herons lie in the tunnel, as if still marking the trail. There is no doubt that I must follow it. The further I advance into the depths of the tunnel, the closer and narrower it becomes, until I am close to crawling. Then the path widens and I enter a kind of gallery, such as will occasionally occur in deep caves. Ahead of me I see a formal doorway, on either side of which stand two fierce and resplendent herons. They are quite alive, exuding vitality and shimmering with iridescent, peacock colors. I also notice that, paradoxically, these live herons are also statues or sculptures—like icons, perhaps, or living patterns.

As I face the doorway I am filled with an intuition—"knowledge"—of what lies on the other side of the threshold: a realm of Absolute Reality, or Pure Possibility. I realize that, if I were to open the door and step across to the other side, I would in some sense die. I notice the thicket surrounding me magically coming alive, like the sentient brambles of a fairy-tale, closing in on me. I flee the shrinking tunnel and the dream ends.

The Autonomy of Dreams . . .

I have presented this decades-old dream because the dream itself demanded it of me. As I mulled over which dream to consider for this essay, it claimed my attention by pushing its way to the front of the dream-queue like an alpha-animal insisting on being fed first. When unconscious contents behave like insistent persons or creatures in this way, I listen, for I have long-since learned to respect the autonomy, even the superiority, of dreams.

"Dreams demand of us an unusual degree of cultivation. They compel us—if we take them seriously—to learn something about cultural and religious history, mythology, symbols, how things work..."

After thirty or so years of considering this dream, I have not reached any sense of finality about it. Would the doorway at the end of the dream have led me into the beginning of something larger—a glimpse into future potentials? At any rate, I was a neophyte at the time—witness my flight from the tunnel and therefore the dream. But the dream continues to reverberate in my waking life like a cannon-shot from a dreadnought, fired across the bow of my intentions. Decades later, I can still feel its portentous echoes. There is not enough space here to treat this dream exhaustively—it extends in too many directions and on too many levels. I would like to comment, though, on a few of its aspects.

The Bow and Arrow . . .

When I first awoke from the dream I didn’t realize what a powerful archetype the bow and arrow constitute in the human imagination, but I would soon find out. That’s one of the benefits of dream study, for dreams demand of us an unusual degree of cultivation. They compel us—if we take them seriously—to learn something about cultural and religious history, mythology, symbols, how things work, the many levels on which images operate, the relationships between different phenomena, the subtle, poetic correspondences, etc.

The bow and arrow, it turns out, have probably been in use for at least 60,000 years. That’s sixty millennia of playing, tinkering, fiddling, observing, shaping, teaching, refining and practicing—not to mention all the life-and-death uses to which bows and arrows have been put. This kind of activity over millennia—like striking sparks for a fire or wearing an animal skin for warmth—is bound to etch deep grooves in the human imagination, a phenomenon that is central to Jung’s theories regarding archetypes. So we see the arrow-like solar rays on the golden crowns of kings. We see Cupid and his love-darts, passion made visible. We admire Bernini’s voluptuous depiction in marble of St. Teresa of Avila in her ecstasy, the angel lovingly brandishing an arrow with which he pierces her heart, filling her with Divine Love. Examples beyond number abound.

But quite apart from their obvious uses in hunting and warfare, the bow and arrow also symbolize, in my mind, the presence of something deeper still, more fundamental and primary, even, than the terrible paradox of killing to live. I see in the simple-but-sophisticated Stone Age technology of bow and arrow an archetypal symbol of the evolutionary groping
of the universe, where darkness itself, embodied in all its creaturely forms, reaches toward the light. I can also see in this same forward longing a simultaneous bending back of eros toward its divine source. In elevated spiritual terms we could call this the longing of the Creature for the Creator, like an erotic instinct toward life, an impulse flowing in all directions and on which entire religions and cultures are based. To me, this evolutionary instinct, at once physical and spiritual, underlies all the killing and mating and feeding. It is the gist of McGlashan’s quote in the opening epigraph, his intuition that “with the birth of human consciousness there was born, like a twin, the impulse to transcend it.”

There is a passage in Jung’s essay “The Psychology of the Child Archetype” that echoes this subtle insight. Referring to the symbolism of the divine child motif, Jung calls it “the deepest, most ineluctable urge in every being, namely, the urge to realize itself.”

Self-realization, in this sense, is equivalent to a rapprochement with the divine, a coming face-to-face with, or at least a siding toward, God. Hence the cryptic biblical assertion that “man was made in God’s image.” And, indeed, Jung’s psychological and cultural researches have shown that, at certain levels of psychic depth, one can no longer distinguish between Self-images and God-images. And in a resonant cross-cultural parallel, Zen archers understand that the spiritual, contemplative aspect of their discipline of archery amounts to a paradoxical letting go of the ego — no thoughts, no illusions — in order to hit the larger target of oneself.

This fundamental impulse — let’s call it a longing for the light — is in everyone. But it is not given to everyone, putting it mildly, to spend their lives chasing after it, following the arrow over hill and dale in search of the divine. That is the province, it would seem, of questing spiritual pilgrims like me and, perhaps, you.

The Trail of Dead Herons . . .

The arrow of my dream led me to a trail of dead herons, a series of hints planted in my path like Easter eggs — evidence of some fertile mystery to come and a confirmation that I was on the right track. The fact that the herons are dead suggests that I am traveling away from the day-world of normal life toward some other kind of paradoxically awakened state. That was not my reaction when I first woke up with the dream, however. I was frankly alarmed by the image, since I regard the heron as my soul-bird. I had to pause, reminding myself that in dreams death is symbolic. Furthermore, it is relative. What dies in a dream can come back to life. And death, of course, is always a pre-condition of re-birth — the essential significance of the archaic Easter rites.

Nevertheless, it was not for me to decide, death or no death, because the dream, on its own cognizance, had constructed this trail of death-images. It even intensified the trail, for the number of dead herons rose, as I made my way deeper into the dream. In following the trail I was being led away from this life, toward some kind of death. And how could I follow the dream’s own trajectory if I allowed myself to be dissuaded by fear of the image of dead herons? This is something that often occurs in dreams: We reach a crucial point where our progress depends on how we relate to the obstacle raised by our own fear.

Entering the Tunnel . . .

I would have to persist, then, if I wanted to stay with the dream: I would have to enter the tunnel — the point at which the path becomes excruciatingly narrow, the razor’s edge of the mystic. For the more conscious we become, or the closer we get to God, or to the Self, or to the Philosopher’s Stone, or to the Doorway, the less leeway there is for error. This tightening process, paradoxically, loosens the ego from its own restrictions, at least for a time.

The tunnel also required a no-turning-back decisiveness, like the moment in the Holy Grail myth when Parsifal the Fool plunges into the dark forest. The proud knights, mounted atop their impressive chargers, hesitate to take that plunge. They are wary of the humiliation of dismounting and proceeding on foot. In that case, ego-pride is the obstacle.

The Doorway . . .

The tunnel led me to the doorway, with its two heron guardians. This is the threshold, the boundary, on the other side of which lies a different order of reality. According to the dream, it was “absolute reality,” and I have no reason to doubt that. It’s just that getting to the other side would require dying.

Here I stood in the dream, then, at the brink of a revelation, like an initiate into a mystery cult. The fact that I did not cross the threshold in the dream says something about my state of readiness at the time of the dream: To wit, I was not yet ready. Perhaps I was still dragging unconscious childhood fears with me; or perhaps it was the lingering trauma of having already tasted the proximity of physical death in a severe auto accident years before the dream. Even when crossing the border between the conscious and unconscious, as in dreaming, the ego-body seems to remain protective of its own substance and fearful of its demise. Years of experience crossing the bridge between the conscious and unconscious, working in the terrain of dreams, would elapse before I was consciously prepared to pass over to the other side. When I finally did so, it was not in a dream but in an active imagination.

Crossing the Threshold . . .

It happened just a few years ago. For some time, I had been thinking and reading about lucid dreams, active imagination, shamanic activities and such topics. One day, as I was reading, the bow-and-arrow dream suddenly came to mind and I decided at that moment to cross the threshold. I put the book down and closed my eyes.

Soon I was back in the tunnel, in the clearing, standing before the heron guardians and the doorway. Without hesitation I opened the door and stepped across.

I immediately found myself flying at great speed through the blackness of outer space, into vast distances. At one
point some black birds flapped toward me as if trying to frighten me off, but I brushed them aside and kept on zooming. Then the thought occurred to me: Why am I zooming through outer space? I want to go back to the doorway and look through it again, only this time I want to look through it from this side.

As many out-of-body accounts testify, no sooner is something thought than it is done. So it was with me. I found myself back at the open doorway, but still on this other side. I received a shock, however, when I looked back through the opening, because what I saw there was myself—still at the threshold! There I stood, the questing pilgrim in all his imperfect glory—his sincerity, his doubt, his weaknesses and strengths, his intense desire to communicate with the divine.

I crossed back over the threshold and took him in my arms. I felt an immense love for this person, and always had. I put my hands on his shoulders, turned him around and began walking him out of the tunnel, back toward the waking world. We walked step for step, he in front, I behind. Then I began to float wherever he went. I received a shock, no sooner is something thought than it is done. So it was with me. I found myself back at the dream, and always would be, accompanying him wherever he went.

I emerged from the fading vision, in tears.

The Other Side . . .

The outcome of that unplanned, imaginal experiment confirmed what I had intuited in the dream about the other side: I had entered some unqualified state or realm, and the notion of pure potential that had come to me in the dream, suited it quite well. Should I call what I experienced in the active imagination an epiphany, a theophany, or an angelophany? Any one of them will do. But by whatever name, the experience has altered my views about the nature of reality, even touching on the relations between life and death—a topic for another essay. But an intriguing question remains to this day: Who was I, when I stood on the other side looking at myself?

Hijacked by a Dream . . .

I said above that I chose to write about the bow-and-arrow dream—or did I capitulate?—because the dream itself demanded it. I want to emphasize that, because dreams so often behave as if they have a mind of their own. I would even say that dreams are more intelligent than we are, they see more than we do and they know more than we do. They come to us laden with intentions—despite Freud’s disparaging statement that “the unconscious can only wish” and they seem to encompass aspects and potentials of our future before we have even lived them. In this regard dreams conform more to Jung’s hypothesis regarding the prospective aspect of dreams than to Freud’s hypothesis of wishing.

“A dream, due to its dynamic, symbolic nature, never yields to final analysis; it maintains its elemental mystery to the end”

The images and motifs in dreams weave in and out of the threads of our waking lives, like warp and weft, creating a mysterious tapestry whose larger, panoramic and visionary images fully reveal themselves to us only over time. And I cannot separate the dream from the active imagination that, however belatedly, seemed to complete the dream. Dreams elucidate and reflect our feelings, emotions, impulses, desires, thoughts, ideas and attitudes before we are even aware of them, bundling them into meaningful, purposeful packets of images soaked in history and culture, biology and anatomy, philosophy and religion—even humor, puns and etymologies.

A dream, due to its dynamic, symbolic nature, never yields to final analysis; it maintains its elemental mystery to the end. This particular dream—the bow and arrow leading to a doorway to the absolute—is one of those. Decades old, it came back to me with surprising force, hijacking my attention as soon as I addressed myself to this essay. It is my responsibility, in this essay and beyond, to continue my efforts to catch up with the dream, which has been way ahead of me all along, and still is.

The Questing Pilgrim . . .

The fate of the questing spiritual pilgrim, it seems, is to follow the arrow where it leads, to resist panic when confronted by images of death, to squeeze through the narrow passage of the tunnel, to stand at the threshold of the doorway to the Absolute and, sooner or later, to cross over to the other side and bring back a report. Freuds might see in this entire progression—all the images of tunnel-entering and squeezing-through—a return to the womb, chalking it up to infantile impulses. I disagree.

But, to an extent, the dream-trajectory does resemble, metaphorically, a reversal of the birth progression, in the sense of going back to the source. As such, it touches on the secret of re-birth. For the spiritual pilgrim, home is in the orient, the point at which the rising sun appears, the place where we all originated, where we were born, where we began. Symbolically speaking, then, knowing where home is, in that spiritual sense, is to be oriented. Think how disoriented our culture has become, over the past few centuries, for having lost touch with this primal truth.

The visionary experience of myself in two different forms, standing face-to-face on either side of the doorway, amounted to a radical re-orientation for me. By finally opening the door and crossing the threshold, I came to know something about the other self who seems to belong to that other side. It was as if my earthly and celestial selves had finally met face-to-face. This is one way to interpret the Zen archer’s intention of aiming at the target of himself. There are many other traditions, metaphors or narratives that describe this kind of experience. For now, let it suffice to say that they exist, and that anyone who casts a net in these mythic waters is likely to bring them up.

Each of us must decide how far we will go in the process of tracking our images back, down and in, re-tracing them through their deeper layers, to their original, higher valence and their ultimate source—a process Henri Corbin calls ta’wil. Whether we think of ourselves as psychological or spiritual seekers, or both—are these modalities so different, in the end?—it is for each of us to file our report on what we find in our individual quest—to bring back an offering, as it were, a strand of Golden Fleece.
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“Spirit is the living body seen from within, and the body is the outer manifestation of the living spirit.”

- Carl Gustav Jung, Modern Man in Search of Soul
At a 1935 lecture in London, Jung stated the following:

I consider my contribution to psychology to be my subjective confession. It is my personal psychology, my prejudice that I see things in such and such a way. So far as we admit our personal prejudice, we are really contributing towards an objective psychology.¹

In the spirit of Jung’s claim, I will begin this essay with my own confession about how my yoga practice became a defense against my psychological life.

Like many young adults, when I reached the age of 18, I set off at a fast sprint from all that was familiar towards the promise of adventure—a casting away of all that was associated with home. The spirit of seeking soon became a seeking of spirit. I was introduced to the practice of yoga, and my longing for change was quickly translated into a steadfast dedication to the yoga tradition. I held tight to the practice—it became my panacea, a cure all, a path that offered a vision of the very pinnacle of development.

My relationship with yoga eventually brought me to the fertile ground of India—a place that seems to have a magnetic pull for the wandering spirit, offering promises of transcendence, enlightenment, mentorship, and peak experiences. In a period of four years, I took two extended trips to India, seeking to satiate the unmistakable longings of spirit.

Although India was generous with her bounty, I returned home with my needs unmet, fantasies deflated. The high I had once gotten from yoga was rapidly diminishing—a fall from the peak marked by depression, irritability, and existential confusion.

With time, I began to realize that behind the fervor and dedication to spiritual development, my psychological life had become withered and dry. What falls into the shadow of the wanderer is that which is already present. The figures of imagination, so close to home, were suffering from disregard and devaluation brought about by years of flight into a spiritual regime.

My psychological life was marked with an acidic self-attacking style, obsessed with the tumultuous struggle to create meditative stillness. I had recurrent dreams of fighting with old friends from my hometown. They were furious with me. My flight left them responsible for carrying my pain—the unfinished business of psyche. Despite their persistent presence at night, the compulsivity and rigidity with which I engaged a highly structured yoga practice coalesced into a violent defense against these spontaneous images that were attempting to push through the membrane of consciousness.

In the fall of 2008, I was shaken awake by the following dream:

*In the fall of 2008, I was shaken awake by the following dream:*

> I am at my mother’s house standing at the counter in the kitchen. As a birthday gift, my girlfriend gave me a black snake tightly bound in a package and seemingly lifeless. I unwrapped the snake and it began to unfold and fill out. I read the package. The snake is supposed to be harmless. I went to the bathroom, intending to keep the snake contained. The snake crawled up the ceiling to a basket where it found a big lizard. At first the lizard wanted to mate with the snake. Then it went into a frenzy attempting to eat it. I seized the lizard and searched desperately for a container. I pushed on the lid, forcing the lizard inside. It reacted with intense anger and tried to get free. Suddenly it stopped resisting and began excreting saliva like stuff from its exoskeleton. I killed it by pressing too hard. Meanwhile, the snake was let loose in the house.

As I was trying to find the snake, an old cat jumped out of a vase. It looked awful and had shit hanging from its ass. I landed on a newspaper I was holding and died. Somehow I had lost the cat and forgot about it. I found the snake and shouted for a container. It bit me several times and sprayed venom at me. I put the snake in a cardboard box and try to fold the sides in. It resisted my efforts with tremendous force, seeking to escape my grip. I considered letting it go in the backyard, but I decided it might disturb the ecosystem. The cardboard was not holding. I looked at my hands and saw drops of blood at the bite marks. I began searching for the package the snake came in to see if it really was harmless—then I woke up.

Looking back on this dream, it appears evident that these vivid images were the living embodiments of the tortured, erratic, and angry personas of psyche, tired of their forced containment. These creatures were furious, and they desperately wanted their freedom. The tight confines of spiritual practice could not withstand the fury and instinctual rage embodied in the snake and the lizard. When tightly packaged, the snake is apparently harmless, not to mention lifeless. Wrapped so tight in the packaging of mass production, it evokes in my waking mind a feeling of disgust and shame—a move so far from the autonomous nature of Snake. Echoing this theme of abuse, the forgotten cat dies from neglect, trapped in a vase. Shit hangs from its ass. The lizard displays its instinctual urge to mate and kill. The frenetic dream ego, anxious in the face of instinct, tries to forcibly contain these urges, killing the lizard in the process.

The dream depicts the unmistakable power and kinetic energy actively embodied in the images of psyche. It is easy to see that an equally powerful energy is required if the ego attempts to contain and control the psyche. However, as the dream so vividly depicted, the instinctual forces never simply disappear. The repressed is bound to return either.
through symptom, complex projections, or violent acting out, and as the dream stated the ecosystem will be disturbed.

Having now formed a more respectful relationship with psychic images, and through a great deal of personal reflection on my experience with the yoga tradition, I have formulated a critique that appears to have relevance for the rapidly expanding population identified as yoga practitioners. Specifically, I have come to believe that yoga has become unnecessarily narrow through the widespread neglect and devaluing of psychological thinking and the autonomous images of dream, fantasy, and reverie. The yoga tradition, as I have experienced it, places aspiring practitioners in danger of becoming blind to their own psychological idiosyncrasies, and unless the tradition makes a valued place for the phenomena of psyche, practitioners are bound to experience psychological stagnation, neurotic symptoms, and violent eruptions of unconscious material.

In the remainder of this essay, I will attempt to highlight elements of the yoga tradition that may reinforce rigid psychological defenses and cut one off from the rich depth of the psyche. In addition, I would like to share concrete suggestions that will make room for the dynamic and spontaneous occurrence of image within a yoga practice.

Beyond a doubt, yoga has proven beneficial for millions of modern individuals. My point is not to undermine or argue with these benefits or the profound impact yoga practice can have on a person’s life. My intention here, as the title states, is to look at the shadow of the yoga tradition. I will be coming from the depth psychological sensibility that everything casts a shadow, has a dark side; and the brighter the light, the darker the shadow. Such is the case with the luminous light of the yoga tradition.

To explain further, I will take up a dialectical postulation by Hillman in his essay titled Peaks and Vales. Hillman argues for the fundamental difference between spiritual discipline and psychotherapy by differentiating the needs of spirit and soul. I would like to use these distinct archetypal propensities to present the need for a yoga practice that “keeps soul in mind.”

Hillman described spirit as pertaining to peak experiences, transcendence, air, and mountainous height—from which everything below appears unified, parts of a whole. Spirit bears a close relationship to Apollo, the far-sighted, the god of light and rationale foresight, a god of purity, deliberation, and discipline, twin to the chaste huntress Artemis. The spirit, in its fantasy of flight, its yearning for transcendence, and its relentless push toward the peaks, interdigitates with the dynamics of the puer aeretmus, the eternal youth embodied in our mythologies of the highflying Icarus, Phaeton, and Peter Pan.

Hillman characterized the puer as “narcissistic, inspired, effeminate, phallic, inquisitive, inventive, passive, fiery, and capricious.” The puer makes himself felt in the obsessional self-involvement of spiritual practice. More essentially though, he is the all-consuming fire of spirit. It is he who fuels the intoxicated longing, or pothos, inherent to any spiritual discipline.

The Shadow of Yoga

Hillman’s soul/spirit distinction places soul in the deep valley below the towering mountain of spirit. In the valley many things are hidden. There is multiplicity, relationship, particularity, fogginess, and mudliness. There dwell the nymphs, fairies, leprechauns, ancestors, and gnomes, the mythic characters of imagination—a retinue of voices and opinions. It’s where you get messy and messed with. Here you find the bitter fecundity of tears. The valley of soul contains the many experiences disavowed by spirit. This is the phenomenology of soul, and by walking this valley, encountering events that can be digested into embodied experiences, falling into the murk and mud, rubbing shoulders with the multitude of characters and the challenges and blessings constellated in these relationships, one is given the opportunity to make soul. Here we follow Keats in his oft-quoted assertion that soul is not some static reified feature; soul is a way of seeing, a way of being in and with the world, and it is something that must be made out of one’s encounters with life—hence his now famous line “Call the world if you please, The vale of Soul-making.” Then you will find out the use of the world.

The practice of yoga favors a one-sided privileging of spirit over and against soul. This one-sidedness is not only part and parcel of a collective and ubiquitous spirit complex, it is validated and supported by the ancient tradition from which contemporary yoga stems. In this tradition, the practitioner aggressively trains the mind, takes it off its natural meandering, instinctual course, and sets it on a contra naturam course toward the mountain top—a steadfast pursuit of psychophysical cessation and spiritual realization.

The etymological root of the word yoga is yuj, which means to yoke: to harness, to unite. Before the term was used to denote a particular practice or religious aim, yoga was a word used to describe the dangerous and difficult task of yoking a horse in a state of battle frenzy. When preparing for battle the charioteer would execute the task of placing the yoke, the harness, a locus of control, around the neck of the violently manic warhorse. This was a task that required great skill. When yoked, the power of the horse could be properly directed. When free, the horse’s energy and behavior was, from the perspective of the charioteer, wild and scattered, driven by instinct as opposed to refined discipline. This analogy evokes the central sensibility of the yoga tradition. The wild, instinctual, out of control mind, requires a steadfast harness, the act of yoga, and the skillful control of the charioteer, the yoga practitioner. Once harnessed, the energy of the mind is then channeled in a single-minded pursuit, which according to the Classical Yoga tradition is the cessation of the turnings of the mind.

The doctrines and practices aimed at the suspension of the functions of mind has withstood the powerful impact of Western appropriation and remains at the very core of contemporary yoga, resulting in an unconscious and at times destructive repression of the animal psy-
The tradition of Classical Yoga, as a key exemplar of the single-focused sensibility of spirit, allows no room for, and in fact, actively undermines a relationship to the surprising, instinctual, morally relative, ego-disturbing influence of soul. When engaged in a disciplined pursuit of unity, what happens to multiplicity? What happens to the outliers of consciousness—the things that don’t fit into a nice, tight, unified package? They become split off, repressed, angry, and unconsciously enacted.

The yogic ideal fosters and exaggerates identification with the longings of the puer-infused spirit. When the propensities of the puer are literalized, when the reflective function is absent, the inner life of the individual dries up for lack of psychic water. This dryness is the felt presence of the puer’s always-present counterpart—the senex or old man.

The influence of the senex is felt when the high ideals and ephemeral longings of the puer are consolidated and grounded into regularity of practice and concentrated discipline. Whereas this meeting of high ideals with intense discipline can certainly result in a steadfast climb towards the mountain peak, without attending to the poiesis of soul, the individual is in danger of falling into a life marked by rote staleness, devoid of vibrancy and richness—a harnessing of energies that chokes off the natural vibrancy and richness—a harnessing of energies that chokes off the natural vibrancy and richness—of the psyche’s images.

The yoga practitioner is encouraged by text and teacher to abide in equanimity, to be free from attachments, yet perpetually marked by rote staleness, devoid of energies that chokes off the natural vibrancy and richness—a harnessing of energies that chokes off the natural vibrancy and richness—of the psyche’s images.

It means that the search and questing be a psychological search and questing, a psychological adventure. It means that the messianic and revolutionary impulse connect first with the soul and be concerned first with the spontaneous and ego-dystonic, back to the irrational enigmatic images of the dream, and the unflattering fantasies that fill our imagination. As primary voices of soul, these phenomena provide the raw elements from which a profound relationship between soul and spirit, valley and mountain, may grow. As Hillman argued, the high-flying energy of spirit falls in love with the depth of soul through imaginative reflection and an aesthetic appreciation of the psyche’s images.

The foundation for a dialectical relationship with image is already in place within the yoga tradition. Hatha Yoga, the branch of yoga from which we derive modern posture-oriented yoga practice, quickly teaches the individual the art of dialogue with the autonomous voices of the body—a process of adjusting the pose in search of the perfect threshold of psychophysical intensity. In a refined practice of postures there is a subtle and fluid conversation occurring among the multiple elements of one’s being: movements of energy, sensation, breath, and the will of the body play on the screen of consciousness. The practice becomes a fine art of listening to the polycentric dynamics of being—entities that are clearly distinct from the will and volition of the ego-mind. It is this very skill of listening, mutual modification, and exploration of intensity that rests at the heart of a reflective relationship with soul.

In addition, yoga practitioners and teachers would do well to expand their study of the yoga tradition to include the vast body of Indian mythology. This rich storehouse of story brings the coloring of imagination to complement the achronic ideals present within the spiritual philosophies. The exploits, battles, failures, triumphs, humor, sex, and sexuality of the Gods can provide yoga practitioners with an archetypal basis for their life experience—giving transpersonal depth to the variety of experience. Ganesha’s sweet tooth, Shiva’s voracious sexuality hidden just behind his ascetic exterior, Kali’s wrathful violence and loving embrace, Krishna’s sensual nature and trickster pranks, Brama’s foolish boons, Ravana’s appetite for destruction, these stories ignite the imagination and give flavor to a tradition that can be desperately austere. Mythology balances the neti neti of spirit-centered philosophy with a generous provision of space; while spirit says no, not this, the mythic imagination appeals to soul with a resounding, “Yes, this too has place, may find its archetypal significance, belongs in a myth.”

As Slater noted myth is “found in fragments, versions, and contradictory details.” These characteristics balance the self-assuredness that comes with identifying with a school or philosophy. The multiplicity presented in myth excites the soul with potentials and affords the space needed to bring out the many facets of character.

This move towards soul, valuing myth, fantasy, dream images, and reverie—meeting these phenomena on their own terms just as the Hatha Yoga practitioner meets the body on its own terms—would undoubtedly bring a rich complexity and depth to the lofty ideals and the high-flying aim of spirit. Perhaps if methods of inner work, such as dream analysis, active imagination, and mythic amplification, were adjoined with the more traditional yoga practices, Western yoga...
practitioners could enjoy the richness hiding in the depths of psyche, thus making a home for the wandering spirit in the valley of soul.

Notes


4 Hillman, Senex and Puer.

5 Ibid., 58.


7 Hillman, Senex and Puer.

8 Hillman, Re-visioning Psychology.


12 Glen Slater, introduction to Senex and Puer, by James Hillman (Putnam, Conn: Spring Publications, Inc), xix

13 Hillman, Senex and Puer.

14 Ibid., 58.

15 Hillman, Re-visioning Psychology, 69.

16 Slater, introduction to Senex and Puer, xviii.

17 Henry Corbin, Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth (Princeton University Press, 1977)

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“One thing that comes out in myths is that at the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation. The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light.”

- Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces
Introduction

Jung was fascinated by Nietzsche. From the time he first became gripped by Nietzsche’s ideas as a student in Basel to his days as a leading figure in the psychoanalytic movement, Jung read, and increasingly developed, his own thought in a dialogue with the work of Nietzsche. As the following quote from Memories, Dreams, Reflections reveals, Jung even went as far as to connect Nietzsche to what he saw as the central task underlying his life’s work:

The meaning of my existence is that life has addressed a question to me. That is a supra-personal task, which I accompany only by effort and with difficulty. Perhaps it is a question which preoccupied my ancestors, and which they could not answer? Could that be why I am so impressed by the problem on which Nietzsche foundered: the Dionysian side of life, to which the Christian seems to have lost the way? (Jung, 1965 [1961], p. 350)

Given the huge influence Nietzsche had on Jung, examining this line of influence is a project of substantial importance for the field of Jungian scholarship. It should come as no surprise, then, that a substantial amount of academic research has already been dedicated to it. While no articles have been written specifically for the field of Jungian scholarship, none of the books written about Jung and Nietzsche provide an accessible introduction to the topic. Only one short text about the topic exists – Paul Bishop’s chapter on Nietzsche and Jung in the collection of essays Jung in Contexts (1999) - but even this text is highly technical in nature, and is likely to leave the uninitiated reader feeling perplexed. This article serves to correct this imbalance by offering an introductory roadmap to the subject matter that is both clear and concise. As such, it will hopefully be the perfect point of entry into the debate for the reader with little or no previous knowledge of this important — as well as fascinating — topic.

"Jung would have been well aware of the fact that Nietzsche had gone mad towards the end of his life."

Jung’s reception of Nietzsche: preliminary explorations

On April 18, 1895, Jung enrolled as a medical student at Basel University, the same university where Nietzsche had been made a professor 26 years before. Up until this point, Jung had not read Nietzsche, even though he had been highly interested in philosophy while in secondary school. In Basel, however, Jung soon became curious about this strange figure about whom there was still much talk at the University.

As Jung himself claimed in his semi-autobiographical book Memories, Dreams, Reflections, most of the talk about Nietzsche was negative at that time, gossip almost:

Moreover, there were some persons at the university who had known Nietzsche personally and were able to retail all sorts of unflattering tidbits about him. Most of them had not read a word of Nietzsche and therefore dwelt at length on his outward foibles, for example, his putting on airs as a gentleman, his manner of playing the piano, his stylistic exaggerations. (Jung, 1965 [1961], p. 122)

As Jung related in Memories, Dreams, Reflections, he postponed reading Nietzsche, because he "was held back by a secret fear that [he] might perhaps be like him" (1965 [1961], p. 102). Jung would have been well aware of the fact that Nietzsche had gone mad towards the end of his life. As Jung himself had had frequent visions and strange dreams ever since his childhood, he perhaps worried that this was proof that he himself might also go mad. Finally, however, Jung’s curiosity got the better of him, and he started to read Nietzsche vigorously. This reading project had a huge influence on the way his early thoughts took shape. This becomes particularly obvious when one analyses the Zofingia lectures (Jung, 1883 [1896-1899]), a book which contains the transcriptions of four lectures Jung gave to the Basel student-fraternity the Zofingia society, of which he was a member during his student days. In all four of the lectures Jung repeatedly referenced the work of Nietzsche. He quoted the famous line from Zarathustra “I say to you, one must yet have chaos in himself in order to give birth to a dancing star,” and he made multiple references to Untimely Meditations, which was the first book by Nietzsche which he had read.

Although the Zofingia lectures, then, might lead one to think that Untimely Meditations had the most impact on him during this time, he later revealed that a different book deserved that particular honor — Thus Spoke Zarathustra, the reading of which Jung described as “a tremendous impression”:

When I read Zarathustra for the first time as a student of twenty-three, of course I did not understand it all, but I got a tremendous impression. I could not say it was this or that,
Jung’s Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche

though the poetical beauty of some of the chapters impressed me, but particularly the strange thought got hold of me. He helped me in many respects, as many other people have been helped by him (Jung, 1988 [1934], Vol. 1, p. 544).

When his student days were over, however, Jung gave up on his exploration of Nietzsche’s thought for a while. The complexities of life drew his attention elsewhere: he took up a position in the famous Burghölzli clinic in Zurich, and developed a collaboration and friendship with Freud. It was only when Jung had been acquainted with Freud for a number of years that he finally began to be interested in Nietzsche again. As the published letters to Freud reveal, Jung became particularly interested in Nietzsche’s concept of the Dionysian. Take for example the following passage, from a letter to Freud dated the 31st of December 2009:

“I am turning over and over in my mind the problem of antiquity. It’s a hard nut... I’d like to tell you many things about Dionysos were it not too much for a letter. Nietzsche seems to have intuited a great deal of it (The Freud-Jung Letters, 1979, pp. 279-280).

Jung’s fascination with Nietzsche’s concept of the Dionysian, as the letters he wrote to Freud in this period reveal, suddenly arises in 1909. What then, one might ask, brought on this sudden interest in one of Nietzsche’s most famous concepts? Although we cannot be entirely sure, I consider it highly likely that this interest was sparked by Otto Gross (1877-1820), who Jung first met in May 1908.

Otto Gross — Nietzschean, physician, psychoanalyst, adulterer and notorious promoter of polygamy — was admitted to the Burghölzli psychiatric hospital in May 1908. He was to be treated for his relentless addiction to cocaine and morphine, and fell under the personal supervision of Jung himself (Noll, 1994, p. 153). Gross had, when still in a better condition, been a disciple of Freud, and had been regarded by many (including Freud himself) as a man of great intelligence and promise. He endorsed a very radical philosophy of life, which perhaps can best be explained as a mixture of Nietzscheanism and psychoanalysis.

According to Gross, Nietzsche provided the metaphors, Freud provided the technique (Noll, 1997, p. 78). Psychoanalysis, for him, was a tool that had the ability to enable the sort of anti-moral, Dionysian revolution he thought Nietzsche preached. In his attempt to live the lifestyle he thought Freud and Nietzsche implied, Gross — apparently a most charismatic personality — urged many to live out their instincts without shame. In Gross’s own case, these instincts led him to dabble in drugs, group-sex and polygamy (Noll, 1994, p. 153).

“What Gross did do, most likely, is install in Jung an even more urgent sensitivity to the problem with which Nietzsche had battled: how to deal with the Dionysian side of life”

By the time Jung met Gross in 1908, Jung was, as we have seen above, already influenced by Nietzsche, albeit only on a philosophical level, not a practical one. He was, at that time, happily married, still tied to the Christian beliefs of his childhood, and a successful member — if not leader — of the psychoanalytic movement. He was, in other words, a far cry from the wild Dionysian Nietzscheanism that Gross practiced and preached, and it comes therefore as no surprise that his initial judgment of Gross’s thought was one of distaste (Noll, 1994, p. 158). However, after Jung had treated Gross for a while, the disgust gave way to admiration, as the following letter to Freud reveals:

“In spite of everything he is my friend, for at bottom he is a very good and fine man with an unusual mind. . . . For in Gross I discovered many aspects of my true nature, so that he often seemed like my twin brother — except for the dementia praecox. (The Freud-Jung Letters, 1979, p. 156)

Whether Jung having fallen somewhat under Gross’s spell influenced his renewed fascination with Nietzsche and the Dionysian is a question to which we will probably never have the answer. In my opinion, however, the fact that both instances coincide does make this likely to be true. Gross probably functioned as a catalyst for Jung’s heightened interest in Nietzsche and his concept of the Dionysian. The knowledge of Nietzsche’s philosophy was already there for Jung, but Gross amplified this knowledge and made Jung more sensitive to its application on a practical level. Needless to say, Jung never became such a radical as Gross was. What Gross did do, most likely, is install in Jung an even more urgent sensitivity to the problem with which Nietzsche had battled: how to deal with the Dionysian side of life. There was one work by Nietzsche in particular which Jung turned to in this period to investigate that question, and that was the book which had tremendously impacted him as a student: Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In 1914, right in the middle of the very difficult phase in his life which followed after the split with Freud (the same period during which he also wrote his famous Red book), Jung embarked on a second reading of the work, this time making lots of notes (Jung, 1988 [1934], Vol. 1, p. 259). Such was the impact that the book made on him again that in 1934, twenty years later, Jung embarked on an even more extensive reading of the book. This time, however, he chose to devote an entire seminar to it. The book that resulted from this seminar is the most elaborate source available to us for the examination of Jung’s mature thoughts on Nietzsche, and for that reason I will devote an entire section to it. It is to that section that we will now turn.

Jung’s seminar on Nietzsche’s Zarathustra

At the time of the seminar (1934-1939), Nietzsche was increasingly being associated with National Socialism (Jung, 1997 [1934], p. xviii). This made a seminar on Nietzsche’s Zarathustra a sensitive issue, especially for Jung himself, who had already been accused of National Socialist affinities more than once at that time. Despite all of this, Jung still decided to persist in his discussion of this now controversial work. In the early sessions of the seminar, Jung clarified why he felt that Zarathustra was deserving of this attention. The collective unconscious, as Jung reminded his audience, operates by a mechanism that in Jungian language is called compensation. It will try to correct conscious attitudes that are too narrow or one-sided by offering, by means of archetypal content, a compensatory
alternative. Zarathustra, according to Jung, consisted of such archetypal, compensatory content. It was therefore a book which not only said something about Nietzsche, but also about the zeitgeist of Western culture at that particular moment in history. Nietzsche, as Jung put it, “got the essence of his time” (Jung, 1988 [1934], Vol. 1, p. 69).

Jung labeled the process that results from the compensatory nature of the unconscious enantiodromia, a term he borrowed from Heraclites to denote a process of alternation between opposites. When the psychological system has reached a certain extreme, the unconscious will intervene by means of an archetypal compensation, thus causing the psychological system to change its course towards the opposite of that extreme. Jung not only saw this principle as underlying the psychological life of the individual, but as underlying the process of life itself:

“In the process of life and becoming, the pairs of opposites come together . . . the idea that next to the best is the worst. So if a bad thing gets very bad, it may transform into something good. . . . This is the natural enantiodromia. (Jung, 1997 [1934], p. 309).

Jung believed it was this process of enantiodromia that had been the driving force behind the creation of Zarathustra. According to Jung, Nietzsche’s age (and in many ways, Jung’s own age too) was an age characterized by a narrow and one-sided conscious attitude. At the end of the Christian era, life had become repressed, too overly focused on the Apollonian side of life, to put it in Nietzsche’s own terms. It was Nietzsche who, according to Jung, was among the first to recognize this fact, and who expressed that a part of human nature was not being lived (the instincts, the Dionysian side of life). Because he felt these problems of his own time so deeply, the collective unconscious presented him with a compensatory, archetypal vision, therewith starting the process of enantiodromia, of a new beginning:

Nietzsche was exceedingly sensitive to the spirit of the time; he felt very clearly that we are living now in a time when new values should be discovered . . . Nietzsche felt that, and instantly, naturally, the whole symbolic process . . . began in himself (Jung, 1988 [1934], Vol. 1, p. 279).

Jung, then, saw Zarathustra not as a conscious, deliberate construction of Nietzsche. Rather, he saw it as the result of a sort of dream state into which Nietzsche had entered, which culminated in a work of archetypal content that stood in a compensatory relation to the age in which it had been created. Nietzsche, because he was so sensitive, was among the first to have such an experience, but it was Jung’s conviction that the very archetypal content that had captivated Nietzsche would later enthrall all of Europe.

“When the psychological system has reached a certain extreme, the unconscious will intervene by means of an archetypal compensation, thus causing the psychological system to change its course towards the opposite of that extreme”

So what archetypal, compensatory content is it that Jung claims we can find in Zarathustra? In the seminar, we find Jung claiming again and again that the essence of the book is characterized by a single archetype: the archetype of Wotan. Jung named this archetype after a Germanic God who he described in another text as “a God of storm and agitation, an unleasher of passion and lust for battle, as well as a sorcerer and master of illusion who is woven into all secrets of an occult nature” (Jung, 1936). It is this archetype which, according to Jung, lies at the root of Zarathustra:

It is Wotan who gets him, the old wind God breaking forth, the god of inspiration, of madness, of intoxication and wildness, the god of the Berserkers, those wild people who run amok (Jung, 1988 [1934], Vol. 2, p. 1227).

This archetype first revealed itself in the work of Nietzsche, but had, by the time of the Seminar, already captivated almost everyone in Europe, according to Jung. He associated it with the revived interest in paganism and eroticism, but also with the disasters of war that would so strongly characterize the first half of the 20th century:

Now old Wotan is in the center of Europe, you can see all the psychological symptoms which he personifies. . . . Fascism in Italy is old Wotan again, it is all Germanic blood down there (Jung, 1997 [1934], p. 196).

Or consider this quote from Memories, Dreams, Reflections, which also sums up Jung’s thoughts on the relationship between Wotan, Nietzsche and the disasters of war quite well:

[The] Dionysian experience of Nietzsche . . . might better be ascribed to the god of ecstasy, Wotan. The hubris of the Wilhelmine era alienated Europe and paved the way for the disaster of 1914. In my youth, I was unconsciously caught up by this spirit of the age (Jung, 1965 [1961], p. 262).

Both quotes illustrate very clearly that Jung saw the archetype of Wotan as an explanatory cause for both World War I and Fascism. The second quote, however, also illustrates something that is of much more importance to our discussion here: Jung related Wotan directly to the Dionysian. Indeed, when we examine Jung’s discussion of Wotan in the seminar on Zarathustra, he makes explicit the fact that he considers the two related:

Therefore one can say he [Wotan, RR] is very similar to the Thracian Dionysos, the god of orgiastic enthusiasm(Jung, 1997 [1934], p. 196).

Now we have finally come full circle. As we have seen in the first section of this article, the work of Nietzsche that Jung was most interested in was Zarathustra, and the Nietzschean concept he found the most important was the Dionysian. Here, then, do these two strands finally come together. Zarathustra, according to Jung, was an archetypal work that stood in a compensatory relationship to the Apollonian age in which it had been created, and the archetype which characterized it most of all was the archetype of Wotan, or, in non-Germanic terms, Dionysos. VI

“In my youth,” Jung wrote in the passage from Memories, Dreams, Reflections quoted above, “I was unconsciously caught up by this spirit of the age” (p. 262). We can now finally come to understand what he meant by this. According to Jung, his age was characterized by the spirit of Wotan, or, in Nietzschean terms, the spirit of Dionysos, and it was in Zarathustra that he saw this spirit announce itself, after having been neglected for such a long time during the overly Apollonian era of Christianity. Zarathustra, in other words, “was the
Dionysian experience *par excellence*” (Jung, 1988 [1934], Vol. 1, p. 10).

**Conclusion**

We are now finally in a position to sketch a rough outline of the essence of Jung’s interpretation of Nietzsche. Nietzsche provided Jung both with the terminology (the Dionysian) and the case study (Zarathustra as an example of the Dionysian at work in the psyche) to help him put into words his thoughts about the spirit of his own age: an age confronted with an uprush of the Wotanic/Dionysian spirit in the collective unconscious. This, in a nutshell, is how Jung came to see Nietzsche, and explains why he was so fascinated by Nietzsche as a thinker.

A topic which still remains to be discussed, however, is in which way Nietzsche, and the concept of the Dionysian in particular, influenced Jung’s own conceptual framework. This is a topic all its own, and one which I do not have enough room for here to fully do justice. It is also a topic about which the scholars who have written about Jung’s reception of Nietzsche disagree somewhat. For myself, I have come to the conclusion that the concept from Jung’s own theoretical framework which was most explicitly influenced by Nietzsche is his concept of the shadow. Jung hypothesized that all the inferior (Jung’s term) parts of ourselves which we refuse presence in our lives — our wild and untamed instincts, as well as our unethical character traits and ideas — take on a subconscious life of their own, occasionally overtaking us when we least suspect it. According to Jung, the best way to deal with this shadow side of our personality is not to deny it, but to become conscious of it and work with it.

\[ \text{"According to Jung, the best way to deal with this shadow side of our personality is not to deny it, but to become conscious of it and work with it"} \]

abstract life force like the Dionysian. Still, if we examine the characteristics of Jung’s concept of the shadow, it becomes clear that it overlaps significantly with the concept of the Dionysian. The shadow, after all:

- Was neglected and repressed during the Christian era;
- Operates on a primitive and emotional level;
- Is also a source of vitality and inspiration, a “congenial asset” (Jung, 1918, par. 20) which represents “the true spirit of life” (Jung, 1965 [1961], p. 262).

All of these characteristics apply to Nietzsche’s concept of the Dionysian as well. Needless to say, this overlap could merely be a coincidence: it could be the case that Jung developed his concept of the shadow without any direct line of influence from Nietzsche’s ideas whatsoever. As I will argue in a forthcoming paper, however, there is clear evidence to be found in texts from the early stages of Jung’s career that Jung developed his concept of the human shadow with Nietzsche’s concept of the Dionysian in the back of his mind. Nietzsche, then, was of profound importance for Jung. Not only did Jung see Nietzsche’s work as essential for anyone wanting to grasp the essence of the time in which he himself lived, Nietzsche’s ideas also had a strong influence on the way his own concepts took shape. Understanding Jung’s relationship to this extraordinary German thinker is therefore of prime importance for anyone who wants to truly understand Jung himself. Although coming to a complete understanding of the exact nature of this line of influence is a complex task, the roadmap presented in this paper will hopefully have made it more manageable.

**Notes**

1 Jung’s favorite philosophers up until that time had been Kant, Schopenhauer and Plato.
2 As is well-known, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* is NOT Jung’s autobiography. Although Jung wrote sections of the book himself, most of the real legwork was done by his secretary, Aniela Jaffé, who based most of the passages she wrote on interviews she conducted with Jung in the period before his death. As Sonu Shamdasani, in *C. G. Jung: A Biography in Books*, has pointed out, the final version of the book was assembled after Jung’s death, and included many editorial changes made by Jaffé and the Jung family that had not been approved by Jung himself. This means that *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* is a controversial work, the content of which cannot be taken at face value. It should be noted, however, that the passages about Nietzsche in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* are in all likelihood not passages that would have been changed after Jung’s death in accordance with the wishes of the Jung family, as they do not represent anything ‘controversial’. Moreover, it is pretty much the only source available if one wants to give a historical overview of Jung’s relationship with the works of Nietzsche, which is why I make use of it in this section.
3 The Dionysian was a concept which Nietzsche first used in his book *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he contrasted it with the opposing concept of the *Apollonian*. According to Nietzsche, both of these forces are operable in human culture. The *Apollonian* he associated with reason, harmony and balance; the Dionysian, on
the other hand, he associated irrationality, drunkenness and madness. He also related it to intuition and to ecstatic union with the forces of nature.

iv Gross was up until recently somewhat of a forgotten figure; however, the recently released Hollywood film about Jung’s life, A Dangerous Method, may have changed this somewhat, as the meeting between Gross and Jung plays an important part in the story of the first half of the film.

v Jung’s alleged National Socialist sympathies are a topic unto themselves, and one with which I cannot deal here. For a good discussion of this topic see Grossman (1999).

vi Jung felt strongly that one had to stick to the traditions/myths of the culture one had been raised in. This probably explains why he preferred to refer to the Dionysian by using a more Germanic term such as Wotan (so as to better suit his own Swiss/Germanic upbringing).

Bibliography


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Sacred Art
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Wee one, brought bare into cacophony,
this emergent pantheon.
This is your place
of smell, touch, blaring light.
This is how we show our face
annoyed with your lack of social grace.
Immersed, made into a person, a defined moving space,
bound in time, mesmerized roughly, softly,
whirling colors, voices, hands demanding

Outcast from warm womb, safe discipline, of
tribal faith
to create beyond common form,
the pain of separation, bravery called,
life’s instinctual desire,
tricks of the trade.
Within this sad parade --
the human will to cure, kill, carry on
with courageous --
if the art is true, burnt pure in sacrificial
flame, aimed impeccably --
-- cathedrals of
awe and inspiration, hallmark of salvation

Taste! Be made aware
of sensation -- touch this instant a place
beyond who you've ever been.
Beyond glory,
graceful soul-wrought energy
pours through these
sacrificial clowns
poisoned by immortality.
It is for you we bleed,
we cry,
imbued with such weight -- to hold
that spark you know could set you free.

Sacred Calling
By Laurie Corzett

Cloistered for warmth in this area between.
I've learned its scenery, like lattice worked into my eyes.
Slowly turning toward a wise relief, pausing at this
portal to awesome wonderment,
pure radiant bliss
dispelling knots of pain and betrayal.
Magnetic, archetype of mystic dreams carried through
into the world of Man -- psyche searing brand,
I come to the promised land,
potent stream of prophecy.
Commanded, I lay down my burden, weight against my back
of gathered assets I was certain to require.
Freed to meet my mission, to accept desire,
immortal pleasure, the opportunity to sketch,
to draw out beauty, to paint leisurely upon prism glass.
Have I reached the bridge upon the crossroads, the glimmering?
Maggick's sea through which I now may travel, native soul
returned, having earned my keep, my long journeyman's
wage. I have looked at age, a deep reflective pond.
A wild road calls, beyond this threshold, sculpted by
oceanic power, drifts and meteors. I feel self-created destiny
shudder slowly, seismically, as I prepare

“The study of lives and the care of souls
means above all a prolonged encounter
with what destroys and is destroyed, with
what is broken and hurts”

- James Hillman,
Re-visioning Psychology
A Jungian Interpretation of the Jewish Tale Miriam’s Tambourine

By Natasha Morton

M. rie-Louise von Franz (1996) hypothesized that all fairy tales endeavor to express and to deliver into consciousness the same psychic fact; that fact which Jung called the Self, the psychic totality of an individual and also, paradoxically, the regulating center of the collective unconscious. Each individual and every nation has its own mode of experiencing this psychic reality (p.2). She also asserted through the interpretation of fairy tales we can move closer to experiencing this psychic totality. This paper will seek to interpret the 19th Century Eastern-European Jewish tale of “Miriam’s Tambourine,” and in doing so illuminate the uniqueness of Jewish fairy tales as they relate to Jewish spiritual life, as well as the similarities of Jewish and Jungian beliefs on about the psyche.

Before proceeding, it is critical to examine what sets Jewish myths and tales apart from other ethnic bodies of work. Howard Schwartz, considered by many to be the foremost expert on Jewish folktales, noted that “in general, folktales evolve until they are written down, and those written versions become the authentic text not subject to major changes” (1998, p.xxvi), whereas Jewish folktales originate from the written text of the Torah. In the forward to Schwartz’s book Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism (2004), Elliot Ginsburg identified five central concepts of the Jewish mythical imagination. The first is the grand myth, or meta-narrative, which “is to hold that this world is created as an act of divine will; that one is the heir of Abraham and Sarah; of those who endure(d) Egyptian slavery and the gifts of Redemption, who stand at the pivot of Sinaitic revelation and its Covenant, who know the joys of homecoming and the enduring dislocations of exile” (p.xxxvii). Second is that this grand myth is rooted in the Hebraic Bible. The third is the Jewish concept of interpretation, midrash, which allows for expounding of biblical narrative beyond written text and is regarded as the Oral Torah. The Jewish scholar, Gershom Scholem (1996) wrote that according to Jewish tradition, Moses received both Torahs at once on Mount Sinai, and everything that any subsequent scholar finds in the Torah or legitimately derives from it, was already included in this oral tradition given to Moses. . . .The oral tradition and the written word complete one another, neither is conceivable without the other. (p.48)

The fourth concept is the role of mythic consciousness; and here Ginsburg looked to Rabbi Arthur Green to best articulate its role. Green related that:

“Scripture should in the proper sense be seen as mythical . . . as paradigms that help us encounter, explain and enrich by archaic association the deepest experiences of which we humans are capable. . . . By retelling, grappling with, dramatizing, living in the light of these paradigms, devotees feel themselves touched by a transcendent presence that is made real in their lives through the retelling, the re-enactments. (as cited in Ginsburg, 2004, p.xxxvii)

The use of we in this paper reflects this notion; we read the myth as if we were living it. The last concept noted by Ginsburg is the expression of this mythic consciousness. As also noted by von Franz, “Myths are built into religious rituals” (1996, p.28). We bring mythic consciousness to light by performing ritual acts, by leading spiritually rich lives.

It is with the above understanding that we delve into applying von Franz’s method of interpretation to “Miriam’s Tambourine,” and in doing so, also highlight the unique Jewishness of this tale. The first part of von Franz’s method of interpretation is to divide the story into four stages: the exposition, the dramatis personae, the naming of the problem, and the peripeteia. Similarly, Schwartz (1998) also identifies four uniquely Jewish aspects of the Jewish folktale: the Jewish time, the Jewish place, the Jewish characters, and the Jewish message. This last aspect is most closely aligned with the third part of von Franz’s method, the interpretation of the tale; and as such, discussion of the Jewish message will be reserved for that time.

In identifying the exposition, Von Franz noted that “in fairy tales time and place are always evident because they begin with ‘once upon a time’ or something similar, which means in timelessness and spacelessness- the realm of the collective unconscious.”

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In identifying the exposition, Von Franz noted that “in fairy tales time and place are always evident because they begin with ‘once upon a time’ or something similar, which means in timelessness and spacelessness- the realm of the collective unconscious.” (1996, p. 39). Yet within the tale of “Miriam’s Tambourine,” we are placed in the land of Babylon. This is what Schwartz would define as a Jewish place and it also indicates the Jewish time. The land of Babylon lends historical value to this tale for it was the Babylonians who destroyed the first Temple, built by King Solomon, in 586 BCE and marks the period of the Jewish Babylonian exile taking place between the years of 597-538 BCE. The symbolic significance of this place will be discussed at a later point. At this juncture, it is important to understand that while the exposition is defined as a historical place with historical value, the conception of Babylon takes on a mythic dimension for both 19th Century readers (the time period in which this tale was written) and present-day readers because we are far
removed from experiencing the reality of this period. Babylon lives solely within our imagination.

Another noteworthy Jewish time-related element in this tale is the Sabbath. While mentioned in passing, the preparation for the Sabbath holds significant value for us within this journey. The symbolic significance of the Sabbath gives us a reference point to our present-day lives. Sabbath’s symbolic significance will be discussed later on along with the other symbolic places mentioned within the tale, the Garden of Eden and the Red Sea.

The second stage is the identification of the dramatis personae, or people involved. Schwartz (1988) would point out the people involved are Jewish characters. We are initially introduced to four characters: Daniel, the king, the rabbi, and the rabbi’s son. Unlike many other Jewish folktales, the biblical Daniel is not featured as a prominent character; in fact, his name is only employed as an inspirational figure. Likewise we do not meet the king at this juncture; but the mention of his presence at the beginning of this tale is critical to the story’s unfolding and ending. The tale focuses on journey taken by ordinary yet extraordinary characters: the rabbi and his son. The rabbi and his son are ordinary in that they are not given names. They are just a father and son living in small hut deep in the forest; who spend their days studying Torah. This existence is not uncommon for a rabbi and his son; yet we are told of their extraordinariness almost within the same breath. The rabbi and his son could read the stars as clearly as any book and “they were the purest souls to be found in that land” (p.1).

We encounter two female characters on the journey. We first meet an old woman described as having beautiful wise eyes. The rabbi and the son ask her name and she replies, Sarah. They ask her husband’s name and she tells them that it was Abraham. Upon hearing this, “the rabbis wondered if she might not be the same Sarah and her husband

Abraham who are the mother and father of every Jew. The woman just nodded that it was true” (Schwartz, 1998, pp.3-4). Interestingly, we do not meet Abraham. He is out in the Garden of Eden collecting leaves for Sarah. The second female character is again a biblical character. Miriam the Prophetess is described as being beautiful and young; her tambourine playing induces animals and humans alike to dance with joy.

We now proceed to naming the problem the tale seeks to resolve. We find ourselves in a time and place where the Jews of Babylon existed in peace because in each generation the king had a Jewish advisor, who protected the interests of his people. Each king kept a golden chest and in that chest was a precious Book. This book could only be opened by one person in each generation and this person was destined to be king’s advisor. However, it was now time to find a new advisor and none who journeyed were able to open the book. The peaceful existence of the Jews of Babylon would be in jeopardy if the person who could open the Book was not found.

The last stage identified by von Franz is the peripeteia, the ups and downs of the story. In this story, there are four peripeteias and they occur at points where the rabbi and his son’s faith are tested.

The first peripeteia occurs when the rabbi and his son become lost after traveling for four days and nights. They had become so absorbed in their contemplation of what mysteries the Book might hold that they did not know if it was day or night. They had paid no attention to the path on which they were walking. Fortified by their faith that the Divine would not lead them astray, they continued on the path until they came to a beautiful palace protected by a high wall.

Here they encounter the second peripeteia of the story. The wall’s gate was locked and the gate opened only once every hundred years, and then only for the briefest instant. They are filled with wonder and yearning to enter the gate, and as fate would have it, the gate flies open at the exact time the rabbi and his son are present. Likewise upon reaching the locked door to the glorious Palace of Pearls, they find a golden key to unlock the door.

The third peripeteia is when they venture into the palace and meet Sarah, who was in the act of creating a powder that she casts into the wind before the Sabbath so that those who suffer from one Sabbath to the next breathe in a taste of Paradise on the Holy Day. The rabbi tells Sarah of the reason for their journey, and she informs them that although they have very pure souls, the Book can only be opened by the purest soul. They inquire if there is any way to purify their souls enough to open the Book. She tells them they must descend
into Miriam’s Well and immerse themselves in the waters. The well is located just outside the palace; however, going there will be futile because the well’s entrance is guarded by serpents. The rabbi and his son are deeply saddened that they had come so far and so close. When the son asks Sarah if there is any way to get past the serpents, Sarah smiles and tells them they must seek out Miriam and ask to borrow her tambourine. To find Miriam, Sarah directs them to a hollow tree in the middle of the garden that is the entrance to a cave.

They descend through both the hollow tree and the cave until they reach the shore of the Red Sea; there they find Miriam playing her tambourine to the delight of the fish and dolphins, who dance to the music. Overcome by joy, the rabbi and his son begin to dance. They would have danced there forever if Miriam had not put down her tambourine. The rabbi and his son tell her of their quest and without hesitation, Miriam hands them her tambourine.

It is Miriam that notes the fourth peritetta of the tale. She cautions them that only mortals such as themselves, who have found their way here, hold the power to drive the serpents from the well. She warns them that they must hurry because if she goes as long as a day without hearing the music from her tambourine, her eternal life will come to an end.

The rabbi and his son ascend back through the cave and hollow tree into the garden, where they find the well surrounded by serpents. Approaching the well, “they had reached the most solemn moment of their lives” (Schwartz, 1998, p.6). Von Franz would identify this part of the story as the lysis, the height of tension. The son begins to play the tambourine, but without the compulsion to dance as Miriam was not playing it. The serpents write in agony at the tambourine’s sound and slither out of the garden, never to return. The purity of the well and the garden are restored with this act of bravery in the face of evil. The rabbi and his son descend into the life-giving waters of the well and their souls are purified to their “very kernel” (p. 7). Their eyes open and “all manner of angels and spirits that had flocked around that garden now became apparent to them” (p.7). The rabbi and his son return the tambourine and thank Miriam. They take leave of the garden through the gate which “could always be opened from the inside” (p.7), and following the path, find themselves at the palace of the king by morning. They are given audience as so many others before them who had attempted but failed to open the Book. As the rabbi lightly touches the cover of the Book, it opens to him. The rabbi becomes the king’s trusted advisor and serves him for many years, referring to the Book for every important decision.

When the rabbi passes from this world, his son, who also purified himself in the well, has no difficulty opening the Book. And so the Jews of that land live in a time of peace and abundance for many years.

“The archetypal images contained within the story serve as markers denoting deeper meaning”

Having come to the tale’s lysis, before tackling a psychological and cultural interpretation of the tale’s themes, its symbols need to be understood through amplification. The drawing of parallels, constellations, and juxtapositions of symbols from other sources is the same process utilized by an author of midrash. While von Franz’s would have asserted that the symbols contained in “Miriam’s Tambourine” also show up in non-Jewish tales and are moreover expressions of the collective-unconscious, focusing on the Jewishness of these symbols illuminates their evolution in relation to the Jewish message underlying the tale.

Schwartz noted that “the biblical text packs a maximum amount of meaning into a minimum number of words” (2004, p. xxxiii). I would extend this to tales as well; the archetypal images contained within the story serve as markers denoting deeper meaning. “Miriam’s Tambourine” contains a plethora of symbols to examine. Only a handful of symbols, and briefly at that, will be examined at this time due to the limitations imposed for this paper.

The Land of the Babylon was the place of Jewish exile after the destruction of the first Temple built by King Solomon. Babylon denotes the continued theme for the Hebrews’, one of exile and hope for return. Daniel, the protagonist of the biblical book of Daniel, was carried off as a child into exile and raised in the Babylonian court. He served as advisor to the king and his chief talent was oneiro-mancy, interpretation of dreams.

The golden chest denotes the Ark of the Covenant, a portable chest that served as the repository for the Ten Commandments and five Torah scrolls written by Moses. The chest was plated in gold inside and out. The Ark was carried by the Israelites through their forty years of exile in the Sinai desert and then came to rest when the first Temple was built. Some traditions claim that the Ark was taken into captivity by the Babylonians (Dennis, 2007, p.19). Likewise, the Book kept in the golden chest represents the Torah. Schwartz pointed to the theme that the book could be opened by only one in each generation as “a variant of the legend of the Book of Raziel. . . . This book was passed down to the primary figure in each subsequent generation [starting from Adam] until it was destroyed along with the Temple (Sefer Noah 150)” (1988, p. 353). “Miriam’s Tambourine” alludes to the Book of Raziel as still extant, having been carried off to Babylon, where it continued to be passed down through each generation starting with Daniel.

The king remains as an ambiguous figure throughout the story. Such a figure typically represents God in Jewish tales. From a Kabbalalistic perspective, the term “king” relates to any of the upper three serifot (Keter, Chochmah, Binah) which represent the intellectual powers of the Divine through which Creation is directed (Kaplan, 2005, p. 2).

The advisor or viceroy to the king denotes the righteous man or tzaddik. The tzaddik is alternatively known as rebbe. In the Hasidic tradition, after a beloved rebbe dies, his son or an immediate relative assumes his role in the community (Dennis, p.216). From the Kabbalalistic perspective, the tzaddik is related to the serifah of Yesod, the sixth serifot. It represents the sixth day of
A Jungian Interpretation of Miriam’s Tambourine

Creation, when the human was created. Hence, the advisor can represent humankind as a whole (Kaplan, p.6).

The walled garden with the gated entrance represents the Garden of Eden, the primordial place of Unity. The gate is emblematic of the entrance to celestial or underworld realms. The Palace of Pearls represents the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The pearl denotes wisdom and is related to dreams (Kaplan, p.18). Sarah is representative of the archetypal Mother. She is the first Mother to the Jews and also considered a Priestess. Sarah crushes leaves collected from the Garden into powder, which she blows to the wind (ruach) so it is carried to four corners of the earth, easing the suffering of her children on the Sabbath. Ruach also represents the heart aspect of soul.

The descent into the hollow tree and cave symbolize the womb. Dennis (2007) noted that the Cave of Machpelah is where Abraham’s family interred their dead. The Sages described Machpelah as the nexus of power and an entrance to Eden. The shore is usually representative of a spiritual realm (Kaplan, 2005). The Red Sea, where Moses performed the miracle of parting the waters, is symbolic of the Jewish exodus from Egypt. This is the place where Miriam, the sister of Moses, played her tambourine and the Israelite women danced with joy when they reached the opposite shore. Music holds a prominent place in Jewish spiritual life and ritual. The Hasidic tradition teaches that the nitzutzei kedusha (holy sparks), that every soul possesses are raised to holiness through music (p.41). Miriam is also known as Prophetess. Her well followed the Children of Israel during the forty years of desert wandering, supplying them with fresh water. According to the Talmudic tradition, the well was created on the eve of the Sabbath at twilight during the days of Creation. There is also the association between Miriam’s well and the Torah; both serving as an inexhaustible resource to quench a person’s thirst (Schwartz, 1988). Purifying one’s self in the waters relates to the Jewish ritual of the mikvah, an immersion into living waters.

Serpents occur throughout Jewish tradition as possessing both positive and negative attributes. The serpents in this tale are most likely associated with the snake that tempted Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. The Hebrew word for snake is nachash, which translates as to trick.

The number four, found throughout this tale, is a significant number in the Jewish tradition. It relates to the four cardinal directions and four elements. The sacred name of the Divine, YHVH, is comprised of four letters. The Passover Sedar, which commemorates the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, is structured around the number four. In Kabbalah, there are four realms: assiyah (body-sensation), atzilut (souls), beriah (thoughts), and yetziah (emotions).

"Jung would describe Sarah and Miriam as Anima figures, representative of the emotional and intuitive functions of the psyche. A Jewish take would be that these women are representative of the feminine aspect of the Divine"

"Psychological interpretation is our way of telling stories; we still have the same need and we still crave the renewal that comes from understanding archetypal images" (Franz, 1996, p.45). The same is true with the midrashic process. Rabbi Nathan of Bratslav, a Hasidic Master, reminded us of Proverbs 1:5: “The wise man will hear and expand the lesson” (as cited in Kaplan, 1995, p.xv).

The underlying theme in the tale of Miriam’s Tambourine speaks of a psychological exile from ourselves and the Divine Self. As exiles in a psychological Babylon, we live in constant jeopardy of unrest. The symbol of Red Sea reminds us not only of our exile but moreover, the possibility of making it to the other side. This tale also speaks of a corrupted Eden with a well overrun by evil snakes. The snakes relate back to the Genesis story, where the Snake tricks Adam and Eve into ego-consciousness. While this ego-consciousness is necessary for our process, it is that which keeps us from experiencing the pure Unity. The rabbi and his son are metaphors of each of us; the potential of being a tzaddik exists within each of us.

As related above, the number four plays a critical role in this tale. We first encounter its use when the rabbi and his son travel for four days and nights, days and nights that blend into one another. This echoes the timelessness existing before the fourth day of Creation in Genesis, when the sun and moon were created. Here the story finds us, with in the rabbi and his son, traveling in a state of undifferentiated darkness. Their transformative passage from journeying in a state of unconsciousness through differentiation to consciousness of the divine proceeds through four peretetia: becoming lost, arriving at the locked gate to the unconscious just when it is opening, descending into the unconscious to borrow the holy instrument of the prophetess, and driving the serpents from the well in order to be purified by the inexhaustible well of the living waters. The four entrances passed in this process represent the psychological process of balancing of the four realms of the Kabbalah – notably similar to Jung’s four functions of thinking, feeling, intuition, and sensation.

It is through the rabbi and his son’s descents into the unconscious that they encountered Sarah and Miriam, which provide them with the answers and methods required for the success of their journey. Jung would describe Sarah and Miriam as Anima figures, representative of the emotional and intuitive functions of the psyche. A Jewish take would be that these women are representative of the feminine aspect of the Divine, the Shekhinah; and are also linked to the realms of atzilut (souls) and yetziah (emotions). Rabbi Levi Meir (1991) wrote that “the unconscious is God’s forgotten language or God’s way of guiding each individual. This process is an experience of Shekhinah, God’s Divine Presence” (p.35). The Shekhinah is also known as the Sabbath Bride, as well as described as God’s Consort. Thus the rabbi and his son reunify the king, the intellectual function of the Divine, with the feminine aspects of the Divine.

The allusion in the tale to the con-
tinued survival of the Book of Raziel reminds us of the powerful messages contained within the Torah, a code in which to decipher our own unconscious. The contemporary Jewish scholar, Avivah Zornberg, wrote that: “the aim of interpretation is . . . not merely to . . . familiarize an ancient book: . . . [but] more importantly, to make the reader aware, of the current that runs between his/her lived situation and the text, of the ways in which we are ‘at key instants, strangers to ourselves, errant at the gates of our own psyche’” (1995, p.xv). This is perhaps, a deeper, and psychological, meaning of the Jewish story of exodus and the significance of its remembrance. We are reminded of Sarah’s smile when the son questions if perhaps there is another way. We each find ourselves on a path, seeking to reunite with the psychic totality of Self through interpreting and questioning. But like the rabbi and his son, with an unwavering faith through remembrance of the possibilities expressed by the Self, we must descend through the cave, bringing consciousness to the unconscious, where we can hear Miriam’s music playing at the edge of the Red Sea, borrow her music, and drive the serpents from her ever-present well. The tale of “Miriam’s Tambourine” reminds us that by drawing on ancient sources, we are able to restore and to renew.

References

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Natasha Morton
"A Mandala for Richmond"
By William Fraker

While constructing a sand mandala,
A Tibetan monk smiled in a moment
Across the room and mountains
Of meditation. Calm delicacy
Floated in patterns of brightly
Colored grains of sand as the
Great circle took form. Crimson
Pillows cradled bended knees
And patient transcendence.
Elbows and hands outstretched
To remember and re-create
An ancient reflection of holiness.

Held in memory and the prayer
Of expression, each monk
Contributed to the mandala
That took over a week to complete.
Palettes of inner detail fell into
A brilliant spectrum of temporality;
Reverence in creative process
Captured on the floor of a museum.

The monks swept the art into an urn.
A procession led on-lookers across
A footbridge to an island already
Sanctified by Union soldiers who
Suffered imprisonment, exposure,
And frequent death in the winter
Before Lee’s surrender. Leaning
Over rapids from jutting rocks, the
Monks offered a varicolored invocation;
Grains of time cascaded into the water.

“Fissure II”

“I created this painting after I had a dream about my mom and I falling through ice, into deep water, and how I tried to keep her and I afloat. As I couldn’t push her up out of the water, suddenly an old hag rushed over and pulled us both up to safety. We felt deep gratitude. In some ways it’s also about thawing out and using my creative abilities. There is fire, opportunities, and access deep below. The key is to keep moving, start something, anything, and not stay frozen.” - Staci Poirier

"Dolphins"
By Silvio Machado

Their bodies
are slim instruments of contentment.
I realized this once while taking the ferry
from Pico to Sao Jorge at sunset.
In the open expanse between islands,
a pod of what I could only guess numbered in the hundreds,
hunted unsuspecting fish
before taking to deeper waters for the night.
With repeated and effortless coherence,
they breached from the water
alongside the boat,
weaving together--their bodies,
moon-shaped needles--sky and sea
with what I dare say were knowing smiles
on elongated faces.
The arcs of their bodies harmonized in the air
as they leapt with enjoyment,
one after the other and sometimes,
two at a time,
in celebration of something
I hope to know well:
the ordinary pleasure of the body
doing what it is intended to do--
in this case,
moving through the salty brine,
eating raw fish.

I fumbled for my camera,
hoping to capture the moment,
but there was no taking my eyes
off their sleek, muscular forms.
How could I?
Clumsily, I snapped a couple of photos
that,
when it was all done,
showed nothing but fractured shards
of sun meeting water,
light meeting dark,
of animal, purpose,
and amazement at the place
where they came together.
The Soul of the Soldier
An Archetypal Inquiry into the Rhetoric of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

By Ipek S. Burnett

The United States of America has been in an uninterrupted state of war for almost 250 years (Marsella, 2011). 250 years of violence and loss... In these brutal battles, the soul of the soldier also becomes a casualty. The veterans who return home are haunted by memories of terror and bloodshed. For them a new fight begins on this ground—a fight for dignity, honor, and health—as they face the cold-blooded diagnosis and rhetoric of psychopathology.

The fourth edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) (2000) strives for “brevity of criteria sets, clarity of language, and explicit statements of the constructs embodied in the diagnostic criteria” (p. xxiii). Yet in the name of brevity, clarity, and explicitness, this thick book betrays the depths of archetypal experiences. It avoids all possible contradiction, necessary tension, and expressive complexities that belong to psyche’s ways of being and its pathologies. With its codes and bullet points, the DSM-IV classifies and categorizes a compendium of conditions. It dissect and distorts, injuring soul with deadening diagnostic criteria and descriptions of disorders. In its compulsive attempt to simplify, the manual of the medical model becomes an abbreviation itself: DSM.

While the DSM-IV and other handbooks on psychopathology offer the clinicians important scientific knowledge for the standardization of concepts and language, they cannot effectively care for the war-torn psyche of veterans. In the healing and helping communities, if we identify solely with the medical approach, we become numb to the intricacy of psychological realities. When we witness suffering, we rely on numbers. We report, rather than remember. We infer, rather than imagine.

Once home from war, the soldiers are given a new rank, an abbreviation—PTSD—a code for the insurance company, a clue for treatment plans. As a consequence, the soldiers’ valor and anguish are reduced to a sterile set of symptoms signified by these four letters. The late James Hillman, a Jungian analyst and a founder of archetypal psychology, believed that words had psychic components; that a word was a messenger, a person, an angel. Following Hillman, an abbreviation is never just an abbreviation. If we imagine into the capital letters, within the given diagnosis we can begin to discern the armies of gods and goddesses—a pantheon of archetypal forces: P.: Pain. Pride. Psyche. T.: Terror. Torture. Tragedy. S.: Sacrifice. Self. Shadow. Suicide. D.: Denial. Dionysus. Depth. Death.

“By inventing diagnostic terms and reducing language to fit the medical model, we believe we can shrink-wrap the mythical beings and archetypal truths words hold, concealing them in a prison of psychological jargon.”

By inventing diagnostic terms and reducing language to fit the medical model, we believe we can shrink-wrap the mythical beings and archetypal truths words hold, concealing them in a prison of psychological jargon. This economics of rhetoric is a misleading fantasy. It is an illusion, dangerous and deadly, for it not only threatens the archetypes living in the words, but also the psyche which is in need of archetypal meaning and beauty.

Imagine: A six-day old beard, a half-burnt cigarette. The soldier sits on an old couch slowly inhaling the dust collecting in the corners of the room. His chest barely moves when he breathes. His eyes are glassy. He stares soft-focus at the wall. His shoulders slope. The expression on his still face is vacant, almost like a trick of camouflage. He blends into the stale air surrounding him. He was a warrior; now he is a sick man impossible to understand. He is a veteran, but the diagnoses, the meds, the stigma make him a living dead.

He, and the men and women like him, are part of the incalculable cost of war as the unfathomable depth of trauma to psyche is beyond all financial estimates. Every year United States Department of Defense spends hundreds of billions of dollars to amass the required technical and material measures to fight all enemies, domestic and foreign. Yet, these plans ignore the psychological dimension of the archetypal experience. By now we should know, as Hillman (1975) did, that the real cost of war is not monetary: “Human existence is psychological before it is anything else--economic, social, religious, physical” (p. 173). Our Western cultural fantasies about war deny this truth.

Department of Defense objectives begin as conceptual agreements on a piece of paper. When soldiers are deployed things change. They are ordered to cross invisible desert borders; commanded to bring about the demolition of nuclear powers. Crossing back into civilian life, the soldiers face a Department of Defense that is blind to the essential needs of the human soul.

The soldiers who are sent back home no longer belong to their military divisions, but to Veteran Affairs. They are offered veteran pensions, disability compensations, vocational rehabilitation, insurance, and prescriptions; and provided with pamphlets that explain their anguish and anxiety. In response the soldiers’ need for healing, the DSM-IV inflicts the differential diagnosis: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder—PTSD. Found under Axis I, code 309.81, this diagnosis describes the symptoms to assess in a mechanical language of
pathology which lacks psychological depth. In this lack the soul of the soldier succumbs and suffers.

A veteran is assumed to have returned from the front, but this is not the case. The soul of the soldier is still at war. Caught in a “frozen war consciousness,” the fighting goes on (Tick, 2005, p. 99). Instead of Afghanistan, the soldier now moves in the “lacunae” of the psyche, traveling through its “gaps” and “wasteland” (Hillman, 1975, p. 89) as claimed by a ground that perhaps was as foreign as the battlefields in the Middle East. This time around, the soldier pledges allegiance to the pathology as it is both a matter of survival and honor.

The civilians and even the clinicians may fear the moist darkness of veterans’ eyes, but the veterans need this sickness. Their suffering is more significant than those small pills they are supposed swallow in order to suppress the symptoms. As Hillman (1975) would argue, soldiers’ pathology is “valid, authentic, and necessary” (p. 58). The affliction provides a certain vision to the soul of the soldier.

What the DSM-IV defines as the “recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections” (2000, p. 468) is in fact the invincible force of imagination. For the veterans the presence of war is everywhere; the psyche holds onto the gruesome images of war to be able to make sense of life. Thus, the veterans’ symptom is a sign of the soul striving for reflection. The veterans break down, in order to crack open the meanings and metabolize the archetypal experience of war. The pathology becomes an opportunity, a path to soul-making for soldiers who are deemed helpless. Not recognizing the process of pathologizing as this ability and need, and undermining this archetypal journey in the name of clinical diagnosis are not only wrong, but treacherous.

Imagine: When the house is most quiet, the veteran gets off the couch, drops his cigarette on the rug, and shuffles his feet. He enters his bedroom, opens the closet, and takes out a shoebox. The brand name on the cardboard reads: Nike. The Goddess of Victory. He reaches in and takes out his handgun. He presses the cold muzzle against his head. His finger on the trigger trembles ever so slightly.

The tip of the gun points at the temple. The bullet aims at the brain.

Psychology has become a mind-game. By mistaking the concrete for the archetypal and reducing soul to biology, psychopathology has defined the disorder living in the brain. There is only one way: Ego’s scientific rationality, coded into diagnostic language, has to prevail. Such acts of reason bring us to Apollo’s altar.

But we cannot understand the madness of Ares with distant and calculated thoughts. We need courage and passion. We need turmoil.

The trigger moves. Bang!

The temple is instantly blown apart.

Apollo sighs. The Goddess of Victory extends her lovely hand to Ares. The ego does not leave a trace. We stand appalled.

"By mistaking the concrete for the archetypal and reducing soul to biology, psychopathology has defined the disorder living in the brain"

This is the most intimate and delicate dance of psyche with Hades. As the veteran sits in his armchair seemingly immobile, his soul tiptoes in circular motions: a dancer, all white and weightless, ready to descend into the realm of Death. Slowly, she spirals down.

Innocence surrenders to the near visions of war; the soul submits herself to the invisible hungry mouth of Hades, begging to be devoured.

The language of the DSM-IV cannot depict this journey. Instead, it desperately longs to control both the subtle and immense movements of the psyche, killing the archetypal specters with its bullet pointed list of symptoms, and condensing soul into categories with its rushed rhetoric. The stubborn labels and stereotypes leave no space for metaphorical possibilities. Nothing divine or profane remains for the imagination to embrace.

War is mythic. An experience that, as Hillman (2004) wrote, “begs for meaning, and amazingly also gives meaning” (p. 10). In their silence the veterans step into the vast realm of visions and memories, carrying for all the rest of us war’s horrific numinosity. Therefore, the veterans’ silence is not necessarily “an impairment in social and occupational areas of functioning” like the DSM-IV claimed (2000, p. 468). The internalization of images provides the means for the psyche to both speak and listen to itself.

Hillman (1975) explained that “the ideation process in psychology is far behind its methodology, instruments, and applications and far, far behind the psyche’s indigenous richness” (p. 115). We witness this constant struggle in the rhetoric of the DSM-IV and its diagnosis for PTSD. The DSM-IV groups together the experience of military combat, personal assault, torture, natural disasters, accidents, and life-threatening illnesses in one neat box. It does not differentiate between war, cancer, and rape. While these are all archetypal journeys of encounter with Hades, each of them is fundamentally unique. Their images and gods are distinct. It is a naïve illusion to think that we can justify them all through one diagnosis, enclose them in one code and shrink them into one abbreviation.

Once there were names addressing the particular pathos of the veteran, like “soldier’s heart” and “shell shock.” The images of war were alive in these expressions. When we read the clinical diagnosis for PTSD we cannot see or feel the changed heart and meaning-searching soul of a soldier. We cannot touch the gods that, in possession of peoples and nations, send the soldier into battle, nor the anguishing burden the soldier then bears. The language of modern clinical psychology fails to reflect the tragedy at the heart of the pathology. As it focuses on behavioral data, it discounts the utter terror and tremendous grief that the veteran feels. It dismisses, and therefore, it “insults the soul” (Hillman, 1972, p. 121).

According to the DSM-IV one of the characteristic symptoms for PTSD is “persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness” (2000, p. 468). However, with its carefully drawn categories and conclusions, and precautionary terms, the DSM-IV persistently avoids stimuli of imagination and attempts numbing. We are in the grip of a major phobia. We are very afraid to enter into the disease and face the gods and their fury.

The Soul of the Soldier
Driven by Ares’ irrefutable force, Hillman (2004) declared that the “syndrome is not in the veteran but in the dictionary, in the amnesiac’s idea of peace that colludes with an unlivable life” (p. 32). Here, Hillman was speaking to our “endemic national disease,” in other words, our addiction to security and innocence, “to not knowing life’s darkness and not wanting to know, either” (p. 133). The very presence of the veteran is a threat to this resolute ignorance. The veteran has been initiated into war; he can no longer be numb to the possibility of pain and death. He no longer believes in innocence. We try to convince him otherwise. We give him a handful of pills and try to convert him back. We are that deep in our denial.

The label PTSD and the rhetoric of psychopathology shield us from the intrusive truth of tragedy, separate our imagination from the dark shadows of Hades. Nonetheless, they cannot protect us from Ares’ rage and unavoidable revenge. He puts his gun against his head, presses it deep and hard into his temple. The bullet screams. The soul escapes deep down. Hades embraces it at once. A carpet with a small cigarette burn remains behind. A wall with blood stains. A deafening silence. An incomplete return from an unimagined war.

We continue to lose this battle, one veteran at a time.

Hillman (1975) put much emphasis on the insights that derive from “souls in extremis, the sick, suffering, abnormal, and fantastic conditions of the psyche” (p. 55). The veterans are a prime example of this. The experience of war and its demanding affair with the soul may be our opportunity to recognize the confining fantasy of innocence in which we find ourselves again and again. It demands that we re-visit our dread of Hades and Ares, see through our ego-defenses thriving at the heart of psychology and psychopathology, and re-vision our intentions in these fields. Stepping out of our abbreviated form of consciousness and taking a new look at rhetoric may be one of the first modest steps in this long and hard journey that awaits us.

References

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The Intuitive Spectrum
A Deeper Look into the Amazing Value of Intuition
by Susan Ozimkiewicz, NCC LCPC

This well-organized and impressively researched book offers a detailed historical and practical review of intuition as a cultural value and personal transformative power. Authoritative and generally accessible, this book could appeal to a range of readers that includes therapists, their patients, students of psychology, Jungian scholars, and women and feminists of all ages—boldly delving into the feminine or feminized quality of intuition and a logical insight, this treatise could come to earn a place in the American feminist canon.

Susan Ozimkiewicz NCC LCPC is a Jungian oriented Depth Psychotherapist in private practice and a graduate of Pacifica Graduate Institute. Her work focuses on the client’s inner world process to gain emotional understanding and integration of physiological problems, symptoms and life’s issues with a blending of intuitive awareness.

Learn more: www.depthcounseling.com
Order the book: www.amazon.com/dp/1475179561
I. Sweet memories of youth, echoes in the Mind's Eye: the face of a girl, golden hair blowing Wild in the breeze; glittering sunlight on a Deep forest stream, swimming with trout; a Calm hidden lake in the blue sunrise; sweet Innocence of a boy, at play in summer fields that Sing to him like dreams.

II. Then the change came, a darkening of the Moon: a child lost, Nietzsche's orphaned Shrieks, a festering, wounded soul; knowledge of Good, and evil-of life, of loss and death. Dark Side of the god that dies, the wounded thigh, the Rib torn out; an invisible stain that won't wash Clean; innocence betrayed, grown proud, and Sad, an eagle devouring its liver; flesh enclosing Vision, like a heavy eyelid or a shroud, like Melancholy-heavy with tears that fall like Rain on the lost gardens of Paradise.

III. O child of sorrows, twice-born, wounded Healer, shaman, initiate, hero, poet-the one who Walks with a limp: Orchards grow fruitful in Springtime; a serpent sheds its skin, and grows Another. Swallows return to their nests each Season. Sunset, sunrise. To the ebb, flow; to Death, regeneration. To the dark of the Moon, Her Fullness; to the journey of descent, Return. The Way of Return is difficult, cry the poets, No one returns unmarked. But for that one, the Golden wheat ripens in summer fields that Sing to him like dreams.

Note: This work first appeared several years ago in Mythic Passages: The Magazine of the Imagination, a publication of the Mythic Institute

Since the beginning of recorded time, on all continents of the earth, the sun and the moon have been re-occurring symbols. Solar and lunar archetypes are fundamental to consciousness. But what do they represent and how can we use the archetypes of the sun and moon to clarify, understand and transform our own lives and the planetary crisis?

Howard Teich's new book:
Solar Light, Lunar Light

"...a skillful interweaving of modern psychology, mythology and ancient history...a healing journey..."  
—Bruce H. Lipton, Ph.D.  
Author of The Biology of Belief

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Why the Men Went into the Woods
Jungian Psychology and the Archetype of the Wild Man
By Dennis Pottenger

For 35 weeks in 1991 a book about a wild man topped the bestseller list in the United States and Canada.¹ The author of the book, poet Robert Bly, said he found the story of Iron Hans in the collection of fairy tales first published by the brothers Grimm in Germany in 1812.²ii

According to classical Jungian theory, fairy tales “represent the archetypes in their simplest, barest, and most concise form.”³iii After working with symbolic material for many years, Marie-Louise von Franz concluded that “all fairy tales endeavor to describe one and the same psychic fact.”³iv This psychic fact is, of course, what Jung called the Self.

With the archetypal pattern of the Wild Man, the psychic factor of the Self, and the ability of the fairy tale to convey psychological meaning to consciousness, in mind, we travel into dangerous terrain. Here we risk the experience of Phallos, that fundamental mark of maleness. Why do the experiences of erection, of testicularity, of insemination, feel dangerous, and thus risky? Because male development makes us all nervous. Indeed, according to David Tacey, “all peoples have shared a basic anxiety about the achievement of masculine maturity.”³v To engage the inseminating and annihilating capacities of Phallos is a psychological move that brings us into intimate communion with what Jungian analyst Eugene Monick called “a powerful inner reality at work in a man,” a reality “not altogether in his control.”³vi

In his preface to Iron John, Robert Bly distinguished between the Wild Man and the Savage Man. “The savage mode,” Bly wrote, “does great damage to soul, earth, and humankind; we can say that though the Savage Man is wounded he prefers not to examine it. The Wild Man, who has examined his wound, resembles a Zen priest, a shaman, or a woodsman more than a savage.”³vii What Bly meant, I think, is that violence born of unhealed injury and fear of vulnerability and healthy wildness in which ego and Self are in right relationship with one another, are two different modes of masculinity.

According to poet Charles Upton, who wrote what he called a spiritual critique of Iron John and the mythopoetic men’s movement that grew up around the book, what makes the transit between these two modes of masculine development troublesome—and potentially lethal—is that when the archetype of the underworld comes up, it doesn’t always arrive neatly divided into positive qualities to be adopted and negative ones to be avoided. The things men need to integrate and those we had better get rid of upon us as a single complex . . . Thus when Bly calls men to worship the spontaneous, the unexpected—[the Wild—]he is invoking appropriate wildness and destructive savagery at the same time.³viii

"Retreats offered men a safe and—in a Jungian sense—sacred, even numinous, space in which they could begin to contact and reclaim the feeling-based aspects of their experience which had been shamed by patriarchy"

The publication of Iron John, Robert Bly’s book about men, galvanized a cultural phenomenon that came to be known as the mythopoetic men’s movement. In the years following the publication of Iron John, tens of thousands of men attended weekend retreats often held in remote locations. Why did the men go into the woods? One pro-feminist male writer, Michael Kimmel, supported the efforts to help men acknowledge and challenge their deep fears about connecting with other men and for enabling men to explore some of the vitality they had lost on their way to sober sensible American manhood, including a sense of joy and playfulness. At the weekend events in the woods there were outpourings of deeply felt grief and despair about fathers who had abandoned or abused their now-adult sons. These retreats helped men begin to dismantle the walls men build to make themselves feel strong, powerful, invincible—to shield themselves from vulnerability, pain, need.³ix

Retreats offered men a safe and—in a Jungian sense—sacred, even numinous, space in which they could begin to contact and reclaim the feeling-based aspects of their experience which had been shamed by patriarchy. With this interior process in mind, Eugene Monick linked the underlying psychological cause of male rage to the castrating effect of what he called the “patriarchal design.”

The rudiments of male rage begin to form when male weakness can no longer be altogether hidden. Patriarchal design typically lays the responsibility for male rage at the feet of women, who supposedly prompt the rage by their closeness to the irrational and chthonic unconscious.x

Femininity, Monick continued, is a terror for men . . . . The implication of subjective femininity suggests castration. For men, the specter of being feminine is based on the perception that femininity emerges when the annihilation of masculinity takes place by means of castration.³xi

For a man, Monick added, the eruption of male rage signals the presence of instinctual danger—archetypal danger, in Jungian language—and with it, a sense of desperation. Or, worse, a sense that catastrophe has already taken place, that the man is therefore powerless,
Why the Men Went into the Woods

Robert Bly himself said again and again that the men who went into the woods were not trying to injure women, nor were they trying to perpetuate a patriarchal emphasis arising from centuries of Christian culture that left in place a rigid scheme of gender dichotomy in which femininity always signals inferiority. The men were, instead, trying to find and develop personal authenticity and authority through contact with a Wild Man covered with hair the color of rusted iron. Bly believed that the image of the Wild Man offered men a symbolic experience of the instinctive, and the sexual and primitive qualities, of the deep, archetypal, masculine. Bly, Michael Meade, and the late James Hillman were fond of a poem by the late William Stafford. Stafford’s poem, titled “A Story That Could Be True,” spoke to the wild fierce personal presence so missing in the “soft” (in a patriarchal sense, limp, even impotent) men Bly indicted in Iron John for their passivity:

If you were exchanged in the cradle and your real mother died
without telling the story
then no one knows your name, and somewhere in the world
your father is lost and needs you
but you are far away.

He can never find
how true you are, how ready.
When the great wind comes and the robberies of the rain
and you stand in the corner shivering.
The people who go by—you wonder at their calm.

They miss the whisper that runs any day in your mind,

"Who are you, really, wanderer?" – and the answer you have to give
no matter how dark and cold the world around you is:
Maybe I’m a king.

With the word king we come to a place of trouble. Archetypes, as we know, display an active-passive bipolar shadow structure. In the case of the uninitiated male, what we see, in the context of relationships between men and women, is what Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, in their work on the mature masculine, identified as the Tyrant (the active pole of the shadow side of the archetypal pattern of the King) and the Weakling (the passive pole of the Shadow King). The Tyrant, Moore and Gillette wrote, exploits and abuses others. He is ruthless, merciless, and without feeling when he is pursuing what he thinks is his own self-interest. His degradation knows no bounds. He hates all beauty, all innocence and strength, all talent, all life energy. He does so because . . . he lacks inner structure, and he is afraid—terrified, really—of his own hidden weakness and his underlying lack of potency.

What Stafford and the men of the mythopoetic movement were referring to in terms of masculine maturity was what Moore and Gillette called the good King. The King archetype in its fullness possesses the qualities of order, of reasonable and rational patterning, of integration and integrity in the masculine psyche. It stabilizes chaotic emotion and out-of-control behaviors. It gives stability and centeredness. It brings calm. And in [this King’s] “fertilizing” and centeredness, it mediates vitality, life-force, and joy. It brings maintenance and balance. It defends our own sense of inner order, our own integrity of being and of purpose, our own central calmness about who we are, and our essential unassailability and certainty in our masculine identity. . . . [The good King’s eye] sees others in all their weakness and in all their talent and worth. It honors them and promotes them. It guides them and nurtures them toward their own fullness of being.

For men, the mythopoetic approach to the re-visioning of traditional, or patriarchal, masculinity offered a promise of renewal—hope that they could gain access to a kind of potency, an instinctual

If the woods marked the setting for men’s move into feeling, Jungian psychology became the symbolic map they followed into the dark spaces of the deep masculine by saying that the psyche is naturally a wellspring of unruly impulses; that strong, unpredictable feelings are a normal and fascinating part of every man, and thus no man need feel ashamed of being emotional. But it also implicitly demanded, less fortifyingly, that a man who wished to become a whole person explore this part of himself, even if doing so was painful. Real and sometimes disruptive insights could thus be gained, if only by studying what was once ignored. If a man undertook this work, Jungian psychology promised relief from inauthenticity, relief from the loss of control to dark psychic forces, and the attainment of self-knowledge that was previously limited by the strictures of traditional [or patriarchal] masculinity.

In pinpointing even more precisely the pivotal role Jungian psychology played in the mythopoetic men’s movement, Schwalbe concluded that it helped men enter wounded psychological terrain, previously experienced as a weakness, without being shamed or pathologized. Through this process, they were able to recognize their wounds as the places that held their potential for growth.

Schwalbe, a profeminist writer who attended mythopoetic men’s events while researching his book, Unlocking the Iron Cage: The Men’s Movement, Gender Politics, and American Culture, Jungian psychology comforted the mythopoetic men without phallus—castrated. In his work on castration and male rage, Monick noted that conventional [patriarchal] wisdom lets women express themselves, while men think, abstract, plan, organize, support. For men to get emotional is ordinarily seen as an abandonment of masculine strength and directedness. Sometimes that is the case, as when a complex seize a man and he flies apart. But it need not be so. Men can learn to overcome the cultural restraint inhibiting emotional expression, to subjectively discover value and to express the emotion that inevitably flows from feeling.

Why the Men Went into the Woods

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wildness, or un-niceness, as Bly put it, that would lead not to power and abuse of privilege but to a fierceness that leads to forceful action undertaken, not with cruelty, but with resolve. The man without fierceness, Bly wrote,

allows his own boundaries to be invaded and in the moment that happens his uninhibited passivity will turn to rage. Violence and brutality toward women and children are not the function of fierceness but evidence of the absence of it.xviii

Feminist and pro-feminist male commentators watched the hordes of men retreat into the woods to find the Wild Man and saw the painting of faces and the pounding of drums in a different light. By embracing Iron John—a fairy tale the feminists, with some accuracy, claim portrays women as prizes, as hags, or as cloying mothers who are blamed for making their sons into effeminate sissies—the mythopoetic men were actually reinforcing the patriarchal presumptions of male superiority they claimed to reject. Where does the patriarchal position—the attitude of power and domination that spawns the harmful behaviors of the Tyrant and the Weakling—leave women? Here is how one feminist writer described her experience of a patriarchal structure which systematically discounts women through rape, genital mutilation, incest, sexual harassment, sex trafficking, economic inequalities, reproductive rights, and other manifestations of violence:

Patriarchy is like a razor blade embedded in a chocolate cream. We bite down eagerly, charmed by the heart-shaped box and the shiny wrapper, and then suffer the pain. Our gums are bleeding, but before the feminist movement nobody ever talked about it. We kept our mouths shut, and if we occasionally noticed a trickle of blood seep out the corner of some sister’s lips, we politely looked away so as not to embarrass her. Feminism taught us to say, “Ow! Hey, this hurts, this is wrong—and look, it’s not just me, it’s you and you and you. Something is wrong with this candy! Let’s get rid of the razor, or change the menu.”xix

Gloria Steinem blasted Bly for his “warlike language of kings and battles” and for a misogynistic attitude that insisted on “closeness only to males” and “measured adulthood by men’s [rejection of and] distance from mothers, thus reconstructing patriarchy in a supposedly gentler form.”xx Another feminist, Kay Leigh Hagan, expressed “cautious hope that men are coming to terms with the realities of true partnership and shared power.”xxi With rape, domestic violence, and other forms of injury against women in mind, Hagan also expressed disgust at the “chorus of whining white men [whose] movement has only succeeded in legitimizing a fashionable new form of woman-hating.”xxii

A third feminist, Starhawk, admitted that she was afraid that the men of the mythopoetic movement were going to disappoint women as they had since the advent of patriarchy and simply use their personal growth to continue blaming women for their problems and defending their own privileges. Peek under the pain, however, and the feminists were willing to admit a longing for men to heal.

“Peek under the pain, however, and the feminists were willing to admit a longing for men to heal”

Starhawk wrote:

Those of us whose lives continue to be bound up with men want to see them become whole. We dream of a world full of men who could be passionate lovers, grounded in their own bodies, capable of profound loves and deep sorrows, strong allies of women, sensitive nurturers, fearless defenders of all people’s liberation, unbound by stifling conventions yet respectful of their own and others’ boundaries, serious without being humorless, stable without being dull, disciplined without being rigid, sweet without being spineless, proud without being insufferably egotistical, fierce without being violent, wild without being, well, assholes.xxiii

So the bar has been set. For optimum maturity a man must embrace the vulnerability that is shamed by patriarchy and which threatens to annihilate his sense of self-definition. For a man shame is simply insufferable. Rage and injury to others, including women, can be the result of a man’s attempt to defend against his own castration, his own annihilation. Eugene Monick spoke to this male experience of distress when he wrote that male rage “is an indication that a man is in living and excruciating personal contact with profound injury, even nonbeing.”xxiv Monick also wrote of what he called the “castration complex,” which he said:

forms in a male’s unconscious when an event or events take place causing a boy inwardly to perceive that something essential to his being as a male actually has been taken from him. Ever after, he has a hole, a weak spot in his masculine grid, an emptiness.xv

This speaks to the affect, to the manifest emotion, in the male experience of wounding. But what of healing? With shame, and the castration of a man’s connection to the archetypal qualities of the Wild Man, in mind, an idea first attributed to Paracelsus, the Renaissance physician and alchemist, becomes meaningful. To the alchemical imagination, semen, as both a physical substance and a metaphoric possibility of the imagination, was a particularly potent substance.

In an essay he titled “Fear of Semen,” Jungian analyst Joseph Cambray quoted Paracelsus speaking about the attraction of the sexes:

The tendencies of man cause him to think and speculate; his speculation creates desire, his desire grows into passion, his passion acts upon his imagination and his imagination creates semen.xxvi

According to Cambray, identifying semen with the imagination is a radical notion. For in this theory Paracelsus makes it clear that for him semen is a basic, archetypal substance, involved in the creation of the universe. . . . Semen is, here, at the archetypal foundation of the world. Psychologically, it is equivalent to the psychic reality upon which the self takes shape and manifests.xxvii

What makes semen so important, psychologically speaking? In one passage Cambray pinpointed the apocalyptic impact semen can play in the work of individuation:

What . . . is being sought psychologi-
cally in the retention [of semen]? Is it not the sense of a potent, powerful self that can be lost when arousal leads to discharge? Tantric exercises seem aimed at introverting the aroused masculine libido, sacrificing it in a return to the self... In the language of psychological objects this might be called a “retentive identification.” By this I mean the possibility of an experience of the self has been projected onto an aspect of the body image, in this case the semen, which it then becomes crucial to hold onto for the sake of the wholeness carried by it.xxviii

If we consider our experience of gender difference, and our understanding of gender conflicts, from the point of view of alchemical psychology, we realize that opposites cannot come back together consciously until they have first been separated. My sense is that men and women—and here I include individuals of every sexual orientation and preference—are still in this phase of things, each wounded by patriarchy and by each other, each longing, in their own ways, for contact, for what David Deida called intimate communion.xxix So where do we go from here? How can those who have been, and are being, injured by patriarchy move toward a type of tecturality that carries wholeness into the world?

As depth psychologists we know too much. Like Jung, we don’t just believe in the numinous, we know there are forces at work in the world that we do not produce or control. As scholars of Jung, and as practitioners of analytical psychology, we engage in the work of individuation in a bid to bring the intelligence and numinosity of archetypal patterns into the world through human experience. As Jung made clear in Answer to Job: God needs man.xxx I wonder if the same isn’t true of men and women: we need each other, and each gender needs both masculine and feminine to bring about the experience of wholeness.

This is sound depth psychological theory. But how, in particular, are men and women to address the political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of gender that perpetuate the castration and shaming of men and the patriarchal oppression of the feminine and inferiority of women? One step toward the conjunction, or union, of the Wild Man and Wild Woman, and of men and women on a human, or ego, level of experience, is for us to forgive where we have been within the oppositional forces of masculine and feminine, and risk starting again. What comes next—learning to value, and integrate, both the inseminating quality of the deep, or archetypal, masculine and the gestating fecundity of the archetypal feminine into the human experience of gender constructions—may be more difficult.

There is much at stake in this work of wholeness. And for those who make meaning and soul through the practice of depth psychology, the work of the inner life is by nature intangible, unpredictable, and often incomprehensible. Demanding
ego-death, it calls upon our vulnerability and courage to engage energies and futures not fully within our control. To accomplish the psychological and cultural marriage of the archetypal masculine and feminine within each gender, alchemy—as a metaphor for the process of psychological growth—tells us that we need sacred, boundaried space (a tenement) and a well-sealed vessel that can tolerate the heating of the base material with which we start. It may be that in the work of a depth psychological transformation of the wounds of the patriarchy, we are still beginning—still in need of vessels that can safely contain our vulnerabilities in the presence of complexed affect and damaged instincts. Perhaps the men who went into the woods sought such a container.

Notes


4 von Franz, p. 2.


7 Bly, p. x.


9 M. Kimmel, “Introduction,” in The politics of manhood: Profeminist men respond to the mythopoetic men’s movement (and the mythopoetic leaders answer, p. 7.


17 Moore & Gillette, pp. 61-62.


27 Cambray, p. 42.

28 Cambray, p. 43.


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###
Blue Woman Longing
Thoughts on a Self-Portrait
By Judith Harte

There are lovers content with longing. I’m not one of them.
—Rumi

Blue, here is a song for you …
You’ve got to keep thinking
You can make it through these waves….
—Joni Mitchell

Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.
—Mary Oliver

3/31/11
What does one say to a blue woman longing?
Will only the words of others suffice?
Poem after poem
Thought after thought
A splash of tear
Here, there.
A cape of clay cushions sorrow’s face
Then … falls away.
I encounter the Self, as portrait
And I am on my knees.

Tricked, bound,
Naked revelations,
My own ugliness revealed.
Inner vision still unseen outside.
Me as toad, where no princess can exist.

4/6/11
Grandma Lena wrapped in babushka.
Ah,
Witchery at its finest!
Grandpa Sam left for another woman.
Lena boiled his hat to cast a spell,
Hoping it would bring him back.

Psychogenetic wounds
Seed the generations
And bring on the longing.

The first is sweet.
The other burning,
Wretched.
Worst, when you’re in it alone.

I’m ancient inside,
Not as sad today.
Ancient equals eons of time,
Billions of people.
It’s hard to be sad
And ancient at the same time.
I place my sadness there,
In antiquity’s container.
C’mon Mick,

Gimme some shelter.
It’s just a kiss away.

“Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.”

4/20/11
Might it be that the Blue Woman isn’t really blue after all?
At least not only blue,
But the kind of black that turns slowly,
Alchemically,
Into blue?
And urges me to leave that sad woman,
Who fights for her life,
Behind.
Tonight the blue woman refuses to be sad.
Perhaps the clay wants happiness?

4/27/11
Longing fills the room.
What does the longing want?
Existence?
Happiness?
Union?
Warmth?

Blue Woman Longing - Sculpture by Judith Harte
5/5/11
Mirror as self,
A captured reflection?
Or mirror as Self?

An image begins
And slowly evolves into a recognized subject.
Is that me?

And ... yes!
It’s true,
“No one does Blue like Margot.”
Especially her “Dream Animals.”
She knows Anima is Soul,
And that dream souls are dream animals,
And that soul animals are blue animals.

5/15/11
Weary after class. Unhappy with the work tonight. I curse that Blue Woman and her longing. I arrive home, open my car door, drop my keys on the half-lit ground. As I bend down to pick them up I notice a tiny, dark, shape on the gravel driveway near my feet. A closer look reveals a slightly curled, fragile, heart-shaped brown leaf whose veined patterns anatomically mirror the arteries and veins of the human heart. I pick it up, expecting it to crumble upon contact. Strong, sturdy, daring me to destroy it, the leaf will have none of it.

“Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.”

5/21/11
Photos taken for a self-portrait.
An exercise in narcissism?
A reparation of same?
Or my attempt to capture
A glimpse of Self?

6/2/11
I dream I visit someone at a retirement hotel/assisted living building. I walk down the hall and into her room. I don’t find her. In the bathroom I find her lying in the tub partially immersed in water, dead. Her hair is brownish gray, her face angular. I can tell she’s been there awhile. I go for help.

I awake with lyrics from “I Should Care,” a jazz standard from the early fifties, echoing in my head:

“I should care
I should let it upset me.
I should care
But it just doesn’t get me.”

Over half a year ago,
While on my way to one of those final decades
That mark the beginning
Of the end, of a life,
Just as I was about to turn the page
On the way to another year,
It happened:

“SOMEONE I LOVED GAVE ME A BOX FULL OF DARKNESS.”

I knew then
Firsthand
That it may take years to understand:
“This too was a gift.”

I embraced that knowing,
Kicked off the countdown to those last days
And crawled my way to the surface of my life.
Overnight the sky had turned to a robin’s egg blue
And I heard
The sounds
The moans
The words
Of a blue woman longing.
I understood then what Rilke meant
When he wrote:

“God speaks to each of us as he makes us,
then walks with us silently out of the night.
These are the words we dimly hear:
You, sent out beyond your recall,
go to the limits of your longing.
Embody me.
Flare up like a flame
And make big shadows I can move in.
Let everything happen to you:
Beauty and terror.
Just keep going.
No feeling is final.
Don’t let yourself lose me.
Nearby is the country they call life.
You will know by its seriousness.
Give me your hand.”

References

A trained therapist, with an M.A. in Clinical Psychology and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology, Judith Harte has been an astrologer since 1975. She began to sculpt about six years ago. Judith has a particular fondness for Depth Psychology and Mythic Astrology as well as the incorporation of a soul-centered approach in her astrological consulting work:
www.imagesofsoul.com

###
“In A Wood of You”

“Endurance”

“The Curved and Varied”

Let the Feast Begin
By Bonnie Scot

At the healing table
welcome every starved
rag-tag
life-beaten
aspect of the self

Open your door

Embrace the goblins
the murderers
the thieves of joy

With intimate scrutiny
bring to light every sweet
dark longing of the soul

Bless curses with truth
Mold blessings with wisdom
Lay them all on the table

Then
temper your old
harsh hunger
with robust offerings
of earth and stars

It’s time love

Let the feast begin

Nightbirds
by Bonnie Scot

Nightbirds are singing
with the silvered
fingernail moon

Inviting me to
a celebration
of the night

If the enchantment
of their song
should come to you
say yes
oh yes
say
yes

Above photo art by Scott Potter
Deconception
by Susanne M. Dutton

“Si lasci pure cadere il concetto di ‘Limbo se e necessario.’”
(“Let also drop the concept of Limbo if necessary.”)
~ Benedict XVI as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, 1985

After a hundred

hundred generations
the middle place
-Limbo
-it’s a mess
swaddling, cotton or muslin
wraps, rabbit-deer-bear skin, softened grass bundles, silken-edged cozies
heaped up to cornices
along pink and blue walls
dolls, leather or paper or cornhusk
gourd-headed or glass-faced mounded in cupboards
safe clowns with flat eyes toppled
safe monkeys with sock hats crammed
cribs and cradles and woven-rush baskets
jostle and rock in wrist-warm rooms
row upon row and pearled into the hallways
both sides, down the center
all cooing and whining, ready forever for nothing.

One more

miss-marked
shudders outside,
womb-red and wrinkled, fist-faced and neckline
shoulder to doorjamb, knee-keen to lol
fallow for eons, side-lined and shiny cosseted keepsake
of mourning and pouty reason and dread.

After a thousand

thousand and one beyond
the one way to nowhere
full-to-bust burst
petal-peeled daisy-splayed open and back
in powder drift hillsides, sheen on sheen
sifted dust layers over far tickling valleys
where slow roaming rivers grassy and thick
captured them in mercy, the millions who dropped,
fat elbows flailing, spitty fingers, bud toes
their dough browns and bellies, bobbing like fruit
as the damp haunch of a white cow stirred the earth
and she groaned.
**Surrender**

By Jean Morin

Dusk falls
As earth devours the last red rays of dying sun
Silence wraps me in midnight
Suffocating me with the whisper of dark wings
Brushing my cheek with a shiver

I sigh,
descending into darkness I feel in my bones
Sinking into the sounds of earth’s magic
Tasting blood on the tip of my tongue
Where yesterday’s lie is still on my lips.

Shadows glide
Into the deepest parts of me-- I surrender.
And I emerge into the place where moonlight
Licks the water like bees wings
Lapping at the edges as they die

Dark heart
Dances like a somber raven in autumn
Scattering leaves that shimmer like starlight
Softens the song of Saturn in my soul
I wake in twilight

There! The charcoal sky
thins with the faintest light
The skeletal slice of crescent moon impales itself
On a jagged crystal peak to the north
Foreshadowing daylight and life