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From the Editor

From the pen of Bonnie Bright, with tremendous thanks to my co-editors, Warren Sibilla & Tish Signet

I am writing this editorial on the final day of the year—always a good day for reflection and attention to the nuances that emerge at the intersection of time and meaning. This is a day when we often ask ourselves we we “accomplished” in the past year and take measure of how we have succeeded or failed, as culture demands. It is a day when I often take stock of “what I have done with depth psychology” after having spent a small fortune pursuing higher education in the field. It is also a time of death and rebirth; a surrendering to the reality of “what is”—even if our precious egos are discontent with what we initially see. We are each exactly where we need to be, it’s often said. Embracing where we are is part of the process of allowing change to take place.

I consider each issue of Depth Insights™ a meaningful “accomplishment”—in the language of the modern world. Over the years, we have done our best to publish high quality essays, art, and poetry that embody the best offerings depth psychology has to offer. And, we have adhered to a strong desire to make it accessible to a wide audience in the hopes that someone, somewhere, will read an article, a paragraph—a phrase even—or take in a poem, or regard a stunning image and find themselves touched, informed, or transformed. Words and images are indeed alchemical agents that can inspire us, shake us up, wash over us, or gently saturate the psyche, creating change.

The selection process for Depth Insights is always difficult, but this issue was particularly challenging as we had the highest number of submissions in our four-year history. Having worked our process, I was gratified to notice that many of the excellent essays in our final lineup feature common threads of alchemy, transformation, recovery, and renewal. Articles such as Paul DeBlassie’s “Trauma, Death, and the Archetype of Hope” By Paul DeBlassie III

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In a depth psychological treatment of a psyche ravaged by trauma, American pioneer in psychology and spirituality, William James (1985) offers inspiration and insight regarding the healing virtue of hope, a sustained will to live. Trauma, as defined by Kalsched (1996), refers to “any experience that causes the child unbearable pain” (p. 1). Therapeutic movement, in this context, energizes healing momentum for patients trapped in malevolent dynamics resulting from trauma. In particular, the numinosity of the Self’s defensive system can become toxic. Kalsched (1996) describes the development in childhood trauma of a dominant archetypal figure—simultaneously protecting and persecuting the individual in a “self-care system [turned] diabolical” (p. 45). Depth therapy necessitates facilitating the liberation of an imprisoned and despairing psyche via the nurturance of a psychic state of hopefulness.

A Jamesian perspective integrates the transformative luminosity of hope within the therapeutic dialogue. This process of integration of the luminosity of hope within the depth treatment of destructive numinosity can be understood through the symbolism of Hermes. As a messenger of the Gods, Hermes carries a staff entwined by the twin serpents of poison and antidote, and appears in dream images during therapy.

Jung (as cited in Dourley, 2010) believed that through numinous experience archetypal forces were carried into consciousness and “that only the experience of the numinous was really capable of effecting a healing transformation” (pp. 232-233). While numinous contact with autonomous, supraordinate representations of the Self can effect healing, it can also carry intrapsychic persecution.

Wilfred Bion (1962), spoke of the “ego-destructive superego” as well as the “bizarre object” when describing intrapsychic malevolence that traumatizes the already traumatized psyche (p. 115). Harry Guntrip’s (1969) internal saboteur within the intrapsychic world of traumatized patients speaks to the same phenomenon of the malevolent aspect of the Self. Ogden’s (1982, 1986) hate-filled projective identification and trauma-based tyrannizing transferences (1992) can be understood to reflect what Kalsched (1996) depicted as the dark aspect of the Self precipitated by a traumatized personal spirit.

As trauma ravaged souls seek therapeutic intervention, the containment of both the Jamesian luminosity of hope and the dark numinosity of the Self’s archetypal defenses nourishes the potential for a transformative healing process. When entered therapeutically, the dark, chthonic realm of demonic energies swirling to malevolent rhythms that prohibit psychic integration can constellate its opposite, positive pole—the luminous archetypal force of hope.

“As a messenger of the Gods, Hermes carries a staff entwined by the twin serpents of poison and antidote, and appears in dream images during therapy”

Archetypal hope, held within the psychotherapeutic vessel together with mind-shattering traumas and dissociative defenses, offers the prospect of stabilization and integration for the soul tormented by trauma.

Hope and Disintegration

The experience, during intense crisis or trauma, of the soul leaving the body, observing from above the tragedy or horror, is not uncommon, especially when associated with what psychoanalytic trauma theorists have termed disintegration anxiety (cf. Kohut, 1977). Often experienced as a type of psychic dying and death, so terrifying is this disintegration anxiety that Kohut (1984) noted, “The attempt to describe disintegration anxiety is the attempt to describe the indescribable” (p. 16). Such disintegration and soul loss can be experienced as a death of facets of self if trauma is of sufficient duration and intensity. Despair and emptiness often accompany such dissociative soul loss. Overwhelming perceptions that the mind is not and never will be well come into sharp focus.

In the presence of unbearable psychic anxiety caused by childhood trauma, Kalsched (1996) described the psyche as developing a self-care system to defend and preserve the most intimate core of the traumatized self. He noted, Once the trauma defense is organized, all relations with the outer world are ‘screened’ by the self-care system. What was intended to be a defense against further trauma becomes a major resistance to all unguarded spontaneous expression of self in the world. The person survives but cannot live creatively. Psychotherapy becomes necessary. (p. 4)

Psychoanalyst and trauma theorist, Michael Eigen (2009), asserted that the depth psychological process of healing the traumatized soul is a sacrament, “a visible sign of an inward grace” (p. 9). This sacrament—experienced as symbolic contact with the potentially generative instinctual force of the Self—invokes the hope that is essential in addressing trauma and its associated malevolent self-defense system that functions autonomously, beyond the grasp of ego resources. Within the context of depth-oriented trauma therapy, hope—the belief that healing is possible—is a vital force can be posited as a vital facet in the healing of traumatized souls. In keeping with the crucial need for a sign of, or contact with the Self’s potential and instinct for growth and wholeness, William James (1985), wrote of hope being as essential as
oxygen to how we engage with and experience life: “let . . . hope be the atmosphere which man breathes in . . . and his days pass by with zest” (p. 120).

In over thirty years of clinical practice in depth psychotherapy treating traumatized patients, I have listened to patients’ pain as childhood memories surfaced: times of trauma and rage within the family of origin, or hatred taken out on a vulnerable child, or abuse committed within the church. Childhood is a time of openness and vulnerability to the best and the worst, a time of necessary yielding. A child is needy and at the mercy of caretakers, those who, optimally, provide necessary provisions of caring and nurturing, and do not inflict emotional or physical neglect or abuse that maim psychic growth and healthy ego development.

When trauma occurs and the necessary psychic provisions are not available, disintegrative anxiety spurs the development of a malevolent self-care system—the individual may be seen as having been bitten by one of the serpents on the staff of Hermes, leaving them in a one-sided and poisoned state of hopelessness. In coming to therapy, the human psyche, the soul, yearns for hope and healing, to be touched again by the staff of Hermes.

The caduceus, with its twin serpents of poison and antidote, symbolizes the potential for psychological disintegration in the presence of experience too venomous to consciously embrace, and the hope of one’s potential for growth and wholeness. The entwining serpents represent the healing aspect of holding this dual awareness: the integration of pain and potential acts as psychic medicine (Jung, 1955/1963). Kerényi (1976) described this as the “Herald’s staff around which intertwine two antagonistic-loving serpents, a symbol of mediation” (p. 96).

Rafael Lopez Pedraza (1977) noted that Hermes, trickster extraordinaire, performs an unblocking of the conscious ego, a blowing out of narrow perspectives including, we might surmise, one possessed by and identified with trauma and disintegration. Kerényi (1976) shed light on Hermes as he who “conjures up the new creation. To him belong the soul-conjuring wand of the wizard and necromancer” (p. 96).

Decades of clinical psychotherapeutic experience have impressed on me the reality of the emergence of numerous movements of energy mediated in the symbol of Hermes, the archetype of transitions, the messenger between the conscious world and the realm of the unconscious. Inevitably, this spiritual messenger brings not only passageway across the turbulent lake of psychological crisis but also inspiration for the journey. Therapeutically, hermetic inspiration is experienced as hope. Thus, Hermes, the archetype of hope, generates spiritual healing potential for the traumatized and despairing soul open to immediate luminousness and practical transformation. For, ultimately, as Rafael López Pedraza (1989) stated, “Hermes is a god of transformation” (p. 8) and “a protector and helper in the difficult adventure of modern psychotherapy (p. 18).

"Childhood is a time of openness and vulnerability to the best and the worst, a time of necessary yielding”

As Jung (1955/1963) noted, toxicity, within the present context of disintegrative trauma, becomes medicine as the patient comes to terms with both pain and potential inherent in being touched by the Hermetic staff. Where there was the threat of disintegration, in being twice touched by the Hermetic staff, hope, the vital air that we breathe, the sustained will to live, returns. The soul avails itself of transformative energy, often arriving into consciousness through an image that brings with it a sacrament from the Self.

William James (1985) advocated the notion that we turn in time of need, and within the context of trauma, to what most serves us in life. In his words, experiences that are filled with an “immediate luminousness . . . philosophical reasonableness . . . and moral helpfulness” (p. 23) most truly aid us in life. When injured via chronic trauma in adulthood or childhood, soul can become trapped in an intimate, chronic state of violation. “As much as he or she wants to change, as hard as he or she tries to improve life or relationships, something more powerful than the ego continually undermines progress and destroys hope” (Kalsched, 1996, p. 5). Such a state carries with it a dark luminosity, an affectively charged experience of being impacted by an awesome force beyond the grasp of the ego. For a counterbalancing energy to help us spring the trap of the malevolent numinous, we are then in need of luminous psychic help via depth encounters with intimate, sacramental soulful happenings.

Sarah, a 36-year-old woman on the verge of divorce, self-esteem negligible, related a dream in which she discovered a tarnished silver coin in the midst of a rubber heap. “I hadn’t seen it there before. All I saw was the mess, junk, nothing of any value. And then I saw the coin.” When I responded that she had been given a gift—a sense of value, she replied, “and hope.” As she explored the value and hope she found in her discovery of the archetypal silver coin, a palpable silence entered the room. I sensed within the psychotherapeutic space the presence of the god of surprises and hope, Hermes, the trickster god who inhabits the realm of the invisible and appears unexpectedly at times of trauma and threatened disintegration.

Clinically, I regularly witness such emergence of numinous movements of energy mediated in the symbol and presence of Hermes, the archetype of transitions, the messenger between the conscious world and the realm of the unconscious, he whom Walter F. Otto (1979) termed “the friendliest of gods” (p. 104). Inevitably, this spiritual messenger brings with him not only passageway across the turbulent lake of psychological crisis but also inspiration for the journey. This influx of psychic energy balances his pre-therapy disintegrative antics that have propelled many a patient prior to treatment to claim that they feared their life was falling apart or that they were losing their mind. Thus, Hermes, archetype of hope, generates spiritual healing potential for the traumatized soul terrorized by the danger of disintegration.
Trauma, Disintegration, Death

Psychopomp of both the devilish and divine, the destructive and creative, Hermes enacts psychic realities of trauma, disintegration (dying) and death, symbolically in dreams and within crisis situations in daily life. Here, as Eigen (1998) noted, the psyche becomes what he refers to as a “catastrophe machine” (p. 99). Buried trauma is reenacted via constant crises.

Hermes calls us to look within, toward the meaning of the insufferable. Within sleep he disables rigid defenses by conjuring nightmares related to that which has been secreted away. Jung (1977) wrote, “You meet the ‘dragon,’ the chthonic spirit, the ‘devil’ or, as the alchemists called it, the ‘blackness,’ the nigredo, and this encounter produces suffering” (p. 228f).

Elsewhere Jung (1954) suggested, “Behind a neurosis there is so often concealed all the natural and necessary suffering the patient has been unwilling to bear” (p. 81). Suffering may then beget a sacred urge to venture into enigmatic waters long navigated by seers, sages, and gods and goddesses of the netherworld. It is as though we intuitively know that we are meant to travel into these trauma laden dark regions of the soul, these psychic birth canals in which resistance to pain and disintegration compete with yearning for wholeness and remembering what has been split-off.

Repeatedly, due to the hermetic catastrophe machine of the psyche, we are offered the chance to be psychologically born, psychically reincarnated, after having suffered enormous and often repeated pain and trauma. The *Spandakarika* (2004) or “Song of the Sacred Tremor,” a classic text of Kashmiri Shaivism, noted,

Free of desire and attachment of extreme (views),
Like a single light dispelling the darkness,
You realize at once the teaching of Sutra, Tantra
And all other scriptures. . . .
Supreme fruition is without hope and fear....
Supreme fruition is beyond all extremes. (pp. 58, 59)

In suffering the tension of opposites between the potential for wholeness, experienced as hope, and the fear of disintegration, felt as despair, the Jamesian emphasis on hope and luminosity, and Jungian insights into the nature of the unconscious and the archetypal Self converge as guides for the descent into depths of trauma. Trauma is held and processed therapeutically, guided and illuminated by the light of hope shone upon darkness. When the therapist holds the presence of both hope and despair, the therapeutic relationship enters into the realm Ogden (2005) referred to as “the unconscious third” (p. 6), emerging from what Jung (1971) described as the transcendent function:

When there is full parity of the opposites, attested by the ego’s absolute participation in both, this necessarily leads to a suspension of the will, for the will can no longer operate when every motive has an equally strong countermotive. . . .
The tension of opposites produces a new, uniting function that transcends them. This function arises quite naturally from the regression of libido caused by the blockage. (p. 479)

“Years later I realized that there is no making it, getting over it, once and for all; but, I am on the way, my own way”

In the blockage created between hope for wholeness that beckons movement toward integration, and hopelessness that warns of disintegration, psychic energy regresses to archetypal layers of the unconscious. There it encounters Hermes in his transformative role. He pivots within the balance between disintegration and hope engendered and nourished by a containing and empathic therapy relationship.

In some cases, severe trauma may precipitate death for facets of self, life coming to an end for realms of psychic experience. Winnicott (1960) took this a step further and wrote of suicide as the destruction of the total self in order to prohibit the annihilation of the true self. Yet, trauma may also birth a hope-laden emotional reaching out, a yielding to an adaptive and transformative attitude that circumvents both unnecessary loss, death of facets of self experience, and literal suicide. Trauma then potentiates an end and a beginning, life transforming itself, consciousness in the process of transmutation.

Metamorphosis of such lasting value is inevitably fraught with swirling spirits dancing to their own numerous rhythms that leave us stunned, frightened of what we are undergoing and, most unsettling, terrified of what has become of us. Lost within its labyrinthine plight, caught in a maelstrom of deep mind, a sojourn in and through a shadowy and dismal underworld emerges for the sufferer of trauma. Ghosts and demons aplenty, in the form of repressed, destructive parental introjects (harmful experiences with parents absorbed during childhood) and archetypal energies run amuck, inflict their hauntings and tauntings. Bion (1962) referred to “the greedy vagina-like ‘breast’ that strips of its goodness all that the infant receives” (p. 115), a malevolent intrapsychic force wreaking wanton damage for the pre-oidipally traumatized psyche. Thus, the sufferer of trauma can feel adrift amidst toxic introjects from the personal unconscious and in the tumultuous waters of the psychic netherworld where gods and goddesses for centuries have had their way with humankind without caring a whit for what the particular human being has to think or say about the matter.

Depth healing ushers the soul through and beyond the netherworld of swirling archetypal opposites into a realm that is both light and dark. Within this psychic conundrum, hope provides a visceral sense of meaning for ostensibly insufferable pain. Articulating the vital role of his encounter with Hermes, one patient, a survivor of childhood abuse six years into twice weekly depth therapy, remarked, “If it wouldn’t have been for the dream image when I began my work—the man who came on the boat over the dark lake and offered me
passage—I may not have made it. I would have given into despair. Years later I realized that there is no making it, getting over it, once and for all; but, I am on the way, my own way. This is enough for me.” Hermes, with the deftness of trickster protector and guide, morphed life’s desperate situation into watchful passage over treacherous psychic waters of crisis and trauma.

**Hermes, Hope, and the Story**

When suffering serious psychic damage, the soul is in need of the caring and solace of Hermes, a seasoned guide who, having been humanized within the therapeutic container, befriends us, touching us again with his caduceus and its serpent of hope. As Kalsched (1996) wrote, “In healthy psychological development, everything depends upon a gradual humanization and integration of the archetypal opposites inherent in the Self” (p. 19). As therapist and patient hold the tension of hope and despair, consciously engaging the traumatized self and its defenses, Hermes is no longer reliant on nightmare awakenings and is free to be encountered more humanely. The trickster god morphs from an underworld demon terrorizing unconscious souls with nightmares, waking hypervigilance, and free floating anxieties into one who, once acknowledged and entered into relationship with, assists us along the journey, enters the storm-tossed boat, assuring us that this way has been traveled before, and that there is—as we call it in our plainest and most succinct language—hope.

Rafael Lopez-Pedraza (1989) noted, Psychic movement is essential to a hermetic psychotherapy. . . . psychotherapy as devoted to moving, hermetically, that part of the psyche that has been paralyzed by the person’s history or experience. . . . Now this is a view of psychotherapy in which Hermes, as the archetype of the unconscious, is the guide; most of the time, the only guide. (p. 7)

As an archetypal motif, Hermes symbolizes the structural and transpersonal aspect of the human psyche that travels between unconscious and conscious aspects of Self. Breaking ego boundaries in carrying nightmarish images to the dreamer, Hermes brings us an encounter with the dark numinous—the presence of autonomous, invisible forces within the Self determined to disturb the ego’s denial and paralysis. As a boundary-crossing guide who relates us to the Self as the totality of the psyche, Hermes is able to provide us with what we need most, at the time we are most in need.

William James (2006) referred to this crisis of need as calling for “possibilities that take our breath away, of another kind of happiness and power, based on giving up our own will and letting something higher for us” (p. 138). Here, we encounter in Hermes, as depicted in the dream image of the boatman crossing troubled waters, a luminous, hopeful psychic presence. Trauma becomes not only a state of terrible privation and anguish but also one in which the resources of the transpersonal Self may emerge.

"On this journey through the rocky waters of the unconscious, the patient is held safe in the therapeutic vessel piloted by Hermes"

Unfortunately, not all who seek find that which they sought. A woman, a middle-aged educator, entered therapy with me for “healing from horrid nightmares” and intrusive daytime memories of early childhood sexual abuse. She reported feeling anxious and troubled as though she were on the brink of death, though she was not suicidal. Years of psychological flight, hypomanic escape from genuine feeling ushered in by Hermes, had left her at death’s door psychologically. Diagnosed as suffering from a borderline personality disorder with bipolar features, her symptoms were a portent, a warning, of impending psychic death; Hermes appearing as disease, echoing Jung’s (1968) assertion that having rejected the gods, the “gods have become our diseases” (p. 37).

During her first session she stated, “I know I’m dying inside and I want help and healing.” I remarked “There are no guarantees, but if we work steadfastly I feel that you may be able to find the healing you are seeking.” Ten weeks later she fled from therapeutic care. Her final words were, “To stay any longer would mean going where I do not want to go. I guess you can say I want relief, but not healing, because that would mean going into the basement, the place of the nightmares, and I refuse. I simply refuse!” This woman was painfully honest, her decision, although tragic to hear, was one that I respected since no one should enter into the “basement, the place of the nightmares” unless they are willing to see into darkness and put the heretofore unspeakable into words.

Jung (1963) stated,

In many cases in psychiatry the patient who comes to us has a story that is not told, and which as a rule no one knows of. To my mind, therapy only really begins after the investigation of that wholly personal story. It is the patient’s secret, the rock against which he is shattered. (p. 117)

Jung (1967) further elucidated what it is that lends hope to a hopeless situation, “The patient’s libido fastens on the person of the analyst in the form of expectation, hope, interest, friendship, and love” (p. 286). Hermes enters within the context of hope fastened to the person of the therapist so that secreted away trauma may be allowed to gradually weave a story of horror and dreaded disintegration. On this journey through the rocky waters of the unconscious, the patient is held safe in the therapeutic vessel piloted by Hermes.

The psychological stage is set for the emergence of historical characters, psychological introjects, and transcendent energies emerging from the wellspring of the personal and collective unconscious. What has been stored can then be released and integrated as therapist and patient hear and endure the telling of that which is often a life-shattering story. If this does not take place, due to either bolting by the patient or the therapist’s inability to sufficiently contain and process the affect, then toxic introjects and archetypes gone awry return to unconscious realms. Hermes reverts to an archetypally aggressive energy that subverts one’s relational and creative life.

People complain of losing their
minds, their life falling apart, everything going to hell, symptoms of a flailing psyche. The woman who fled from her depths ended up divorcing her third husband only to finally disintegrate into a life of chronic alcoholism. Traumatic complexes, left untreated, can become an increasingly destructive, diabolical force, introjects and archetypal energies playing out their malignancy in worsening life dramas.

Harry Guntrip (1969) poignantly wrote concerning both the need and resistance of the patient to the process of healing trauma, “He comes to fear and hate his own weakness and neediness; and now he faces the task of growing up with an intolerance of his immaturity” (p. 187). When patients hate the telling of their story and resist traversing into therapeutic deep waters, the therapist helps hold the relationship steady so the energy of Hermes—ongoing hopefulness and potential for wholeness in the face of despair and disintegration—remains present and nourished. In the midst of intimately knowing trauma, the therapist empathically sits with the patient during this time of letting go into what is often an abyss of despair. It is in the act of letting go into realms of trust gone bad and consequent madness that the therapeutic relationship, based on caring and consistent presence, rows across the troubled waters of the deep unconscious mind.

Numinous Descent and the Great Reservoir

Luis, a middle-aged Hispanic man suffering from an adolescence of chronic physical and sexual abuse at the hands of a priest stated, “Even now, thirty years later, the part of me that felt and witnessed my abuse is dead. He is a teenager lying in an open coffin. I mourn him. I will always mourn him. He is a part of me, and he is dead.” Silence enveloped the consultation office as Luis uttered these words. In my mind’s eye, I too saw the boy in the coffin, and wept inwardly. Luis continued in depth therapy for many years. During this time he witnessed the emergence of facets of his personality that had not died but had gone into hiding. These facets of self were afraid that the abuser would once again strike, afraid that no one would understand just as his tightly webbed Hispanic family refused to comprehend that trauma had been inflicted by one who represented God and therefore “could do no wrong.”

The family and the Church stated that it was Luis who had done the unforgivable by suggesting and speaking that wrong had been done to him and done to him by one who could do no wrong. God himself was implicated and Luis stood no chance of matching a fragile sense of self against such an omnipotent and pervasive societal and cultural denial. In his words, “I was once again fucked.” The declaration suggested that he was discovering his voice, an enigmatic facet of a sequestered away self.

“It is in the act of letting go into realms of trust gone bad and consequent madness that the therapeutic relationship, based on caring and consistent presence, rows across the troubled waters of the deep unconscious mind”

After seven years of working together multiple times per week, Luis confided that he feared I would tire of him, thinking that he was not progressing quickly enough. That night he dreamt of himself at the bottom of a ladder that was positioned against an adobe hut, a Native American kiva. Luis was a native New Mexican mestizo, a mixed blood of Mexican, Indian, and distant European ancestry. In the dream, as he made his way up each rung of the ladder, he looked up and noticed a man standing at the top, near the entrance of the kiva, a Hermetic place of transition. The man told Luis that he had been there for the past seven years and that it was within the confines of the kiva that he would see that which seven years of travail had produced.

As Luis made his descent past the guardian to the entrance of the kiva, down and into the sacred realm, he saw a garden in which tender, young plants were peeking through the ground. He awoke and knew he must bring this dream into therapy. We processed this dream and understood it to mean that the recesses of his personality were coming to life, and required therapeutic care as a gardener would tend a garden, fertilizing, watering, and sheltering. “This is what we do together,” he earnestly shared. The emphasis was on together—the palpable knowing of a therapeutic relationship that opened the way for “the man who was standing at the entrance to the kiva.” Without a doubt, the trickster god, Hermes, remained within the invisible realm of spirits and then made his presence known when encourage-ment was most needed.

William James (2006) explicated that there is:

a great reservoir in which the memories of earth’s inhabitants are pooled and preserved, and from which, when the threshold lowers or the valve opens, information ordinarily shut out leaks into the mind of exceptional individuals among us. (p. 136)

Luis was such an exceptional individual, one who chose to make the descent into trauma with the harbinger of hope, Hermes, as overseer. As Kerényi (1976) observed regarding Hermes, He is most likely the same dark depth of being from which we all originate. Perhaps for this reason Hermes can so convincingly hover before us, lead us on our way, show us golden treasures in everyone through the split-second timing, which is the spirit of finding and thieving—all of this because he creates his reality out of us, or more properly through us, just as one fetches water not so much out of a well as through the well from the much deeper regions of the earth. (p. 12)

Via the mystic Jamesian and Jungian perspectives, we are opened to numinous realms that are ordinarily shut out from the conscious mind. In the reality of those suffering from trauma, the awe inspiring pools of archetypal phenomenon, the numinous messenger of hope, Hermes, the tender of the Kiva, invisible trickster god, appears when
needed. For souls afflicted by traumatic suffering, Hermes proffers both the dread of disintegration and hope for transformation.

References


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Poetry

Suspending Dr. Monnett
By Stephen Linsteadt

It’s pouring rain in the Mojave over bone dust

Melting polar ice-caps need someplace to go

If only stranded polar bears had rafts of wood they could follow their evaporating habitat to the desert

‘We are at the beginning of a radical depopulation of the earth’

Be careful not to blame it on global warming
Hecate’s Guiding Flame
A Mythical Perspective at the Crossroads of Addiction and Recovery
By Tricia Durni

In us is also a dark angel (Hekate was also called angelos), a consciousness (and she was called phosphorous) that shines in the dark and that witnesses such events because it already is aware of them a priori. This part has an a priori connection with the Underworld through sniffing dogs and bitchery, dark moons, ghosts, garbage, and poisons. Part of us is not dragged down but always lives there, as Hekate is partly an Underworld Goddess. From this vantage point we may observe our own catastrophes with a dark wisdom that expects little else.

—James Hillman, 1979, pp. 49-50

Hecate, companion of the dark nights of the soul, keeper of the crossroads of the Underworld and depicted as “carrying a light in her hand” (Athanassakis & Wolkow, 2013, p. 73) has the unrealized potential to be an imaginal figure who can become part of a stronger support for those recovering from addiction. At the heart of archetypal psychologist’s James Hillman’s work is an emphasis on the importance of mythical thinking. He maintains that as one seeks out in search of meaning and soul that we are bound to find ourselves intertwined with mythic figures, such as gods and goddesses, and they inherently become more psychologically relatable (Hillman, 1980, p. vi). This means moving beyond seeing the gods and goddesses as not only literal figures but also as styles of consciousness. Drawing on the archetypal psychology of James Hillman (1972, 1975, 1979), this paper seeks to show how this way of thinking is present in our relationships and dealings with others, in our ways of being in the world, and in our behaviors specifically in the lives of addicts seeking recovery through a careful consideration of the Underworld goddess, Hecate.

Hecate’s myth encompasses many layers, far too many to fit within the confines of this paper. This paper will specifically explore Hecate’s role as a part-time goddess of the Underworld, her many gifts, and the tools she was given; a key, torches, rope, and dagger to aid in her journey. But that would not be enough. Hecate demands more attention. To put it another way, this paper will examine the intertwining of the myth of Hecate as a keeper of the crossroads in addiction and recovery.

An examination of the literature has shown that little attention is given to this powerful goddess and the tools that she is gifted. Therefore, this paper calls for a remedy to this neglect through an imaginal exploration of the literature of Narcotics Anonymous to bring forth the tools of Hecate that are embedded in the “Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.” As well as the ways in which Hecate’s consciousness is present in the journey from the Underworld of addiction to the Upperworld of recovery. Thus, it is vital that I include my own personal experience of how Hecate herself can be perceived as a guide for those recovering from the Underworld of addiction. For the purpose of this paper the term addict will be used with neither judgment nor disparity but merely to describe a person with an addiction to drugs.

“To find Hecate in the world around us, we need to be curious about the ways in which we imagine our world”

To situate the intertwining of depth psychological underpinnings within the framework of Narcotics Anonymous literature, concepts, and traditions I offer a brief overview: Narcotics Anonymous, referred to as NA throughout the rest of this article. NA is an internationally known community that is comprised of people who have suffered the struggles of the “dark night of the soul” (Moore, 2004) that is drug addiction. Narcotics Anonymous formally held its first meetings in Southern California in 1953, although its establishment predates circa 1944. It is known within such circles, that NA was an offshoot of Alcoholics Anonymous, whose groundwork was influenced by a founding member’s relationship and council with Depth psychologist, Carl Jung (Jung, 1961/1976; Schoen, 2009).

However, while the program of Narcotics Anonymous has served those on the road to recovery, there are others who often shy away from the programs offerings. This is due largely in part to the masculine and monotheistic tone found within the programs’ literature and language and its emphasis on their use of the word, “God.” In offering Hecate’s myth within the framework of Narcotics Anonymous, this paper extends a shift in perception of the experience of addiction and recovery and seeks to reclaim a polytheistic perspective and potential healing of the feminine energy once cast into the shadows by Christianity.

Finding Hecate
“We live life in a field of mythic imagination. We put mythological glasses on to become conscious.” — Glen Slater, 2013

To find Hecate in the world around us, we need to be curious about the ways in which we imagine our world. As was mentioned previously, this takes seeing through things in a mythical way. In order to make this movement we need to access a different way of imagining. Poet William Blake tells us, “imagination is the human existence itself” (as cited in Avens, 2003, p. 25). However, as adults in our society imagination has been devalued and even dismissed. Often told as we grow from children into adolescents that the way in which we perceive the world is “only in our imagination” and that we need to “live in reality.” In this dampening down of our imagination, we are in essence ignoring the gods and their myths. Rather than trying to concretize our lives into the pretty little boxes of “reality” we could instead ask ourselves, “What god is speaking right now?” or “What particular god consciousness is appearing in this moment?” This is not to
say that the answer to these questions will provide us with a “right” way of being in the world but rather provide us with a means to look deeper into a particular situation, moment, or challenge.

For Hillman (1992), it is through perceiving myths metaphorically in our lives that we can open ourselves to a deeper inquiry (p. 158). Therefore, mythic imagination offers us a connection to both a deeper personal and collective attitude. In other words, we can become inquisitive into the role of Hecate consciousness that exists within the background of Narcotics Anonymous, the individual addict, and the path from addiction into recovery.

Hecate is the goddess of the Underworld and companion of dark nights of the soul and goddess of the waning moon, also called the dark moon, a time of death, sickness, and destruction (Harding, 1971). I experienced this direction firsthand and Hecate’s guiding flame began to flicker at one of the darkest moments of my life, although I did not know it was Hecate consciousness at the time. As I struggled to open my eyes, my lids so heavy as if they had weights attached to them, I reached my hand for the bottle of pills that had been my trusty companion these last few days. I did not want to be awake. I did not want to die because that would be too much work. I simply wanted to sleep the days away in a haze of beautiful benzodiazepine bliss. But alas, my friends were all gone. I had nowhere left to go, nowhere left to turn; the road was dark and dismal with no end in sight, no light ahead. I made my way to my therapy appointment and the kind and gentle man that had been my guide for nearly two years took one look at me that day and was afraid for my life.

He directed me to a woman, an addiction counselor, who gave me two options; either go to treatment or go to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. I chose the latter and the fog began to lift. There is not much I recall in the midst of the misty haze of those first few days, but I remember a sense of inner pulling or gentle pushing guiding me on. It was as if Hecate with her loveliness and burning torches were showing me a new path. Mythology scholar, Safron Rossi (2014) encourages us to “recognize the gods within our emotions, ideas, complexes, and events” (n.p.). It was in recalling this moment that I was able to recognize Hecate with her three-sided vision, not only in my addiction and at my crossroads as I moved into the path of recovery but as an inner companion that had been with me and guiding me all along in the darkness.

Meeting Hecate

Hecate is the goddess of the night, witchcraft, magic, and the moon. She was the daughter of Titans Persaeus (Destroyer) and Asteria (Starry One), thus holding both the dark and the light within her being. In some references she is seen as the daughter or Nyx (Night). As their only daughter she was referred to as “tender-hearted” and surpassed her father in boldness and lawlessness” (‘Hecate,’ 2015, para. 13). Hecate is depicted with three faces. Psychologist and author, Ginette Paris (1986) recognizes this triad as the three phases of the moon: Selene (full moon), Artemis (crecent moon), and Hecate (terrifying black moon) also called the new moon (p. 122). Put differently, these three phases could symbolize Hecate’s ability to perceive the past, the present, and the future.

"I did not want to be awake. I did not want to die because that would be too much work. I simply wanted to sleep the days away in a haze of beautiful benzodiazepine bliss"

Hecate was said to have been the only one to hear Persephone/Kore’s cries when Hades abducted her into the Underworld. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter says:

She screamed in a shrill voice calling for Zeus, her supreme and powerful father. But nobody, no one of the immortals, no one of mortal men, heard her voice . . . except Hecate, daughter of Persaeus, in her bright headband, alone in her tenderness. (Boer, 2006, p. 112)

Kore’s mother, Demeter, is overcome with grief. She can hear Kore’s cries but cannot find her. She goes off in search of her and it is Hecate who comes to her aid. “But when dawn ten appeared, luminous, Hecate encountered her, holding a light in her hand and bringing her news . . . . I heard a voice but I didn’t see with my eyes who it was” (Boer, 2006, pp. 115-116). It is Hecate with her two torches that guides Demeter to find her daughter who has now matured to Persephone, as she has become Queen of the Underworld and wife to Hades. And it is also Hecate who acts as a companion to Persephone when she resides in the Underworld and returns to the Upperworld during Spring. “Then Hecate came up to them, in her bright headband, and she showed much affection for the daughter of sacred Demeter. And from that day on that lady precedes and follows Persephone” (Boer, 2006, p. 156).

Hecate serves as a companion during those transitional stages of our lives when we do not know in which way to go. She lays in wait with her two torches to guide us, whether it is as a companion in the Underworld or to light the way to the Upperworld. We alone choose the way; she does not choose it for us. She waits for the cry for help, just as she did with Demeter and Persephone. She reveals to us what is already there that we cannot see.

Hecate witnesses events “a priori” (Hillman, 1979, p. 49), she encompasses knowingness through understanding rather than observation. This knowingness comes from the possession of a dark sense of sight, a night vision. When you live in the darkness, as Hecate does, your eyes begin to adjust to the shadows and your sensibility becomes more acute, more attune. You are forced to rely on your own senses, your own way of perceiving in order to navigate about the darkness. I think about this when I am going to sleep at night and turn the lights out; during those first few moments I am in total darkness, almost blind, and if I try to move about I risk running into the objects around me. But over time, I begin to settle into this new space. The darkness becomes ever so slightly more revealing. I begin to surrender myself to this new vision and trust my intuition to
guide my way on.

This is Hecate’s vision. She was the one who knew where Persephone was even though she could not see her because she is comfortable in the dark. As addicts, this darkness becomes so familiar. It is as if it is like a warm blanket that comforts and soothes. As Hillman (1979) points out, “part of us always lives there” (p. 49). That is to say that this darkness lies within us, not coming from any exterior place but an interiority that is necessary and essential to who you are as a human. We must experience the darkness to have the light; just as Hecate was born of the Destroyer and the Starry One, so does the addict embody both light and dark.

Hecate consciousness is present in the individual addict approaching that decisive moment of desperation when trapped at the crossroads and you realize that you cannot keep diving down into the drug riddled depths, the present is filled with fear, and the future is too dim. It is in that moment that Hecate, bringer of light in dark times, can provide the inner wisdom needed to make a change.

**Hecate’s Tools**

Hecate is mostly noted for the torches she bears to help light the paths of those coming into the Underworld and in their ascent into the Upperworld. However, she also possesses other tools that aid in her role such as the key, the dagger, and the rope. We all need tools to accompany us throughout our journey. Tools to assist us when we need just a little extra help that we maybe cannot achieve on our own. Narcotics Anonymous is commonly known as a “Twelve Step” organization. What this means is that they utilize a series of 12 steps for the individual addict to read about, write about, and integrate into their daily lives. These steps act as tools to aid the individual addict on the road to recovery. In The Basic Text (Narcotics Anonymous, 1988) it states, “we make use of the tools that have worked for other recovering addicts. The Twelve Steps are positive tools that make our recovery possible” (p. 10).

**Torch**

Hecate has a connection to the Underworld as a navigating companion and also a guide into the Upperworld. Hecate was a torch-bearing goddess of the night (‘Hecate,’ 2015, para. 2) whose torches helped to guide the way not only for Demeter to find Persephone but also to accompany Persephone as she remained in the Underworld. In the chapter of The Basic Text, “How It Works,” it is stated that, “one addict helping another is without parallel . . . for one addict can best understand and help another addict” (Narcotics Anonymous, 1988, p. 18). This movement acts as a guiding flame for those new to recovery and meandering their way about this newfound life. In the meetings of Narcotics Anonymous, members are asked to share their experiences as addicts in addiction and recovery, their strength as they move through their daily lives without using drugs, and their hope for a new way to be in the world with other members of the community. It is in this sharing of experiences and finding the similarities that Hecate’s bright light shines. The members of NA that have come before know the pain and suffering that is endured in the underbelly of the Underworld of addiction. The hope and strength that is offered sheds light into a dark deep abyss thereby illuminating the path ahead when one cannot yet light it themselves.

"The hope and strength that is offered sheds light into a dark deep abyss thereby illuminating the path ahead when one cannot yet light it themselves”

Before I found Narcotics Anonymous, I wandered down many roads. I tried to stop using drugs on my own. I sought help through psychiatry and searched for solace in religion. All of which had the same result, I always went back to using drugs within a certain period of time and the devastation continued in my life. I was unable to find any strength to stop. Over time, I just came to believe that I was destined to live a life of misery, those were just the “cards” I was dealt. I succumbed to the sickeningly sweet surrender in the substances that continued to swallow me whole into the darkness. But as I emerged that one-day, a day just like any other day, I found myself in a strange place and surrounded by strange people in a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. As each person shared their “story” a small light began to ignite and that light grew brighter and brighter as they told of their joys, their pain, their happiness, and sadness but all the while able to maintain abstinence from drugs. A feat I never knew existed. Hecate’s guiding flames illuminated my life and set out to presenting a new way to live.

**Key**

“As mistress of the way down and of the lower way, she has for her symbol the key”


Keys open locks and unlock doors. Keys are known to unlock secrets, give explanations, or provide solutions. As Hecate’s key opens the gates for the Underworld, so do the first three Steps of Narcotics Anonymous open the gates from addiction into recovery. “Working the steps . . . gives us a daily reprieve from our self-imposed life sentences. We become free to live” (Narcotics Anonymous, 1988, p. 11). Moreover, if we imagine into these steps we can see them as keys to unlocking the secrets to living life without using drugs.

**Steps One Through Three.** In active addiction, I felt powerless over my use of drugs and their absolute hold over every aspect of my life. I was unable to manage my work, my family, my relationships, and most of all my drug use. In Step One (Appendix A) “We admitted we were powerless over our addiction that our lives had become unmanageable.” Here powerlessness and unmanageability are referred to in the past tense. Thus implying that the power has now been given back to me. A solution had provided itself through my admission as an addict. By accepting the darkness as a part of me rather than something that needs to be fixed or split off, I was able to find comfort in the fact that I was not just destined for a life of doom. A new door was opened.

Steps Two and Three (Appendix A) further open more unlocked doors. In both of these steps we see the ways in which the addict can continue to reclaim the power over their lives. This unfold in three ways; the addict taking action in

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coming to believe in an outside power that is greater than oneself, the implication that sanity was once present and could be rebuilt again, and making the decision to turn their lives over to the care of something greater than themselves. This reclamation and decision making again evoke the powerful consciousness of Hecate and the trusting of one’s inner knowing in which way to go.

**Dagger**

“The ultimate weapon for recovery is the recovering addict.”

We could view the dagger from a few different perspectives. A dagger can be used to harm or to protect. It can be wielded to penetrate and cut through the bullshit lies that build up and infect the mind of an addict in active addiction. After going through the first three steps and having gained a newfound repossessing of one’s self-power, you are armed for battle against fearlessly facing the work that is before you. In essence, you become your own warrior against the darkness. In her book, *Godesses in Older Women*, Jungian analyst, Jean Shinoda-Bolen (2001), claims that Hecate’s dagger came to be a ritual power symbol that is able to cut through delusions (p. 49). As the addict is able to share the refuse that surrounded them in active addiction with another addict and become humbly ready and willing to release that trash, the delusions are cut away.

**Steps Four Through Nine.** Step Four (Appendix A) begins the journey of looking inward as it calls for a “searching and fearless moral inventory” (Narcotics Anonymous, 1988, p. 27). Steps Five through Nine (Appendix A) ask the addict to dig even deeper to evaluate their wrongdoings towards themselves and others, their character defects and shortcomings, and the people that were harmed during their addiction. Hecate is the goddess of “garbage” and “poisons” (Hillman, 1979, p. 50). There is no question that the life of an addict is filled with just such things. Much like the rituals for Hecate where the townspeople would leave their food and trash as offerings for her, the recovering addict seeks to get rid of the garbage of the past to clear away for the new journey of recovery.

These six steps are of vital importance to maintaining a life of abstinence from addiction. In active addiction, one’s characters defects and shortcomings acted as a means of defensive protection offering survival through otherwise dangerous times. One might be more willing to keep this coat of armor with them as they traverse the road to recovery but this armor can weigh you down. “One thing more than anything that will defeat us . . . is an attitude of indifference or intolerance towards spiritual principles” (Narcotics Anonymous, 1993, p. 17). It is for this reason that the addict should remain steadfast on his journey and keep searching for more tools.

"Even now, more than ten years later I am still amazed at the newness that each day can bring to me when I am not enveloped by the everlasting quest to be numb"

**Rope**

Hecate’s rope is not one of binding or tethering but “is a symbol of the umbilical cord of rebirth” (Shinoda-Bolen, 2001, p. 49). In the mother’s womb the umbilical cord is an outlet for the developing baby to provide it with the life force it will need to sustain itself once outside of the womb. The power in these remaining steps offers the sustenance and nourishment that is needed for a newly reborn recovering addict.

Hecate as the Dark Moon goddess is not limited to death and destruction but also to renewal and rebirth. With life comes death and with death comes life. However, in our society we have come to associate the darkness with fear and negativity. All that which is unknown, hidden, or uncertain is met with pain, panic, and fright. Yet, there is a liberation that comes after having traveled the dark recesses of Hades and being guided out into the light. It is as if life has begun anew.

**Steps Ten Through Twelve.** Steps Ten through Twelve (Appendix A) facilitate the rebirth and renewal through a daily self-examination, searching to bring a conscious awareness to life, and sharing this awareness with other suffering addicts.

After coming to find Narcotics Anonymous I felt as though I was being born-again. There were so many treasures and gifts in life that I never knew were available to me. Even in the most simple of things. Such as listening to the birds sing outside my window in the early morning sunshine, a sound that once would send me cringing into the corners covering my ears and shutting my eyes as tight as I could possibly could shut them. As it meant that another morning had dawned and I had yet another day to face trapped in the darkness of my addiction. Now this sublime sound filled me with overwhelming joy to the potentiality that was to come with the new day ahead. I felt as though I was experiencing many things for the very first time, ever day. Even now, more than ten years later I am still amazed at the newness that each day can bring to me when I am not enveloped by the everlasting quest to be numb.

**Knowing Hecate**

As I circle back to the beginning of this work and the intention that was set, to mythically imagine into the gods, or in this case the goddesses at play, one thing has become quite clear. It was Hecate herself who demanded that she be seen and known in order to get the attention that she is so deserving of. In a moment of deep frustration and anguish, I screamed for help unable to hold back the tears. Hillman (1975) once said that what the gods want most is to be remembered. Hecate did just this as she showed herself to me, in her loveliness with her compassion and guiding flames to show me what was already there. I already possessed the inner knowing that I was always in search of.

We imagine the gods in an addict’s behaviors as modes of consciousness that present themselves as guiding spirits (Hillman, 1992, p. 35) and can be of service to the gods through the insights they offer into our sufferings. Thereby seeking to bring healing to the feminine energies. As we come to know Hecate,
just as we would a new friend, we can glean some of the gifts that she bestows such as honesty, trust, faith, courage, surrender, compassion, perseverance, and willingness that are also found within the principles that underscore the “Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.”

Hecate embodies an inner wisdom and strength that comes to those that know the darkness well, representing that which is seen and not seen, and known and unknowable. Within the community of Narcotics Anonymous, this intuition and dark night vision is a unique sensibility that serves not only to guide us when we are in the depths of addiction but also to assist others that they might not be alone in the dark as they seek recovery. This requires trusting in oneself and paying attention to the truth that lies within us. It is in knowing that Hecate’s guiding flame will be there to show us the way, that her key will unlock secrets once thought to be unattainable, her dagger provides us with protection and the ability to cut through the lies of the past, and her rope gives the addict the sustenance to fuel us in this newly formed way of living. In this way, we can see through the monotheistic emphasis found in Narcotics Anonymous with its singular “God” approach to the many gods and goddesses whose symbols can be found within its literature. Hecate lives at the liminal crossroads between dreaming and waking, consciousness and unconsciousness, and death and rebirth. These are the crossroads of addiction and recovery.

References


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The 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us, and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wakes us, and we drown.

— T.S. Eliot

The practice of psychotherapy presents a rich context for exploring the experience of sound from the perspective of alchemy. My own interest in this topic stems from my first career as a record producer and musician. I chose psychotherapy as a mid-life path because it was the closest I could approximate of my experience as a musician where I got to be an inspired listener. As a counselor or a musician (or a maieutic philosopher), that’s what we do: show up and listen. Call it the midwifery of articulating what is either present or latent in the room, in others, or in the material at hand. This listening instinct is always to move toward connection and to host the invisibles and insensibles—the deeper aspects of living for which psychotherapy is designed.

It is simple enough to point out that the major sense to which the alchemical tradition appeals is sight. The ocular bias of alchemy can be attributed in part to the symbolic language of dreams and projections that are at the heart of the alchemical adventure. I haven’t come across the smell or taste of the roasting salamander (though I am sure it tastes like chicken.) As well, the written word, etchings, and prints like the muter libris are mute and emphasize sight as the psychological sense for gathering experience; we study the visual image. But what if we consider sound? Since alchemy starts with a symbolic attitude toward all experience, let us proceed from the perspective that sound is an aspect of image, as well.

The absence of sound in psychology is a curious thing. Viet Erlmann (2008) echoes this point in his anthropology of sound, stating that, “questioning Western monopolies over knowledge and representation appears to have generated only more texts and more images” (p.4.) As psychotherapists, I believe there is an invitation to re-vision listening, this other, most necessary sense in our work. We listen to people talk, just as much as we watch their bodies, or as we feel the weight of the air in the room in a shared, silent reverie with a client. I have several clients, for instance, who prefer to have the windows of my office open slightly because they find the sound of the traffic noise to be a comfort. The thrum of the city street serves as a kind of comfort to them, a ballast, as they experience territory that seems unreal to them. The traffic noise is an umbilical to the familiar.

"Like a dream, the alchemical perspective has the uncanny ability to both open up and to suspend our sense of knowing exactly what is happening to us and our immediate world"

Barbara Holfield (2010) reflects on a similar instinct, to include the sound of the world in the work of psychotherapy. She writes:

As I have entered a life within the confines of a consulting room, I have grown keen on listening for the natural world waxing in my patients’ consciousness and mine. Jung’s emphasis on the objective psyche, what I see as not a thing, but as the natural process that moves through us, much like the rhythms and cycles of the living wild world, was a good fit for my sensibilities. I understand the remarkable sense of substance and soul affected in me by the natural world. (p. 21)

I wonder if the sound of city life outside the window is a soothing image that compensates for the client’s experience of The Real going on in my office? The Real is what Jacques Lacan (1991) names all of that which is not symbolized by our minds, much like the territory of dragons in ancient maps—what depth psychology would name the unconscious. Like a dream, the alchemical perspective has the uncanny ability to both open up and to suspend our sense of knowing exactly what is happening to us and our immediate world. For my clients on such an adventure, the white noise outside the windows of my office softens the blackness of massa confusa going on in the room. But also, I experience how the meaning of the noise changes as my clients move through different experiences in psychotherapy, quite similar to different alchemical operations. Some of the examples I provide here are from my practice; some are imaginal and gathered by inference.

James Hillman’s (2003) words are helpful here. Instead of a metaphysics, alchemy offers an appreciation and an approach to the minutiae of what is happening in the treatment room during therapy. He writes,

Alchemy’s maxims and curious images are useful, less because alchemy is a grand narrative composed by many hands depicting one theme — individuation’s stages in the conjunction of opposites — but rather because alchemy’s myriad, cryptic, arcane, paradoxical, and mainly conflicting texts reveal the psyche phenomenally; and so alchemy needs to be encountered with the least possible intrusion of metaphysics. (p. 103)

To make this inquiry I start with the alchemical rule of The Emerald Tablet, (Jung, 1967): “What is below is like that...
which is above.” In this case, I listened from the perspective of that which is outside is like that which is inside. The quality of the city noise operates in a correspondence with the state or operation of the relationship in the room. To further borrow from Jung (1954), I imagine the Marriage Quaternio, the familiar diagram of the analytic encounter where the bottom line shows the unconscious of the client and the therapist connecting. In this iteration, however, I substitute the sound of the noise from the street for the unconscious and include the sound of our work as well as part of my listening (See Figure 1):

B. on this warm day in Seattle, says he likes the windows open and hearing the city noise outside. He brings a dream into the room:

I am outside a large building, like a hotel, and I see a beautiful tree and I climb it only to realize it is not the tree I intended to climb. It is very windy. I am so high up and afraid that I am going to fall. There are EMT guys in the distance but I can’t get their attention.

B. strikes me as a dismayed mystic, trying to make sense of the culture around him as though he had emerged from an earlier and quieter century. He cannot find his place in the world. The abrasions of city life are experienced as personal impingements on his transcendent-sal soul. I become conscious of the traffic noise as he tells me this dream, which poetically underscores how the wind sounds in this sublimatio dream. We are in the dream. What does the noise say about the dream? The sound of the wind might be an alarm, as though I were the last witness of this guy before he crashes from his great height—\( I \) do not want to consider what “accident” he might have, what sort of fate might show up as he attempts to navigate his way. I become aware how vested I am in his journey. In this moment I have to sort out if I am hearing a haunted wind from high in the trees or the sound of B. himself as he disappears into a dissociative haze.

“\( I \)n this moment \( I \) have to sort out if \( I \) am hearing a haunted wind from high in the trees or the sound of B. himself as he disappears into a dissociative haze”

Edward Edinger, (1994) frames the sublimatio structure well: “The ability of the psyche to dissociate is the both the source of ego-consciousness and the cause of mental illness” (p.126). In this moment with B., out on the branch of this tree, I am relieved to see the EMTs as well. It means to me that he is not so celestial, so achingly high that his ego structure is just too porous to hold onto to both himself and the world around him. Rather, he is still in the world and its ways and can imagine people being able to assist him. As I listen, I think the EMTs are too far away—but that is my heart, my attachment, and not necessarily helpful to B. The dream suggests that though he is vulnerable, outside of the familiar structure of the life he has known, here he sits able to tolerate our connection. The sound of the traffic outside places us both in his dream high above the world as a sublimating wind but also as a glue in the confounding world where he is dismayed and buffeted about by city life.

In a portion of their published dialogue, \textit{We’ve Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World’s Getting Worse} (1992), James Hillman and Michael Ventura are in Michael’s apartment talking. Their conversation becomes a meditation on the ways in which culture and the individual have each failed the other. I think of this because I hear this as a part of B.’s dilemma. In their conversation, the same alchemical dynamic as my session with B. is emphasized. The sound of the world outside comes into focus:

A pall rises in the room. There’s total silence except for the noise outside. It’s extraordinary how all the traffic, brake squeals, honking, and sirens, fragments of human voices drift up eight stories through a closed window. (We) can’t make out the words, but (we) can still hear the voices. And the snug, orderly colorful apartment seems to hover above it all like a dirigible. (p. 168)

Is there a more sublimating image than a lighter-than-air dirigible above the sound of the distant din of city life? Imagine, then—from the image above—if one were to listen to the city sound outside the window of my office becoming more distinct and articulated. Would that be an image of a \textit{anagogia} at work? I hear it as a descent from the dissociative heights and into an embodied engagement in the world. The wash of the city noise becomes distinct, separated out, and one is in the world differently at that point. Such has been the case with B.. He recently requested that I listen to a certain Bach sonata because there was something he wanted
to ask me about it. We haven’t had the opportunity yet, but apart from his gradual shift toward trust in our relationship, I hear in him a process of trying to hold on to the transpersonal self as he descends into the more mundane soup of regular life and its impingements. Asking me to listen to Bach—making any overt request at all—is a remarkable step for him. As he comes together, condenses, he is guarding against the spiritual losses he feels this world requires. And he is comforted by a sonata instead of by noise.

**Words Like Knives**

When we consider how dream images convey the life of the autonomous psyche, I believe we have to include sound. I often hear things in my dreams—sometimes music I could never intentionally create (nor remember upon awakening). But most often the sound is a human voice and my attention, both my dream-ego and then later in my own amplification of the images, I always move to the meaning of the words. The sound of the voice gets lost to my ears. Dealing with sound from an alchemical perspective, especially the sound of the human voice, underscores alchemy itself: The difference between material sound (the matter of acoustics), and meaning (the psychological life of symbolic representation). To which aspect do we pay attention? How do we make distinctions without losing the mysterious whole? Ibn Umail (2006) writes, “By cooking the elements in the retort they begin to speak out [emphasis added] what they really are, namely the manifestations of God’s creative power” (p. 109). So if the frame of psychotherapy is likened to the alchemical vas, then what is happening in the treatment, in the amplification of a dream, for example, is a loosening of the literal and automatic moves of regular consciousness that prefers words-as-symbols and hosts instead the less-common aspects of sound and image. The alchemical perspective recognizes that while there is a human voice in my dream, how quickly I am already on to what it is saying—the meaning—before I can even hold my attention to the quality and music of the speaker’s utterance. How quickly ego-consciousness shuns *The Real.* This distinction between the sound of a voice and the meaning of the words is embodied in a different client, V., where her borderline condition responds to my presence with acute somatic pain. A small silence is met with panic and it seems my speech is like a dagger to the joints of her shoulder or knee. The angst she experiences in a moment of quiet is just as intolerable to her as when I reflect (I was just about to write “surgically.” Maybe my words are knives!) any shared reality with her. At the sound of my voice she winces with pain and grabs her arm and the effect of this reaction is to destroy any meaning of the words—the symbolic—contained in my response. On one level it is the *sound* of my voice that is experienced as annihilation. On another level it is also the *symbol* of my voice, the fear of what I may be saying, that is being destroyed. V. experiences concretely in her body what for most us is usually symbolic and contained in the mind. Meanings are made somatic, symptoms expressed as an attack that she feels at the level of her skin. V.’s unquiet mind cannot soothe her, nor can she tolerate relatedness with me—so the only tool is her body. Her body is doing the work of her mind.

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“A small silence is met with panic and it seems my speech is like a dagger to the joints of her shoulder or knee”

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Consider how much the sound of a human voice, or even the indistinct voices heard from the dirigible earlier, must be one of the most archetypal experiences we can have (and this is not even to take up the matter of language.) If I were lost in a psychological wasteland such as that of my client, the sound of a voice would draw me helplessly toward it, no matter what. And like a primitive animal, I would likely shy away in alarm at the sound of someone talking. My client does both. She shows up for sessions only to kill off connection as best she can.

When she can manage to bear the sound of my voice she grows slightly more tolerant of her experience, but it is a kind of hell because in the same moment she also experiences the constraints of her unsoothing mind. There are two different sounds of an alchemical operation at play here. One, there is the alchemical operation of a *coagulatio* at work where V. experiences a kind of bondage which “Confines individuals to their actual reality, the portion they were given by destiny” (Edinger, 1994, p.101). I would emphasize that it is just the *sound* to which I refer. I am unclear if the meaning of the words has any relevance at all. I am conscious that sometimes, there is a *concordant transference* (Jacoby, 1984) present where my own voice sounds different to my ears, as though the room has shrunk and the sound reflections are small and dry—like sound under a microscope. I sound like what I imagine her harsh father-imago to be. As we enact this *coagulatio* operation and the relationship moves forward, her archetypal contents are slowly being organized differently. So too, I recognize my own voice in the room again separated out as myself. Because the fact of me addresses the fact of her, the sound of my voice functions as a *mortificatio* — literally a death where the effect is to alter her isolated and suffering position. As her imago-father changes, the imago-therapist (and the sound of his voice) changes as well. All changes are a terrifying loss for her.

**No One Knows What to Do with Love**

I have not had an exchange with B. about the music of Bach because he has taken a break from our work. I stand at the window of my office listening to the city noise and imagine that there is enough of him gathered to try on his adventure on his own — as it should be. The sound of the city is now a *separatio* and it is an alchemical operation at play in me: one of the sounds outside my window is B, getting on with it. J. H. Van de Berg (1972) writes,

As soon as I ask myself, by introspection, how I feel, instead of a more refined, I get a less distinct realization of my loneliness. Worse: if I try, by introspection, that is, by leaving out everything that is outside myself to investigate my feelings, I don’t know what to do...Every effort, purely by myself, to summon my loneliness results in the realization of what is there: my room, the fire, the bottle and,
within all this, my absent friend. (p. 35)

The noise is holding my projection, is giving back to me my alienation and relative position. If I were concerned that B.’s absence were due to some ineffective psychotherapy, then I might well be hearing the sound of a calcinatio of my own, where my vanity—and my identity with it—is sizzling away: the traffic noise is a burning shame. It would be easier, in fact, if I could point to an error on my part, some statement I made that caused a rupture that we could not metabolize. But as it is, I believe I am listening to the sound of love in all its complexity.

The counselor at the window, listening to the city noise, evokes one of the few stories of sound I have come across in our work. Late his life, Jung took a meeting with Margaret Tilly (1900–1969), a music therapist with whom he was impressed. She played the piano for Jung to demonstrate her technique and he was greatly moved. He declared, “I feel that from now on music should be a part of every analysis. This reaches the deep archetypal material that we can only sometimes reach in our analytic work with patients. This is most remarkable” (Jung, 1977, p. 275).

In Marie-Louise Von Franz’s commentary on the Corpus Alchemicum Arabicum (2006), she takes up the thread of Eros in alchemy and relates the dream of a woman who hears “The mighty sound of a bronze clock ... a sound from the beyond, of exceptional beauty, irresistible!” (p. 47). In this dream, the holy sound draws her into a church where “Everything changed.” She comes to realize she is standing in her own heart: “And I realized that this magnificent sound which I still heard was the beating of my own heart.”

I am not sure which operation applies here, but it is a fine example of sound as an image reflecting transformation. The sound of a church bell transforming into a heartbeat is an evocative image. “In some ways love always leads to a crucifixion,” writes Von Franz (2006). “(It is) the death of the natural human being, i.e. the unconscious man” (p. 47). The therapist at his window is drawn into his loneliness, for example, through love for his client, aware that something wants to be made conscious.

In one position, when we’re in session, the city noise is a container; we’re together and the work is being done. But now the same sound is barrier, a wall, and some new corner of love and loss is being experienced. The therapist’s condition, stirred up by the erotic activity of living, has followed his own heart into this church.

References


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Poetry

Exiting the House of Academia

By Robert Romanysyn

I have been a standup comedian for the soul,
A juggler of passions,
A clown in a painted face,
A magician with a few bad tricks,
And a fool.

I have dropped milk-white semen words on many pages
And dripped blue honey in unsuspecting ears.
I have written articles and books,
Traveled to far places,
Made too many speeches,
Ranted and raved,
Begged and wept,
And made numerous appeals.

What is left behind of all these efforts,
Of all these disguises?
Some legacy, some small trace of
Who I am, that I was here?
Are there any children of these deeds,
So many of which seem ill conceived?

On gray, empty days I see only abortions,
Stillbirths and miscarriages.
And it seems I have wasted my seed
And my life,
Chasing phantoms.

I am getting old now and my days are long and slow.
I sit in the sun with a big hat to cover my face.
I have no magic to make the ghosts disappear,
And I am still a fool.

But at night in my dreams,
A poet sometimes comes
Who leads me from the house of academia
Into the streets of life.
The Sleeping King
Alchemical Symbols as Manifest in Dream, Alchemy, and Creative Work

By Gary T. Bartlett

In times of pale and stagnant thought
Where neither hope nor love prevail
A regal one now lost is sought
In realms unknown beyond the Veil

In time alone that depth has wrought
Where neither hope nor love remain
A regal one now lost is sought
To set a’ right his vagrant reign

— — —

His name was known in days of old
Scribed in the Books of Eytherin
The search, a tale, in myth is told
Far shadows of truth known to men

Beyond the aged and vaulted peaks
His hand upon the reins of fate
Lies the truth of the One who sleeps
In silence bound beyond the gate

-Gary Bartlett, 2007

“One day a King will come and the sword will rise.”
—King Arthur, Excalibur (1981)

One can hardly think, in our modern democratic society, of a more seemingly obsolete concept worth understanding than the value of the King. Culturally, we have long ago moved beyond a practical consideration of this culture-role and, it would seem appropriate to state, the archetypal energy once invested within it. Despite the continued presence of royal families with their kings, queens, and princes in our world, our culture and our collective consciousness have left this form of social structure behind. However, this transformation of consciousness, although seemingly complete, is nonetheless still underpinned by the millennia of cultural experience in which the King and the role of kingship reigned.

We could surmise that because our culture is rooted deep within the Christian tradition, with the King energy largely invested within the figure of Jesus Christ, that the continued fascination with the King is largely due to the place this energy holds within our collective psyche. Yet, another possibility emerges if we take C. G. Jung’s view as expressed in his work Answer to Job (1958). Jung’s analysis, amplified by his followers, especially Edward Edinger emerges as the foundation of a new myth for our age – with the Self replacing God as the organizing image of the psyche. Consequently the continued presence of this archetype in our collective and individual experience becomes clearer.

It is this other possibility, offered by the work of Jungian psychology, which will occupy the majority of this discussion. In doing this I will offer some reflections on my own personal experience with this archetypal energy as the subjective inner experience is for me, following Jung, primary. Dream and fantasy, as well as what I have come to call directed fantasy, play a significant part in this process of coming to terms with, and deepening into the energy that arises from psyche. The presence of certain themes or images, in this case that of the King, are worth focusing on due precisely to the juxtaposition they offer to the lived state of waking consciousness.

Keeping in mind that Jung tells us in his Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious (1959) that the unconscious often acts in a compensatory manner to the conscious attitude (Jung, 1959, pp. 162-163), the desire to see why the King is speaking is heightened. This paper explores the nature of the king archetype as it manifests within the alchemical and religious traditions. Further, I will offer some of my own experiences in the form of fantasy, dream, and the results of my sessions of directed fantasy, to demonstrate the nature of my own engagement with this energy.

Directed Fantasy vs. Active Imagination

Before beginning it may be helpful to define this term directed fantasy. This is a term that I have applied to the elaboration of inner images and experiences through the medium of creative writing and poetry. The directed aspect of this process is the initiation or inspiration given autonomously by the unconscious through the dream. The fantasy element is the growth and depth this initial image undergoes through the conscious investment of time and the synchronistic force of attraction the image expresses once within consciousness. It is my theory that if I take as the initial image that which rises of its own from the unconscious that I am thus working with an authentic image that is not wholly of the ego.

Correlates exist for this sort of work of course as the invocation of one’s personal inner experience has been a part of several artistic movements. In this I see strong elements in the work of surrealist movement, especially Andre Breton (1896-1966) who states in his 1924 Surrealist Manifesto that “psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express - verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner - the actual functioning of thought” (Waldberg, 1971). Another major figure in this vein is the American psychotherapist Ira Progoff (1921-1998) whose work The Well and the Cathedral (1977) leads the reader through a series of poems accompanied by meditations intended to draw out a unique and personal experience for the reader and through journaling on this experience an increasing depth of understanding of ones subjective inner world.

This is personal work, sacred work, accomplished by individuals in their own
way and the sharing of this work with the wider world is not to be taken lightly. In this work with directed fantasy I embrace the nature of my characters as fractal manifestations of my own psychic unfolding, limbs of tree still in mid-life and sending out feelers above and below. This is murky territory to say the least, as Jung himself cautioned against this form of exploration, regarding it as a form of passive imagination. He wrote, The modern artist, after all, seeks to create art out of the unconscious. The utilitarianism and self importance concealed behind this thesis, touched a doubt in myself, namely, my uncertainty as to whether the fantasies I was producing were really spontaneous and natural, and not ultimately my own arbitrary inventions (Jung, 1973, p. 195).

Despite Jung’s reservations and views of this form of exploration, I maintain that this process is not only a powerful source of inspiration as a writer, but therapeutic as well. Given the very fact that the image is in consciousness, we are already dealing with an image that has been assimilated or to some degree altered by ego-consciousness. Jung states that “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (Jung, 1959, p. 5).

To counter this unavoidable fact, I have routinely kept a dream journal within which the initial image is recorded shortly after waking. This “early report” very often is cloudy or unclear and thus, I feel, less loaded with the ego baggage that later reflection can deposit into the image. Further, the following of the image and an awareness of synchronistic associations that arise deepens the initial experiences and very often offers clarification.

This work has two specific effects: the first is that it makes for very deep and imagistic content for the writer of fiction or poetry; the second is that the product that emerges is very often highly personal in nature and saturated with the emotive content that the initial dream presented. This combination has accumulated to such an extent, that I personally find the work more of a spiritual practice than a creative method.

The Archetypal King

The Realm. In order to keep this discussion reigned in and to prevent the temptation to go a ‘wandering in the vastness of association and amplification, it will help greatly to narrow our inquiry of the King to three aspects: who the king is, where the king is, and what the king does. Every king has a kingdom, a Queen, castle, throne, guard, army, and dungeon. Further, the king is arrayed with power, either that which flows from the upper and/or lower realms, or through some weapon or scepter that signifies his right of rule and dispatches that rule through law.

"The king is the central person of order within a kingdom; the medium through which the upper and lower worlds are connected to the middle world of mortal reality"

Who, Where, & What. The king is the central person of order within a kingdom; the medium through which the upper and lower worlds are connected to the middle world of mortal reality. Speaking of the centrality of kingship, John Weir Perry, in Lord of the Four Corners: Myths of the Royal Father (1966) tells us that:

In the symbolic cosmos, the locus of most supreme and intense powerfulness was the axial center, and any figure or object occupying this position became thereby highly numinous and evoked feelings of awe and reverence. For not only was this the focal point at which the world’s powers were concentrated, but even more significantly, it was the connecting link between the three planes of existence, the sky world, the world of man, and the underworld. (pp. 18-19)

The king is also, as the generator and vehicle of the law, the establisher of the boundaries of the realm. This is not a mere geographical feat, but one of cosmic and psychic significance. The limits of the power of the king are very often resonant with the identity within which the inhabitants of the realm exist. In other words, the ordered kingdom is hedged by darkness, chaos, and disorder, within which dwell the demons, ogres, and enemies of that order. The mythologies of a people are partly the recounting of the establishment of the light amidst the darkness (Eliade, 1991, p. 37). The lighting of a fire or the building of a city can symbolize this, which in archaic times was often a wall of earth or timbers wherein the king or chieftain established his reign and from which he expanded his rule.

Taken psychologically, the waking state ruled by ego-consciousness could be said to be the current occupant of the throne of consciousness, however, as we will see, this reign is fraught with troubles. Jung (1959) tells us that the ego is the “psychological center of personality,” yet “although the center is represented by the innermost point, it is surrounded by a periphery containing everything that belongs to the self” (pp. 357-58). The king then, as the bringer of light and order or consciousness, necessarily establishes a shadow region outside. The ego or individual identity then operates unaware of the realities that slumber and move within the unconscious and the boundaries of the ego are then assaulted and penetrated by these contents.

Jung’s development of, and work with the individuation process was precisely directed to introduce the ego-consciousness to these energies and establish a relationship that hoped to prevent the flooding of the ego’s realm by the unknown factors of the psyche; shifting the center from the ego to the self. This can be imaged as the difference between the king who builds a wall and the one who establishes trade routes. Very often walls fail in the face of floods as the waters may crest and overflow, whereas the mediation of the waters through diverting channels limits or prevents the damage such inundations can bring.

The king is also the channel of creation or recreation in many mythologies informing ritual and domestic life
that, “It represents the unknown substance that carries the projection of the autonomous psychic content” (p. 317). Sol is also characterized by Jung as the active half of the unconscious self or Mercurius; Jung (1963) states that “since, in his alchemical form, Mercurius does not exist in reality, he must be an unconscious projection, and because he is an absolutely fundamental concept in alchemy he must signify the unconscious self” (pp. 96-97).

"Appearing in the dream and upon waking, the consciousness of the individual, the archetypal coloration then takes on an acutely personal meaning and through this, growth and depth can emerge"

From this, if we extend this image to the king, we are given the indication that the very move to establish the kingdom and the occupation of the throne precipitates a limitation hedged by shadows and enemies. The king then is in a double-bind; tasked with bringing order but limited through this very act. Similarly, the ego-consciousness finds itself assaulted and no longer master of its own house as the dissolution of the established boundaries brings tension and fear. In this we can see the advent of complexes and the Shadow as the army and dungeon of the king archetype within the individual psyche.

Alchemically, this is the Calcination, or the heating of the undifferentiated material to achieve the purified state or prima materia. Edward Edinger (1994), in his book Anatomy of the Psyche: Alchemical symbolism in Psychotherapy, states that:

This procedure corresponds closely to what takes place in psychotherapy. The fixed, settled aspects of the personality that are rigid and static are reduced or led back to their original, undifferentiated condition as part of the process of psychic transformation. (p. 10)

This, in effect, is the ordeal of the death of the king, or the beginning of the transformation of the ego. Edinger (1994) sums this up by stating that:

The death of a king is a time of crisis and transition. Regicide is the gravest of crimes. Psychologically it would signify the death of the ruling principle of consciousness, the highest authority in the hierarchical structure of the ego. (p. 19)

This transition and crisis period can be imaged as a political revolution, paradigm shift, interregnal period, psychosis, or any other transitional phase in which the ruling principle undergoes transformation. Within the individual experience, these movements within the psyche are often heralded by dreams and or psychological distress. It is within these moments that the ego is given a view into the wider self and the creative vastness of the unconscious. Jung (1953) found, through his work with individuals in the grips of psychosis, that these images of death and dissolution, usually encountered in dream, would often be followed by images of wholeness, specifically mandalas, which he saw as an archetypal image of wholeness or Self stating that these images were “among the oldest religious symbols of humanity” (pp. 96-97).

Appearing in the dream and upon waking, the consciousness of the individual, the archetypal coloration then takes on an acutely personal meaning and through this, growth and depth can emerge. It is with this that I will now move into my own work with the King.

The Subjective Coloration

The Sleeping King.

A solemn march, torch light to spit the rain. Two held aloft, respects for the fallen, closed eyes seeing, knowing which passes through...

—Gary T Bartlett, 2004

This brief glimpse, taken from a dream that occurred shortly after I began my journey as writer, although I could not have known it at the time, would grow to become a central theme of my work, both personally and vocationally. The dream was very vivid and one that still haunts my memory.
Dream 1.  
I am observing, through a grey rain at dusk, a long procession of robed figures, moving across a vast landscape, which is overshadowed by a tower or tree. At the front of the group, carried on pallets, are two individuals, wrapped in greyish-blue robes; these are the royal couple. The procession is silently singing, or at least I seem to hear singing, as well as a rhythmic drumming. In the distance looms a massive tower or tree. Suddenly the eyes of the Queen flash open and I awake.

In the dream, through that curious knowledge that dreams impart, I “knew” that I was witnessing the funeral march of the King and Queen. The dream continued in this fashion for a long time, the procession moving slowly toward the immense tower or tree in the distance until the eyes of the Queen met my own gaze. The opening image was what I had written down in my journal before going back to sleep, while the “Dream 1” passage is what emerged upon my morning reflections on the dream.

My work with this dream was slow to start. The emotions that it triggered worked on me for several weeks before I was able to or pushed to ask the basic question of who this king and queen were. For whatever reason, I found that I was far more interested in who the King was rather than the Queen. The confusion regarding the alleged death of both followed by the Queen suddenly awakening triggered other questions as well. Specifically, why was the dream telling me that they were dead and what I was witnessing was a funeral when the Queen was obviously alive. I began to think about this question more and more and then one afternoon I wrote simply, “the King is asleep,” and from this came all that has followed.

I have wondered about this for a long time and I remember the determination of this “fact” was like another voice speaking; as if the answer was suddenly given in order to initiate a process of expressing a specific image of the King. Through my explorations in an attempt to come to terms with this image I have found a vast storehouse of connections and amplifications that support the Sleeping King archetype. This image ranges from the Once and Future motif of the Arthurian mythologies to the Hindu image of the sleeping king in the form of Vishnu, from whom the universe manifests as a dream. In our own culture-myth, we have the Messiah, first prophesied in the Old Testament tradition that in the Christian tradition was fulfilled by the figure of the Christ. From Jung’s view of the Self as the new image of the god-head within the psyche, the sleeping king would thus be the immanent wholeness rising, with the image of the funeral and the royal couple signifying the initiation of the ego’s journey of transformation and relationship with the wider psyche.

"Our experiences of childhood through our most intimate relationships involve our earliest encounters with love and death"

However, this image contained other elements, specifically the Queen, whose sudden waking cast me back to consciousness. This experience was frightening, thus the sudden waking and this figure has been more difficult. The difficulties continue to mount as I have explored these images through alchemy. Alchemically, the Queen is identified with Luna or the moon. This in some of Jung’s writings is identified with Mercurius, yet, in other places Sol is said to be at once identical with Mercurius and also the husband of Mercurius. Jung writes, “...the conunctio of Sol and Mercurius is a heirosagmos, with Mercurius playing the role of bride” (Jung, 1963, p. 100). Yet, it is important to keep in mind when dealing with these images that “...the reality, the true being, of the king, as of an individual—is not in his character as individual but as archetype” (Campbell, 1959, p. 412). With this reminder, I am able to see the Queen as an archetype as well, therefore taken together, the presence of both is a commentary on the emerging state of an inner transformation that is in line with both Jungian psychology and alchemy.

Jung explores this in his discussion of the dual mother in his Symbols of Transformation (1956) who manifests both nurturing and terrible aspects. Within alchemy, we are given the multivalent aspects of Mercurius within which the masculine and feminine principles are wedded, dissolved, and reborn through the work of the alchemist. Personally, this image seems to speak to the difficult issues I have had in my life. Like so many who reflect on their experiences of childhood I remember moments of being very happy and loved and also times of stress, anger, resentment, and a perceived betrayal. Our experiences of childhood through our most intimate relationships involve our earliest encounters with love and death. Parents give us not only positive/nurturing experiences but also experiences of absence or distance as well as anger. These images are primordial and taken together they indicate what Jung calls “a pattern of behavior which will assert itself with or without the cooperation of the conscious personality” (Jung, 1956, p. 309).

The presence of the looming tower or tree has also found expanded meaning in relation to the royal couple, both in my research and in my fictional elaborations. This image specifically has been the locus of some significant synchronistic experiences. These are many as the work with this dream through my writing has been ongoing for ten years and so space allows me to share only one, however, it is by far the most significant.

About two years ago my family and I were visiting my in-laws and during our stay I was taking some time to read, looking for additional information on the nature of the sleeping king. I turned, as I do many times to Jung. There was a storm moving in and I had settled in to spend some time on the subject. However, as I searched through Jung’s works, specifically his Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious (1959) & Aion (1959), I found that I was finding consistent explorations of tree symbolism. I found references in Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious references to the quaternity and Mercurius, specifically that of the center, which, as discussed above, is resonant with the central axis, axis mundi, cross, and very often imaged as a Tree; Tree of Life, World Tree, etc. (Jung, 1959, p. 296) Further, in the same text I found the association of the tree,
by the alchemists, with the heirosgamos or the union of the opposites as discussed above (p. 109). In Aion (1959), I found further associations between tree symbolism and Mercurius, of whom, at the time I knew nothing, least of all the associations with the archetypal king and alchemical transformation (p. 235). In Jung’s alchemical studies, I found an extensive discussion of the Philosophical Tree in which he again brings in the connection of the Tree to Mercurius and the quaternity. He states, “The fourfold Mercurius is also the tree or its spiritus vegetativus” (Jung, 1967, p. 279).

I paused as my daughter awoke and asked for a drink of water and I went downstairs to get it. I stopped, before going back upstairs, to look out the back window of the house, the storm was building and the landscape was livid. Suddenly there was a shudder and I saw what turned out to be the top half of a tree fall into the back yard. Apparently, one of the large pine trees in the front of the house had broken off about ten feet up and fell on the house. The damage was extensive but no one was hurt.

Later, after everything settled down it struck me that this push into tree symbolism while searching for information on the king was apparently a commingling of psyche and physis; a synchronistic event that reignited the images from the old dream and solidified the inherent connections these archetypal images share. I had already invested a great deal of time in the image of the tower or tree from the initial dream and its presence in my fiction, and the mythology of the King had been a long-standing factor. In an active imagination session done for Professor Susan Rowland I wrote the following, which is part of a larger piece titled The Golden City (2011), which is too extensive to include here:

The journey within to achieve this sight is a long and toilsome one; stumbling down uncut pathways in search of one’s truth. Passing beyond the encircling mountains that hedge the edge of the vast plain, the city shines. The plain, which was my path, surrounded the city walls stretching into a distance that shared no kinship with human experience. Indeed every aspect of this “place” dwarfed the terrestrial landscape of mortality; surely the waking world could not contain the arrogance of this impossible space.

Then as wave upon wave of awe breaks upon awareness the trembling senses are drawn up, up and into the depths of the night, tracing the up-stretched immensity of the center. At once a great tree or mountain yet seemingly hewn or crafted. The summit is unseen, a majestic and humbling sight, reared from the soils of eternity to stand peaked and titanic at the center; a pinnacle of power to behold, resolute in its charge, no thought of dissolution and defeat.

"For me, the transformative aspect of the work is in the honoring of what has arisen through the dream by allowing it free reign to fully express itself"

The images that flowed from this work and the extensive fictional world that has grown from this initial, fragmentary image, have taken on a life of their own. What I have found through the use of this method of directed fantasy is that the key is to ask the questions of the image in a manner that reflects their authenticity and originality. For me, the transformative aspect of the work is in the honoring of what has arisen through the dream by allowing it free reign to fully express itself.

In this it has been revealed, through direct experience, that the images that arise in dream reflect, not only the multivalence and endless aspects of the archetypes, but also the ways in which the subjective coloration can offer insight into one’s own emergent wholeness. Through the lens of depth psychology and alchemical symbolism, I have found an ever deepening well of energy through which I have found, not only a highly personal spiritual practice, but also a rewarding and rich vocational outlet as well.

References

Gary Bartlett holds a M.A. in Depth Psychology with an emphasis on Jungian and Archetypal Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, California, where he is also currently pursuing a Ph.D. Gary is a writer by vocation and a teacher by avocation. He has been writing fiction and essays for nearly fifteen years and chooses to focus on the imaginal and the role of creativity in the lived life. He lives in South Western Michigan with his wife and two children.
“Creative Block” (left) is the first in a series of three paintings that came about from using active imagination in relation to a creative block I was experiencing. When I started painting, I knew I was engaging with my block and bringing it to life, a process that ultimately transformed it, resulting in a painting of a snake at the end of the series.

Joey Paynter has traveled extensively to over 40 countries as a counselor, healer, lecturer, and photojournalist where she has provided therapy to refugees, orphans, prostitutes, victims of trauma, and has also run support groups for those that have been affected with HIV/AIDS. Joey holds masters degrees in Clinical Psychology and Depth Psychology and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Jungian and Archetypal studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute.
Alchemy: Vessel for Personal Transformation
(Or, Alchemy: The Life it Saves May Be Your Own!)
By Clara Lindstrom

Introduction
Life change can be terrifying. When things fall apart, a threatened ego will grasp at almost anything to stave off rising waves of panic, anxiety, and depression. Conventional psychiatry is quick to oblige by recommending pharmaceutical medications that will ostensibly lift the user out of these states. However, if one has a certain amount of support and the proper map, one may actually plumb the depths of transformation and reap the rewards of those uncomfortable, shadowy realms. For me, that map was alchemy, and it proved the deciding factor in successfully navigating rough terrain. What follows is an exploration of my transformational crisis, or spiritual emergency (Grof & Grof, 1991) through the lens of alchemy.

The Dream: Prima Materia
How to describe the fundamental re-configuring of a life? Let me begin with a dream. Although I was already well into my transformative breakdown, which began in the spring of 2014, this dream appeared nine months into the process, in December 2014. It was an explicit harbinger of what was about to become its most intense, challenging, and destabilizing phase. I include the description here verbatim, as I recorded it at the time:

December 15, 2014. “GIVING BIRTH:" I realize that I have a baby in me. I look in the mirror in my room, and spread my legs, and am surprised to see the top of the head, visible there! So now that I've seen it, there is no way to stop the birth process….oh my gosh I'm not totally ready though, I'm just here, by myself in my room…. But I start to lie down because this is going to happen, now! I think of my white carpet and all the blood…but there is no time to prepare otherwise. I lean back, and without even much effort the head starts coming out, and I reach my arms around to catch it, and before I know it there is a little baby lying in my hands! It was so fast— I am astonished. I did it all by myself. I am relieved and amazed that it was so easy and painless. I mean… what luck! That’s really unusual! She is a little girl, not moving, not very bloody…. I look closer, and she starts to move. And talk. I don't feel a rush of maternal feelings…. I can't remember what I'm feeling, I think amazement... I go into my parents' room to show them this new baby, and hold her out in my hands. I say, “Her name is Clara, and she’s really verbal.”

"What had brought me to this peak of intensity? What was the crucial ingredient that ushered in this dawning realization? I was falling in love"

This dream is a classic illustration of prima materia, or “first matter.” “The alchemists inherited the idea of the prima materia from ancient philosophy and applied it to their attempts at the transformation of matter. They thought that in order for a given substance to be transformed, it must first be reduced or returned to its original, undifferentiated state” (Edinger, p. 10). In this dream I have returned to my original condition as a newborn infant, ready for transformation and growth. As Edinger asserts,

Fixed, developed aspects of the personality allow no change. They are solid, established, and sure of their rightness. Only the indefinite, fresh, and vital, but vulnerable and insecure, original condition symbolized by the child is open to development and hence is alive…the image of a child in dreams...can symbolize the prima materia. (p. 11)

With this dream, my psyche could not have delivered a clearer message that my alchemical journey was about to begin in earnest. Little did I know it, but certain “fixed, developed aspects” of my personality would indeed begin breaking down in ways that would prove decidedly uncomfortable.

Background: Solutio and Circulatio
For many months leading up to this dream I had been enduring debilitating chronic pain in my neck, shoulder, and arms. Truth be told, the pain had dogged me in some form or another for almost five years prior to this, causing me to seek help with physical therapy, acupuncture, massage, and chiropractic adjustments. But it had gained particular momentum and intensity in March of 2014. This is why I mark my transformational crisis as having begun at this point: I began to acknowledge the hard fact that life as I knew it could not continue in the same way. Something fundamental had to change.

What had brought me to this peak of intensity? What was the crucial ingredient that ushered in this dawning realization? I was falling in love. I met a man who Soul recognized as a kindred spirit and a disrupter of my patterns. On some level, it knew that if I were going to open myself to receiving love from this person, some of the deepest structures in my psyche—the very same structures that were also implicated in my chronic pain—would have to dissolve and wash away. Fears, rigidities, boundaries, and protections that had functioned to keep me safe were now direct impediments to love, change, and growth. True, James had moved into my home on March 1st merely as a renter; there was no overt sign of romance until a few months down the road. But Soul anticipates on a subtle level what individual ego becomes conscious of only later.

With the presence of this man in my home, my pain—which I had heretofore
been able to keep somewhat private and hidden away—had a sensitive and attuned witness. My suffering was starting to leak out and be noticed in ways that were, for me, new and unsettling. I did not like to have my “weaknesses” observed, much less responded to; I did not want to be “pitted.” But rather than diminish and allow me to contain it, my pain increased. It had found something of an outlet, and in spite of my best efforts, I found myself cracking open and breaking down not only in the presence of this man.

My choice of words in describing this process is no accident. Going over them with a discerning eye, it becomes glaringly apparent that the terms “dissolve,” “wash away,” and “leak out” indicate that, with the entry of James into my life, I was plunged into the alchemical operation of solutio. In alchemy, solutio refers to the washing, cleansing, or dissolving of the substance being worked with. And falling in love is a kind of dissolution, for what could be more powerful than love at dissolving egoic boundaries and individual psychic structures? Even the language we use, “falling in love,” indicates the submersion of the self in something like a pool or a lake; a liquid containing matrix. One does not “fall upon love” or “step over to love;” one falls into liquid love. One is dissolved by it.

Edinger (1996) has this to say: “Love and/or lust are agents of solutio. This corresponds to the fact that a particular psychic problem or state of development often remains arrested or stuck until the (person) falls in love. Then abruptly the problem is dissolved. Although new complications appear, life has begun to flow again. It has been liquefied” (p. 55). He goes on to mention that “whatever is larger and more comprehensive than the ego threatens to dissolve it” (p. 56).

In my case, I had been limping along with chronic pain for years, and acute pain for months. I was not happy about it, and was growing less and less satisfied with my life. But at least I was still “in control.” I was making sensible, rational decisions and operating in a way that I was used to. My boundaries, defenses, and coping mechanisms, although rigid and increasingly constraining, were familiar. Even though I wanted something to change so that I would no longer be in pain, I was not able to figure out how to get “from here to there,” so to speak. There was no force in my life big enough or comprehensive enough to overtake or engulf my habit energy and egoic will—something that would ultimately be necessary to bring about radical transformation. Love entered and became that force. Yes, pain had been a powerful agent, nudging me along and forcing me to make certain adjustments. But love engulfed and began to dissolve me.

By May of 2014, with James’ support and encouragement, I made what felt like a radical decision: I would take a medical leave of absence from work. Although this felt risky, drastic, and possibly selfish, the typing and desk work required to do my job exacerbated my neck and shoulder pain beyond tolerance. Once my leave was granted, I spent four months away from the office, living with friends and family in the Pacific Northwest where I grew up. During this time, I hiked, prayed, read, and spent as little time as possible on a computer, in an attempt to heal. Again, I knew that my chronic pain was related to profound change that was trying to come through, or, more specifically, that the pain was related to my resistance, on various levels, to this change. Still, I did not know what “my new life” was supposed to look like! I knew that my old routines were not working, but I did not know what to replace them with.

Prima Materia and Calcination

After four months away, I returned to work, part-time, in September. Granted, my job was problematic, but I hoped that a reduced work schedule would be a stopgap measure against quitting entirely, until I had some idea of what else I would do. By this time the pain was slightly more manageable, but still very present. I knew in my heart that it was related to not only the physical mechanics of the job (i.e. typing and working on a computer), but to the promptings of Soul: this position was not my calling and, to the degree that I devoted most of my time and creative energy to it, was standing squarely in the way of Soul’s increasingly insistent urgings. In his book The Soul’s Code, archetypal psychologist James Hillman (1996) puts forth the idea that each of us is given, before we are born, a “unique daimon,” which “has selected an image or pattern that we live here on earth. This soul-companion, the daimon, guides us here.

In the process of arrival, however, we forget all that took place and believe we come empty into this world” (p. 8). It is then one’s task to remember, or perhaps get out of the way, so that the daimon, who “remembers what is in your image and belongs to your pattern” (p. 8) can effectively guide you to your destiny. Perhaps it would be more apt to frame the necessary action, rather than “getting out of the way,” as coming into alignment with one’s daimon. Whichever, Hillman (1996) points out that “a calling may be postponed, avoided, intermittently missed. It may also possess you completely. Whatever; eventually it will out. It makes its claim. The daimon does not go away” (p. 8).

The difficulty comes when one is fairly certain of what isn’t one’s calling, but has not yet formed a concrete idea with regard to what is. In these cases, as in mine, life can become excruciatingly uncomfortable as the urgings of the daimon point one away from familiarity, comfort, and safety but do not make crystal clear the proper path to move toward. One is left suspended in an existential void of sorts, with one light fading into the background but no discernible beacon to illuminate the path ahead.

I had also, come September, moved back in to the house with my new love. Only this time, we were not just housemates, we were partners. One need not be an alchemist to know that the initial stages of serious love are associated with fire, passion, and heat. These connections are made in myth, fairytale,
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and modern songs and movies. In alchemy, the operation associated with the element of fire is calcinatio. This is the stage when fire gets applied to heat up and catalyze the substance being worked upon. Careful attention must be paid so that just the right amount of heat is applied; too little, and the Work remains cold and stagnant; too much, and the Work may burst into flames and be destroyed before it is ready.

Ultimately, the idea is to burn away impurities and leave what is pure, strong, and worthy.

I am not someone who falls in love easily. On the contrary, for me it is an exceedingly rare and precious occurrence. And, as the weeks living with James unfolded, I began to understand why I had been mostly single during my adult life: falling in love—real love, transformative love—can be terrifying! In addition to the joys and delights of new partnership with a truly kindred spirit, I began to experience some unfamiliar fears and anxieties. In fact, it could be said that certain aspects of my personality were being subjected to the unrelenting flame of another person’s attention, day in and day out. In the midst of the love, which was definitely present, the fire of calcinatio was beginning to produce some discomfort.

Edinger (1994) talks about the ruling principle of the ego—or, the dominant value around which the personality is structured—as being personified as a King in alchemical texts, and there are many images depicting the king being burnt on a pyre, shoved into a stove, or boiled alive in connection with the calcinatio operation. Then, “after a descent into hell, the ego (king) is reborn, phoenixlike, in a purified state” (p. 19). Viewed from the perspective of alchemical Soul Work, then, the dominant value around which my personality had been structured, “defend, achieve, and be self-sufficient!” was being challenged, or rather, burnt up in the fire of calcinatio. In order to love and be loved, I had to incorporate another’s care; I had to soften; I had to be vulnerable; I had to learn that I could depend on another. Real love is no joke; the stakes are high.

In order to love and be loved, I had to incorporate another’s care; I had to soften; I had to be vulnerable; I had to learn that I could depend on another. Real love is no joke; the stakes are high.

In our case, falling in love and immediately living together proved to be a recipe for nearly immolating ourselves entirely. By December, it became increasingly clear that if we wanted to build a solid foundation and preserve a lasting and more stable connection, we would need to move out. This, accompanied by the additional ego-destabilizers of continued physical pain, and the knowledge that I probably needed to leave my job and perhaps my Ph.D. program, was enough to thrust me out of calcinatio and into the darkest of all operations: mortificatio. It seems apt that this occurred at the onset of winter—the season of long nights, hibernation, and underground incubation.

Mortificatio and the Vessel

In the weeks prior to the dream of giving birth to myself, my physical suffering had reached a debilitating crescendo. I had sharp nerve pain radiating from my neck down my arm, making any position uncomfortable and wreaking havoc on my sleep. In a desperate attempt to diminish what I knew to be a ramped-up stress response in my body—which was not responding to acupuncture, physical therapy, massage, Roling, and other physiological healing practices—I changed tactics, somewhat, and began working with relaxation techniques, mantras, and meditation. In combination with a few other supportive measures that I put in place, these caused me to shift focus ever so slightly from primarily the physical to the psychological (of course this duality is more or less a mental construct; they are, at bottom, indivisible). An excerpt from my journal at the time describes the beginnings of this shift:

Suddenly I had this overwhelming realization that I would actually rather be in physical pain than experience depression and anxiety again. As much as it hurts and constrains my movements... it’s better than psychological hell. And in THAT MOMENT I realized what my body has been doing for me all these months/years: It has taken on the burden of stress and uncertainty to spare me the hell of psychological fear and anxiety.

Suddenly everything flipped, and I felt immense, tremendous gratitude and compassion! My body has allowed me to function, these past five or six years at this job! So, rather than be my tormentor, my body has taken this hit, for me. I felt amazed. To suddenly switch out of this “my-body-is-torturing-me” mode to “my-body-is-trying-to-spare-me” mode. It was like night and day.

And weirdly, within the next few
hours, the massively acute, hot/tingling pain that I’d been suffering in my right arm substantially diminished. It’s just astonishing. And now... the sheer level of stress and anxiety I have been carrying about next steps in my life has come into my conscious awareness. My body is saying, “OK finally, I can start to unwind this tension because you are taking back from me some of this burden and working with it, CONSCIOUSLY.

Within a few days of this epiphany, I was visited by the dream indicating my state of prima materia. What is particularly interesting is that I am not only the baby, in this dream; I am also the one giving birth. Thus I am not simply being reduced to prima materia; rather, I am reducing myself to prima materia, in preparation for the deep Work to begin. This points to the archetype of the Ouroboros, the snake that eats its own tail, symbol of infinity and rebirth that the alchemists borrowed from ancient Egypt. Jung (1977) had this to say about the Ouroboros:

The Ouroboros has been said to have a meaning of infinity or wholeness. In the age-old image of the Ouroboros lies the thought of devouring oneself and turning oneself into a circulatory process, for it was clear to the more astute alchemists that the prima materia of the art was man himself. The Ouroboros is a dramatic symbol for the integration and assimilation of the opposite, i.e. of the shadow. This ‘feed-back’ process is at the same time a symbol of immortality, since it is said of the Ouroboros that he slays himself and brings himself to life, fertilizes himself and gives birth to himself. He symbolizes the One, who proceeds from the clash of opposites, and he therefore constitutes the secret of the prima materia which [...] unquestionably stems from man’s unconscious.

(Para. 513)

After the birth dream, everything began to rapidly shift into mortificatio. Love’s calcinatio had been steadily burning away rigid defenses such that I was more emotionally exposed than I had perhaps ever been. Pain made me fragile, vulnerable, and frustratingly dependent on other people. Mounting ambivalence about my job and PhD program—roles which had defined me for the past seven years—made me question, on a fundamental level, who I was and what I was doing with my life. In many ways, although I chose to focus on love’s role in the process of calcinatio, the fire was also being fed by my waning enthusiasm for academic work. All my life I had been a student: I got straight A’s, skipped a grade in school, earned a full ride to college, and genuinely loved learning and the classroom environment. If calcinatio is understood to be the operation wherein the “dominant life value around which the personality has been structured (undergoes) reevaluation,” (Edinger, p. 20), then contemplating a flight from academia was certainly fanning the flames.

"Life changes of this magnitude, all at once, can feel not only challenging and destabilizing, they can produce a physical and mental state bordering on madness"

Life changes of this magnitude, all at once, can feel not only challenging and destabilizing, they can produce a physical and mental state bordering on madness. Many times during those months I said to myself “…Am I going crazy...?! I can’t handle this; this is too much! This level of tension and anxiety is impossible to hold; my body is going to break apart, my mind shatter into fragments.”

During these times, using an alchemical lens to understand that my process was in the stage of mortificatio was invaluable. The notion that, in the quest for the philosopher’s stone (i.e. the Self), one gets burnt to a crisp, reduced to prima materia, and only then begins the real Work—which includes a harrowing descent into a shadowy underworld—is immensely comforting when one feels as if one is being held to the fire, crushed in a vice, or exploded from within. The alarmingly gory images of dismemberment and hellish trials that Zosimos (Linden, 2003, pp. 50-53) described suddenly become reassuring when one is experiencing terrifying dreams, paralyzing anxiety, a racing heart, and high levels of depression and existential fear on a weekly basis. Rather than bizarre and terrifying, the images become normalizing.

It was at this juncture that one of the principles at the heart of alchemy proved to be crucial for me as well. That is: essential to the Work of transformation is a strong vessel, or container. Otherwise the Work will break it apart, or begin to leak through and be lost or destroyed. Never in my life have I understood this at a deeper, more visceral level. For nine years I had been living in a small room in a San Francisco apartment. During much of this time, the place served me well: it was a mere two miles from work and school, allowed me to gather community around me, provided easy access for visiting friends and family, and was close to parks, shops, and restaurants.

As my pain had increased over the months and years, however, I had begun to intuit a connection between this container and the fraying state of my mind and body. By the middle of December 2014, shortly after the dream, it became abundantly, painfully clear that the kind of transformation being asked of me would be nothing short of impossible were I to continue living in that space. The container had become weak and cracked, and my process corrupted and even poisoned.

What did this look like? First of all, I had not been able to do any writing or creative work in my room for a few years. If I wanted to concentrate or get any kind of flow of ideas, I had to leave the house. Further, anyone who wanted access to the backyard had to pass through my space, so it was more of a passageway than a room. It was also located off of the house kitchen, below the upstairs neighbors’ kitchen, and adjacent to the next-door neighbors’ dining area. This made it something like a box-drum, or “Cajon,” with the percussive sound of feet and voices bombarding it from all sides. The times I could go to bed and wake up were governed by the unpredictable activities of the people.
around me. From outside, the sound of non-stop air-conditioning units and restaurant dumpsters being emptied at 4:30am leaked in. The room was totally porous; barely more than a symbolic membrane between me and the psychic and physical energy of the urban environment.

This was tolerable when I was settled in my job, happily attending classes, and pain-free. In other words, it served adequately when I was in a kind of stasis. But as this period of deep alchemical transformation gathered momentum—with my job, my academic career, my health, and my love relationship all in question and shifting rapidly—I began to feel the need to go within and attend to the process more and more. I found myself unable to do so in this container. It became a matter of utmost urgency that I have a quiet, safe place to rest, meditate, create, and sleep, and I could do none of these activities uninterrupted in this space. My anxiety level increased and my nervous system ramped up to the point where I required drugs to sleep for even a few hours. I found myself having active imagination fantasies of crawling into a hole in the forest floor; I longed to be surrounded by solid, noise-cancelling, damp earth. I longed to be held securely.

All of this points, again, to mortificatio, the stage in which the Work depresses, becomes heavy, spoils, decomposes, and/or otherwise invites the alchemist into low places of reflection. Says Edinger (1994), “Mortificatio is the most negative operation in alchemy. It has to do with darkness, defeat, torture, mutilation, death, and rotting. However, these dark images often lead over to highly positive ones—growth, resurrection, rebirth” (p. 148). Viewed from this angle, my “strange” desire to crawl into the ground and cover myself with earth could be understood as an urge to “compost” myself in rich soil; to descend into the undisturbed darkness of earth and surrender to decomposition. Ed (1994) cites a passage from The Golden Treatise of Hermes, an old alchemical text, which reads as follows:

O happy gate of blackness, cries the sage, which art the passage to this so glorious change. Study, therefore, whosoever applieth thyself to this Art, only to know this secret, for to know this is to know all, but to be ignorant of this is to be ignorant of all. For putrification precedes the generation of every new form into existence. (p. 149)

I was a nervous wreck and needed a calmer, safer place. The framework of alchemy became very useful for stepping back and understanding the gravity of what was actually going on for me, and what was required: it helped me see that my situation was not one of simply “needing to get it together and be less sensitive,” or even one in which attending to just my physical health and internal psychological needs would suffice. Albertus Magnus stressed the need for “a place and a special house” (Linden, 2003, p. 103), meaning, a sacred place set apart to attend to the Work, and this is exactly what I required. It is, I think, a notion foreign to most mainstream psychologies that a particular kind of personal/spiritual transformation might require a special holding space. So I am grateful to alchemy for validating what I was intuiting so strongly, but had not quite been able to act upon.

"I found myself having active imagination fantasies of crawling into a hole in the forest floor; I longed to be surrounded by solid, noise-cancelling, damp earth. I longed to be held securely"

I moved to Oakland, California, on March 1, 2015. Having a safe, quiet place to which I can retreat feels like a huge luxury. Also, this act of separatio shifted things immediately and dramatically for the better in my love relationship. In alchemy, the separatio operation is just what it sounds like: a process of cutting away, dividing up, or separating out what should not be part of the Work. In our case, separatio needed to happen in order to counteract, or rather cool down, the raging fires of calcinatio. We had applied too much heat, too fast, and had in some sense melted together. Moving into a different physical space, separating myself out from the vessel in which our love had first inflamed, proved to be exactly what was needed at that stage of the Work. With some distance between us, we could each focus on our own personal process as distinct from the intensity of the relationship process.

Still, I am often scared. I am often depressed, anxious, and worried that maybe this will go on forever and that in fact I have some kind of disorder. The disconnect between what conventional society tells me—that I must know what I am doing in life, have a set career, and be “successful” and “independent” at this point in my life—is in direct opposition to what is trying to happen: this breakdown/breakthrough; this decay and putrification of the old ego system in order to create fertile ground for the new Self to emerge. It is remarkably difficult to maintain a sense of deeper, unconventional, personal truth in the midst of the daily grind: we are inundated with commercial messages aimed at propping up a false self and a false definition of “success” nested in a fragmented and alarmingly misguided society. In part because of this, surrender to the process is challenging. There really is no place, in the industrial growth society, for rest, decay and putrification. These things run, in every sense, counter to the capitalist agenda and a growth economy. There is no time for rumination, reflection, a composting of what’s been learned, or a lying fallow while the new growth germinates and waits to be born. Yet this is what nature, and the alchemists, knew to be necessary! These wise practitioners emphasized above all else how long the Work—in other words, emergence of the Self, or Soul, and what Jung (1989) called individuation—takes, and what fortitude it requires. They placed a huge emphasis on the patience, diligence, and long-suffering required of the alchemist, and maintained that doing the Work quickly was in essence worse than not doing it at all.

From the famed eighth century Islamic Alchemist, Jabir ibn Hayyyan:

Yet you must not think all this can be effected by preparation at once, in a very short time, as a few dayes and hours; but in respect of other
Modern Physicians, and also in respect of the operation of Nature, the verity of the Work is sooner terminated this way. Whence the Philosopher saith, it is a Medicine requiring a long space of time. Wherefore I tell you, you must patiently sustain labor, because the Work will be long... Therefore let him that hath not patience desist from the Work, for credulity will hinder him making over much haste. And every natural action hath its determinate major and time, in which it is terminated. (Linden p. 81)

**Conclusion**

In the end, it doesn’t matter what my career looks like, or how people perceive me; it doesn’t matter if I end up with a Ph.D., or achieve that which my culture deems admirable or appropriate. If I can stay with this process of dissolving old egoic structures, if I can more fully surrender to love’s liquid matrix, I will exist in a container large enough to call forth and nurture Soul’s plan for me. The room in which I live will no longer be so important; nor will the neighborhood, nor even the city or state. For indeed, I will exist freely in the cosmos...itself a vessel whose entire contents is love.

**Tired of Speaking Sweetly**

Love wants to reach out and manhandle us,  
Break all our teacup talk of God.  
If you had the courage and  
Could give the Beloved His choice, some nights, 
He would just drag you around the room 
By your hair,  
Ripping from your grip all those toys in the world 
That bring you no joy.  
Love sometimes gets tired of speaking sweetly 
And wants to rip to shreds 
All your erroneous notions of truth 
That make you fight within yourself, dear one, 
And with others, 
Causing the world to weep 
On too many fine days. 
God wants to manhandle us, 
Lock us inside of a tiny room with Himself 
And practice His dropkick. 
The Beloved sometimes wants 
To do us a great favor: 
Hold us upside down 
And shake all the nonsense out. 
But when we hear 
He is in such a “playful drunken mood” 
Most everyone I know 
Quickly packs their bags and hightails it 
Out of town.  
—Hafiz

**References**


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**Poetry**

**No Place for Refugees**

By Stephen Linnead

Vapor trails crisscross above
the San Joaquin Valley like Fukushima
fallout over the West Coast where huddled
anchovies and disoriented sardines
prepare to evacuate.

No place for ocean life.

Rows of pink blossoms on rain soaked
bark line the valley highway
like a military parade with stacks
of bee boxes empty and foreclosed
spread out among the flanks.

No place for honeybees.

Flood and drought force
migration into human trafficking
and sinking boats.

No place for farmers.

The apparatus in foreign camouflage
laps up the last drops of black blood
while bombing their own.

No place for refugees.
Trickster tales have been told around the world since ancient times. Trickster can be easy to recognize, but hard to reconcile. It’s one slippery archetype that has been said to be at the very foundation of civilization and culture. Tricksters have been teaching us through trickery since the beginning. It’s an archetype we need to get familiar with if we want to attain a semblance of balance in the currently duplicitous cultural and political climate in which we find ourselves.

Archetypes have been described as universal prototypes, or fundamental building blocks, of the psyche (Robertson, 1987). The archetype can be thought of as a blueprint that informs and structures individual and collective human experience and behavior. Archetypes, by nature, generate patterns of behavior based on innate—sometimes dormant—instincts. C. G. Jung believed archetypes are part of all of us, via the collective unconscious, the aspect of the unconscious mind shared by all people though all cultures and time periods. In Murray Stein’s (2009) words, “For Jung the archetype is a primary source of psychic symbols, which attract energy, structure it, and lead ultimately to the creation of civilization and culture” (p. 85). Archetypes appear cross-culturally as images, symbols, and motifs found recurrently in myth, religion, and art throughout history. There are numerous examples of archetypes such as The Great Mother, The Wise Old Man, The Orphan, The Hero, and The Trickster, to name a few.

Archetypes are often brought up from the unconscious and experienced as complexes. A complex can be thought of as a fragmented piece of personality arising from the unconscious mind. It can manifest as a dissociative state that is at odds with a person’s conscious attitudes. Complexes display a sense of authority that remains beyond ego control, until we become aware of them and begin consciously working with them (Jung, 1967; Stein, 2009). Jung proposed that at the core of every complex is an archetype, which, by nature, has both positive and negative aspects. Archetype-centered complexes can take over the conscious personality and motivate behaviors that come seemingly out of the blue and can inspire actions that are at odds with conscious intentions (Jung, 1970). On the negative end of the spectrum, these actions can range in severity, from simple over-indulging to rash acts that have devastating consequences, such as the increasing presence of public violence in places that used to be safe, like schools and churches. We can better understand the implication of complexes in these contemporary situations by considering Jung’s perspective, as follows, “An active complex puts us momentarily under a state of duress, of compulsive thinking and acting, for which under certain conditions the only appropriate term would be the judicial concept of diminished responsibility” (Jung, 1970, [CW 8, para. 200]). He elaborates: A ‘feeling-toned complex’ ... is the image of a certain psychic situation which is strongly accentuated emotionally and is, moreover, incompatible with the habitual attitude of consciousness. ... it has a relatively high degree of autonomy, so that it is subject to the control of the mind to only a limited extent, and therefore behaves like an animated foreign body in the sphere of consciousness. (Jung, 1970, [CW 8, para. 201])

One doesn’t have to look far to see a “fit of passion” overtake a person who then lashes out, sometimes taking lives and creating great destruction in their wake. Destruction, as well as creation fall into Trickster’s terrain. Trickster energy sweeps in and delivers hard knocks in an attempt to wake us up as individuals and as a culture. Sometimes it’s all in play, a jest that jolts us into new perspectives, like the brash tongue of a comedian. The Trickster steps in and points things out, asking a culture to look at its own folly (Christen, 1998; Hyde, 1998). Modern day Tricksters like Bill Maher, Stephen Colbert, and Amy Schumer address hot topics in political and social culture with biting wit and humor that shines a light into shadowy areas and brings public attention to culture’s underbelly.

Sometimes, the duality that Trickster juggles can split lives and worlds apart in order to transform them (Hyde, 1998). Take Edward Snowden, for example. A former contractor for the U.S. government, Snowden has been accused of leaking top secret information on questionable spying and data-collecting practices engaged in by the U.S. National Security Agency. The data leak has stirred national ire as well as international tension and has cast Snowden as Villain on one side and Hero on the other (Reporter, n.d.). Here we see a classic Trickster trait of absence of both loyalty and morality. Trickster answers to no external agenda and is focused on its own amoral schemes and desires (Hyde, 1998).

Trickster is alive and well in the current social and cultural landscape. Not only do we see an increase in destructive impulses, such as public violence and “acts of terrorism,” we also see creation in places where conventions are being turned upside down to make way for...
more creative, inclusive, and progressive ways of living with each other and on this earth. Proposed innovations in science seek to counteract the effects of global warming; a movement to create sustainable farming solutions has brought us things like rooftop and vertical gardens; and recent efforts to bring living architecture into urban areas is literally changing the modern landscape.

However necessary, Trickster, that shifty, crafty archetypal symbol found across times and cultures is a particularly tricky concept to resolve. Archetypes are, by their nature, hard to define and relegate to fixed, static definitions. Trickster is all the more challenging to describe because it is the embodiment of contradictions. The Trickster archetype represents the dualities and polarities that directly confront our desire for clarity, certainty, and stability. Trickster is unpredictable and has a pluralistic, shape-shifting nature that defies rigid structure. It is a liminal, or transitional archetype associated with boundaries, edges, and places of transition (Hyde, 1998). It serves as a balancing agent, an equalizing force that challenges us to grow, oft times employing discomfort to motivate the process along.

Trickster is the character in myths and lore who “stirs the pot,” mixes things up, and brings a bit of chaos to an otherwise placid story. Trickster is often the catalyst that pushes the storyline along by abruptly shifting the direction and because of this, is frequently the cause of distress. Trickster brings the unexpected and introduces the element of doubt into what was once certain. Trickster poke holes in rigid boundaries and complicates situations with multiple points of view. It is the archetype that pushes us to question norms and move beyond known limits. Trickster is involved any time we find ourselves examining assumptions or stretching ourselves in previously unexplored directions. It is that which stirs on the edges of thought and belief structures and thrusts us forward, as individuals and societies, into new frontiers.

Because Trickster disrupts convention, it is commonly cast in a negative light. It is neither strictly positive nor negative—it is both and yet it is neither one. Trickster is known to embody divine qualities while at the same time engaging in diabolical acts. It’s hard to come to terms with something that is light and dark, good and bad, in and out, up and down, spirit and matter all at once. As humans, we struggle to grasp the possibility that unity can underlie apparent duality. Trickster is an amoral character who isn’t bound to standards and rules and so can contain and balance the paradoxes that often split and divide us humans - making it all the more tricky to define and apprehend.

In alchemy, the Trickster archetype manifests as the multifaceted and elusive symbol of Mercurius. Mercurius masterfully holds the duality of spirit in matter and is often associated with the Lapis—the Self, or unified whole. According to Jung, it is at once related to the Holy Trinity and paradoxically, to the devil. Jung said the following about Mercurius: “His positive aspect relates him not only to the Holy Spirit, but in the form of the lapis, also to Christ, as a triad, even to the Trinity.” He goes on to further illustrate this seemingly impossible contradiction: “In comparison with the purity and unity of the Christ symbol, Mercurius-lapis is ambiguous, dark, paradoxical and thoroughly pagan.” He summarizes the conundrum nicely by stating, “The paradoxical nature of Mercurius reflects an important aspect of the self—the fact, namely, that it is essentially a complexion oppositorum, and indeed can be nothing else if it is to represent any kind of totality” (Jung, 1967, [CW 13, para. 289]). In this way, the Trickster, in the form of the alchemical Mercurius, can be said to contain the totality of the psyche—both the unconscious and the conscious mind, the known and the unknown, and the light and dark within us all. Further, any symbol of divinity that attempts to encapsulate the entirety of creation must impartially encompass this dual nature or else fail to be complete and whole—which is itself a tricky concept to grasp.

It is not surprising that the spirit of Mercurius has, to say the least, a great many connections with the dark side. One of his aspects is the female serpent-daemon, Lilith or Melusina, who lives in the philosophical tree. At the same time, he not only partakes of the Holy Spirit but, according to alchemy, is actually identical with it. We have no choice but to accept this shocking paradox after all we have learnt about the ambivalence of the spirit archetype. Our ambiguous Mercurius simply confirms the rule. (Jung, 1967, [CW 13, para. 288])

Jung’s description of the perplexing
nature of Mercurius shows up in cross-cultural myths and stories of the Trickster archetype. For example, Ananse the spider is a West African Trickster from the country of Ghana. He is a morally ambiguous character who fools humans and gods alike. His tricks are enhanced by his ability to change form and take whatever shape best suits his escapade. Yet some stories also cast him as a divine creator who spun the entire world into being (Christen 1998; Allen & Phillips, 2000). The Greek god, Hermes is another famous example of a Trickster figure. He is a prankster and thief as well as a beneficent creator who brought fire and music, among other things, to the human realm. Hermes is a border dweller that has the power to bridge the upper and lower worlds, and he is not bound to the laws of gods or men. He moves freely between the underworld, the human world, and the world of the gods (similar to the shamanic upper, middle and lower worlds). Because of this, Hermes serves as messenger between the realms — making him an impeccable diplomat (Christen 1998; Allen & Phillips, 2000).

One of my favorite Trickster characters from childhood is Bugs Bunny, the cartoon character who is forever donning disguises to elude his pursuers. He demonstrates the wit, ingenuity, flexibility, and fluidity characteristic of the Trickster. Bugs, like the Trickster archetype, is a shape shifter that can take any form. Trickster can cleverly show up in any guise and imitate the form of other archetypes, yet we can identify Trickster energy by the very nature of its changeability and its incendiary actions.

“We are reaching a tipping point and mercurial Tricksters are still on the scene, attempting to show culture its shadow and wake us up to the inevitable changes that are afoot”

It is not hard to imagine that we currently live in a Trickster world where the opposites do divide into extremes in culture such as the unfortunate global reality of severe poverty and extreme wealth. Polarized political views on critical topics like abortion, guns, fossil fuels, the environment, and so forth, affect us in profound ways now and will continue to for generations to come. We are reaching a tipping point and mercurial Tricksters are still on the scene, attempting to show culture its shadow and wake us up to the inevitable changes that are afoot. In mythological terms, the battle between the forces of creation and destruction, as typified by Trickster polarity, are as alive and well in the modern world as they were for our ancestors. Trickster makes its way to the world stage via the psyche of the individual. It is the duality which resides within the individual that rises up and moves from the interior realms of psyche to the outer, collective sphere. It is my belief that we must come to terms with inner conflicts in order to gain more clarity about the outer conflicts we seem, as a culture, to be mired in.

Internally, the Trickster archetype can be experienced as the inward “split” we have all encountered at one time or another. It is present in those times, situations, and relationships that give us “mixed feelings” in which we simultaneously experience love and hate, attraction and repulsion, joy and sorrow. It can also show up psychologically as doubt, which can be extremely uncomfortable yet growth-promoting at the same time. Doubt is a precursor to change and Trickster is all about change. James Hollis (1996) addresses doubt’s role in transformation in his book, Swamplands of the Soul:

Given the fact that the top priority of the ego is security, doubt is an unwelcome visitor to us...Doubt is the necessary fuel for change, and therefore growth. There is no scientific or theological dogma which does not contain within it the seeds of reification and tyranny. Similarly, the psyche summons us, quite apart from the desires of the ego, to relinquish what seemed clear, what protected us, and thereby what now mires us in yesterday. The problem then is not doubt; the problem is fear of change. Confronting the risk of doubt is necessary for any group or individual to grow. (p. 56)

Certainty is the enemy of growth. Trickster, in the form of doubt, breaks us out of old categories in order to free our energy to flow into a new form. As an agent of change, Trickster triggers our fear of change and is an uneasy yet essential companion on the path of growth. Some would say we live in a time of fear. Certainly, we live in a time of rapid change that links this era with the
Trickster.

Trickster has been associated, by Jung and others, with the unconscious mind. Like the unconscious, the Trickster is unpredictable and beyond the conscious control of ego. From my research, and personal experiences with Trickster I would say that it is on the boundary, if there can be said to be one, between the conscious and the unconscious. The Trickster moves between the conscious and unconscious realms and can perhaps be viewed as a third condition - similar to the transcendent function in alchemy which unites the opposites and holds them in balance.

Trickster is a liminal archetype that lurks on the edges of transitional processes like initiation. In his book, *Thresholds of Initiation*, Joseph Henderson (1967) describes the state of the “uninitiated ego” as existing in an archetypal Trickster cycle, a transitory state between youth and maturity. According to Henderson, identification with the *puer aeternus*, an ego complex marked by stunted development and an adolescent fixation on the idea of eternal youth, often manifests as the Trickster archetype. It is the adult (or a culture) who has somehow failed to “grow up”—an immature yet tremendously powerful individual.

He may be what the French laughingly call the village rooster, but on another level he becomes the embodiment of a universal trickster because of his extraordinary talent for causing trouble and disrupting the social order in which he lives. Ordinarily, one does not see the worst specimen of tricksterism in psychotherapeutic practice because they do not suffer from their own evil; they merely provide the evil from which others suffer and accordingly comprise part of the sickness from which society suffers. (Henderson, 1967, p. 32)

The Greek god Dionysus, along with being the god of music and wine, is known to embody Trickster energy and has long been associated with ancient initiatory rites. As a Trickster figure, Dionysus is likened to instinctual forces in the psyche that lie outside the bounds of all things civilized (Kerényi, 1976). Dionysian forces seek to break conventions and take us into wild, untamed places. Dionysian initiation is aimed at integrating the primal, instinctual forces into conscious personality where they can be balanced with our more civilized tendencies (Fierz-David, 1980).

In contemporary society, dogmatic religious and moral structures discourage and inhibit individualized expression of the human soul. There is a push-pull dynamic between doing what the ego and persona deem to be acceptable and following instinctual impulses that well up from the individual and collective unconscious.

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"As an agent of change, Trickster triggers our fear of change and is an uneasy yet essential companion on the path of growth"


instinctual depths is often comparable to a self-serving orgy which can be wildly destructive (Fierz-David, 1980).

This is the notorious plunge into the realms of uninhibited sex, indulgence in mind-altering drugs, and ecstatic states brought on by hypnotic music, as was glorified in 1960s counter-culture and has been carried through into contemporary expressions such as raves and festivals. Entering into states of ecstatic self-abandon are often associated with the Trickster side of Dionysus as god of wine, music, and ecstasy. Instead of enhancing life, an unconscious dance with instinctual nature dissipates the deep psychic life force represented by the Trickster.

As a culture in need of soul-enhancing initiatory experiences, we seem to be floundering. Caught in the tension of opposites, we need Tricksters to move us beyond the stalemate of irreconcilable duality. We need to transcend divisions that prevent us from moving forward with finding and enactin可持续 solutions that address the myriad global problems we face. We need to restore balance and wholeness. As individuals, this means consciously engaging in the process of *individuation*. Individuation is the development of wholeness over a lifetime and leads to the emergence of the *Self*. Jung described
the Self as the totality of the psyche which unites the opposites and holds everything together in balance and unity. He frequently associated the Self with the archetype of God, as an image of totality and undivided wholeness (Stein, 1998). The Self, just as many god figures, is represented as an ambiguous and powerful archetype capable of both creation and destruction—much like Trickster. Wholeness, it would seem, is largely about coming to terms with inner and outer Trickster figures in order to glean the change-inducing, life-enchancing wisdom they hold.

When the lens is focused on Trickster energy, it is easy to see its movements and implications all around. Everywhere there are references to the patterns the Trickster archetype portrays. With devastating acts of destruction and exciting displays of creativity, Trickster attempts to wake us up and in the process, it shake us to the core. Perhaps this is because it embodies fundamental patterns that we fiercely struggle with and desperately need to reconcile within ourselves and our world. Through negotiating and disrupting conventions and boundaries, Trickster broadens the realm of human potential. While Trickster may bring us difficult lessons, it is also the force that allows us to imagine and create entirely new possibilities.

References

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Stephen writes:

This series, Of Sky and Earth, is an exploration of the Jungian notion that our outer world is a reflection of our inner state. The intention of the paintings is to stimulate conversation and awareness to a deeper inner connection to Nature and Her presence in a time of global chaos and an ever threatening climatic landscape.

View this series online at www.stephenlinsteadtstudio.com/artwork_of_sky_and_earth.html

Stephen Linesteadt is an artist, writer, and poet. His creative work is an ongoing exploration into the study of Cosmology, Alchemy, and the archetypal symbolism of Carl Jung.

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His paintings can be seen at StephenLinesteadStudio.com.
Introduction

As the child of immigrants, I straddled two worlds. My close-knit, Orthodox-leaning, Jewish family celebrated holidays and festivals together. Old World foods, ancient rituals, and Hebrew melodies warmed my soul and connected me to my ancestral lineage. Alongside this, and decidedly apart from it, were my friendships with peers (none of whom were Jewish) and my experiences in secular school. It is no wonder that I had internal conflicts. Eastern European shtetl values did not easily mesh with 1960’s Southern Californian culture. The psychological and democratic consciousness of the times were at odds with many of traditional Judaism’s precepts: its male favoritism, its allusions to chosenness, and its angry, vengeful God. For decades, I struggled to come to terms with the conflicting ideas in my psyche.

Naturally, I was drawn to depth psychology. Here, I could hold the opposites and try to find some peace. In Carl Jung’s Memories, Dreams, and Reflections (1961), I found the questions I was trying to reconcile: If I no longer lived in the myth of my ancestors, then in what myth did I live? Where could I find my people, my place? Was it possible that we, as a culture, did not have a guiding myth? What would this imply for our spiritual development? How could we achieve a sense of wholeness?

D. Stephenson Bond, in Living Myth (1993), normalized my experience of restlessness and searching, naming them as signs of the mythisness of our times. He described a growing number of people who, like me,

see behind the curtain of their childhood faith and are dismayed to find a patriarchal image of God that they can no longer worship, who discover the dark side of God that goes unspoken, who search for new traditions to meet an often indescribable hunger, or who live without any religious practice at all. (p. 52)

In its ideal form, Bond (1993) explains, religious practice holds the “memory of an entire people on how to live a human life; it is the guide through life’s stages and transitions” (p. 50). Like all myths, religious practices arise over countless generations and then dissipate. We then live for a time empty, until a new myth arises in its place. What, I began to wonder, is the new myth that we are moving towards? How can we, in Jung’s words, dream the myth onwards?

After years of holding this question in my mind, I awoke one morning with an image. I drew a Venn diagram, the merging of four inter-connected circles, and labeled them as below (See Figure 1).

Each circle represents a category crucial to the development of the new myth. I quickly realized that many western spiritual developments over the past century lie within the overlapping boundaries of two or more of these categories.

Self-help programs such as 12-step spirituality, for example, land in the overlapping sphere between psychology and democracy. They provide psychological support within a premise of equality, rather than the one-up, one-down basis of traditional psychotherapy.

I soon realized that a Venn diagram with four overlapping circles does not include all the possible combinations. The circles opposite one another (democracy and ancestral wisdom, psychology and the natural world) do not overlap without incorporating a third category. I experimented with a Euler diagram. Using ellipsis instead of circles, it holds all possible combinations (See Figure 2).
Though more accurate, I found it a visually challenging image for tracking overlapping categories. I liked the sense, in the Venn diagram, that the opposite circles needed to be united and reconciled. And the Venn diagram more accurately reflected my notion of inward movement. As a culture, I believe we have been moving slowly towards a place where the boundaries between these four energies dissolve, towards the new myth. I decided to hold on to the Venn image while maintaining an awareness of its limitations. In this article, I will: 1) explain why each of the four categories is necessary, yet not sufficient by itself; 2) discuss how the four categories balance one another; 3) give examples of societal developments that reflect intersecting points of the ideas; and 4) explain the myth that lies in the center. I will show how this model integrates ancient and modern, inner and outer worlds, and the four ego functions (thinking, feeling, intuition, sensation). At the end of this article, I have included a more detailed visual image demonstrating the ideas discussed below.

Democracy

At first glance, democracy is an unexpected component in a spiritual mythology. However, our western democratic mindset has clearly changed our culture’s ideas about the Divine. As is true for each of the four categories in my diagram, there are those who once believed that democracy alone could be the harbinger of a new spiritual mythology. Theologian Eugene Borowitz (1991) explains that many immigrants who arrived in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century placed great hope in the universalistic values of secular society. “We stopped relying on our traditional God to save us and instead put our faith in humanity’s power to create justice” (p. 3), he explains. In the latter half of the twentieth century, with its unending war in Vietnam, government corruption, and the continued presence of racial and gender struggles, it became clear that democracy was not the new Messiah (Borowitz, 1991). Still, democratic principles have had a lasting impact on our ideas about spirituality and God.

In Children the Challenge, Rudolf Dreikurs (1964) notes that child-rearing has changed markedly in recent generations. Why is this the case? Democracy has moved from a political ideal to a way of life. Children seem to be born with an awareness that they have an equal right to dignity and respect. A democratic consciousness has permeated parenting and parents have shifted from more authoritarian disciplinarian styles to more relational ones. Alongside this shift, children’s notions of God have changed. A child’s God-image “is powerfully affected by early experiences in our family of origin” (Corbett, 2007, p. 81). Our parents’ parenting style, whether loving or fear invoking, close or distant, contributes to a similar conception of God (Granqvist & Dickle, 2006). This exists independent of any formal religious training. Whether children belong to a religious community or not, they still develop a concept of God and their concept is directly related to the relationship that they have with their parents.

"Democracy allows each new generation to have its voice, ensuring that the spiritual practices and rituals embraced by a community resonate with contemporary meaning and are not merely the empty shells of practices that once held significance"

Based on these ideas, we would expect to see significant changes in religious belief and practice as the democratically raised children of the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s became adults. One notable change is a movement away from organized religion, suggesting that the traditional notions of God and religious expression no longer fit. The Pew Research Study (2015), which tracks trends in America’s religious landscape, notes that “the unaffiliated are now second in size only to evangelical Protestants among major religious groups in the U.S.” (2015, May 12). And each subsequent generation includes more people who identify with no religion at all. Within Catholicism, a growing number of people are questioning the church’s ideas about divorce and remarriage, marriage to non-Catholics, non-traditional family structures, and contraception (Lipa, 2015). In each of these instances, there is the sense that the church is overstepping its bounds and intruding upon parishioner’s rights.

Published ideas about God and traditional liturgy have also taken a new bent. Theologian Marcia Falk (1999a) argues that the hierarchical notion of God as Ruler—and of humans as His “flock” or “servants”—so prevalent in traditional liturgy, is the “basis of hierarchy and domination” (p. 133). In our society. It is a mindset, she believes, that promotes all forms of one-up, one-down relationships, including “sexism, homophobia, racism, classism” (p. 133). Falk (1999b) further argues that the anthropomorphism of God promotes species-ism, “the belief that the human species is godlier than the rest of creation” (p. 138). She turns instead to the mystic’s view that “All is One,” a philosophy which is better aligned with current notions of equality and respect for all forms of life.

Marianne Williamson (1994), a contemporary spiritual teacher, directly acknowledges the relationship between changing political views and changing ideas about God:

Just as the founding of democracy relocated the center of political power from the king to the individual, so shall the spiritual revolution of our times relocate the center of religious power...from religious institutions to the heart of the human being. (p. 52)

Professor David Tacey (2004), whose research focuses on college students’ ideas about God, spirituality, and the sacred, draws similar conclusions. The new youth spirituality feels “the sacred [as] intimate and close, a felt resonance within the self” (p. 79). Like Falk, Tacey notes the re-emergence of the mystical tradition, which fits more closely with young people’s notions about God and self. However, Tacey points out that the next phase of spirituality must move beyond our notions of democracy. Many self-serving ideas and lifestyles have gone hand in hand with our freedoms. “Spirituality,” Tacey states, “explodes the myths of egotism, narcissism, self-
sufficiency, individualism and privatization. It is completely subversive to modern society” (p. 147).

In my diagram of the new myth, democracy is placed opposite ancestral wisdom. The two must balance one another. Democracy allows each new generation to have its voice, ensuring that the spiritual practices and rituals embraced by a community resonate with contemporary meaning and are not merely the empty shells of practices that once held significance. Democracy alone, however, can result in a self-indulgent pursuit of pleasure as the highest good. Ancestral wisdom mitigates that tendency, tempering individual autonomy with communal responsibility.

**Ancestral Wisdom**

My notion of ancestral wisdom incorporates two distinct ideas: 1) a connection to the wisdom and values of traditional peoples who lived in harmony with the land, engaged in seasonal celebrations and rituals, and honored the needs of the community over the desires of the individual; and 2) a connection with one’s own ancestral lineage. In the paragraphs below, I explore how ancestral wisdom can inform and deepen our democratic practices. Later, I discuss how ancestral wisdom can transform our psychological understandings and our relationship with the natural world.

I once heard Chana Andler speak about *tzedakah*, the Jewish obligation to give 10% of one’s income to the needy. Andler contrasted American society—with its focus on material acquisition and individual rights—with the European *shtetl*, where the community always provided for the poor. “In a nation in which the focus is on rights, you breed takers,” she said. “In a nation in which the focus is on obligations, you breed givers” (C. Andler, personal communication, March 23, 2003). In our current world, where deforestation is wreaking havoc, where our “right” to burn coal and use fossil fuels is causing unprecedented global warming, where we outsource the production of goods and take advantage of underpaid foreign laborers, “taking” causes too high of a toll. Our survival depends upon our ability, as a culture, to now breed givers instead of takers. Ancestral wisdom holds an awareness of the greater good.

**African elder Malidoma Some’ (1993) points to the need for mentorship, ritual, initiation and community, which have been largely ignored in modern Western life. Democratic ideals imply that we reach our deepest potential through our freedoms. The corollary belief is that we must go it alone, that our unfoldment is somehow in competition with others. Some’ reminds us of ancient wisdom:**

> “Repeated stories of past victimization or oppression by other cultural or religious groups—stories that fail to see the other with the eyes of love—can promote intergenerational conflicts with no seeming way out”

> “Without a community you cannot be yourself. The community is where we draw the strength needed to effect changes inside of us” (p. 49). It is critical that we slow down and incorporate ritual into our daily lives. Social decay is inevitable “when the focus of everyday living displaces ritual in a given society” (p. 14). In our incessant busy-ness, we forget why we are here. We starve our souls of their deepest nourishment (p. 18). When democracy and ancestral wisdom merge, we are deeply supported by community in becoming our truest selves. The recent onslaught of Internet based courses that provide virtual community to support spiritual growth, empowerment and fulfillment is an interesting example of ancient practices blending with modern technology.

Ancestral wisdom knows that to be old is to carry life knowledge. Elders provide mentorship, without which there is no objective way to assess growth along a spiritual path. Author Joel Morwood (2009) comments that without a spiritual teacher “you have only your ego to rely on. But...your ego is the main obstacle to Enlightenment” (p. 64). Trying to grow spiritually with only your ego as your guide “is like a prisoner relying on the warden to help him escape” (p. 64). The odds of success are low.

And yet, ancestral wisdom must also be tempered. Over-attachment to ancestral practices can result in a fundamentalist rigidity that precludes openness, acceptance, and healthy movement towards change and growth. Ancestral ways can mask a particularism that judges or excludes others. Repeated stories of past victimization or oppression by other cultural or religious groups—stories that fail to see the other with the eyes of love—can promote intergenerational conflicts with no seeming way out. We must distinguish between ancient ways and ancestral wisdom. Not all that is old is wise. Rabbi Shefa Gold suggests a simple test for all spiritual practices: Ask yourself, “Does it open my heart and make me more compassionate? Or does it close my heart and make me more judgmental?” (Gold, personal communication, February, 2008). Wisdom is aligned with an open heart.

Carl Jung noted that there are four distinct ways of viewing and interpreting reality. Thinking and feeling are opposites, as are intuition and sensation. In my model, democracy represents the thinking realm. It is heady, based upon the ideals expressed by political thinkers and philosophers, ranging from Plato and Aristotle to Hobbes and Locke. Ancestral wisdom, with its rituals, ceremonies and rites of passage holds the feeling realm. It is heart-based. It remembers the soul’s need for meaning, for belonging and community.

Intuition and sensation are the two remaining ways of viewing and interpreting reality. In my model, intuition falls within the realm of psychology and sensation is held in the natural world.

**Psychology**

Just as immigrants at the turn of the 20th century believed that democratic ideals could replace traditional religion, many have believed that psychology alone could provide a non-dogmatic approach to spiritual development. In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1955), Carl Jung states that the field of psychology grew because of the spiritual vacuum created by religion’s failure to meet modern people’s spiritual needs.
How has psychology changed our relationship to organized religion and our notions of the Divine? Psychologist Greg Mogenson (2005) believes that religion and psychology ask fundamentally different questions. Religion’s core question is “What does God demand of me?” This question places God first and the individual psyche second. The Old Testament God, who “demands...submissive obedience...to His awesome knowledge and power...” (p. 10) is at odds with both our rising democratic consciousness and our modern psychological awareness. Not too many of us (outside of religious fundamentalism) would define our spiritual practice as obedience to a demanding God.

Through the advent of psychology, we have come to see that belief in a harsh, punitive, judgmental God leads to various negative psychological complexes. Michael Vannoy Adams (2005) describes the Middle Eastern cultural complex, which plays out as an obedience complex in the psyches of Jews and Christians and as a submission complex in the Islamic psyche, making individuation challenging. Related to this is the Puritan perfectionism complex (Roy, 2004), based in the notion that “in order to placate a God who punishes failings with little mercy, one has little choice but to repress instinctual desires” (p. 73) and try to be perfect. Finally, Sylvia Brinton Perrera (1986) links the scapegoat complex to those raised with the Old Testament image of God.

While most contemporary Americans are not consciously aware of these complexes, an unconscious awareness exists. Psychology has permeated mainstream thought. As a result, there has been a pull—particularly amongst young people—away from traditional Judeo-Christian religion and a simultaneous rise in other spiritual practices. Buddhism appeals to many precisely because it sidesteps the issue of the Old Testament God. It also easily coexists with a psychological consciousness (Brazier, 2006). In the West, adherents to Buddhism have grown in recent decades (Lampman, 2006). We have also seen a rise in psychologically based spirituality (such as A Course in Miracles), earth-based spirituality (such as the Goddess movement or shamanism), body-based spiritual practices (such as yoga), and spiritual practices that eliminate traditional western religious language (such as the Toltec Four Agreements).

Psychology, Mogenson (2005) argues, presents a question that is very different from the traditional religious question. Psychology asks, “What does my soul want?” (p. 10), placing psyche’s needs first. In *Psyche and the Sacred: Spirituality Beyond Religion* (2007), Lionel Corbett outlines the possibility of a personal, psychologically based spirituality that listens to the soul’s call.

“Constellation work suggests that we can embrace the parts of our ancestry that strengthen us and leave the entanglements and parts that no longer fit with the ancestors”

Drawing upon numinous dreams and experiences, Corbett believes that the individual can discover a more “authentic spirituality” than what is found in traditional religious institutions. His focus is on direct experiences of the Divine. Corbett explains: “The experiential approach does not say that God is love, or that God is one, or that God is a trinity, or omnipotent, or personal, or [an] eternal invisible spirit” (p. 31) It does not define God at all. The experiential approach does not believe that specific rituals are the ‘right’ way to connect with God, Corbett notes. “Instead we ask: ‘What is your direct experience of the sacred? What form does it take in your life? How does it affect your behavior’” (pp. 31-32) and influence your feelings? The psychological approach to the sacred includes creative expression as a pathway to the Divine. Corbett views psychotherapy “as a secular form of salvation” (p. 113) that addresses our desire for wholeness in a different manner than traditional religion.

The psychological approach to the sacred eliminates the issue of a punitive, judgmental God and allows for deep, personalized forms of spiritual expression. However a key issue with the psychological approach is that an over-focus on one’s inner world can become narcissistic. The true destination of the spiritual path is social responsibility (Tacey, 2004, p. 148).

Whereas Mogenson and Corbett view psychology as being at odds with traditional religion, many contemporary theologians—particularly those with a mystical/non dual worldview—have moved beyond the notion that either God or the individual psyche must come first.

*A Course in Miracles* suggests that our psychological needs are not at odds with God’s will at all, because we are not separate from God. There is only one will.

We experience personal happiness when we replace fear with love. Jay Michaelson (2009) replaces the idea of a demanding God with the notion of personal commitment. A path with heart, he explains, requires more than just listening to our desires or inner callings. It necessitates “cultivating...compassion, righteousness, and openness...[which] implies a task, an obligation” (p. 120), a commitment to others. Private spirituality is a stepping stone along the spiritual path, but it represents only a transitional stage (Tacey, 2004).

Another limitation of the psychological approach to spirituality is that the language of psychology (enmeshment, family dysfunction, individuation, etc.) suggests that connection with our ancestral lineage keeps us ill, rather than strengthening us (Iversen, 2009). Lisa Iversen (2009), social worker and family constellation facilitator, notes that many of her clients hold both family and community at an emotional distance. “By default rather than design, psychotherapy has [become]...one of our culture’s replacements for ancestors...for the [lost] web of connection” (p. 12). Therapy, however, cannot replace what is missing. A therapist is “not a tribe” (p. 7). Iversen likens the role of ancestry to the blueprint of a house. The blueprint—though unseen—permeates the structure. To think that the house arose independent of it is to view life at a very literal level. So it is with our ancestry. Our ancestors, even those we have never met, hold an “influence...though largely invisible” (p. 6) on our present lives.

Ancestral wisdom reminds us of where we came from, which helps us to connect deeply with who we are. Marie-Louise von Franz (1999) comments on the hole that may be created when we lose...
connection to our roots. Having analyzed Americans at the Jung Institute in Zurich, von Franz saw the psychological consequence of being cut off from one’s ancestral lineage. Psychologically, there was a gap, a lack of continuity. On the surface, von Franz faced “a cultivated white man [but] beneath that [exterior] was a primitive shadow” (p. 7). By consciously assimilating their ancestors’ stories, and perhaps visiting the lands their families had emigrated from, her clients developed a fuller sense of who they were.

Family constellation work looks directly at our ancestral influence, striving to bring what is held unconsciously into conscious awareness. An individual’s issues are viewed through an intergenerational lens. Constellation work suggests that we can embrace the parts of our ancestry that strengthen us and leave the entanglements and parts that no longer fit with the ancestors. This focus on aligning with what brings us strength—rather than what causes our deficits—is a movement away from a DSM, pathology-based approach to mental health. This orientation is also found in the emergence of positive psychology, which uses the scientific method to identify those character traits, actions and orientations that contribute to positive human functioning.

The Natural World

Psychology arguably holds the intuitive function in Jung’s scheme. And its opposite, sensation, is found in the natural world. The sensation function addresses what we perceive physically, with our senses, in the present moment.

Our culture’s relationship with the natural world has been severely limited. We have replaced our ancestor’s awareness that all of nature, including ourselves, holds “pure potential, undivided from source” (Amara, 2014, p. 16) with the notion that we can control and manipulate the natural world to meet our needs. We do so in the name of science, which has achieved a myth-like, unquestioned status. Even though science constantly rewrites itself and asserts new claims, it is constantly viewed as “truth” (Bond, 1993). As with democracy and psychology, Bond suggests, there are those who believe that science represents the new mythology, but alone, it is incomplete. It leaves our inner worlds languishing and creates a mythological split between our inner and outer worlds. We lose our sense of spiritual wholeness.

How has the scientific method changed our spiritual expression? For some, science has stood in the way of faith. We’ve learned to believe only that which can be proven. By definition, however, faith is belief in that which cannot be proven. Others of us have brought the scientific method to our spiritual lives. “We ‘test’ the claims of religion against reality as we see it, and against our emotional and intuitive responses, and we draw conclusions based on these observations” (Tacey, 2004, p. 45). Young people, in particular, feel less inclined to embrace a spiritual/religious approach whole. Tacey insists they are more inclined to pick and choose and see what works for them personally.

“As with democracy and psychology, Bond suggests, there are those who believe that science represents the new mythology, but alone, it is incomplete”

How has the scientific method limited us as spiritual beings? Our culture’s relationship to the natural world has been dominated by a scientific mindset. Through categorization and systematization, we have cut off our heart’s connection with nature and held ourselves apart from it. The role of humans in the natural world has become one of domination and exploitation. The scientific method runs on a linear mindset: we move from hypothesis to experiment to conclusion. It gives us the faulty notion that nature—and life—is within our control (Amara, 2014).

When we hold the natural world in combination with ancestral wisdom, we become a fluid part of the whole. Our ancestors held a cyclical view of life. They understood the ebb and flow, the rising and falling away, of all things in nature (Amara, 2014). When we hold on to linear thinking as our primary way of relating to the natural world, we suffer, because we cannot force things to move forward in the way we would choose. “Cyclical living teaches us to embrace the ups and downs of life” (p. 17). Rituals and ceremonies attached to nature’s cycles (the seasons, the moon’s cycle, etc.) help us to feel aligned with the natural world and to see ourselves as part of it.

The sense of separation between humans and the land was created in our minds and must be healed if we are to survive. We can no longer place human “needs” for material resources over the needs of the natural world to sustain life. The permaculture ethic—“Earth care. People care. Fair share”—is revolutionary. It brings our democratic sensibilities to the global level, applying it to the distribution of resources and to care for the earth. It divorces democracy’s notion of equality from capitalism, placing the survival of all above the profit motive. It may take centuries for us to get there, but our survival as a civilization is at stake.

New fields of study acknowledge the inter-connection between our psychological health and the natural world. Ecopsychology suggests that “the illusion of separation” between humans and nature is the cause of widespread ecological devastation and untold human suffering (Davis, 2006). Terrapsychology explores the relationship between the earth, our psyches, and culture, suggesting that geographical patterns influence the development of ideas, relationships, and our sense of self (Chalquist, 2007). Terrapsychology also suggests that the land carries an awareness of events that transpired upon it.

If so, American soil carries knowledge of horrific wrongs. Our culture was built by taking land from native peoples and using slave labor to build it. This is the often-repressed truth. Iversen (2009) believes that we are unable to heal from our individual issues of guilt, shame, blame, and perfectionism—no matter how many self-help books we turn to for guidance—because we have not communally acknowledged and made amends for past wrongs. As a culture, we are guilty.

A new sense of urgency is developing, asking us to not view ourselves as “separate from” anything. The “prophets” of our time are all
horrors, urgently demanding that we wake up and pay attention. Wildfires, droughts, floods and typhoons brought on by global warming remind us that our lifestyle is not sustainable. The honeybee’s colony collapse disorder screams, “Your food supply is at risk if you don’t stop poisoning the planet with pesticides!” Cancer is running rampant, begging us to look at what we’ve done to our land, our air, and our water—and how we can clean it up. Alienation and despair, caused by our separation from each other and from the earth, has led one mass shooter after another to horrific acts of violence. Destruction of habitat and species extinction ignore the value of, and our interconnection with, other forms of life. If we continue on our present track, we are headed towards annihilation. Marianne Williamson (1995) says that we must love one another unconditionally before we can learn to care for the earth. If that is the case, now is the time. Here lies the new myth.

The New Myth

The new mythology incorporates:

• The “equal right to dignity and respect,” a democratic sensibility, extended amongst and then beyond all humans, to include the earth, the sky, the sea, and all living things;

• A psychology that moves beyond notions of dysfunction or self-indulgence, bringing our understanding of our inner natures out of isolation and into service;

• An appreciation of the natural world and our place within it;

• An embrace of the ancestral wisdom that exists beyond conformity to any creed.

In the new myth, we find the re-emergence of an old philosophy: mysticism. Mysticism is at odds with the notion of a puppeteer God who commands, demands, rewards or punishes humans. We are part of a divine All, in which each aspect of creation is equally valuable. Mystics believe that the boundary between self and other is illusory (Morwood, 2009). Like drops of water in a large ocean, we are all part of a larger whole. Any harm I do to another, I do to myself (Williamson, 1992). From this, there is a natural awareness of the ripple effect that our actions have in the world. In the past, mystical thought aligned itself with one or another of the religious denominations. It may do so again, as a transitional phase. However, in the myth we are moving towards, there will be no divisions. It will take time to move beyond religious particularism to universalism—the rise of a new myth can take centuries—but that is the goal. In my diagram, the new myth exists at the center, beyond even the divisions of democracy, psychology, ancestral wisdom and the natural world, in the place where Oneness is all that matters.

And in that Oneness—in the absence of dominance, exploitation, self-indulgence, judgment, greed and victimization—what remains? Love.

THE NEW MYTH

( Please note that the examples in the overlapping areas are not meant to be inclusive of all developments or all possibilities. They are meant to provide examples of a trend that has been accelerating in recent decades: inward movement towards the inner circle. Please refer to the text for a discussion of the limitations of a Venn diagram in depicting the intersection of four subsets.)

(See Figure 3)

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The New Myth


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Poetry

A Quiet Place
By Lois Carey

As I sit in this quiet place
Reflections of a lifetime seep
Through with ups and downs

Boats and swans rock with the lake
As they enfold the creatures of this place.
I gasp at the visible sights and sounds
The worms, the fish, the flies abound.
Smells of the flowers, the fruit, the trees
Permeate the atmosphere, as if to please
Me with purest joy unbounding
In this place of peace and quiet-sounding.
Invisible things are here as well

Creatures from my darkest reaches
Demons, fairies, gnomes and witches
Haunting the specter of my silent night
Creeping, smashing into awareness
Of inner shadows, blackest darkness.
Darkness hiding the Self from me
Yet pulling me inward intimately
To seek, to find that central core
That opens the hidden, magic door.

This quiet place, not really quiet,
Teems with life, noisy and silent
Yet something more taps on the space
A presence, a god, a spirit, or
Is it Spirit and something more?
Something as yet unnamed, unnameable
Harmonious, cacophonous, it’s all of this
As I stretch, pull, tug with the process
That beckons me on ever more deeply
Spiritual questing continues uneasingly.

My own uniqueness I jealously guard

Yet taunted, touched in intangible ways
By the outer souls along this journey
That, once begun, I am powerless to leave.
I stop, I start, I turn around
I seek, I ask, I think I know
And suddenly I become muted
As a spiritual presence overtakes my soul.
Mere words loom as a major hindrance
As I wander . . . pondering
The wonder of it all.
Empty Journals: An Exploration of Psyche, Nature, and Voice

By Adriana Attento

My Mother’s Journals are a love story,” wrote Terry Tempest Williams in her book When Women Were Birds: Fifty-Four Variations on Voice.1 In the 54 essays that make up the book, Williams struggles with the fact that her mother’s journals, left for her upon her mother’s death, were blank. In her book, Williams explores what it means to search for, find and lose voice—both hers and the voice of her mother.

“My Mother’s Journals are a creation myth.”2

Like Williams, I am also a writer with at least 50 filled journals saved and treasured. The idea of receiving my mother’s journals seems like a great gift. It would finally be an opportunity to see what I’ve always suspected: that she and I walk the same soulful journey, perhaps separate but, no doubt, parallel paths. If I had been in Williams’ shoes, discovering that my mother’s journals were blank, I would have been devastated too.

Between writing and a 15-year practice of meditation, I’ve observed an interesting phenomenon of the mind: psyche creates. Life forever arises from within. Whether it is a thought, a memory, a dream image, an intuition—again and again, the mind produces and gives birth. It is forever pregnant and bearing gifts. So, how can one’s journals ever be blank? How can one ignore the compelling call to write down bits and pieces of soul, to jot down psyche’s wisdom? How can one buy journals and never use them?

I feel Williams’ disappointment, especially knowing there is always activity arising in the psyche. Watch it for yourself a moment: take a step back from the content of thoughts and notice that thoughts themselves continue to arise. The life force streams through the psyche as ideas, thoughts, feelings, moods, dreams, and at its most basic level, images into the light of awareness. Although on most days, the mind possesses thoughts about the to-do list and demands of the day; take a step back and observe, as you might in meditation, how a fountain of activity continues to spring forward.

In fact, Daniel Siegel, clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA and author of The Mindful Brain, observed this too:

One surprise is that the mind is never “empty”. It is an oft stated and apparent misconception that the meditative mind becomes a vacuum of activity. Filled with continually generated images and thoughts, feeling and perceptions, the mind is abuzz with activity that never ceases.3

Even if one possesses empty journals, the choice to be creative opens the door to psyche, and a conversation begins

Psyche’s creativity is not a new concept in psychology. Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869), a philosopher who preceded and deeply influenced Jung, wrote about the creative, autonomous and healing function present in the unconscious. Of course, one of Jung’s greatest achievements, compared to Freud’s reductionist view of the inner landscape, was the affirmation of the creative psyche.

“Below the threshold of consciousness,” wrote Jung, “everything was seething with life.”4 And many post-Jungian scholars, such as Robert Johnson, author of several books including Femininity Lost and Regained, recognized the healing and meaningful function of the “stream” that emanates from within. “The unconscious mind,” wrote Johnson, “emits a continual stream of energetic pulses that find their way to the conscious mind in the form of feelings, moods, and most of all, the images that appear in the imagination.”5

Of course, there are times when psyche’s continual stream seems to dam up and there are dangers, such as disease. A person might feel this cancerous curse as the inability to speak, the pain of emptiness, and the loss of meaning. Sadly, this disease seems to be metastasizing throughout the collective psyche. It is the curse of being silenced, repressed, and cut off from the inner spring.

Author and psychotherapist Maureen Murdock might agree, however, that the creative act is the healing antidote that resurrects voice. Even if one possesses empty journals, the choice to be creative opens the door to psyche, and a conversation begins. Writing is no doubt a dialogue. If my mother had left empty journals upon her death, I would sadly wonder whether our parallel paths had begun to diverge. In the same way, Terry Tempest Williams underwent a soulful journey to uncover her own voice in relation to that of her mother. I believe that Williams and Murdock would agree that a woman’s life is her voice and a woman’s voice is her life.

A Woman’s Life is Her Voice

Maureen Murdock wrote about the Heroine’s journey in response to the Hero’s journey, developed by mythologist Joseph Campbell. She met with Joseph Campbell for three years off and on in the early 1980’s. She had been working with men and women privately and in groups, using the Hero’s journey as a map. However, she recognized that it did not address the deep wounding of the feminine for both men and women. In her therapy practice, she noticed that women were having a difficult time making it in a man’s world. She created a new map and showed it to Campbell. In response, he said, “Women don’t need to make the journey; they are the place that everyone is trying to get to.”6

His reply surprised her. From a mythological perspective, Murdock knew...
this to be true; the feminine is the place most people hope to open up to and integrate. However, most of the men and women she knew were disconnected from their feminine nature. “Our task,” she said, “was to reclaim the feminine for ourselves.”7 Creating a new map and charting the journey of the Heroine was the way to do this.

Murdock made clear that the Heroine makes a different journey than the Hero. At first, she finds herself under the spell of society. She is smitten with success. She gets good grades, graduates, and achieves. She is focused on seeking control—over herself and others—and she is set on arriving at good fortune. Yet, there is no deep connection to herself. Her life is a product of what society expects of her. She doesn’t know who she is or what she wants. “So, there’s a split,” insists Murdock, “when we focus more on making it in the world, rather than on listening to our deep self.”8

Moreover, when there is an event that jeopardizes her successes, such as a death in the family, divorce, or loss of employment, she may question her sense of self, her identity, and her attachment to achievement. Feeling the pain of loss, separation, and suffering, she may cry out, “Who am I really?” With this declaration, a search for her deep self begins. The search for voice is underway.

Yet, the only way she is going to find that deep self, the only way she is going to really take a deep breath in, is by first dis-identifying with the masculine and the illusion of making it in the world. To do that, she must die. She must let go of all her old identities, all the voices that tell her this is the way to succeed.

Instead, she must find her own voice, buried deep within, but lovingly held in the arms of the Great Mother. “When a woman stops doing,” writes Murdock, “she must learn how to simply be. Being is not a luxury, it is a discipline. The Heroine must listen carefully to her true inner voice.”9

In the stillness of non-doing, voice can be heard. In the tranquility of non-action, listening can take place. Slowly a bridge to the inner life can begin to form. Interestingly, on the descent inward, the natural and innate desire to write, paint, and dance might surface. Perhaps this is true because one way to listen carefully is to create. One way to find voice is to find that inner spring. Creativity requires turning inward and placing a cupped hand upon the inner ear to listen for the next piece of creative direction. To be creative, the artist must listen for an intelligence that emerges from the heart. The famous cinematographer Ingmar Bergman describes this creative process well:

It is a mental state, abounding in fertile associations and images. Most of all, it is a brightly colored thread sticking out of the dark sack of the unconscious. If I begin to wind up this thread, and do it carefully, a complete film will emerge.10

“Creativity requires turning inward and placing a cupped hand upon the inner ear to listen for the next piece of creative direction”

Creativity immediately puts the artist in a place of union, versus being split from oneself. The sacred act of being creative removes the veil of silence and opens the door to expression, the expression of what is yearning to be born—voice—the expression of what is meant to be heard. Creativity immediately reuniates one with a greater intelligence. With this reunion, a woman becomes more receptive, more accepting, and even appreciative of what has always been. She may see life anew, wanting to protect the spiritual seeds planted within her. She may even find that the outer measure of her worth is much less important than that which lies within.

The psyche’s creative fountain, as Murdock also recognizes, is intimately related to the cycles of life, death, and rebirth—processes women know but the collective body has stifled, silenced. “Women and men,” she writes, “need to support each other to honor the feminine cycle, which, like the cycles of life in nature, is one of death, decay, gestation, and rebirth.”11 These cycles are Nature’s cycles, Creation’s cycles. “Nature is not matter only,” wrote Jung, “she is also spirit.”12 Jung’s deep wisdom that “psyche is nature” crystallizes when recognizing how the inner creative fountain and Nature behave similarly.

For example, Nature and psyche are similar in three distinct ways: First, as described above, the creative psyche is always in motion. The inner spring never ceases. Thoughts are always arising and passing away. Memories too arise and pass. Feelings and images enter the field of consciousness and then fade. The mind is always in motion, and the same is true for Nature. The Earth forever spins and pivots; clouds are always shaping into existence; the planets ceaselessly circle the sun; the waves continue to curl and crash; and the grass grows endlessly towards the sky.

Secondly, the life of the psyche is not only perpetually in motion; it’s eternally dawning. The inner landscape is ceaselessly pregnant. With each moment a new shape of the mind is born: a thought, an idea, an image, a memory. In the same way, Nature continues to give birth. Clouds come into existence from the emptiness of sky. Waves find form out of the expanse of the sea. From beneath the Earth’s surface, flowers and trees, grass and plants break open to sky. Whether it is a cloud, a wave, a breath, a thought, a feeling, or a sensation in the body, Nature’s expressions are forever in labor. “From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth.” (Romans, 8:22)

Lastly, the darkness of the soil is intriguingly similar to the darkness of the unconscious. The dark landscape, whether of the Earth or of the woman is fertile, fecund, and fruitful. Just like the round, pregnant belly of a woman, which creates life from the darkness of her womb, so too the round Earth is pregnant with plants, flowers, grass, bushies, and trees. The bountiful Earth gives birth to her children from the darkness beneath her surface.

As the planet spins and lovingly embraces the sun with its orbit, we can see the Earth’s cycles of birth, life, and death happen again and again with the seasons. In the same way, the Heroine dies to an old way of being, finds life.
within, and is reborn. These are the cycles that keep planets on course, fill the human being with breath, and write the poetry of sunset at the close of each day. It is life.

The intelligent, creative fountain is life. Whether in a man or woman, this life is one’s essential nature. It is one’s individuated expression, one’s essence. In fact, when there is receptivity for all that springs forward inside—the light and dark and everything in between—a woman mends a tear. She transforms the Kali within. Where she was once pushing parts of herself away, now receptivity and allowing facilitate an inner tenderness. In Eastern mythology, Kali is known as the black one, goddess of dark formlessness, and lord of death. Tantric practitioners worship Kali hoping the brutal goddess will one day reveal her tender side. For the Heroine, the same is true.

“Each of us,” suggests Murdock, “has to take back the discarded feminine in order to reclaim our full feminine power.”14 By allowing that inner spring to flow, no matter its content, a woman stitches the angry split between what is shameful and what is beautiful. She mends the violent tear between what to hide and what to reveal. As this happens, she becomes the benevolent mother of herself. No longer the violent slayer of what to accept and what to reject, she welcomes her orphaned parts with sweet and tender arms.

This great love inside—for being a woman, for being beautiful, for embodying creation and the source of creation—continues to grow. It becomes a flowing river, and heals the chasm that once kept her in bondage. The Heroine is no longer a product of her society; she is a polished jewel of her own making.

A Woman’s Voice is Her Life

Despite this incredible feat, the journey of the Heroine is not over. With self-love, she can make a return, a return to those masculine values of action, achievement, and accomplishment, only this time there is great acceptance and a deeper purpose.

“Once you know that you have a voice,” said Louis, an adopted son of Terry Tempest Williams, “it’s no longer the voice that matters but what is behind that voice.”15

Having developed a practice of going inward again and again, where the Heroine feels ease, connection and timelessness, wholeness begins to feel like home. Totality feels like the force behind voice, and having that feeling again and again, she begins to trust the inner world more than the outer world. She recognizes that it is the deep self who can navigate her life, not the strong, but misguided will of a separated self. Sure, that old self may still want to take control, but it is only when her authentic voice is embraced that wholeness can be experienced. So, though it is challenging at times, she listens to and follows the intelligence within; she takes action on behalf of her deep self. With ongoing experiences of wholeness and inner trust, the Heroine eventually becomes a servant for the fountain within. With this, a bridge from a conscious self to an authentic self has not only formed but is firmly in place and the link between the two forms union.

"By allowing that inner spring to flow, no matter its content, a woman stitches the angry split between what is shameful and what is beautiful"

This union positions the Heroine differently. Now, she can receive the images that flow from her core. These deep images are those the mystic Meister Eckhart speaks of when he describes the creative power playing a vital role in time and space. “Everything of the past and everything of the present and everything of the future God creates in the innermost realms of the soul.”16 These images flow from within and contribute to the gradual unfolding of the human race. They are the visions and passions of the soul. They require attention and care because they speak the intelligence of the cosmos. They come spontaneously, at odd moments, when they’re least expected, and often with a quality of softness making them easy to dismiss. They create union between an individual’s life and the evolutionary process of Nature. They arise at the intersection between human and divine.

With a strengthening ability to accept and express what arises from within, there is ecstasy and the gradual illumination of one’s truest nature. “Birth is bringing what is inside out,” wrote the theologian Beatrice Bruteau. “Ecstasy is bringing what is inside out.”17 With freedom to be an open vessel for the images of Creation, the Heroine recognizes her deeper identity as a conduit for the cosmos, as midwife for the making of a new world.

However, this doesn’t mean the Heroine is perfect, but she is complete. She is whole and accepts herself, both her masculine and feminine sides just as they are. “The Heroine comes to understand and accept,” insists Murdock, “the dynamics of her feminine and masculine nature and accepts them both together.”18 Her feminine ability to turn inward and touch the images that speak the language of her life is joined by her masculine ability to succeed in the world and bring those images into fruition. Achievement is now driven by the power of the Self. Accomplishment is now powered Nature.

Furthermore, her inner masculine is loving, accepting, and kind. With a healing of the masculine, she is able to bring to the world the great love she discovered by sharing her innate gifts and talents. Just like Nature which is ceaselessly generative, she continues to deliver, in one form or another, the creativity that flows from within. Yet, “the current problems are not solved, the conflicts remain, but such a person’s suffering, as long as [s]he does not evade it, will no longer lead to neuroses but to new life.”19 Staying open to her life—the good, the bad, and what lies in between—keeps her in touch with her vitality and authenticity.

And life, just as it is, becomes the great gift.

“My Mother’s Journals are an awakening,” wrote Terry Tempest Williams, arriving at a different relationship to her mother is in relationship to the Self becomes like the Virgin, the one united to an uncontaminated world full of possibility. She continues to die to an old self and listen, so that the greatest
expression is her.
However, I admit, this takes courage. The Virgin, Marion Woodman continues, is “the feminine that has gone down into herself and worked very hard to find out who she is and then has the courage to live it.”22 Perhaps finding courage to live out one’s authentic self is the most difficult stage of the Heroine’s journey. Speaking the language of Self in a crowd expressing the old tongue of separation, split, and loss of self can be frightening.

Carol S. Pearson, author of The Hero Within, wrote about the fears that keep men and women from following their unique path:

The pressure to conform, to do one’s duty, to do what others want, is strong for both men and women, but it is stronger for women because their role has been defined in terms of nurturance and duty. Often women forbear taking their journeys because they fear it will hurt their husbands, fathers, mothers, children, or friends; yet women daily hurt others when they do not do so.23

I’m aware of this pressure to conform in myself and thus my tendency to push the authentic voice aside. Perhaps this growing tendency is the very impulse that later leaves one with empty journals! Yet, yesterday, as I was walking through the hills in my neighborhood, I passed someone on the trail who inadvertently gave me a gift. I was deep in the peaks and valleys, far away from streetlights and stop signs, in the embrace of Nature. As the young boy passed me, he said, “Hi”, and when I responded with “Hello”, I unexpectedly heard my own voice. I noticed its uniqueness, its vibratory quality, and its deep tone. I noticed that it was mine, a distinct essential sound. Of course, I’ve heard myself speak many times, but at that moment, I not only noticed my voice, I felt love for it.

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**Art**

*Brenda writes:*

My process: I try to capture my dreams on paper. My current process involves me painting or marbling paper, and merging parts of it with my photography. Once printed on watercolor paper, I continue to embellish the image with water color, oils, pencils, crayons, gold embossing, and/or Indian ink, essential oils, charms, and spells. The final outcome is a way to tend to my dreams, and to practice my little form of alchemy for my daily practice of healing.

_Joshua Tree_
By Brenda Littleton

_Wild Horses_
By Brenda Littleton

_Mustang Spirit_
By Brenda Littleton

*Brenda Littleton is a full time professor at a community college, where she teaches writing and counseling classes in college success: kind of a mini forum of group therapy.*
Mankind used to recognize itself as being an integral part of nature, and nature as an integral part of itself. Animals have always taken a predominant place in humans’ lives. Early cave paintings and legends attest to the human-animal connection. When primitive man first drew animals on walls of cave dwellings, the aim was not aesthetic, it was a practical mean—a blueprint designed as a rite intended to help in the pursuit of the animal (Storr, 1972). The bones of animals and various representations of animals have been buried with humans in pre-historic graves suggesting a human belief or desire of their connection with them even after life (Robinson, 1995; Serpell, 1996). Not only were animals hunted, they were revered, if not worshipped.

Animals have metaphorically dominated the skies by representing signs of the zodiac and are featured as main characters in myths, legends and folk stories across cultures. Americans practically permeate their environments, and particularly their children’s worlds with animal imagery and experiences (Serpell, 1999). Unfortunately, as humans, we often disregard our lineage to animals, and regard our species distinctly separate if not superior to other the family members of the animal kingdom. Despite that humans have always shared the landscapes of this planet globally, animals today are not seen as intricately tied to humans and the vice versa can also be stated. Anthropocentric attitudes are believed to be part of the central problematic concept used to draw attention to a systematic bias in traditional Western attitudes of the nonhuman animal world (Andersen & Hendersen, 2005; Naess, 1973).

Animals and their images are powerful in the human mind as they give form to human instincts (Jung, 1964). Humans’ everyday belief systems are engrained with ideological concepts of childhood that equate to or are associated with children and the animal nature of human beings, or animality, at least only during an earlier period in life. Delineating such ideologies can reflect upon both historical and contemporary Western culture’s value systems and judgments about the human-animal association, animality and the socially prescribed distance from these two (Varga, 2009). Myer’s work (1999) points out such assumptions by exploring the symbolic association of both children and animals, and of childhood animality. Furthermore, historical discourses found in the West associate animality with immaturity and idealize transcendence of this state.

“Western culture has been prone to distinguish humanity and animality in more dichotomous, non-relative and fixed ways”

Western culture has been prone to distinguish humanity and animality in more dichotomous, non-relative and fixed ways. More recently, researchers in the areas of history, literature, anthropology, animal studies, and psychology also have studied these comparisons. Jung suggested that no individual is born a blank slate. Although this notion has been widely suggested and recognized in the instinctual behavioural patterns of animals, when it is applied to humans it incites strong opposition (Hannah, 1976). Myer’s research (1999) of three historical discourses in the West which suggested that ideologies are based on the tenet that humans and animals are sharply distinguished and human development is transcendence of the animal body and animality, provides insight when considering previous assumptions. Reviewing the three interwoven historical discourses in relation to animals and humans might lead to a deeper level of understanding of where Western thinking is absolute on separating aspects of humanity and animality (Myers, 1998).

Nevertheless, identification with animals has been seen as marginally important in human development and in the process of maturation in Western culture’s ideologies and symbolic universe (Myers, 1999). This rejection of the human-animal association can be criticized for its rigidly imposed influence on investigating the roles and values of nonhuman animals in human development. More critical discussions are necessary to examine how these assumptions evaluate the theoretical original animal-like condition from human development standpoints. Research examining the human-animal association as an integral element in both Western culture’s metaphorical and symbolic universe is limited. Investigation of these associations may provide new avenues of insight with respect to ideologies, human development and psychology. In addition, an exploration of humanity and animality and the associations between the two might refresh our evaluations of humans’ associations to animals and nature at large.

Jung’s theoretical groundwork, which points to the natural, instinctual and even positive connection between humans, animals and animality with respect to human development, may suggest an alternative view compared with past assumptions found in Western discourses. In addition, Jung’s conceptualizations and paradigms of mankind suggest that mankind’s origins include the deepest layers of “primeval ancestors” and “animal ancestors” in general, among other natural elements (Hanna, 1976). In Jung’s (1964) viewpoint, the original animal-like state is not only in primitive societies valued as an instinc- tual, primal and powerful force, but it is a foundation of the natural and primal expressive process of humans. In contrast to other assumptions found in historical
Western discourse, this formulation can be based on recognizing humans’ metaphorical relationship with animals or their “animal being” or “animal soul” (p. 263) as an integral part of the human mind, body, and psyche.

Few studies have investigated psychological theories that set standards of optimal maturation and psychological adjustment with respect to the association of humans and animals. Examining how past ways of thinking influence current perceptions might provide more insight on how these perceptions perpetuate deeper patterns of cultural beliefs and ideologies with respect to the human-animal association (Anderson & Henderson, 2005; DeMello, 2012; Meyer, 1999; Varga 2009). This paper explores though an analysis of the association of humans and animals as an element in Western culture’s ideologies. In addition, in aiming to extend discussion on this topic, this paper will include review of Myer’s research of three historical discourses, in addition to Jung’s research as the comparative fourth discourse associating humans and animals with respect to human development and ideologies rooted in Western thought. Such research may provoke more thought and introduce new ways in approaching how we investigating the structural nature of the human-animal association.

Animal Paradigms in the West

Definitions under the entry “animal” in the Merriam-Webster dictionary include: “a living thing that is not a human or a plant; a person who behaves in a wild, aggressive, or unpleasant way; of or relating to animals; coming from the bodies of animals; of or relating to the body and not to the mind; one of the lower animals as distinguished from human beings; a being considered chiefly as physical or nonrational (nature).”

The word “human” is defined by the same sources as: “a bipedal primate mammal; of relating to, or characteristic of humans.” Synonyms of animal are entered as: “...beast, beastie, brute, creature, carnal, corporal, corporeal, material, somatic.” Synonyms for human are listed as “earthborn, mortal, natural.” All these point to aspects of humans’ inner nature, and their natural, instincual lives, which are often rejected or at least troubling due to everyday beliefs, ideologies, and socialization (Borstelmann, 1983; Hirschman & Sanders, 1997). Terms such as the discussed are also indicative of Western culture’s urgency to distinguish humanity and animality more absolutely (Myers, 1999).

The first discourse involves a tendency in Western culture to evaluate paradigms of socialized and the unsocialized as dichotomous: civilized is good, natural is bad. Thus, in these metaphors animals serve as examples of conditions, of being and conduct (Varga, 1999). Animal metaphors such as “act like an animal,” “primitive state,” and “brutish behaviour” provide not only clear examples, but also imagery, assigning authoritative prescriptions embedded in this dichotomy. Bodily states, primitive expressions, lack of self-control and antisocial impulses concern Western thinkers. Freud’s work in The Interpretation of Dreams suggests that the id’s infantile, selfish and passionate impulses, express themselves in dreams, where they may be represented by “wild beasts” (p. 445). Moreover, animals appear in dreams as an influence to affront:

The chimpanzee cuddled up to her, which was very disgusting. This dream achieved its purpose by an extremely simple device: it took a figure of speech literally and gave an exact representation of its wording. “Monkey,” and animals’ names in general, are used as invectives; and the situation in the dream meant neither more nor less than “hurling invectives.” (p. 441)

Humans’ and animals’ basic functions, such as eating, excreting, moving, copulating, being born, giving birth, dying and so forth are assigned with rules that are attached to any social code or cultural system (Tapper, 1988). In Western culture, conduct posed by animality can be seen as threatening to man and civilized society and is often dealt with by suppressing, taming through therapy, or using it as a “bad example.” Social constructionist theory provides perspective for regarding animal behaviours as potentially threatening to models involving socially acceptable or “proper” conduct, thought, or sense of self (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, Myers, 1998).

Myer’s metaphor of the “untamed child” demonstrates the high value placed on the outcomes of proper socialization in discourses found in the West (Meyers, 1999). Moreover, animals, animality, and nature wilderness are portrayals of threat, danger or examples of bad conduct (Varga, 2009). Western metaphors in bestiality represent basic human nature which has long occurred in literature, political and psychological theory. This theme can be found throughout secular, Christian, social and psychoanalytical models as well. One may only have to think about this relation and the early church to understand this sentiment. Animals, nature in general and overt pagan themes were taboo to early Christianity, and yet ironically, there were sacred and worshipped animals such as the lamb, the dove and the fish.

Alternatively, with respect to the Western query, the socialized and the asocial is evaluated in an opposite manner: natural is good, civilized is bad. The second discourse, referred to as the “child of nature” by Meyer (1999), is associated with animal tendencies, in that at least for a while, it exists somewhat apart from the fallen world of civilized adults, and thus is innocent, educational and superior (Grier, 1999; Thorsley, 1972).

One of the first idealized concepts of the noble savage appeared in Dryden’s play, “The Conquest of Granada” in 1672 (Thompson, 2006). Eighteenth century writer Rousseau’s theme of the noble savage refers to the romanticized concept of uncivilized man, thereby affirming the basic tenet of man’s innate goodness, preserved when not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization. Rousseau also makes an ideological argument that advancements made by man removes him further from his
primitive, more innocent state, resulting in the continuing state of unhappiness (Rousseau, 1986). Reflective of this view point we see writers in the modernist movement such as T.S. Eliot (2000) express a dominant theme in which stresses the role of technology and industrialization contributing to the degradation of humanity, and the downfall of Western civilization.

The third discourse, referred to by Myer as “childhood animality,” consists of a stage paralleling recapitulation theory and two additional elements: a literal equivalence between children and animals and an appraisement of connection between children and animals at a particular phase of earlier development (Myers, 1999). This argument emerged around the turn of the century in light of theoretical evolutionary enthusiasm in which germinated a variety of evolutionary schools of thought during that time. Hall’s child study movement agreed that these two ideas were connected. He also agreed with the position that repetition in evolutionary development continues after birth and the child is re-enacting cultural epochs. Hall’s promotion of child study as a science laid the groundwork for the field of developmental psychology (Arnett & Cravens, 2006).

This conception of “the animality child” also served in satisfying social concerns of this period, in which were based on the recognition that rural and community-centered existence was rapidly declining and moving towards an industrial way of life. An idealized and practical vision of children raised alongside animals was maintained among Victorian middle class families, thus animals were given a pedagogic role in which was perceived as critical in childhood and beneficial for society (Grier, 1999). Freud (1918) argued that continued or abnormal attachment to animals, however, indicated a weakness of ego functions.

As discussed so far, all three discourses use animals as metaphors for qualities that are natural in humans, and children are observed to have a larger share of such qualities. Regardless of the expected outcome of these theoretical discussions, when viewed together they illustrate an animal to human transformation in ideologies as theories in human development move from an animalistic state toward a distinctively human one (Meyers, 1999).

The Humanity, Animality and Pathology Tripartite

The metaphoric closeness of the child, the animal, and the body, which are all conceived as asocial or anti-social at root, is very strong in Freudian psychoanalytic tradition. Psychoanalysis recognizes and assumes human-animal nature, but its conception of the animal being is asocial. Freud’s Totem and Taboo observed children’s affinity to animals, however, an equation is drawn of children and their primal state to that of animals’ state:

Children show no trace of the arrogance which urges modem adult civilized men to draw a hard-and-fast line between their own nature and that of all other animals...Uninhibited as they are in the avowal of their bodily needs, they no doubt feel themselves more akin to animals than to their elders, who may well be a puzzle to them. (pp. 126-7)

"Psychoanalysis recognizes and assumes human-animal nature, but its conception of the animal being is asocial"

Freud’s writings propose a tripartite equation between the psychological development of primitives (the earliest human societies which practiced totemism), savages (of contemporary human societies living “substandard” civilized conditions), and neurotic patients (particularly children). The following passage illustrates this equation:

If this equation is anything more than a misleading trick of chance, it must enable us to throw a light upon the origin of totemism in the inconceivably remote past. In other words, it would enable us to make it probable that the totemic system—like little Hans’s animal phobia and little Arpad’s poultry perversion—was a product of the conditions involved in the Oedipus complex. (p. 193)

Also,

“Psychoanalysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father; and this tallies with the contradictory fact that, though the killing of the animal is as a rule forbidden, yet its killing is a festive occasion—with the fact that it is killed and yet mourned. The ambivalent emotional attitude, which to this day characterizes the father-complex in our children and which often persists into adult-life, seems to extend to the totem animal in its capacity as substitute for the father. (p. 202)

Western thought is deeply rooted in the concept of rationality, in the practical and critical sense, as a means to maturity. Rationality is often conceived in a way that divides it from the animal being, assigned to particular stages in life, and presumed as dichotomous (yes/no). In addition, fundamental human development theories have mostly fixed on the view that development occurs in a linear direction or in progressive stages. Also concerning theories of human development, there is a tendency to view stages as age-linked, assuming that if an individual does not pass through a stage at an appropriate age, then subsequent development is asymmetrical (Gardner, 1983).

Two negative consequences emerge from the rigid human-animal nature distinction in cultural history and theories of human development. First, assumptions about valued human qualities separate animals and humans. Animals, seen as unworthy of the attention in a budding community of theories, are incidental or even symbols of regression in development. A trend is set between children and animals in which, at some point, diverges. Thereafter, certain mature human qualities are expected to be reached at certain prescribed points in development. These points omit animals, identification with animals and aspects of animality. Second, there is a rigid and implied dichotomy in the humans’ functioning of mind (or self) and body. Non-duality and unity consciousness is found throughout the teachings of
Hinduism and Buddhism, but rarely found in historical Western discourse, especially in schools of thought concerning human development.

Human-Animal Inclusion in Western Ideologies: “Animality” of the Psyche

The three discourses discussed so far illustrate the tendency of Western culture to ignore, if not reject, both the metaphorical and symbolic inclusion of the association of humans and animals, and of animality with respect to humanity and human development. The fourth discourse relates to animality or “animal being,” which can be distinguished from the previously discussed when considering that humans and animals are not as sharply distinguished through the lens of Jungian psychology. In addition, animality is not excluded as transcendence—rather animality, and the “animal being” is tied to human nature and the human psyche in its entirety.

Western science and literature at some point had begun to recognize the significance of humans and their association with animals and nature in general, which included: Durkheim’s, Firth and Fortes’ totemic elements in psychology, Jung’s representations of the shadow self, and Eliot’s human engine.

Totemism, and the study of it, offers discussion on the aspect of the human animal association and animality. Totemism played an active role in the development of 19th and early 20th century theories of socialization, human development and religion. Thinkers such as Durkheim, Levi-Strauss, Evan-Pritchard, Wundt, Freud and Jung concentrated their studies on totemism and several theories emerged.

To Jung, the abundance of animal symbolism among cultures of all eras does not merely emphasize the critical nature of the symbol—it demonstrates the critical role it played for humans to integrate into their lives as instinctual. Animals and animal nature were perceived as neither good or bad, nor synonymous in portraying good or bad qualities in humans, but rather a part of nature. His passages in Man and His Symbols suggest the close association of animals and humans:

The further we go back in time, or the more primitive or close to nature society is, the more literally such titles must be taken. A primitive chief is not only disguised as an animal: when he appears at initiation rites in full animal disguise, he is the animal. (p. 262)

In other words, incorporating animals and their representation such as animal symbolism is natural and instinctual to Jung. Just as animals obey instincts, they have their parallel in human life. Succinctly put in Jung’s terms, “The foundation of human nature is instinct” (p. 265).

Although Jung’s theory posited that a child is animal-like for the first a few years after birth, later in life, adult transcendence can be achieved through the union of the conscious and unconscious contents of the mind, representing the psyche as a whole. Jung’s metaphorical animal being,

“Animals and animal nature were perceived as neither good or bad, nor synonymous in portraying good or bad qualities in humans, but rather a part of nature”

representative of the shadow self, resides in humanity. The shadow originates from the pre-human, animal past and it must be integrated in the self: “Primitive man must tame the animal in himself and make it his helpful companion; civilized man must make it his friend” (p. 226). His assumptions lie in the criterion that it is necessary for humans to acknowledge and integrate rather than reject their aspects of the shadow in order for a maturation process to occur.

Jung’s statement further illustrates this position: “The Self is often symbolized as an animal, representing our instinctive nature and its connectedness with one’s surroundings” (p. 220). When aspects of the “animal” self are incorporated rather than extinguished, or at least undistinguished, a “re-birth” occurs in which an individual is able return to a state of psychological wholeness and attain a sense of well-being, or better yet, a state of apocatastasis or restoration. Specifically, the acceptance and working with, rather than the distinction between, the animal and the self sets the condition for transcendence.

Contrary to the previously discussed discourses that have suggested that the “threat” to humans lies in animality itself, Jung (1964) suggested that this animality which lives in humans may become dangerous to civilized man if not recognized and integrated in the self and in life. Furthermore, Jung’s analysis of human nature and development includes a more holistic approach, with a broad range of multi-cultural studies to include Eastern and Western religions, archaeology and mythology (Hannah, 1976).

Consequently, Jungian concepts challenge assumptions that marginalize the human and animal association and aspects of animality. Rather than constituting a dual renunciation of self and animal, non-duality states and unity consciousness are key in Jungian precept. Furthermore, symbolic roles of animals as archetypal figures integrated in the self are recognized in providing powerful potential for not only for maturity, but for psychological states of well-being and wholeness. Similar studies might provide further insight regarding the nature of the human-animal body and the human-animal structures of the psyche.

Exploration of the Human-Animal Association

As demonstrated, aspects found in three dominant historical discourses notably distinguish the human and animal association and animality, whereas Jungian principles integrate the animal being, or animality in the process of development and transcendence. With respect to a psychological model for emotional well-being and wholeness, aspects of animality are essential in residing in the human psyche.

At best, discussions in this paper demonstrate the need for a fresher look in regards to our place in evolution and the prescribed distances we have placed between us and animals. The examination and reporting of discourses on the association of humans and animals with respect to human development would certainly help to mobilize an interest among scholars and professionals in relevant fields. Although many thinkers
that have influenced ideologies unquestionably go far beyond what is documented in this paper, what has been discussed here only touches on exploring one of the countless avenues scholars have pursued in understanding metaphorical concepts, symbols and conceptualizations.

Medieval thinkers especially were absolute in the status of the human condition and the human states. Copernicus and later Darwin challenged assumptions by demoting mankind from the center of the biological universe. By proposing that humans had evolved from the animal species, the biological uniqueness of humankind had been challenged, and human beings were classified on a continuum scale as one of many species of animals. Freud, Jung and other thinkers’ theories clearly were influenced at least to some degree. Perhaps it is time for us again to begin to search for new perspectives in search of understanding ourselves in relation to the animal kingdom. 

"It is logical to suggest that we should continue to look at the nature in us, and our progressive distance

Even our everyday and common use of the terms humans and animals as opposed to the more descriptive terms humans and nonhuman animals attests to how we are inclined to minimize this association. These common terms, which stand behind covertly expressed apprehension in the possibility that we are not transcendent of the animal kingdom, can be seen everyday in countless works such as letters, literature, poetry, song lyrics, stories and media creations. Yet, even over a century and a half after Darwin we are inclined to think in black and white terms and to minimize the gray areas.

It is reasonable to imply that we know less about our association with animals and nature at large than we think we do. It is logical to suggest that we should continue to look at the nature in us, and our progressive distance from it. It is also plausible to suggest that we should review assumptions and preconceptions based on ideologies of who we are and what we are made of. Jung states this need for openness and further inquiry best:

Yet there is so much that fills me: plants, animals, clouds, day and night, and the eternal in man. The more uncertain I have felt about myself, the more there has grown up in me a feeling of kinship with all things. In fact it seems to me as if that alienation which so long separated me from the world has become transferred into my own inner world, and has revealed to me an unexpected unfamiliarity with myself. (p. 359)

Elsewhere, he noted, “Because they are so closely akin to us and share our unknowingness, I loved all warm-blooded animals who have souls like ourselves and with whom, so I thought, we have an instinctual understanding” (p. 67).

Many members of society who work today in close cooperation with animals and who insist that they feel a close and special kinship with them illustrate how the human-animal boundary is indefinite. Studies may need to reach beyond current boundaries in exploring the role of the mind as well as the body with respect to the human–animal association in order to gain a deep level of understanding. Although it is reasonable to propose more research on the subject matter, unfortunately psychology and sociology as sciences have limited their study of the animal and human association and animality as part of the psyche. This is baffling considering the profusion of animals in our world and the prominence of the human-animal connection in our culture and so many other cultures around the world throughout all time.

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**Poetry**

The Day Always Comes
By Donald Carlson

Yesterday could you imagine waking into a different now? The next day always comes, and we say, “How is it I find myself here?” as is passes to was, find to found. By virtue of such questions we come to ourselves sitting quietly Saturday afternoon, around the kitchen table, face-to-face, sipping coffee, wondering at the staging of trumpet vines draped across the garden twine we stretched for them (too late, I fear) widthwise across the back patio to engineer some shade. The bumble bees and honey bees fumble into orange cones to find pollen they will later transubstantiate into honey and wax until, at least, a cunning hand shucks blossoms from their vines to make a pile of rusted husks composting, deflated on the concrete floor.

A question mark hangs within the silhouette of someone boarding a plane tomorrow morning for the coast, a coast that has yet to unfurl itself fully from the sea.

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Review of Carol S. Pearson’s *Persephone Rising: Awakening the Heroine Within. Using the Power of Story to Transform Your Life*

By Dennis Patrick Slattery

**Getting the Gods Rite**

Many years ago in a section entitled “Altruism and Ecstasy” in *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By*, Carol Pearson was already seeding the underworld of mythic consciousness with the figure named in her new study, Persephone. She wrote in her earlier volume, which has undergone numerous printings, that “The Greek Eleusinian mysteries explained the origin of the seasons through the myth of Demeter, the grain goddess, and her daughter, Persephone” (Pearson, 199 p. 125). She goes on to relate the consequences of Persephone’s abduction by Hades and her mother’s grief, which led to a barren earth and a famished population. Zeus finally had to intervene to return Persephone to the upper world, but with the proviso, since she had eaten one pomegranate seed in the land of her abductor, that she would spend part of each year in Hades’ precinct.

I think of Pearson’s own eating of one pomegranate seed of inspiration, of wonder, of interest and of abduction by this myth, so that decades later she returns to write a full-length study of the mother and daughter, along with two male figures, Zeus and Dionysus, to form a quaternity of psychic life that inhabits the psyche of all of us, but for many it remains beneath the floorboards of consciousness. I understand *Persephone Rising* as an elegant and multi-disciplinary achievement of ushering Persephone into the light of consciousness so we all can see and feel her as well as the other divinities’ presences in the most ordinary moments of our daily actions.

At the outset I’d like to address the style in which this study is written, something often not mentioned in book reviews. It is, first of all, a casual style throughout, full of vernacular phrases and words. For instance, in speaking of the Eleusinian mysteries of ancient Greece, a staple throughout the book, Pearson writes: “the only way to gain access to the secret lore was to sign up, show up, and go through the nine-day initiation” (2015, p. 15). Later in exploring a best-selling teen novel, *The Fault in the Stars*, she uses the phrase “inner eros GPS” to describe what a young character lacks in his maturing into the ways of the heart (2015, p. 217). In addition, her study is written most often in the second person to establish a more personal, even intimate, connection with those of us reading the descriptions and then directly addressed in the various reflections and writing exercises that comprise a part of each section.

“Both Eleusis and *Persephone Rising* formulates its own temenos by which one may reinitiate oneself to the scattered parts or shards of a fractured self in order to bring it to wholeness”

The second element of the book is its unique structure, which remains consistent throughout its four parts. 1. A story of the god or goddess in antiquity as well as how these qualities and characteristics carry into the soul of the contemporary reader’s life; 2. A template of the sections that the chapter will develop; 3. Qualities of the archetype of the god or goddess that follow a set of areas that comprise the range of that archetype; 4. The specific god or goddess discussed in relation to “the Eleusinian Promise”; 5. Application Questions that puts the reader directly in touch with what I am going to call their personal myth. Each subsequent chapter for that divinity consists of a series of Lessons that one reads through to an “Application Exercise.” This structure has a guiding purpose in it, as one learns after reading the first goddess, Demeter, section and sees the interconnecting linkage between antiquity and modernity, between divinity and humanity, between the qualities of the archetype and seeking them out in one’s own biography.

But within the many-structured parts of the book listed above, the foundation of Pearson’s study is and remains throughout, the mysterious, attractive, potent and changeable nature of our story, or stories, that we rehearse with uncanny and sometimes insane frequency in order, as I understand her argument, to create, revision and sustain a coherent life. I like her term, “narrative intelligence,” to capture what dynamic energy is unfurling within the drama of our desires, wishes, wounds and wonderings. The ancient mysteries at Eleusis, south of Athens, which my wife and I visited in the mid-70s when I taught for a university in Rome, carried a peaceful energy and aura that was reawakened as I read *Persephone Rising*. It is, in effect, the central dramatic space for Pearson in her study because it allowed for a richly varied pilgrimage into the self and out to the world that remained secret, contained and blessed for each participant.

In effect, *Persephone Rising* is a rich analogue to Eleusis, for in its pages one’s deepest structures, relationships and memories have an opportunity to mingle with the eternal energy patterns that shape and give form to the mythic world she conjures up through the four figures revisioned in the book’s pages. Both Eleusis and *Persephone Rising* formulates its own temenos by which one may reinitiate oneself to the scattered parts or shards of a fractured self in order to bring it to wholeness.

However, her study does not stop with the ancient stories of the four divinities that hold the work together as a unity; contemporary films, novels, short stories, some written for adult audiences, others for young teens—all are further bithnings of the divine ancestors that populate the pages of the study. Pearson’s own history, relayed at key
junctures in her study, add a further personal aura to the work as well as allow the reader to discern that she does not speak about many of the tragic and comic circumstances that have given texture and meaning to her own plot from an exclusively theoretical perspective.

That myths are eternal stories with very particular and poignant details Pearson stresses throughout; but there is more to it, she reveals. I would put it this way: myths model; myths mimic; myths are mimetic. The word mimesis does not appear in her study, but what her methodology, or methodology, includes, is what the ancient Greeks also discovered and Aristotle gave the most voice to in his Poetics: mimesis. He believed that this tendency to re-present, to imitate, to seek out analogy, correspondence or accord with other persons and things, grows from two causes deep in our nature: our desire to imitate and “the pleasure felt in things imitated” (Butcher, 1902, p.15). Seeing “likenesses” is an enjoyable experience and a very effective way of teaching, by yoking something unfamiliar with something we can easily relate to; the effect is new knowledge.

The question is: what is being imitated? Aristotle is clear on this point and I believe Pearson’s book is a manifestation of this 5th Century BCE discovery. While Aristotle is addressing tragic stories most specifically, it is not a large leap to extrapolate from it something essential to all stories: “Tragedy is an imitation not of men but of an action and of life and life consists in action. Its end is a mode of action, not a quality” (Butcher, 1902, p. 27). This mode of action he speaks of is what Pearson’s study, to my mind, is seeking. Myths, she exposes, are not just stories of fates and destinies but kinds of action that the soul seeks, avoids, confronts and promotes. Not an outer behavior but first an inner disposition, a certain condition or way of being and imagining oneself both within and within the world.

We are more than our plot lines; in Pearson’s working of myth poetically, what is below the plot level shines through: the soul’s action that myths codify through narratives. When she speaks, for instance, of societies and individuals “revising their narratives when the world changes” (2015, p. 118), so that some new configuration between, for instance a “Zeus-Demeter balance” may be implemented that takes the form of “adopting social policies that protect competition and individual rights while allowing more time for family life and creating a stronger safety net” (2015, p.118), we witness a new alliance between forms of power and persuasion. The thought providing such an alteration in consciousness I would call mythopoetic, for the mythic figures are being recalibrated in the psyche—individual or collective—to inaugurate a new context for and style of consciousness. Tracking these changes, mutations and modifications seems to me the central intention, if not mission, of Persephone Rising.

"Myths, she exposes, are not just stories of fates and destinies but kinds of action that the soul seeks, avoids, confronts and promotes”

As readers, we must adjust our own thinking and encourage a flexible response to Pearson’s insights into divine presences. She realizes how we as readers may struggle with some of her reflections on any of the figures she delineates: “The Persephone archetype can seem paradoxical from a modern perspective. We live in a culture that equates dark with evil, and light with good, and that typically thinks that deep spiritual wisdom should be talked about in quiet, pious tones. . .” (2015, p. 191). She also “connects us with our deeper selves, or souls. From the psychological perspective the soul is a deeper part of us than the ego, mind, or even heart, and a more reliable source of guidance about what is right for you or me. . .” (2015, p. 192). The author’s angle and stance is always depth-psychological as well as poetic and analogical. Adopting it in our reading seems to me essential in order to experience the rich flavors emanating from these divinities and their analogues in modern expression. Not just content but point of view is indispensable to entertain in order to fully engage the figures in the fabric of our lives. Later we may judge things differently, but for the exercises and meditations, a yielding to Pearson’s point of view will encourage new insights into the mythic dimension of ourselves through the divine figures who embody not just psychological but ontological qualities.

Finally, a note on story structure. I confess my own reading bias here in that the section on Dionysus, followed by a rich conclusion entitled “The Power of Story to Transform Your Life” (2015, pp.339-357) is my favorite. As I read the conclusion I thought: what if this were first in the book rather than the last? At this writing I am still uncertain, but it does seem to set the entire work in motion. On the other hand, it is a capstone element that allows the reader to reflect back on all the stories that s/he has read and refrares them into a sharper focus. You decide. But regardless of your decision, I believe it is the heartbeat of the book.

Our culture has rediscovered the power and the purpose of story that goes well beyond entertainment, though we would not want to lose that property. But as Pearson reveals, “Because the stories we tell about what happens around us are filtered through the archetypal and other lenses in our psyches, they have a subjective element to them. Therefore, it pays to wield the shield of story vigilance, to sort out what is true and what is not—. . . .” (2015, p. 341). The liberating insight imbedded in her language is that we are not condemned or paralyzed for life in or by a single narrative; it can be altered, revisioned, reclaimed or trashed if need be. We do have the capacity, whether or not we exercise it, “to imagine alternative stories” so we can “substitute any number of new narratives for tired, old, disempowering ones” (2015, p. 351).

Her insights open up new conversations about the place of classic works of literature handed down as wisdom texts from hundreds or thousands of years; if we return for just an instant to the idea of mimesis, then reading these classics can serve as poetic surgeries to our own stories in an operation of the imagination to see possibilities for a life no longer satisfying and for the occasion to find a Dionysian joy in altering, even altering, another narrative that suits where we are historically. Whether a story is heard,
read, imagined, it has the capacity to “connect the heart and the mind in ways that spur action and often are remembered in memorable short phrases or sentences that evoke a larger narrative” (2015, p. 352). Our narrative selves, Pearson implies here, can be as liquid or as solidified as we choose to make them; life’s circumstances have little meaning as events until they are positioned within a narrative frame so to give events a context of meaning they cannot possess without that creative act of remembering and imagining, the twin impulses in creating meaning.

Lastly, and to state the obvious at this late juncture: this is an interactive text; simply reading it won’t serve. Unless the reader chooses to engage some of the exercises in order to make her/his history part of the narratives collected herein, the work will not work, or not work with the full intention that the author had in constructing it as she did. In this way, there is no ending to Persephone Rising for its narrative foundations will be added to by each participant reader/writer to stretch the stories well into the future by pulling from the present-past of one’s life. Only then will the text have served its full purpose of giving voice to one’s “metanarrative.” In so doing, one’s story enriches and extends the ancient figures from timeless myths by situating them right now, where one’s heart is and where one’s plot finds its place in a larger cosmic design.

References

Dennis Patrick Slattery Ph.D., is Distinguished Core Faculty at Pacifica Graduate Institute, and has been teaching for 40 years. His areas of emphasis include the poetic imagination, writing and reading as mythic activities, the relation of psyche, spirit and matter, and the place of contemplation within the academic setting. He is the author of several books and three volumes of poetry. He serves as the Faculty Advisor to student literary and online journals at Pacifica, and teaches Approaches to the Study of Myth; Mythopoetic Images; Joseph Campbell: Metaphor, Myth, and Culture; and Epic Imagination, among other courses.

Poetry

What Dan McDermott Found
(When He Was Looking for Something Else)
By Donald Carlson

What Dan McDermott found wasn’t what he wanted but what we needed, the grace of looking in the wrong place at the right time. Consider this Fun Fact:

On average, we spend a year of our lives looking for misplaced things. The time we spend finding whatever we aren't looking for defines a life lived well. The puzzlement of knowing that there’s something we should be seeking without being able to, defines life in hell, as Dante learned, descending concentric rings of stickness past a people eternally stuck, the damned clueless how to look, how to find what they aren’t looking for—a road—a way out and up, through and beyond themselves. Which brings me back to Dan, whose providential find, once shared about, prodded something in us to awaken, not so much an object as a route.
Pandora Addresses Evil,
With Regrets
By Mary Ann Bencivengo

I was so curious,
so wanted to see,
that that box/jar took
the better of me.

The very first time
an evil appeared,
I laughed and I laughed and
nearly laughed myself to death,
the world quite negligent.

I never meant to
service you, I laughed only
out of nervousness, you
then took advantage,
fed off it, grew.

And so time was the vacuum
the gods slipped through.
They went to the remotest heavens,
became removed.
Their voices echoing through
my nights did not console my hopes.
They spoke to me in sleep,
whispering, Eckleipsis,
Archilochus was right.

So now as some say the earth’s
days are lessening to none,
with rain forests disappearing
and global warming long begun,
thief, murder, rape,
victims burned at the stake,
homicides, suicides,
the orient’s enforced
more than one child abortion
spermicide,
the hole in the ozone
unfriendly things might just slip
through,
and all this plastic in the oceans
and all these chemicals in our food,
please take it all back,
I beg of you.

Editor’s Note (Continued from page 1)

stunning image and find themselves touched,
infused, or transformed. Words and images
are indeed alchemical agents that can inspire
us shake us up, wash over us, or gently
saturate the psyche, creating change.

The selection process for Depth Insights
is always difficult, but this issue was particu-
larly challenging as we had the highest
number of submissions in our four-year
history. Having worked our process, I was
gratified to notice that many of the excellent
essays in our final lineup feature common
threads of alchemy, transformation, recovery,
and renewal. Articles such as Paul DeBlas-
see’s “Trauma, Death, and Hope” and Tricia
Durnil’s work using myth as a lens to explore addiction
and recovery are complimented by three
essays from Joel Bell, Gary Bartlett, and Clara
Lindstrom that invoke the topic of alchemy—
itself an image of the Jung’s individual
process—directly. Mythology as an agent
of change is invoked by Deborah Salomon’s “The
New Myth,” by Tina Azaria’s interesting article
on Trickster, and even by the book review by
Dennis Slattery of Carol Pearson’s

“Persephone Rising.” Essays on nature, the
feminine, and animals from Adriana Attento
and Effie Heotis round out this brilliant col-
collection.

As we each look forward to the year
ahead, in the midst of the many disturbing
cultural and planetary crises we all face in the
modern world, I hope each reader might find
something of value here that speaks to you—
an image, a poem, a sentence or two—that
provides a foundation you can cling to when
things seem chaotic all around. Making the
time to allow yourself to engage with these
works and reflect is one of the greatest gifts
you can give yourself to allow transformation
to work on you, and allowing space and
reflection is an “accomplishment” more
aligned with a depth psychological intent than
that of the fast-paced, goal-driven culture
in which we live. In this way, perhaps the assess-
ment of “what I have done with depth
psychology” will be re-visionsed as “what
depth psychology has done with me” this
year.

—Bonnie Bright, Executive Editor

Postscript...

In Memoriam: Jesse Masterson

A few short days after I wrote the editorial
for this issue, a great light left our world in the
beautiful being of Jesse Masterson, who
passed away after a short battle with pancre-
atic cancer. Not only was Jesse my brilliant and
dedicated co-editor for Depth Insights for the
past couple of issues, at the time he was
diagnosed with what he knew was to be his
journey home, we had been spending several
hours a week together on video calls as he
poured his soul into his role as Board President
of Depth Psychology Alliance.

There is so much to be said for Jesse’s
commitment to soul, his capacity to connect
with spirit, and the grounded sense of love,
joy, serenity, and strength he brought with him
every time he showed up.
And he did show up!—
even offering to help work
on this issue long after that
fateful diagnosis.

Jesse would have been the first, I think, to
acknowledge that we are each an integral part
of that infinite cycle of life, transformation,
death, and renewal, presided over by the great
goddess, and participating in a universe of
being that we can only begin to glimpse when
we do show up and passionately be who we
are in spite of all else.
Jesse, my friend: You are tremendously
missed, but you still live on in the soul of the
world that you loved so very much.