

IN THE ARMS OF AN ARCHETYPE

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Abstract:-

Exploring the powerful nature of archetypes as they grab hold and thrust us, unaware, or release us into the conscious experience of their energy, In the arms of an archetype describes the author's personal journey from one archetype, The Lover, to another, the Creator. Weaving narrative and poetry, psychological discourse and philosophy, the article examines the call and the shadow side of these two archetypes and the influences each had on the journey of a young girl into womanhood. The article presents a heartfelt reflection of Jung's claim that "Our personal psychology is just a thin skin, a ripple on the ocean of collective psychology ... and the archetypes are the real decisive forces, they decide the fate of man."

Keyword:-*Archetype, Jung, Creator, Lover, Shadow, Nature*

If, for a moment, you doubt the existence and importance of the archetype, you have never been held in the arms of that archetype. I have. I have been in the arms of the Lover, and in the arms of the Creator. Moving from one to the other almost killed me. Literally, almost killed me. This is the story of that transition.

Jung (1971) describes archetypes as the “accumulated experiences of organic life in general, a million times repeated, and condensed” (p. 400). He (Jung, in Pembroke, 2007) further insists that “Our personal psychology is just a thin skin, a ripple on the ocean of collective psychology.

.. And the archetypes are the real decisive forces, they decide the fate of man” (p.56).

Lover came to me too early. I had not yet explored the Ego archetypes. I needed to enjoy the optimism of the Innocent. I hadn't yet learned to employ the Orphan to help me watch my back. There was no Warrior to let me know how to say no and set limits. There was no Caregiver to heal myself. I was only four years old. And my step-father was a forty-year -old with no self- control, perhaps with an illness that offered no relief from his terrible desires. Whatever, the reason, my love map began very early as a dark and dangerous thing that could only lead to abandonment and betrayal.

The dark side of Lover has been recognized by artists and theologians as enormously powerful. The darkest lover of all, the Vampire, seduces and drinks the blood of his victims, dooming them to the eternal damnation of carrying on his painful cycle of life and death.

Of all the shadow monsters depicted on the screen, the vampire has been the most prominent and popular of the lot. A possible explanation is that the creature's thirst for blood can be equated with the sexual function...victims frequently found the vampire's visits highly pleasurable and quite addictive (Iaccino, 1994, p. 61).

Bitten by the vampire of the dark Lover archetype, I craved the admiration of men. By the age of thirteen, I was engaged to be married to a young man who suffered from a bi-polar disease that caused him to attempt suicide when we separated.

By nineteen, I was a pregnant wife, married to a man with an exciting edge, but an inability to express tenderness, an alcoholic raised by two parents who hadn't spoken a word to one another for twenty years. Somehow, a child had been born in the silent period.

I left that husband for a man even more alluring, darker, more dangerous, and more impossible. A convict, a thief, a poet, an addict. Someone so attractive I couldn't resist him; so doomed I couldn't possibly create a life with him. But I tried. And the beauty and the pain of the trial reached such heights, I was almost mad with love.

Love can make you mad. Even the best of us, the most sainted. Theresa, the saint of Calcutta, long considered the icon of the Care-giver archetype, was essentially the Lover, doing good to earn the promised visitation of her God, the source of her bliss and her pain.

In more than 40 communications, many of which have never before been published, she bemoans the "dryness," "darkness," "loneliness" and "torture" she is undergoing. She compares the experience to hell and at one point says it has driven her to doubt the existence of heaven and even of God. She is acutely aware of the discrepancy between her inner state and her public demeanor. "The smile," she writes, is "a mask" or "a cloak that covers everything." Similarly, she wonders whether she is engaged in verbal deception. "I spoke as if my very heart was in love with God — tender, personal love," she remarks to an adviser (Van Biema, 2007).

Not only was I attracted to the dark side of Lover, I was subject to its shadow side, jealousy. The kind of jealousy that makes the audience spellbound in *Fatal Attraction*. The kind of jealousy that creates a cut-up-his-clothes kind of anger, an axe-in-his-head kind of pain. An anger and a pain akin to what I felt as a teenager when I wanted to chop my step father into pieces with the outboard motor, back and forth, back and forth with the boat, him in the water, under the propeller until he no longer existed, until he was fish bait.

That, too, raged, until it was enough.

You'd think it easy to give up something which is so wrong for you. But it isn't. You need to go soul searching. You need to mature to another level of your hero's journey, and I had really missed a few steps along the way. I needed to call upon the Rebel/Destroyer to stand up to the memory of my step-father's abuse, and although I can call upon that archetype to protect every kind of animal on the planet, but when it comes to defending myself, internally, that archetype runs for the woods. I needed the Warrior for my “internal sense of authority that enables us to deal realistically with other

authority figures in the world” (Adson, 2004, p.13). But the Warrior was hiding in the woods with the Rebel. I was on my own.

There was another issue going on. The issue of privilege. It sounds like a strange word to use, but I think it is a good one, coined by one of my graduate students, Karen de Jesus, when talking about moving from one country to another, one culture to another. You give up the privilege of the old culture and it is awhile before you really benefit from the privilege of the new one. That is pretty obvious in the case of immigration. It may not be so obvious when you move from one archetype to another, especially when you are living the shadow side of the darkest part of that archetype. However, I believe there is a loss of privilege.

The hunger of the lover is very attractive, and unconsciously or consciously, you cast your spell, and you draw others to you, looking at you, wanting you, picking you out of a crowd, a classroom, an auditorium, a restaurant, like a moth to the flame, as the perfume of need spills from you.

That is the privilege. Others desire you, pay attention to you. There is more. The privilege of excitement and danger, attention. There is more. Love-making that is wild and passionate and overtakes you. You feel in love. You feel that this is the reason you were born. It is your bliss.

You ask yourself, “Who would I be without it?”

I decided it had to stop. I wore black. I became sick. I had my gall bladder removed. My thyroid. My breasts. I gained 50 pounds. Never consciously trying to make myself unattractive, never getting sick on purpose. All unconscious. I didn’t scream “stay away”. I simply quit saying “I want you”. And they stopped. It all stopped. The pain. And the joy. Like Rilke, (1999) I was afraid that when my devils left me, my angels would take flight as well.

The privilege, the excitement, his arms around you in a dance, the song sung to you in a lost meadow, the love stolen in a library, the passion of sex that took you to places you hadn’t thought possible. All gone.

But, oh

A shadow
Walks across My wall.
I know
The wind
Has pressed
And moved
The naked branch
Against
Transparent pane
Not you
Stealing in
To curse
And crush
And kiss my lips Again.
(Author, 1979, p.12)

For a while. A great emptiness. A vast hole. “Personality can never develop unless one chooses one’s own way consciously and makes this an ethical decision” (Jacobi, 1965, p. 82).

And then, a hunger, a surplus of energy. Where to put it? I had no idea. Until the Creator held me in her arms. And I began to write. I had what Toni Morrison (2008) calls a flooding.

You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally, the river floods these places. “Floods” is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there and the route back to our original place. It is emotional memory – what the nerves and the skin remember as well as how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our “flooding” (p. 77).

Stories poured. Children’s books, poems - fifty hundred in a week-end, screen-plays, stories, novels. I couldn’t stop.

I entered a new world. The world of the writer. My teaching expanded. I began to teach creative writing in the film world. It was a rebirth. “No matter what stage or grade of life, the call brings up the curtain. The familiar life horizon

has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand” (Campbell, 1968, p. 78).

I bought a cabin nestled in the woods. A perfect place to write. Isolated. Beautiful.

“One function of the Creator and our incredible power of visualization and imagination is the ability to change perspective, reframe the issue, or look at events in a different way (Adson, 2004, p. 49).

And yet another change occurred. As an ENFP, (extraverted, intuitive, feeling, perceiving type) sensation had always daunted me, plagued me. I ignored the details, signed contracts without reading the fine print, I missed dates, got lost in even familiar territory. In stress I became obsessed with the detail. If I made a mistake on a handout before a workshop, I’d rush to an all-night printing place, regardless of the hour, ripping open booklets, making new copies, putting them together, skipping sleep all together, but arriving, haggard and nervous, with perfect handouts in my clutches.

Oh, I knew the horror of “being in the grip” (Quenk, 1993) of sensation. My worst grip experience occurred when I was on my way to Philadelphia to give a paper on an observation instrument I had developed to determine type in adolescents. Isabel Myers was ill and we, her students, wanted to show where we were taking her work; wanted to show that her work would never die.

The inferior also appears during important transitional periods in our lives. People report that memorable encounters with their inferiors have often preceded or accompanied significant developmental changes. Moving out of one’s childhood home, graduating from college, getting married or divorced, or experiencing the death of a loved one are the kinds of transitional events that people mention (Ibid. p. 57).

I was stressed. Like a magpie on diet pills, I chatted to the person unlucky enough to sit next to me on the airplane. I told him about Isabel and her great influence on our lives. He listened, then told me had tickets to a play in Philadelphia and would be honored if I would join him and I agreed to do so.

“I’ll pick you up at your hotel,” he offered. I paused.

“Where are you staying?”

I had no idea. The university secretary had made the reservations and I had forgotten to check where I was supposed to go.

My seat companion suggested I call the secretary and ask her.

“It’s Friday night,” I said.

“So?”

“So, I can’t phone her at work, and, and...I don’t know her last name.” “Devi...Devi...I kept saying to myself. Hoping her last name would pop into my already frazzled brain. Nothing.

Then I had a terrible thought. “What if I have to give my paper on the week-end?”

“What if?” My almost theatre date was incredulous. “You mean you don’t know when you give the talk?”

“I do. I do, generally, just not specifically.

“Let me get this straight, you are going to a conference, you don’t know where it’s being held, you don’t know when you are giving your paper, and you can’t phone your secretary to find out because you don’t know her name?”

I felt stupid. I felt like breaking his neck.

I got off the plane, rushed to the phones that were directly connected to major hotels. None had heard of me. That’s when my tertiary function of thinking kicked in to help out my inferior function. I tried so hard to be specific and logical, that I decided to call some hotels, using the telephone book attached to a phone booth. At the best of times, I am no good at using a phone book. They never seem to label things the way I would. Gardening becomes Landscaping; Cars become Automobiles; Fabric becomes Goods. I never get it right.

I could hardly hold open the huge phone book, attached by iron clamps to a shelf in the booth. I was so upset, so irrational, it occurred to me that since I was from out of town, I should actually phone out of town hotels to see if I were registered.

No, it did not occur to me to phone someone I knew who could phone Devi for me. Nothing rational occurred to me. I was locked in the grip of my inferior function and my tertiary was adding to the horror.

Exasperated, ashamed, I headed for the bar for a drink of bourbon, the favorite drink of my ex. It always worked wonders for him; maybe it would jolt me into some more productive action.

One gulp, warmth, a sudden release of breath, water to the eyes, a shiver and I almost ordered a second. But a second would have put me under the table, and I was already in trouble. Instead, on the fifteen - minute high of the bourbon, I scolded myself for getting stuck in sensation and thinking. Why hadn't I turned to intuitive feeling?

I walked around the airport, looking for the kind of people who might be going to this conference. I found not one, not two, not three, but four. "Are you going to the conference? Are you staying there? Want to share a taxi?" And off we went! I stayed away from sensation for quite some time after that.

But, out in the woods, writing, in the arms of my Creator archetype, I began to explore my sensation in a way I had never done before. I began to clear the forest and plant trees, shrubs, perennials, bulbs. I began to build a three - acre botanical garden.

Von Franz (1971) describes the inferior function as "slow, touchy, tyrannical and childish." I could certainly attest to that aspect of my sensing function. She also said that it was a new source of energy that provides a new potential for life (p. 8).

I grew strong and well. I began to wear the colors of the earth, browns, greens, the burnt oranges and reds of poppies, the colors of autumn leaves and winter berries.

The first tree I planted was one from my childhood, the birch, sometimes called "The Lady of the Woods", the embodiment of the feminine spirit (Gifford, 2000, p.10). Though seemingly fragile, the birch is very hardy and teaches strength, promising new life and new love (p. 14). The second was a Beech, because I'd never had one. I planted it next to the Birch, its red/purple leaves laughing with joy, brushing its dark branches against the white purity of the Birch bark. The Beech, talisman to creative powers, "reminds us of the importance of learning and the need to preserve our knowledge in writing" (p. 156).

There is another aspect of what was happening to me. It was that both the setting I was creating and my own body as part of that setting were influencing me, were all part of the therapy. This is not a new theory. Churcher in speaking about Bleger's thesis that setting forms part of the body schema, he says, "I think we need to add something which has perhaps gone unnoticed theoretically, even if it has been there implicitly all along: *the body itself is part of the setting*. The patient's body and the analyst's body are no less parts of the physical setting than are the couch or the chair; and like everything else, the body is taken for granted until it goes wrong" (Churcher, 2013, p.8).

A new form of writing emerged. As I created the various rooms of my garden, I recognized I was writing a biography. Each garden represented a different part of my life. "Kissing Cousins", full of flowers that flamed with life and color and femininity, purples and plums and peach, a Pansy Red Bud Tree in the centre, created in memory of my favorite Aunts in California, my mother's cousins, really, Dolly and Marie.



“Prairie Gals”, crept into existence, the beautiful *Cornus Variegata Argentea*, the ballerina tree, in tiers of green and white, named Mary after my grandmother, white lilies, for her purity, and red roses, red gladioli for the passion that was my mother, the tiny viola my daughter loved, the lilacs that were me. All flowers that grew in the prairies, all flowers that the four of us loved, four generations of Prairie Gals.

The garden grew, room by room, and as it grew, so did I. I began to write my biography, through the garden and the plants that I choose. None of this conscious, until I began to write about it. And like Kincaid, (1999) I was recreating my home.

“What are you trying to do here?” I have been asked. (About the shape of her garden beds) Sometimes I would reply by saying, “I don’t really know,” or sometimes I would reply“.....” (With absolute silence). When it dawned on me that the garden I was making (and am still making and will always be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it, I did not tell this to the gardeners who had asked me to explain the thing I was doing, or to explain what I was trying to do: I only marveled at the way the garden is for me an exercise I memory, a way of remembering my own immediate past, a way of getting to a past that is my own (the Caribbean Sea) and the past as it is indirectly related to me (the conquest of Mexico and its surroundings) (p. 8). One of the last chapters of my book, *Crazy for Trees*, surprised even me. Even its title, “Pillow Talk”, was the last thing I’d expected: This is what I wrote:

I was out at Wells Nursery when I saw it, the *Cedrus Atlantica*, its long arms reaching out, embracing all the plants around it. It created a tall wall of dripping, lacy greenery. I had to have one.

I remember digging the hole in the soft composted soil. I remember spreading out the roots, sifting the soil around the roots, adding peat, compost, more soil. I remember watering, adding growth stimulant. I remember tying the tree to the fence with soft twists of stretchable ribbon. I touched the needles gently, bound them gently, and fastened them gently. I remember their yielding willingness.

And then I stepped back and viewed the tree. The pleasure I felt, the satisfaction, the rush of emotion and physical pleasure was just like sex. Nothing less. Planting a tree has become a sensual experience for me, as exciting and satisfying as finding a love machine when I was in my twenties.

That doesn’t mean you exchange one for the other. It means, simply, you have added a richness and a way of responding to life that you might not have considered part of how you could feel.

Some people find God in nature. They speak about gardening in spiritual terms. I find myself talking about gardening as a uniquely intimate experience. It is more a closeness to life, a satisfaction, a drive, not unlike the need to procreate in the young (Author, 2014, p. 232234).

I know I’m not alone in thinking about things sexual in the garden. Many regard Lady Chatterley’s Lover as riské. For my money, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* is far more erotic.

I am thinking, of course, of the peach before I ate it.

Why so velvety, why so voluptuous heavy?
Why hanging with such inordinate weight?
Why so indented?

Why the groove?
Why the lovely, bivalve roundnesses?
Why the ripple down the sphere?

Why the suggestion of incision?
Why was not my peach round and finished like a billiard ball?
It would have been if man had made it.
Though I’ve eaten it now (Lawrence, 1923, p.13-14)

When I speak of the garden being sexual, I do not mean the peach, the fig, the medlar and sorb-apple, as sensual as they may be to tongue and lip, to tip of finger, to tip of nose. No matter how pleasing and suggestive to the eye, it is not that which I mean.

No, I mean me, my being, the way I feel when planting a tree, the great oneness with life when I perform this act, this union with nature.

So rests the sky against the earth. The dark still turn in the lap of the forest. As a husband embraces his wife's body in faithful tenderness, so the bare ground and trees are embraced by the still, high, light of the morning. I feel an ache of longing to share in this embrace, to be united and absorbed. A longing like carnal desire, but directed towards earth, water, sky, and returned by the whispers of the trees, the fragrance of the soil; the caresses of the wind, the embrace of water and light. Content? No, no, no—but refreshed, rested—while waiting (Hammarskjold, 1966, p.77).

I write in my book, *Crazy for trees*, I smile as I walk back into the forest finding a spot to plant another tree. I know I want to put something special back here in the forest, where the light leaks in with long thin fingers of warm and muted sun moving through the trees like haunting music, unforgettable.

I think I will create a living shelter out of several butterfly bushes. They are so amenable to shaping, and they have such wonderful color and scent. I will plant five, in shades of pink and red and violet. I will pull the branches together and form a cathedral ceiling. There will be places to enter between each small tree. I will lace the branches with colored ribbon.

I dream of my house of color and fragrance and I wander deeper into the forest, past the toad lily farm, past the place where I plan the pond, to the spot where I want to build my resting room, the room of Cedar and screen. It will be a room with a large bed, all of wood that cannot rust.

The blankets will be white, cotton, bleachable. There will be a chair for sitting. A sturdy little table on which to place a book, a writing tablet, a glass of water, a radio, a lover's shirt (Author, p 361-365).

Could it be that I have healed? Have I come closer to what Moore & Gillette (1990) call the appropriate accessing of the Lover. It is the Lover, appropriately accessed “who is the source of our longings for a better world for ourselves and others . . . the idealist, the dreamer
...who wants us to have an abundance of good things” (p.140).

Perhaps the Creator would allow me to go back through what Hunter (2008) calls the stages of the Lover that I had missed, that he describes as the journey of love:

“The concept of love cannot be defined or even properly illustrated without referring to how we experience it at different points in our lives. An acorn, a seedling, and a full grown oak tree are all essentially the same creature, but entirely different in their levels of development. It would be absurd to pretend that they are exactly the same thing. Love is no different and has to be treated accordingly” p. 17).

Whatever was happening, I was feeling a sense of harmony. “Harmony happens when behavior and belief come together, when inner archetypal life and outer life are expressions of each other, and we are being true to who we are” (Bolen, 1989, p. 287).

Jacobi (1965) in her view of individuation suggests that it is a mistake to unremittingly search for “happiness”. “The true goal is a task that continues right up to life's evening, namely, the most complete and comprehensive development of the personality. It is this which gives life an incomparable value that can never be lost; inner peace, and there with the highest form of ‘happiness’” (Jacobi, 1965, p.17).

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