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Polikoff, Daniel Joseph. *In the Image of Orpheus: Rilke, a Soul History*. Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 2011, ISBN 9781888602524.

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In the Image of Orpheus is an important book not only because it addresses the scholarship of literature, art, archetypal psychology, and religion but also because it transforms the terms of their engagement. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926), born in the same year as C. G. Jung, belongs to that broad cultural resistance to Enlightenment rationalism and modernity that includes the poetry of W. B. Yeats, quantum physics, modernist art, and the discovery of the unconscious as vital to human existence. In a long and lively treatment of Rilke’s life, passions and art, Polikoff makes a unique and significant contribution to *our* time examining Rilke through the lens of James Hillman’s as yet too little known Archetypal Psychology. *In the Image of Orpheus* examines and tries to heal deep psychic deficits in who we have become.

Above all, the book explores how James Hillman restores the term “soul” to its ancient tripartite connection to body (matter) and spirit. “Soul” is the medial term between material body and ethereal spirit - the realm of images, of imagination. Soul is psyche not bound to an earthen body but rather mediating its relation to the cosmos. Soul is body and psyche conjoined; its matter is images, and they *matter* as the expression of divinities or archetypal powers. Imagination is therefore a divine rite; poetry that aspires to this soul-making through imagination’s images is both authentic art and religion. The two are indissolubly wed.

Yet as this comprehensive and fascinating work of cultural history demonstrates, such a notion of soul and art has been radically suppressed from the Western tradition. A particularly cogent analysis of this suppression occurs in chapter four of *In the Image of Orpheus* where Polikoff looks at Hillman’s criticism of Augustine as one of the “Fathers” not only of theology but also of psychology. Augustine’s apparently benign insistence on the “feeling heart” shifts religious concern for the fate of man to something that will become Hillman’s *bête noir*, the human personality as “psychological” in the sense of being structured predominantly through “personal” factors and relationships.

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Such a focus on the “personal” becomes what Hillman dislikes as an overly subjective sense of feelings clustered around egoic inflation above all else. Such a valuing of ego-linked emotions has the power to shut down imagination, the wilderness of soul. For imagination as soul needs *not to be limited by the personal* if it is to embody in images its archetypal and divine dimensions. Augustine, by contrast, constructs feeling as anti-imagination. His only true images come from religious tradition. He substantiates that foundational severing of soul into the dualistic binary of body and spirit. For him the feelings of man can only find genuine imaginal expression in the rites and symbols of the Church.

To Augustine, images made by the imagination can have no religious essence because they are not genuinely creative. Augustine’s dualistic God is *creator ex nihilo*, creating out of the void. Humans do not possess any divine creative powers, for they are material and sinful bodies with an immaterial spirit that must “accept” God’s divinity via the received symbols of his book and his Church. God creates the universe; human images have no authentic creative participation in the divine. By contrast, Archetypal Psychology’s “soul-making” is an assertion of the human imagination as intrinsically religious in the sense of participating in making what is real. To Hillman, the heart is a place not so much of personal feeling but of true imagining. The heart is where essences of reality are transformed by the imagination into archetypal images.

In the Image of Orpheus carefully demonstrates that Hillman’s remarkable revisioning of psychology is an illuminating frame for Rilke’s art. In so doing, the whole book is a testimony to a profound cultural revolution, begun by those modernists, Freud and Jung, then arguably crucially developed by Archetypal, and now expanded to challenge traditional disciplinary paradigms by depth and literary scholars such as Polikoff. For Rilke was dedicated to combatting the modern secularization of consciousness of his age. In his congruent sense of the divine roots of the imagination with Hillman, poetry and religious being are one. As Polikoff says:

[In Rilke]... we are invited to enter a specifically aesthetic sphere—one that may... be rooted in and emerge from the author’s personal psychology, but, at the same time attains a critical degree of independence from it. We are invited, that is, into the transpersonal poetic sphere of images themselves, the imaginal realm that counts as the proper domain of both art and archetypal (not merely personal) psychology. (142)

Elaborating Rilke’s soul-history, later chapters of *In the Image of Orpheus* look at two founding mythic plots that emerge from the work. Orpheus, who loses his Eurydice to the underworld and ends as a dismembered singing head, is entwined for Rilke with the ostensibly happier story of Eros and Psyche. Polikoff argues that there is a deep congruence with the sadness of Orpheus’s final song and

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the divine consummation of the marriage of Eros and Psyche among the gods. Archetypally, the Orphic dismemberment is fundamental to the returning of soul to the world. The way of the soul *is*, as Hillman so often insisted, the way of the underworld and psychic death. Rilke shows that poetry or “song” needs to pass through Hades.

So finally *In the Image of Orpheus* is a book about restoring the soul to the world of today. The scholarly disciplines of art, religion and psychology were built on the dualism of body and spirit that produced a notion of psychology as overly “personal.” Art and psychology have attempted to care for “personal” passions while dividing themselves off from eternal, archetypal, transpersonal domains of disembodied spirit in religion. Rilke and Hillman, through the wonderful imaginal mediation of Daniel Polikoff, show that we need to assert yet again the divinely creative powers of soul in imagination.