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Introduction

Welcome to the 2019 *Journal of Jungian Scholarly Studies*. This volume marks an important milestone in the history of journal, the first year in which it is being hosted by the University of Alberta to enable wider accessibility and influence in the community of scholars interested in Jungian ideas. Great thanks go to Dr. Alexandra Fidyk and Professor Luke Hockley, as well as the fine staff of the University of Alberta's Library Publishing Team, for making this partnership possible.

Essays in the 2019 volume reflect the theory of emergence, the theme of the 16th annual conference, in June 2018, of the Jungian Society for Scholarly Studies held in Portland, Oregon. Emergence is a feature of complex and adaptive living systems, from the microscopic to the macroscopic, studied by scholars in the natural and human sciences. Jung's 1916 theory of the transcendent function anticipated emergent phenomena: the tension of the opposites, he said, creates "third thing . . . a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation" (CW 8, par. 189). Thus it is no surprise that contemporary Jungians have turned their attention to the exploration of emergence articulated by our sister disciplines in much the same way Jung himself was fascinated by the scientific discoveries of his time.

In keeping with the theme of the 2019 volume, and thanks to the artful suggestion of Matthew Fike, the six scholarly essays are arranged in three pairs suggesting an emergent order. The first pair begins with Susan Courtney's exploration of the medieval symbol of the salt-point and its component elements—circle, square, and point. The salt-point is an image of the Self that emerges, over time, to produce coherence of body, soul, and spirit. Courtney explores five kinds of time that shape human experience, from our standing in earth-bound time to our interconnectivity with eternal, archetypal forces. The themes of time, timelessness, and the journey toward the Self are the subtext of the second essay, in which Lisa Pounders uses the lens of alchemy to analyze the vivid, unprecedented bone paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe that were produced when the artist discovered her soul's home in northern New Mexico. Pounders demonstrates how creating visionary works rooted in a specific landscape reflects as well as fosters the emergence of symbolic material that transcends time and space.

The second pair of essays turns from personal and artistic themes of emergence to the presence of emergent phenomena in political life. Inez Martinez examines the cultural and religious roots of toxic patriarchy in the U.S. through literary analysis of Charles Brockden Brown's 1798 novel *Wieland or the Transformation, An American Tale*. She argues that President Donald Trump's followers, socialized to worship a Judeo-Christian almighty father that divinizes narcissistic traits, easily embrace his claims to unlimited power, obedience, and adoration. Elizabeth Nelson's essay on toxic masculinity describes what may be called the devouring father in the western tradition. She argues that the *puer-senex* dyad reveals this wound through the omission of *pater* (Latin, father). The essay explores the impact of generative fathering on communal life expressed in a male developmental triad *puer-pater-senex* that is parallel to the female developmental pattern maiden-mother-crone.

The final pair of essays returns from the chaotic nigredo of communal strife to the promise of fresh, restorative emergent processes. How can human participation with the

continuously creative psyche fuel the transformative practices we need to bring about a more healthful future? Bianca Reynolds offers one possibility: the utility of a Jungian theoretical framework for the creation of play texts. As a case study, she explores the contemporary family homecoming drama in Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County* and Reynold's own original play, *Eventide*. The second essay in this pair, by Douglas Thomas, explores Dream Tending, a method of working with dreams that treats the images as living entities from the timeless archetypal world of the *mundus imaginalis*. Thomas points out that the vital dimension of a dream-centered life is play, which offers significant psychological value after the exodus from childhood. Play opens the potential space of new meaning—for individuals, communities, and cultures.

The six scholarly essays individually explore the theory of emergence and, in their sequencing, enact emergence. We continue the practice of including poetry and art, paired with the essays and poems, since they too offer images of emergence. A separate section includes all of the art selected for this year's volume, accompanied by the artist's statements about the work.

On behalf of the members of the editorial team who have worked so tirelessly to create this volume, I welcome you to Volume 14 of the *Journal of Jungian Scholarly Studies*.

Elizabeth Eowyn Nelson
General Editor

2019 ESSAYS, ART, AND POETRY



“Antechamber” by John Dotson

The Salt-Point: *Kairos* Emergent from Chaos

Susan J. Courtney

Abstract: This paper presents the medieval symbol of the salt-point, a dot in a square in a circle, as a functional blueprint for the emergence of the transcendent *self*—the person fully entangled with an inner yet higher authority that is experienced as a state of grace. Jung had intuited this self-organizing movement, individuation, through the metaphor of *squaring the circle*, a continual refinement of the chaotic *solutio* of bitter salts of experiences and memories toward an end point of coherence of body, soul, and spirit. The salt-point is explored through a fresh perspective of an emergent dissociability of time and psyche through the images of chaos, *kronos* and *Ananke*, *Aion*, *kairos* and *Metanoia*, and cosmos. The idea of a salt *solutio* of time is presented side by side with concepts such as probability and time salt crystals.

Keywords: *nous*, quaternity, iota, unitemporality, synchronicity, grace

Introduction

The lived experience of meaningful timing in our lives and in the world might be intuited in the medieval symbol of the *salt-point*, a dot in a square in a circle. The circle, square, and point symbolized for Jung (1959a) psychological movements toward individuation, the reconciliation of unconscious material and everyday consciousness within the encompassing presence of the *self* (p. 224). In Jungian thinking, the *self* is paradoxically the center of one's being and a unified, objective circumference, the totality of the psyche (p. 169). Edinger (1996) described the transformational process of individuation as an act of apocatastasis, a remembering of and "return to the original ordering of things": the *self* (pp. 46–47). As the archetype of wholeness, the *self* expresses in *sui generis* symbols of collective unity (p. 44). Symbols of the deep psyche, such as the salt-point, are not projections of our thoughts; neither do they "belong to the rubbish heap of the past" (Jung, 1963, pp. xiii, 254). Because reductionism and rationalism alienate the natural symbol from its "transcendent roots and immanent goals," nonrational movements of intuiting, feeling, and sensing (pp. 221, 246) initially hold the image.

The physical, psychological, and spiritual meaning of the alchemical *sal* suggests why the symbol of circle, square, and dot was called the *salt-point*. *Sal* represented the bitter matters of the unconscious that are reconciled with consciousness in the alchemical work, the spirit that innervates this transformation, and the state of *self-unity* in the embodied and inspirited wisdom called *Sal Sapientia* (Jung, 1963, pp. 188, 192–193, 240–243, 486). Mercurius is the only image operating in the transformative process as much as *sal*, and even Mercurius, according to the Arabic alchemist Ibn Umail, was "made from salt" (in Jung, 1963, p. 189).

The salt-point is explored through our felt and lived experiences of mutable timing in the work toward individuation. Notions and perceptions of time shape human experience, from our standing in earth-bound time to our interconnectivity with eternal,

archetypal forces. The circle of the salt-point symbolizes both the chthonic clock whose hands round up the chaos of the unconscious psyche “under the laws of space and time” and the “cosmic, even transcendental” sphere that indicates the *self* (Jung, 1953a, p. 105). The chthonic clock relates to images of *kronos* (time) and *Ananke* (necessity), while the cosmic clock symbolizes a timeless, fully realized state of *grace*. The square or quaternity of the salt-point symbolizes a four-dimensional “unitemporality” that indicates the “essence of individuation” (Jung, 1959a, p. 251), presented here in the image of eternal timelessness, *Aion*. Together, circle and square hold a compensatory dynamism and psychical ordering principle called *squaring the circle*, which leads to the emergence of the *point* (Jung, 1959a, pp. 194–195, 224). Jung (1959c) intuited in the point (the punctum, *scintilla*, or *iota*) a “vital and numinous” centering personality, the *self*, “to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is a source of energy that is “manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to become what one is” (p. 357). The point is presented through the images and spirit of *kairos* and *Metanoia*, which can be discerned in numinous yet sensate moments that lift us into a new sense of time and space. The point emergent in the center of the quaternity creates a quincunx or *quinta essentia* that speaks to the fifth dimension of atemporal, cosmic harmony (von Franz, 1974, p. 121), presented here as the state of *grace*.

Methodology

This paper uses a methodology that Jung (1963) perceived in the alchemical operation of *solve et coagula*, to dissolve and coagulate (p. xiv). *Solve* represents an incoherent *solutio* in which fixed thinking and old attitudes dissolve within fresh waters, while *coagula* signifies the refinement of understanding through new connections that emerge out of the *solutio* (Edinger, 1985, pp. 47, 83–85). Jung employed *solve et coagula* in his work through what Edinger (1996) called a nonlinear *presentational* methodology in which information from many backgrounds that seem “raw . . . alien and disconnected” are held in the *solutio* of research without pre-conceived ideas of how they fit together (p. 11). The *solutio* has its own *eros*, which magnetically self-organizes into a cluster of images holding unexpected associations (p. 11).

Chaos

The beginning state in the movement toward self-unity can be likened to the primeval chaos in which orderly time and space have not been established and mysterious forces repulse and attract us (Jung, 1954, pp. 182, 191). Chaos is experienced as a fragmenting of psyche, time, and everyday matters; the sense of *me* dissolves, sometimes to the point of a catastrophic collapse of the personality (Jung, 1953b, p. 163). In Hermetic doctrine, dark chaos was home to the chthonic mother whose animate and magnetic power could “*feel or perceive*” our bitter, dissociated sparks of regret, sadness, and guilt (emphasis in original, Jung, 1959a, pp. 156–157). The Mithraic mysteries perceived a “spirit of the chaotic waters of the beginning,” the “matrix of all potentialities,” which transforms the chaotic *solutio* to the “baptismal water of rebirth and transcendence” (Jung, 1963, pp. 197–199). The work of *coagula*, to form a stronger sense of *me* out of the chaotic miasma, does not rely primarily on the thinking function; our feelings and intuition help us to sense and integrate “the whole weight of reality” (Jung, 1959a, pp. 32–33). Jung (1953a) considered the experience of dissolving in the blackness of chaos as “the *sine qua non* of any regeneration

of the spirit and the personality” (p. 74). Recognizing the deeper meaning held in the unconscious psyche through sense and sensibility creates a breakwater against the sea of chaos and “in this way a new cosmos arises” (Jung, 1959b, pp. 30–31). Jung added, “Life is crazy and meaningful at once” (p. 31).

The Circle of Time and Necessity: *Kronos* and *Ananke*

The abyss of the unconscious psyche finds self-organization through a circular distillation of chaotic thoughts and feelings within the constraints of measured time and space (Jung, 1959a, p. 32). The circle had both corporeal and noncorporeal meanings in medieval philosophy; the corporeal or *coagula* aspect belonged to *kronos* (Jung, 1968, p. 76). In ancient times, *kronos* symbolized relational time, the cycles and rhythms of the human condition that underlie the beauty and heartbreak of birth, decay, and death (Levi, 1944, p. 274). *Kronos* is accompanied by *Ananke*, the goddess of *necessity* (etymologically related to *nexus*, “bound”), who binds the world in causality and fate (von Franz, 1992, pp. 92–93). *Ananke* spins earthly lives out of conflicts that arise in the necessities of lived existence; Heraclitus wrote, “all things happen by strife and necessity” (qtd. in von Franz, p. 93). *Ananke* in turn is bound by the predictable cycles of *kronos*, a marriage symbolized by the ouroboric, tail-eating serpent (p. 93). The ouroboros symbolizes the necessary cycles of consciously swallowing and metabolizing the disordered tailings of the unconscious psyche in what Jung (1959c) called an instinctive “*attempt at self-healing*” (p. 388, emphasis in original). *Ananke* was traced etymologically to the ancient Semitic words for *narrow*, *throat*, *necklace*, *strangle*, and *fetters* and to its Germanic root *eng*, found in *angst* and *anxiety* (in Hillman, 1980, pp. 5–6). Whereas *kronos* brings empirical boundaries to our lives, *Ananke* reminds us that the nexus of family, social, and professional circles strangles some part of our wild soul that longs for unfettered chaos.

The Square, Quaternity, and Aion

The circle, square, and point are not static figures in symbology but natural dynamisms of the psyche. The square squares away the personality by reconciling conflict in the numinous,¹ unifying force of the *quaternity*, which drives and illuminates the process of individuation (Jacobi, 1959, p. 166). The quaternity symbolized a self-organizing principle of wholeness in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance philosophies (Jung, 1958b, pp. 37, 37n), just as *Aion* was “an image of totality” (Edinger, 1996, p. 16). Jung (1956) associated the “strange god, Aion” with the fourfold “*mystic quadriga*,” which signified eternal “Time” and destiny (pp. 279–280). The quaternity also represented a guiding voice of inner authority, an intimate partner of the soul, the “God within,” the *self* (Jung, 1958b, pp. 57–58); (Jung, 1959a, p. 22). In the same way, *Aion* held the meaning of an inner life partner who inspires one until the last breath is gone (Edinger, 1996, p. 15).

Aion throughout ancient and medieval times was conceptual more than religious or anthropomorphic; it was a “creating power” of a “divine mind of a world of ideas . . . present in the world as an image” (Manchester, 1995, p. 167). Levi (1944) surmised from his study of the mystery traditions that *Aion* signified a bundle of characteristics, ranging from cosmic timelessness to the effect on human experiencing of the divine, greater *Nous* (pp. 309–310). In this light, perhaps *Aion* is an ideogram whose letters *alpha*, *iota*, *omega*, and *nu* represents its attributes.

Alpha-omega signifies the unbroken wheel of timelessness in the “self-generating and self-devouring” nature of the ancient ouroboros (Jung, 1963, p. 307). Alpha and omega are “symbolic features of the Self,” the archetype of wholeness that reconciles inner and outer conflict (Edinger, 1996, pp. 34, 44). In a mosaic dated to the third century CE, a figure labeled *Aion* stands in the midst of the zodiac’s unbroken wheel, indicating the stature of the eternal “ruler of the universe, without beginning and without end, who was, is, and will be, the immutable and perpetual creator” (Levi, 1944, p. 292). In Gnosticism, *Aion* existed before the beginning and was “the origin of all things” as well as the destroyer of all things, signifying the alpha-omega of eternity (Edinger, 1996, p. 17).

The dot was missing in the ancient form of the Greek letter *iota*, but its esoteric meaning lies in the immanent power of the unmanifested dot or point, which signified in Arabic Gnosticism the perfect, invisible, yet indivisible universe (Jung, 1960a, p. 199). Jung associated the *iota* with the *scintillae* or *lumen naturae*, “tiny conscious phenomena” that hold a “uniting character” and that signal the emergence of the *self* (pp. 198–199).

A cognate for the Greek letter *nu* has not made it into the English lexicon, but a modern Greek seeker of esoteric knowledge related *nu* to *nous*, the mind: reasoning that incorporates sensate, emotional, and intellectual senses (<https://greece.greekreporter.com>). The Neoplatonists considered *Aion* to be the Supreme Principle of a greater or divine *Nous*—an “agglomeration of light,” which fragments into the earthly realm in points of lesser *nous* called *aiones*, *scintillae*, or *lumen naturae* (Casadio, 2005). In ancient Greece, *Aion* was associated with a life force, inner spirit, *daemon*, or *nous* that flows within us throughout our lifespan (Edinger, 1996, p. 18). Manchester (1995) described the personal, felt experience (*nous*) that emanates from the great *Nous* of *Aion* as “an inexhaustible power that seems to well up in oneself,” which relates with “equal immediacy and potency to all time” (p. 167). Plotinus described the great *Nous* of *Aion* as “vivacious” and “boiling with life”; “for the soul that awakens to this presence of Mind, the experience is like a homecoming, a coming into oneself” (p. 168). Jung (1959a) associated *Aion* with *Nous* in his concept of the *self* as an *eidos* behind the “supreme ideas of unity and totality,” which will be felt as a state of grace (p. 34). In the moment of receiving a flash of divine *Nous*, we would do well to remain cognizant of our own embodied *nous* so as to sustain the great *Nous*’ creative spark and vitality in “a kind of divine possession” (pp. 212–213).

Squaring the Circle

Jung (1959a) perceived in the circle, square, and point an “organizing principle” of individuation that he called the “squared circle of the self” (p. 204). Squaring the circle is a lifelong process of differentiating and integrating psychical conflict to a state of coherence and wholeness (pp. 189–190, 224, 239). The squaring of the circle is comparable to the alchemical *vas pellicanicum*, the vessel and agency of transformation that creates an inner readiness to accept the archetype of the *self*—the *quinta essentia* (Jung, 1968, pp. 86–87). The resolution of the tension of the circle (*kronos*) to the square (*Aion*), is suggested in Jung’s (1963) observation that “the one-after-another is in reality a happening of events side-by-side” (p. 169). Edinger (1996) interpreted Jung’s statement as a “psychologically profound notion” of how the nexus of time and nontemporality work toward an ever-crystallizing wholeness (p. 16).

Point and *Kairos*

The *point* of the salt-point signified to Jung (1959a) a higher authority, an “indescribable whole consisting of the sum of conscious and unconscious processes . . . what I have called the self” (p. 189). The point acts like a magnetic force or axis between the everyday *me* and the “original and unalterable character” of the transcendent *self* (p. 190). Where the circle represents *kronos* and the square *Aion*, the point suggests the meaningful flash of *kairos* that Edinger (1996) described as “the right moment, the time of fulfillment” in one’s life (p. 15). Von Franz (1974) noted the etymological connection of *kairos* to the Sanskrit *Kali* (feminine, activating form of time), and *kairos*: “to attach the threads of a web together”; she envisioned *kairos* as an archetypal goddess weaving a dynamic field of meaning across time (pp. 255–256). White (1987) discerned in *kairos* a propitious, relational, fleeting arrow of time that pierces ordinary time if there is sufficient *eros* present in the critical moment (p. 13). In ancient Greek poetry, *kairos* held the sense of finding a critical point of balance between lived experience and an intervening divine presence of inspired wisdom (Kinneavy, 2002, pp. 62–63). *Kairos* has held meaning for millennia of a highly significant instant touching the human experience, a salt-point which calls us to respond and act with greater *nous*.

Kairos in Lived and Transcendent Experience

In Judaic texts, *kairos* indicates critical points when the sacred order intersects with the earth-bound temporal order, creating openings for spiritual transformation of the people, such as the moment when Moses received the commandments (Smith, 2002, p. 55). *Kairos* is found 86 times in the New Testament, most significantly in the manifestation of the eternal Christ spirit in the begotten “Son of Man” (p. 55). Jung (1958a) presented the transformation of the begotten man into the unbegotten Christ as a meaningful interconnection of a “nontemporal, eternal event with a unique historical occurrence” (p. 400). The eternal (*Aion*) “appears in time (*kronos*) as an aperiodic sequence (*kairos*)” (p. 400). Understanding the meaningful juncture of begotten time and unbegotten nontemporality requires the difficult acceptance that “‘time’ is a relative concept” (p. 400). Jung (1959a) cautioned against over-identification with a singular moment emerging from psychically relative spacetime, since that can lead to falling out of sync with the necessary world of time and space (p. 24).

Kairos indicated the razor’s edge of wilderness and *civitas* at least as far back as the Pythagorean school (Kinneavy, 2002, p. 65). Thompson (2002) perceived the spirit of *kairos* in Emerson’s image of America as the land of opportunity, a transcendental yet earthen state that works toward social change and global leadership (p. 187). In one example, the Emancipation Proclamation evoked *kairos* in the meaningful and transformational “providential moment” that Lincoln seized to transcend the mud and mire of ground-in hatred and racism (p. 194). In 1985, South African religious leaders wrote the *Kairos Documents*, which challenged the current practice of nonresistance to the social injustice inherent to the apartheid state. Its first words, “The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived” (Kairos Theologians, p. 1), called for spiritual leaders to seize the moment and to act civically with confidence of divine righteousness.

Kairos was closely associated in antiquity with *krisis*, a vitally important and decisive point when change must be made for better or for worse—in one’s health, a battle,

a life decision, in faith (Sipiora, 2002b, p. 120). The *kairotic* crisis carries a timeless numinosity that magnetically draws the person to its unknown source. A crisis holds opportunity (a personification of *kairos*) for taking action in the right moment (*eukairos*). If one acts when the gods are not present, the result is *kakakairos* (Sipiora, 2002a, p. 4). If we allow a degree of creative freedom to such moments, there arise possibilities of a reciprocal action between the conscious person and the unconscious psyche that creates a third thing striking out of the crisis point, a momentous, numinous flash that will be felt as “grace” (Jung, 1961, p. 335).

Kairos and Metanoia

Kairos has a consort, *Metanoia* [from the Greek *meta*, above and beyond, and *nous*, mind (etymonline.com)], who was often depicted standing behind *kairos* with a bowed head, symbolizing feelings of sorrow and regret for opportunities missed (Meyers, 2011, p. 6). *Metanoia* mediates possibilities for reflective self-awareness of “mind and body, feeling and intellect,” in critical points of our lives (pp. 7–8). For Jung (1956), *metanoia* signified a transformational point, often in midlife, in which some face or facet of the unconscious psyche makes itself known in dreams and visions (p. xxvi). As we hold the disquieting feelings of a *metanoia* and bring to them our insight (the embodied conscience), we find our individuality (Jung, 1964a, pp. 275–276). An inner authority, *metanoia*, emerges in us from the roots of our felt experience and from the heights of “metaphysical command” (Jung, 1964b, pp. 379–380).

There is a kind of cascade effect that begins with not grasping the potential of new horizons and ignoring the inner voices and visions that signal the emotional, mental, and spiritual rebirth of a *metanoia*. In a critical moment of confrontation with uncanny forces (chthonic and transcendent), it is tempting to cling desperately to the safe boundaries of our old attitudes and beliefs. As a result, we may fall back to an earlier stage in life in what Jung (1953b) called a “*regressive restoration of the persona*” (p. 163, emphasis in original). Rejecting emergent opportunities out of fear of mistakes and of the unknown could trigger a collapse of one’s values and ideals. Even the framework of everyday time and space could lose its integrity in an event horizon that signals a potentially catastrophic tumble to the unconscious matrix (p. 163). As we bring perspicacity and sensitivity to our embodied existence and inner spirit, our *nous*, we gain the confidence to seize a numinous moment of *kairos*.

Kairos and the Loss of Unmeasured Time

The spirit of *kairos* is evident in contemporary politics, rhetoric, psychology, and the arts, yet the word *kairos* is not in everyday usage. Smith (2002) correlated a loss of the spirit and meaning of *kairos* in our culture to the absence of an English cognate and a consequential diminished understanding of critical, qualitative moments in our lives (pp. 46–47). Mason (2002) contended that the loss of *kairos* in our vocabulary has eroded the appreciation for qualitative, unmeasured time and for the depths of timelessness in the arts (p. 199). Time has become shallow and quantitative, measured by money, efficiency, and the accumulation of objects that “hedge against our own transience” (p. 199). A world “bereft of the comforting backdrop of timeless ideal certainties” (*Aion*) alienates us from the “shifting horizons” of *kairos*, from our “fuller natures,” and from our place in the chaotic uncertainty of the cosmos (p. 208). As we heighten our embodied awareness of our

experiences, we become more sensitive to the openings of transcendent horizons that are fluid and alive (pp. 208–209).

The flashpoint of *kairos* expresses a transcendent moment out of time and space that relates to the human experience: characteristics of synchronistic phenomena (Jung, 1960a, pp. 229–231), which suggests that synchronicity is the contemporary cognate of *kairos*. Just as noticing a synchronistic event deepens its intrinsic meaning, the apperception of a vital and transcendent moment of *kairos* calls for sensitivity and responsiveness (Sipiora, 2002a, pp. 1–10). Hill (2002) proposed that a moment of *kairos* is felt as a “resonance” with “the elements and the stars, in music, minds, and bodies” (p. 212). Cambray (2009) suggested that resonance is an “attunement among elements or agents in a field . . . [that] can lead to emergent properties,” including synchronistic phenomena (68). Synchronicities emerge from an unknowable, “‘Just-So,’” eternal “*psychic probability*” field that is organized by a meaningful, contingent (chance) yet “universal factor existing from all eternity” (Jung, 1960b, emphasis in original, pp. 515, 519). Isocrates had understood *kairos* as a spirit of responsiveness to ever-changing conditions of the person in the world, which Sipiora (2002a) characterized as an “epistemology of probability” revealing a “contingent universe” (pp. 13–14).

***Kairos* and Discrete Time Crystals**

In this paper, the salt-point symbolizes unpredictable flashes of *kairos* emergent from the disorder of chaos and the substrate of chronological time within *Aion*’s eternal timelessness. In the last few years, physicists have observed new phenomena that they termed *discrete time crystals*, a new dynamic of time created by salt crystals (“Physicists unveil,” 2017, p. 2). The salt crystals are first dissociated to a dynamic, molten ionic solution—a disordered system (Shelton, 2018). The ions are driven in alternating pulses that magnetize them and then “kick” them into a self-organizing yet unpredictable, crystalline lattice of time that is not fused to chronological time or space (Shelton, 2018). The crystals’ dynamic patterning or lattice-making can be accelerated to twice the speed of its pulsing drivers, a characteristic that has not been observed before in any classical or quantum system, which suggested to the researchers an unknown, out-of-system driver (“Physicists unveil,” 2017, p. 2). Although the observation of unpredictable flashes of time is new, quantum physicists expressed confidence that discrete time crystals are not rare events and “can occur in essentially all natural realms” (p. 2).

Including observations of discrete time crystals in a depth-psychological essay does not reduce the salt-point and its meaning to a physical mechanism. Jung (1963) surmised that the quantum world and depth psychology share a “common background” that is “as much physical as psychic and therefore neither, but rather a third thing, a neutral nature which can at most be grasped in hints since in essence it is transcendental” (p. 538). In a letter to a friend, Jung (1973) wrote, “we are crucified between the opposites and delivered up to the torture until the ‘reconciling third’ takes shape” (p. 375). Jung (1960b) intuited in his observations of synchronistic phenomena a continuous creation of a pattern that exists from all eternity, repeats itself sporadically, and is not derived from any known antecedents” (pp. 517–519)—a prescient portrayal of salt time crystals.

Cosmos and Grace

The point is a magnetic “organizing factor” and universal centering power that works to reconcile inner and outer conflict, leading to a state of unity within the totality of the transpersonal *self* (Jung, 1959a, p. 198). The “inner unity” of the *self* is not ethereal but encompasses the whole person and “offers the possibility of an intuitive and emotional experience” (Jung, 1954, p. 314). By a spiraling movement, the point “changes the angular form of the square into a circular one. This [fully-differentiated circle] is the final perfection, the cosmos,” the quintessence, “the most refined, spiritually imaginable unity” (Jung, 1959a, pp. 121, 220). We experience the squaring of the circle in synchronistic, *kairotic* flashes of insight that draw us out of ordinary time and space into harmony with the encompassing timeless unity of *Aion*. Progoff (1973) described the sense of participation with the cosmos as an intense transportation “to a higher dimension of being . . . accompanied by a great emotional affect” that carries “a sense of transcendent validity, authenticity, and essential divinity” (p. 83).

An experience of cosmic timelessness might be felt as a state of grace. Grace in Christian orthodoxy has been projected onto an externalized God while being excluded “from any bond with nature” (Rahner, 1955, pp. 361–362). God grants grace through the Holy Spirit as a *metanoia*, glossed as repentance for earthly sins (p. 361). In contrast, Jung (1964a) interpreted *metanoia* as a “rebirth of spirit” that works through “trusting [our] inner experience,” our embodied, psychical life (p. 276). The marriage of spirit and nature in the presence of grace can be found in many older cultures and spiritual traditions. In religions of India, grace radiates from a transcendent deity who reposes in nature and who participates in our lives through “*prasannam jnanam*,” clear insight (Masson-Oursel, 1955, p. 11–12). The Eleusinian initiation mysteries imbued grace with the joys and sorrows of the realms of body and earth as well as a rebirth and transcendence of the spirit (Wili, 1955, p. 83). The understanding of grace (*yugen*) in the Japanese Shinto tradition suggests that as we participate imaginatively in the world of nature (through a creative discipline), a transcendent moment of stillness is possible when “tears well uncontrollably” (Parkes & Loughnane, 2005, sec. 5). Jung (1958c) proposed that although the gifts of grace, faith, hope, love, and understanding cannot be “taught nor learned, neither given nor taken, neither withheld nor earned,” we draw closer to these essences as we “commit to ourselves with our whole being” (pp. 331–332). Certain techniques promote the transformational quality of grace, including yoga and dialogue with our “inner friend of the soul,” although grace is also a silent presence of *otherness* who “transforms what is mortal in me to what is immortal” (Jung, 1959d, pp. 129, 131–132, 134). Jung (1961) recalled a moment in his youth in which he felt the presence of a supreme authority within himself, an experience that brought him to a state of grace and a feeling of “unutterable bliss” (pp. 39–40). The experience of grace does not come out of *logos* but is a numinous experience of one’s own natural being, and “then and then only is it convincing” (pp. 335–336).

Conclusion

This essay has explored the salt-point and its component symbols of circle, square, and point. Each image carries a depth of meaning in our participation with five aspects of time as they relate to the process of individuation. In the timeless disorder or *solutio* of chaos, we experience an uneasy fragmenting in body and psyche as well as an inspirational spark of a fresh perspective. The orderly cycles of time of *kronos* and the bonds of necessity help

us to contain our inner chaos, perhaps overly so, calling for a revitalizing return to our depths. Time and necessity ground us in reality and sustain the resolution of inner and outer conflict, symbolized in the square and *Aion*. The eventual embodied connection with the eternal timelessness of *Aion* is realized fully in the differentiated timelessness of cosmos, the *quinta essentia* that we experience as grace. Each aspect of time and timelessness is punctuated with meaningful, resonant sparks of *kairos* that emerge in numinous moments and draw us into our individuation. The resonance we feel with the world in such moments may one day extend to the cosmos.

Contributor

Susan J. Courtney, PhD in depth psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute, writes as a means to explore places where psyche and the natural world fuse in a dissociable *solutio*. She incorporates Jungian studies with quantum probability and entanglement through an intuitive appreciation of the *anima mundi* as a lived experience.

Notes

¹ *Numinous* in Jungian thinking indicates a *scintilla* of insight or consciousness shining out of the collective psyche that indicates the emergence of the individuated *self* (Edinger, 1995, p. 60).

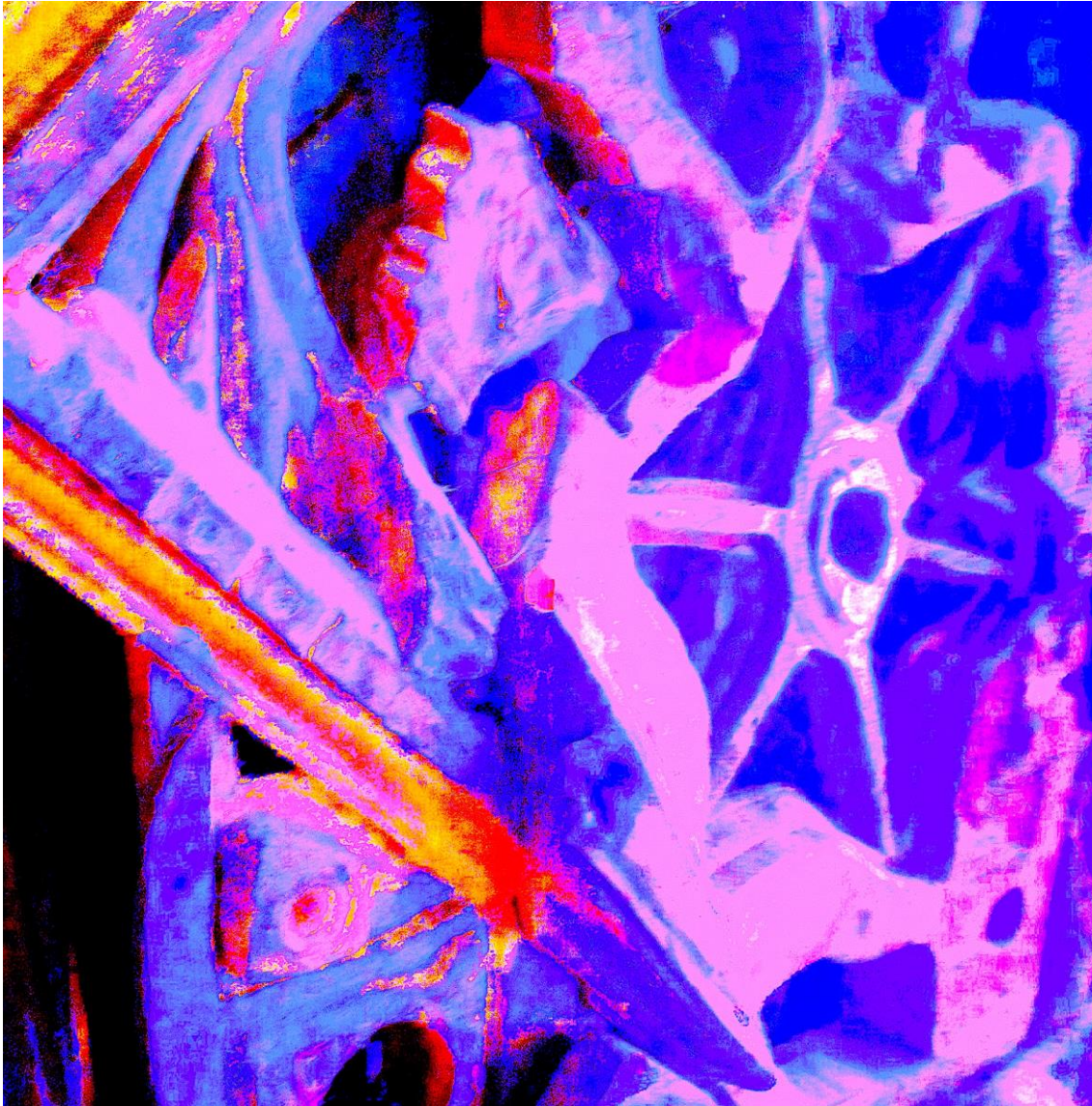
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“Dawn Fire” by John Dotson

Mother Mountain, Grandmother River

Cacky Mellor

The gentle loving caress of the cloud's shadow on Mountain—
quenching Her arid stalwart stance.
It is ok to rest. You are not alone.

The wind carries away the cloud, You still stand anchoring the land, reaching for the sky.
Transmit the knowing patience of time.
Teach me—I am as small as an ant at your feet.
Mother Mountain reminds me, Ant holds the medicine of strength and community.

What offense I now take to the cultural mission to “move mountains.”
What blasphemy to uproot such sacred teachers!
This Faustian overreach feels an assault of the patriarchy...
No. Embracing the Divine Feminine, I feel called to shape the world as Grandmother River.

Winding through the Rockies, there are moments I cannot tell the direction the Colorado River flows.
One place, She seems a mile wide... 20 minutes down the road, She is a small trickle of a creek.
Her patient persistence never wavers.
This beautiful and powerful Grandmother carved the Grand Canyon with her softness—
molding the land to her curves, she coquettishly exposes what time tried to burry.
With gentle ferocity, she sings, “Sweet river your way to freedom.”

From Mother Mountain, Grandmother River—a forgotten quality of time emerges.
Humbly, I take in the wisdom They so willingly offer to all who will listen.
I step forward, this is my Mother Line.



“Maternal Roots” by Heather Taylor-Zimmerman

Her “Symbols of the Desert”: An Emerging Alchemical Impression in the Bone Paintings of Georgia O’Keeffe

Lisa A. Pounders

Abstract: Employing C. G. Jung’s theories of the transformative nature of the unconscious in collaboration with his understanding of alchemy, this paper analyzes a number of Georgia O’Keeffe’s paintings featuring bones that were created during a 15-year period following her introduction to northern New Mexico. The analysis circulates among events from O’Keeffe’s life, the works of art themselves, and potential associations to alchemical concepts. The intention is to illuminate and deepen not only an appreciation of the artist’s visionary work but also an understanding of what alchemy has in common with Jung’s theories regarding psychological transformation. More broadly, the paper suggests that an ongoing engagement with art-making is a practice that can also function as an alchemical transmitter “of unconscious contents that are seeking expression” (Jung, 1938/1967, p. 82). Put another way, an attentiveness to creating works of art has the potential to enable the emergence of symbolic manifestations from the unconscious that evoke and facilitate psychological development

Keywords: C. G. Jung, Georgia O’Keeffe, alchemy, art, art-making, individuation, bones.

When interviewed at the age of 89, the American modernist painter Georgia O’Keeffe said of northern New Mexico, “As soon as I saw it that was my country. I’d never seen anything like it before but it fitted to me exactly” (Adato, 2003). It was 1929 when she first saw “her country.” Art historian Jan Garden Castro (1985) remarked that as a result of O’Keeffe’s affinity for New Mexico her “paintings of the next ten years were unprecedented in the history of art. Her representations of hills, bones, crosses and adobe churches were an original infusion into the still-life and Post-Impressionist traditions that O’Keeffe had studied” (p. 83). One of O’Keeffe’s biographers, Roxana Robinson (1989), emphasized that “in the vast sweep of the New Mexican views” O’Keeffe found the sense of “limitlessness” as well as the artistic and emotional liberation she was craving. This discovery in turn “allowed her sense of self to expand infinitely, independent yet attached to something larger than the self.” The vastness of the landscape, its brilliant colors and the freedom and solitude it inspired, offered the painter “a supreme sense of transcendence . . . [that] would remain thereafter the central source of elemental strength” (p. 361). Apparently, O’Keeffe’s introduction to New Mexico was a catalyst that transformed and shaped the rest of her work and life.

When such a monumental shift occurs in an artist, a transformation that touches both life and work, does the art-making itself contribute to the development? In other words, how might O’Keeffe’s artistic evolution, including content choices and implementation, have informed her psychological development and vice versa? This paper

will respond to these questions from the perspective of C. G. Jung's theories of the transformative nature of the unconscious in collaboration with his understanding of alchemy. Its focus is on the content and depiction of images, the visual aspects of the paintings, rather than the process of painting itself. Accordingly, a number of O'Keeffe's paintings featuring bones, and created during a 15-year period following her introduction to northern New Mexico, are analyzed. The analysis circulates among events from O'Keeffe's life, the works of art themselves, and potential associations to alchemical concepts. The intention is to illuminate and deepen not only an appreciation of the artist's visionary work but also an understanding of what alchemy has in common with Jung's theories regarding psychological transformation. More broadly, the paper suggests that an ongoing engagement with art-making is a practice that can also function as an alchemical transmitter "of unconscious contents that are seeking expression" (Jung, 1938/1967b, p. 82). Put another way, an attentiveness to creating works of art has the potential to enable the emergence of symbolic manifestations from the unconscious that evoke and facilitate psychological development.

A Brief Introduction to Jung and Alchemy

For Jung, alchemy was more than an archaic precursor to chemistry. Essentially, he saw in the alchemists' elaborate material operations a metaphorical enactment of unconscious principles and attitudes that arise during a psychological transformative experience. Central to understanding Jung's theories, including those concerning alchemy, is the idea that the unconscious consists of both personal and collective or universal elements. He said that "the alchemist projected what I have called the process of individuation into the phenomena of chemical change" (Jung, 1944/1968b, p. 482). In other words, when the alchemists were performing and observing their complicated experiments—an effort intended to redeem the spirit held within the material substance in order to produce the sought for gold/*lapis*/philosophers' stone—they were at the same time working upon "an interior or psychic life that was [their] own" (p. 245). This idea is important because integral to Jung's (1939/1968a) notion of the process of *individuation*—his term for an attentive engagement with psychological development—is establishing a connection between consciousness and the unconscious. Crucially, the individuation process entails developing a relationship, dialogue, or reckoning with the presence of things unknown, repressed, or somehow forgotten (p. 279). That said, the degree to which individuation is conscious may vary, since Jung understood that a goal-oriented urge to psychologically develop is ubiquitous and inherent to the autonomous nature of the unconscious. He emphasized that individuation is a process within the psyche that "seeks its own goal independently of external factors" (Jung, 1944/1968b, p. 5). Put another way, individuation occurs due to a unifying impulse within us that forges a relationship between consciousness and the unconscious in order for psyche to know itself better.

Jung (1961/1989) collected information about alchemy throughout his adult life. However, his research on the subject did not become a focus until after 1928 when he received a copy of an ancient Chinese alchemical treatise, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, from his friend the sinologist Richard Wilhelm (p. 204). At that time, Jung was still developing *The Red Book*, his creative manuscript corpus consisting of texts and paintings representing what he described as a "confrontation with the unconscious" (p. 170). Since 1912, this imaginal work had facilitated Jung's exploration of the deep reaches of his own

psyche and seeded many of his theories including those concerned with spirituality, creativity, and individuation. In *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung recognized a stark similarity to his own individuating experiences recorded through *The Red Book* (pp. 170–199). This recognition led Jung to understand that alchemists’ operations personified and imaginably addressed unconscious contents in order to phenomenologically make real a transformative experience of the psyche. He further concluded that the alchemical texts documenting these efforts, which spanned over 1700 years of history, were full of *symbols*—imaginal portals representing communication from the unconscious in its effort to relate what is unknowable. Effectively, the texts portrayed recurring motifs and ancient patterns related to psychological development.

After he made the connection between alchemy and psychology, Jung (1961/1989, 2009) stopped work on *The Red Book* and set himself to unpacking alchemy’s history and its relationship to his ideas. As a result, he produced two books on the subject, *Psychology and Alchemy* (1944/1968b) and *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1955–56/1970), as well as a number of essays that eventually became volume 13 of *The Collected Works*, titled *Alchemical Studies* (1967). At the end of *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, his “last great work . . . [that] gives a final account of his lengthy researches into alchemy” (Read, Fordham, Adler, & McGuire, 1970, p. v), Jung (1955–56/1970) asserted that alchemy had “performed for [him] the great and invaluable service of providing material in which [his] experience could find sufficient room” thus enabling him to describe more fully the essential nature of the process of individuation (p. 556). In essence, alchemy—due to its historical presence, imaginative and symbolic contents, and spiritual associations—was integral to his development of a psychology that values the *experience* of phenomena (be they inner or outer manifestations) and the unconscious impulse to find purpose and meaning in life.

Following Jung, analytical psychologist and scholar Edward F. Edinger (1994) explained that “alchemical writings are complex, confused, and even chaotic,” which suggests that even the recording of the work or *opus* had a hand to play in the process. Despite this, he concluded that “the basic scheme of the *opus* is quite simple,” and he summarized it as follows:

The purpose is to create a transcendent, miraculous substance, which is variously symbolized as the Philosophers’ Stone, The Elixir of Life, or the universal medicine. The procedure is, first, to find the suitable material, the so-called *prima materia*, and then to subject it to a series of operations that will turn it into the Philosophers’ Stone. (p. 9)

The alchemical transformative process, then, is generally one of manifesting a mysterious superior/perfected substance from some base material through a series of prescribed complex procedures. Whereas alchemists tend to follow this larger pattern, the details of their “operations” are ultimately as unique as the individual.

Prima Materia

It is often difficult to identify how the work of alchemy begins since “the alchemists reiterate that the *opus* proceeds from the one and leads back to the one” (Jung, 1944/1968b, p. 293). In other words, the “one” at the beginning, known as the *prima materia*, is integral to and essentially the same as the end result (philosophers’ stone/gold/lapis). Throughout the process, it is the substance or form that the alchemists’ work focused on. Ancient

alchemical texts refer to the *prima materia* as ubiquitous, of great inward value, yet at the same time vile, despised, and rejected; both multiple and singular, finite and infinite, without definite boundaries, limits or form (Edinger, 1994, p. 12). Effectively, it is “impossible” to be specific about what this base material is, “because the projection emanates from the individual and is consequently different in each case” (Jung, 1944/1968b, p. 317). That is, the *prima materia* is unique in each case because the matter being worked represents something attributable to the alchemist’s life. Psychologically speaking, the *prima materia* is whatever the psyche brings, an essential unconscious element that seeks attention and conscious integration in order for a sense of unity to be born and prevail.

To suggest that there is an emerging alchemical impression in Georgia O’Keeffe’s work in connection with New Mexico requires, then, the identification of her *prima materia*. Going forward, I propose that it arose out of O’Keeffe’s desire to pursue artistic independence coupled with tension from maintaining a close relationship with her husband.

By 1929, 42-year-old O’Keeffe had tried several roles: artist, artist model, mistress, wife, nurse, gardener, designer, and gallery assistant (Castro, 1985, p. 74). Though her paintings were beginning to garner strong public support, she was still dependent on her husband—the well-known photographer and gallery owner, Alfred Stieglitz—for financial and emotional support. Her first extended visit to the desert country of northern New Mexico was in April 1929 at the invitation of Mabel Dodge Luhan—a wealthy patron of the arts who lived near the artist community of Taos, New Mexico. For the previous eleven years O’Keeffe had spent her summers in upstate New York at Lake George, Stieglitz’s family’s summer home. Though she was initially captivated by the low, rolling, perpetually green mountains surrounding Lake George, that view now felt oppressive and creatively dull (Robinson, 1989, p. 326).

When she first arrived in Taos, O’Keeffe was immediately enamored with the vast, bright, and evocative landscape. In a letter to her sister Catherine, she wrote, “I am West again and it is as fine as I remember it—maybe finer—there is nothing to say about it except the fact that for me it is the only place” (Robinson, 1989, p. 326). On this initial trip, she remained for four months at Mabel’s Taos ranch exploring and painting. She stayed there again the following summer. Initially intrigued and invigorated by Mabel and her social entourage, O’Keeffe later realized that in order to paint she required more solitude and less distraction than the artist community at Taos afforded. Therefore, in the summer of 1931 she rented a small cottage for herself in the Rio Grande valley west of Taos in the quiet village of Alcalde.

From the beginning, an attraction to and curiosity about the northern New Mexico desert influenced O’Keeffe’s work. She began exploring new motifs that reflected New Mexico’s cultural traditions and slowly felt her way into depicting the essence of the landscape (Benke, 1995, p. 56). During the summer of 1929 her creative process included roaming the countryside and picking up artifacts—feathers, stones, fossilized sea shells, and bones. She also learned how to drive and bought her first Ford, which enabled her to explore the territory on her own as well as sketch and paint the landscape in situ (Castro, 1985, p. 82).

However, despite the invigoration she felt during her initial summer visits to New Mexico, this time period also marked a sharp decline in relations with her husband. Though

they shared the same passion for art, they differed in how they fueled that artistic expression. Stieglitz thrived in the comfort of his New York social circle, boxy urban spaces, and a fixed familiar routine. In contrast, O’Keeffe sought wide-open spaces, solitude, and the opportunity for spontaneous exploration. In addition, she was beginning to be recognized as an artist in her own right, apart from the reputation of her well-known husband. As a result, she became more independent and started making her own decisions about where to show her work and for whom she wanted to paint. This newfound autonomy left Stieglitz out of the process more and more, which was apparently unsettling since he was used to being seen as the benevolent mentor, advisor, and publicist (Lisle, 1980/1986, p. 211). Just prior to O’Keeffe’s first trip to New Mexico, Stieglitz developed an intimate relationship with Dorothy Norman—a wealthy and significantly younger¹ married woman who eventually helped finance and run his gallery (Robinson, 1989, pp. 318–319). Reputedly, O’Keeffe was not happy with the Stieglitz/Norman relationship and soon became “restless and uninspired” (Castro, 1985, p. 90). Whereas it was evident that she deeply loved her husband and felt committed to him as a wife, Stieglitz’s affair with Norman, coupled with a growing desire for creative independence, fostered a gnawing conflict within O’Keeffe (Lisle 1980/1986; Castro, 1985; Robinson, 1989). Ultimately, as the emotional landscape in New York became more tense, “Georgia set out to find a new physical one” (Robinson, 1989, p. 319).

O’Keeffe started making bone paintings after her introduction to New Mexico. She called the sun-bleached bones she collected when rambling the high-desert landscape her “symbols of the desert.” She said:

To me they are as beautiful as anything I know. . . . The bones seem to cut sharply to the center of something that is keenly alive on the desert even tho’ it is vast and empty and untouchable—and knows no kindness with all its beauty. (Bry & Calloway, 1989, p. 3)

Apparently for O’Keeffe, the bones represented both the allure and beauty of the wide-open liberating spaces of the New Mexican desert as well as its contrasting sense of desolation and wildness. In addition, I propose that another way to view the bones is as an embodiment of O’Keeffe’s *prima materia*—objects that assumed the projection of her inner state. Applying this Jungian perspective, we can read the bone paintings as portraying stages of her psychological development as well as demonstrating, in effect, a form of alchemical work.

Nigredo

O’Keeffe spoke about the bones as her “symbols of the desert” in 1939, ten years after the discovery of *her country*. Although she created paintings during that first trip to northern New Mexico, the first bone paintings were actually produced back in Lake George, New York. They are studio pieces that feature bones she shipped back during her initial New Mexico visits. In these paintings, the bones figure prominently against an ambiguous abstract background of geometric panels of color, often with details that suggest fabric. One of the first bone paintings, *Thigh Bone with Black Stripe* (Figure 1), is dated 1930. Three others follow in 1931: *Horse’s Skull with White Rose*, *Cow’s Skull with Calico Roses*, as well as the “splendid and monumental” (Robinson, 1989, p. 366) *Cow’s Skull—Red, White, and Blue* (Figure 2).

The center background in these paintings features a narrow black vertical band. Robinson (1989) reported that, “as early as 1919, O’Keeffe had used the image of a fissure in the center of the painting, a narrow crack of vulnerability that splits the composition centrally” (p. 456). In each of these bone paintings, O’Keeffe’s symbol of the desert appears to be spanning this vulnerability, as if to transcend the apparent darkness or not be pulled into its depths. *Cow’s Skull—Red, White, and Blue* in particular has a very dynamic and charged feel, as if resisting the dark fissure. Whereas the other three bone paintings feature only shades of black, white, and grey, this painting has the bleached cow skull set against a blue receding background framed on either side by vertical red bands.



Figure 1. *Thigh Bone with Black Stripe*, 1930, oil on canvas, 30 x 16 inches, private collection.



Figure 2. *Cow’s Skull—Red, White, and Blue*, 1931, oil on canvas, 39 7/8 x 35 7/8 inches, the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

From an alchemical perspective, the center black bands suggest the presence of a *nigredo* element. The *nigredo* or blackness is generally encountered in the initial phase of an alchemical *opus*. According to the alchemists’ texts, it may already be present “as a quality in the *prima materia*” or is produced by the practitioner’s operations (Jung, 1944/1968b, p. 230). Psychologically speaking, this blackening phase is tied to the “dark realm of the unknown” (p. 336), one’s unconscious aspects. Jung likened it to the hero’s descent into Hades (pp. 335–336). Classically, hero myths portray a male figure choosing a perilous journey to combat and overcome obstacles. That said, if we take Robinson’s view, then the black bands in O’Keeffe’s paintings symbolize vulnerability. This interpretation implies a defensive energy associated with the susceptibility to being harmed—subjected to rather than provoking an attack. Therefore, I propose that O’Keeffe’s *nigredo* bands mythically bring to mind not the hero’s journey but rather

Persephone's forced descent to the underworld. According to that myth, Persephone, a female goddess figure, is taken against her will by Hades to the realm of the dead. There, she becomes Hades bride and queen of the underworld. This myth suggests a relational quality in the *nigredo*.

As in ancient texts where often a combination of alchemical ideas is represented at once (Edinger, 1994, p. 51), the stark white skulls in the above paintings also suggest a *mortificatio* operation and the *albedo* phase. As an alchemical operation, a *mortificatio* or deadening event is literally associated with killing. It is a death experience that is undertaken in the *nigredo* phase and importantly leads to rebirth (p. 147). Yet, psychologically, it is often "experienced as defeat and failure" (p. 172). *Albedo* is the whitening stage in alchemy that usually follows *nigredo*—a transformation of the blackness through some sort of purification process (p. 26). Psychologically, these alchemical ideas describe a process of becoming aware of, dealing with, and then releasing negative qualities. The process is facilitated through a conscious differentiation of emerging unconscious prompts and images. If this perspective is applied to the above paintings, then it appears that O'Keeffe's psyche was attempting to mark and thereby communicate that her outer experience of New Mexico was significant for negotiating and transforming her current inner turmoil.

Interestingly in 1932, when she was back in New York, and against Stieglitz's wishes, O'Keeffe applied for and was one of several artists awarded a commission to paint a mural in the new Radio City Music Hall (Castro, 1985, p. 94). Though the building was slated to open in December, the project was fraught with delays. As a result, artists were not admitted into the building to work until November. When O'Keeffe arrived to start her mural, the plaster wall was not dry enough, and her canvas would not adhere correctly. She insisted that this was a problem and chose to withdraw (Robinson, 1989, pp. 378–379). Robinson suggested that O'Keeffe could not endure the idea of a public artistic failure along with the added strain that her attempt at artistic independence had put on the relationship with her husband (p. 381). Shortly after this event, O'Keeffe suffered a nervous breakdown and on February 1, 1933 was admitted to Doctors Hospital in New York for psychoneurosis (p. 385). She remained in the hospital for two months and afterward returned to Lake George, New York for the next year to recover. Though a disturbing event, this *nigredo* illness also proved to be a transformative catalyst.

By the end of 1933, as a result of much rest and long stretches of time alone, O'Keeffe's health began to return. During her convalescence she evaluated just what she needed to survive. Part of her recovery included coming to terms with her feelings toward her husband, and ultimately their relationship was put on surer footing (Robinson, 1989, p. 411). However, her strongest conviction was for herself, to take charge of attending to her own needs. In a letter to Jean Toomer, a close friend at that time, she wrote:

If the past year or two has taught me anything it is that my plot of earth must be tended with absurd care—by myself first—and if second by someone else, it must be with absolute trust . . . it seems it would be very difficult for me to live were it wrecked again just now. (p. 400)

Sublimatio

In the spring of 1934 O’Keeffe was painting again, and that summer she returned to New Mexico. She arrived in June with the intention of staying once again in the village of Alcalde. But soon after her arrival, a friend introduced her to Ghost Ranch, a dude ranch situated twelve miles north of the village of Abiquiu on the eastern edge of the Jemez Mountains. She adopted the place on sight and immediately took up residence there (Robinson, 1989, p. 408). The landscape surrounding Ghost Ranch apparently provided O’Keeffe with everything she was looking for. Robinson said that “the singing sky, the radiant cliffs, and the oblique profile of the Pederal [mountain] all spoke to her, and the message was one she wanted to hear. It was her landscape” (p. 409). Here she began a summer routine that would last a decade, and later, after Stieglitz died, O’Keeffe chose Ghost Ranch and the village of Abiquiu as her permanent home.

O’Keeffe’s return to New Mexico also provoked a change in the bone paintings. No longer a sort of abstract still life, the bones now hovered over a landscape, became an animating presence suspended against the background of a desert panorama featuring mostly sky. These paintings strongly suggest the alchemical *sublimatio*—a phase related to air. For the alchemists, it represented “an elevating process whereby a low substance is translated into a higher form by an ascending movement.” Psychologically, the *sublimatio* is about gaining objectivity by getting above the problem and initiating a positive detachment from a situation. It is an energetic ascent removing one from the “confining entanglement of immediate, earthy existence and its concrete, personal particulars” (Edinger, 1994, pp. 117–118).

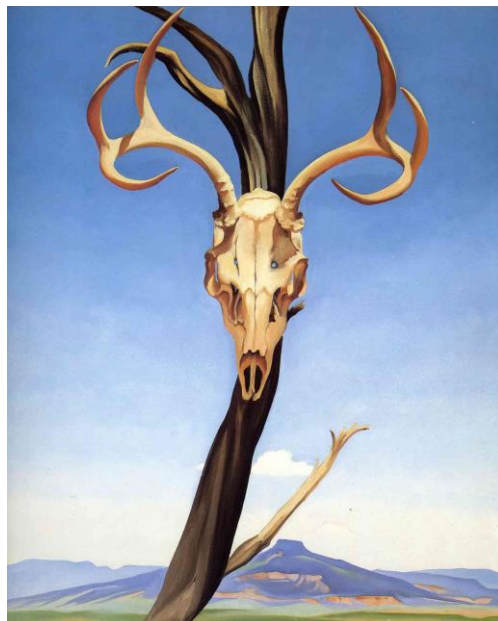


Figure 3. *Summer Days*, 1936, oil on canvas, 36 x 30 inches, collection of Calvin Klein.

Figure 4. *Deer's Skull with Pederal*, 1936, oil on canvas, 36 x 30 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

In 1936, one such painting, *Summer Days* (Figure 3), features a deer skull with antlers hovering over soft red hills that resemble those near her adobe house at Ghost Ranch. Just above the hills are patches of blue sky dwarfed by a rising formation of clouds that, in the distance, hint of a thunderstorm. Is the storm coming or receding? It is hard to tell, and yet had O’Keeffe not just come through a personal storm? Just below the skull’s nose floats a small bouquet of desert wildflowers, like an offering at a shrine. Once again, the bare skull evokes the idea of death. However, here death is not associated with darkness but appears as a divine or spiritual presence ritually venerated by the bouquet. In this sense, *Summer Days* suggests “the ultimate sublimatio whereby the soul is separated from the body” (Edinger, 1994, p. 122). Whereas the hovering indicates the capacity of human consciousness to elevate itself above the instinctual sphere, the distinctiveness of the bare skull and flowers also reflects “the final translation into eternity of that which has been created in time” (p. 140). In other words, this image illustrates sublimatio as a transformative experience whereby the psyche gains knowledge of itself as immortal or having a timeless connection to all things and in contrast to an ego-centered perspective bound or weighted down by the strictures of material reality (pp. 128–129).

In another 1936 painting, *Deer Skull with Pedernal* (Figure 4), the same skull is featured. Represented in the lower background, painted in shades of blue, is the Pedernal, the flat-topped mesa-like mountain as viewed from the front porch of O’Keeffe’s Ghost Ranch house². In this painting, the deer skull appears to be hung on a large vertical blackened snag. Compared with *Summer Days*, the sun-bleached skull in *Deer Skull with Pedernal* is painted in shades of beige rather than white and therefore seems less otherworldly, more earthly than divine. The black snag brings in O’Keeffe’s *nigredo* vulnerability once again—although here it is altered and perhaps even reconciled by being cast in an earthly shape. These two paintings created in the same year alchemically suggest a moving back and forth between heaven and earth, between a spirit-soul objectivity and an attachment to the embodied necessities of the physical world. They perhaps also reflect O’Keeffe’s tangible and emotional movements between New Mexico and New York.

By the close of the 1930s, O’Keeffe had begun to establish herself and her professional image separate from her famous husband and his publicizing of her and her work. Her trips to New Mexico were no longer a mere retreat or vacation from life with Stieglitz in New York. She now seemed to understand that her art and her existence depended upon extended time spent on her own in the desert of northern New Mexico. The several hovering skull paintings from 1936 to 1937 were part of a period in which she gained clarity and objectivity. O’Keeffe intentionally defined who she wanted to be, how she wanted the world to see her, and where she wanted to live. Before this, she had been governed by Stieglitz’s life and cultural lens. Now, “the center of Georgia’s life” was no longer with him nor in the urban landscapes of New York (Robinson, 1989, p. 440).

Coniunctio

Now that O’Keeffe was spending longer stretches of time each year in New Mexico, the bone paintings evolved once again. “In the summer of 1943 O’Keeffe found a perfect [cow’s] pelvis bone” (Robinson, 1989, p. 458). Soon after she began a series of striking near-abstract paintings that feature a close-up view of the pelvis with the sky peeking

through the holes—as if it was held up to one’s face like a mask. In contrast to what I have called the *sublimatio* bone paintings from the late 1930s in which the skulls appeared as a spiritual other floating upwards, O’Keeffe’s pelvis bone paintings are intimate pieces. They essentially bring the viewer into close relationship with her “symbols of the desert.” That is, in the pelvis paintings, the viewer and viewed object are brought together, united, as if the object’s mystery were one’s own. Robinson (1989) suggested that the “imaginative manipulation of scale” in these pieces “was psychologically important” because it allowed O’Keeffe “to offer a visually insignificant object as one of great psychological significance. . . . The [compositional] format in its banishment of the middle ground proclaimed the dream quality of the image” (p. 459). Moreover, she said that these paintings “combine echoes of both birth and infinity” (p. 460). Such comments speak to the symbolic quality of the paintings. Overall, these works appear to symbolize a psychological recognition or celebration of the uniting of O’Keeffe’s inner understanding of herself, including her creative vision, with an embodied sense of belonging to something larger, inspired by the New Mexican desert landscape.



Figure 5. *Pelvis IV*, 1944, oil on board, 36 x 40 inches, private collection.

Figure 6. *Pelvis Series—Red with Yellow*, 1945, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches, Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe.

Several of the paintings in O’Keeffe’s pelvis series feature the bleached white of the pelvis bone interrupted by a dominant, central, and egg-shaped patch of sharp blue. “The form of the pelvis, severe and stark, is at once abstract and realistic” (p. 460). In at least one painting, *Pelvis IV* (Figure 5), within the egg shape is the faint circle of a nearly full moon. The egg shape and the moon, or *Luna* figure, are symbols often found in alchemical literature and illustrations. For alchemists, the egg was associated with the *prima materia*, *Mercurius* (a mythological personification of the spirit in matter), the alchemical vessel itself, and the *anima mundi* or world soul (Jung, 1943/1967a, p. 218). The egg symbolically represented the result of the alchemists’ material operations and at the same time the alchemical container (Jung, 1938/1967b, p. 87). Thus, the egg (like the figure of *Mercurius*) can paradoxically represent the transformative process, the material being transformed, and the resulting unity that emerges (Jung, 1944/1968b, p. 217).

Moreover, it implies the presence of the earth mother or feminine divine as it holds the seeds of all life.

The alchemical figures of *Luna* (moon) and her counterpart *Sol* (sun) symbolically and historically represent feminine and masculine principles of consciousness—a pair of opposites. *Sol*, as the masculine principle, is seemingly all light, like the sun, seeking to illuminate, see, and differentiate everything. It corresponds with the ego or light of consciousness and inherently calls forth the shadow: “light without and darkness within” (Jung, 1955–56/1970, p. 108). *Luna* as the feminine principle is the milder, damp, relating, cooler light of the moon, therefore naturally associated with darkness and the unconscious. Together and separately they also represent aspects of *Mercurius*. In Jungian terms the *Luna/Sol* pairing symbolizes the unification of psyche once a relationship is established between consciousness and the unconscious. The moon is also indicative of the water of life, the alchemical *aqua permanens* as the divine and miraculous water that prompts and promotes the dynamic of transformation (p. 99). “From *Luna* comes the *aqua Mercurialis* or *aqua permanens*; with her moisture, like *Mercurius*, she brings the slain dragon to life” (p. 140), which symbolizes the essence of alchemy’s death and rebirth cycle.

When viewed in light of these alchemical principles, *Pelvis IV* suggests an unconscious representation of a *sublimatio* leading to a *unio mentalis coniunctio*—an initial spiritual union. Such a union represents a psychological standpoint occurring after the soul (consciousness) and spirit (the unconscious), having differentiated themselves from the body and instincts, come back into relationship with the physical world. Whereas spirit animates the soul, the soul animates and is called to the body. After spirit and soul are united, the arduous task of bringing the spirit-soul connection back into relationship with the body begins. Insights gained from the *unio mentalis*—in other words, the realized spirit/soul connection—must be made real in the embodied expression of everyday life. This event is the rebirth of an enlarged consciousness after the *mortificatio*, a “reanimation . . . reuniting the soul with the ‘inanimate’ body” (Jung, 1955–56/1970, p. 521). What emerges is a new conscious understanding of the connection between psyche and one’s physical reality—the world of the body. More specifically, in Jungian terms this alchemical *coniunctio* represents the integration of unconscious elements into consciousness. It conjures an awareness of how the spirit of the unconscious moving through the organ of psyche seeks the goal of reuniting with the physical aspects of the *unus mundus*.

In 1945, the year before Stieglitz died, O’Keeffe painted the significant *Pelvis Series—Red with Yellow* (Figure 6). This painting was different from all the other pelvis pieces in that she painted the sinuous bone in scarlet-red paint, and the central egg-shaped patch that usually represented a blue sky in yellow or gold. In effect, the image looks like a sun-colored egg (or possibly a sun in the shape of an egg) surrounded by a reddened abstract contouring object seen at close range. Alchemically speaking, we appear to be looking at a symbolic expression of the *rubedo*—the reddening and often third phase of an *opus*—in conjunction with the resulting gold or *lapis philosophorum* (philosophers’ stone). For the alchemists, the *lapis* paradoxically stood for both the *prima materia* and the end result of their work. Through their art, they sought the perfection of nature and the divine, what they believed was the latent or “hidden state” of the *lapis* (Jung, 1944/1968b, pp. 325–327).

In addition to the above qualities, we can also view *Pelvis Series—Red with Yellow* as reflecting the final alchemical stage of the *coniunctio*. Alchemists referred to this as “the union of the whole [person] with the *unus mundus* [one world]” (Jung, 1955–56/1970, p. 534). Put another way, the *coniunctio* symbolized the embodied knowledge and expression of how one’s existence is simultaneously finite and infinite. It is a mystical union with “the Unknown beyond our experience,” not as a *participation mystique* or a return to the primal fusion with nature, but rather as an awareness of being at once differentiated from yet intrinsically a part of all things (p. 537). In Jungian psychological terms, it is the potential for “a synthesis of the conscious with the unconscious” (p. 539), the emergence of a new integrative and overriding perspective

After Stieglitz died in 1946, O’Keeffe spent three years settling his estate and in 1949 moved full-time to her final home in northern New Mexico. If an affinity for that desert landscape had evoked an alchemical transformative process for O’Keeffe, as I have argued, then perhaps in 1945 the approaching realization of Stieglitz’s death, and with it her final separation from the life he had represented in New York, found a culminating and transformative expression in *Pelvis Series—Red with Yellow*.

Conclusion

When she was in her late eighties Georgia O’Keeffe wrote, “I find . . . I have painted my life—things happening in my life—without knowing” (Peters, 1999, p. 193). Although she refused to make a connection between her life and the images she painted at the time they were created, in retrospect it was apparent even to her that the paintings were autobiographical on some level. When introduced to northern New Mexico, O’Keeffe became fascinated by the objects she found in the desert. Soon after, she began collecting and painting the sun-bleached bones that were, for her, symbols of that landscape. In the January 18, 1936 issue of *The New Yorker*, art critic Lewis Mumford wrote about the first showing of her early bone paintings:

Mid the throng of good shows that have opened the new year, that of Georgia O’Keeffe at An American Place- stands out . . . every painting is a chapter in her autobiography, and yet the revelation is so cunningly made that it probably eludes her own conscious appraisal. As soon as one realizes that she is neither a botanist who looks at flowers through a magnifying glass nor a comparative anatomist who collects the skulls of the North American desert fauna, one is brought face to face with the real problem. What has she lived through? And what do these turkey feathers and bare hills and bleached bones convey in terms of one’s own experience? (Castro, 1985, pp. 114–115)

As if to answer Mumford’s questions herself, O’Keeffe’s bone paintings evolved over a 15-year span, as did her ways of being and living.

In this paper I proposed that one way to view O’Keeffe’s enigmatic bone paintings are as unique alchemical expressions evoking universal patterns of transformative psychological development. Although O’Keeffe and Jung were contemporaries, their lives having overlapped by 74 years³, there is no historical evidence to suggest that they ever met⁴, or that O’Keeffe had any interest in alchemy. However, by applying Jung’s view of alchemy as a perspective, it seems apparent that O’Keeffe’s unconscious was

transformatively engaged with her art-making. Similar to Jung's assessment of alchemists' work, I charted how O'Keeffe's bone paintings evolved in apparent collaboration with unconscious projections of her psychological state. Moreover, if we take seriously Jung's theories concerning the teleological and autonomous nature of the unconscious, then the paintings not only marked but in turn promoted her individuation. Effectively, the artist's lifelong practice of engaging with the world around her through art-making helped facilitate a choice to live authentically—outwardly in communion with her inner nature. Overall, this paper presented the idea that O'Keeffe's bone paintings demonstrate how artists, like alchemists, can “accomplish in [their] own self the same process” they “attribute to” their work (Jung, 1944/1968b, p. 267).

Contributor

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Notes

¹ Norman was 41 years younger than Stieglitz and 18 years younger than O'Keeffe.

² The Pedernal is also where O'Keeffe's ashes were scattered after she died.

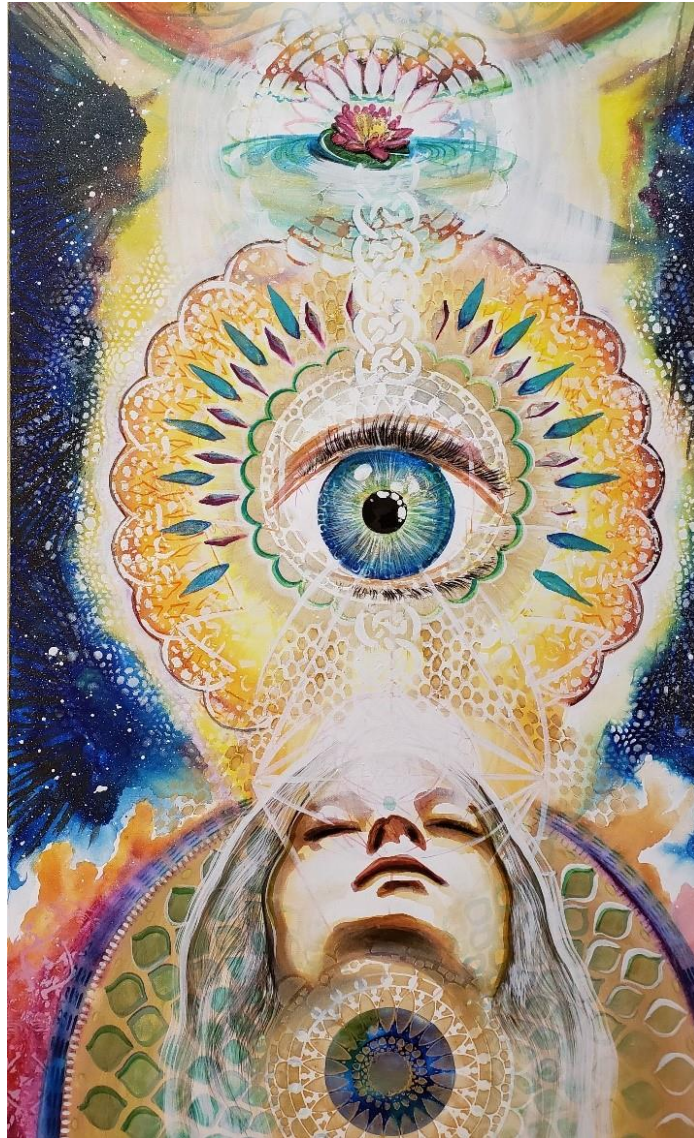
³ Jung, born July 26, 1875, and died June 6, 1961. O'Keeffe, born November 15, 1887, and died March 6, 1986.

⁴ Jung visited northern New Mexico and the Taos Pueblo in 1925, four years before O'Keeffe.

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“Insight” by Heather Taylor-Zimmerman

Connecting the Image of God as Almighty Father, Narcissism, Trump, and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*

Inez Martinez

Abstract: Given Jung's understanding of emergence as unconscious materials unattended emerging into lived life, the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States calls for analysis of unconscious collective attitudes. Trump's enthusiastic supporters embrace his narcissism, including his claims to almighty power, obedience, and adoration, claims characteristic of the God image of the Judeo-Christian Father almighty. This essay proposes that Americans socialized to worship that image of God have not been aware that they are divinizing narcissistic traits. Charles Brockden Brown's novel *Wieland or the Transformation, An American Tale* (1798) portrays such a God and a phantom narrative unveiling murderousness in the narcissistic divine Father-son relations. Brown concludes with a call for the development of "juster notions" of divinity. Recognizing the latent murderousness in the narcissistic image of God the Father almighty potentially leads to recalling that projection and collectively accepting responsibility for inner murderousness.

Keywords: emergence, Narcissism, God image, Father almighty, Trump, *Wieland*, Charles Brockden Brown, phantom narrative, American self-image

Carl Jung warns that "when an inner situation is not made conscious, it appears outside as fate" (CW 9.ii, par. 126). Donald Trump's ascendance to the American presidency is a fate Americans did not anticipate, an emergence from collective unconsciousness demanding analytic attention. Jung's vision of psychological emergence differs from the current more general understanding of emergence in that it does not presume an evolution of order and adaptability. Joseph Cambray in his study of synchronicity discusses emergence as a move toward a higher order. Describing systems "operating far from equilibrium" interacting "with their environments" to produce "adaptive emergent properties," he explains that the "sum of the interactions . . . manifest[s] new, unexpected higher levels of and order in the process of adapting to their surroundings" (45). He attributes the emergence of mind, for example, to this kind of process (46). Increase in complexity occurs when there is a breakdown in symmetry through "phase transitions," "rapid, abrupt reorganizations in a dynamic system that radically restructure the system, allowing new forms to emerge." At this point Cambray acknowledges that "psychological equivalent[s] of phase transitions and reorganizations can be highly stressful . . . even if ultimately positive in transformative effect" (64).

This idea of emergence as creative of a higher order, when applied to relations of unconsciousness and consciousness, elides the uncertainty in the consequences of unconscious material emerging into manifest intelligibility. Jung's vision assumes that when unconscious material becomes conscious, the possibility of choice also emerges.

What choices may follow encompasses a range of possible consequences. Once the unconscious contents have become manifest, it may be possible for a higher order to emerge, but, as experience all too frequently shows, that development is not assured. The ascendance of Trump as a collective fate emerging from collective unconsciousness thus demands inquiry into what has lain unattended in collective unconsciousness, but even successful inquiry does not guarantee an evolution in order and adaptability.

Jung's framework for understanding emergence allows analysis of the implications for group psyches of emergences not leading to greater adaptability or inclusive order: e.g., unrepresed hatred of migrants and adoration of authoritarian leaders.¹ In the case of Trump, his passionate supporters embrace not only his authoritarianism but also classic traits of narcissism that he embodies, as I will explore in detail.

In particular, this essay will focus on one aspect of unconsciousness not previously identified as contributing to the intransigent support of Trump's base. That aspect concerns fantasies of unlimited power, God as an almighty Father, and connections between these fantasies and classic traits of narcissism. Exposition of these connections provides the context for revisiting an early American literary production (1798), a novel by Charles Brockden Brown that portrays the projection of a punitive God as an almighty Father by a narcissistic devotee at the beginnings of the American nation. Brown's *Wieland or the Transformation, An American Tale* shocks in its analysis of subjection to paternal authority and implies the need for a morally evolving image of God the Father. It reveals, as Jung suggests visionary literature does (CW 15, par. 141), an aspect of what needs to be made conscious in the American collective. Jung writes:

Every period has its bias, its particular prejudice, and its psychic malaise. An epoch is like an individual: it has its own limitations of conscious outlook, and therefore requires a compensatory adjustment. This is effected by the collective unconscious when a poet or seer lends expression to the unspoken desire of his times . . . regardless whether this blind collective need results in good or evil, in the salvation of an epoch or its destruction. (CW 15, par. 153)

Wieland reveals narcissistic idolization of the rule of the father at the beginnings of America, an idolization considered legitimate because it is embedded in religious worship of God imaged as almighty Father. That attitude—without the religious trappings—manifested in the ecstatic crowds supporting Trump, is the aspect of unattended unconsciousness upon which this essay will focus.

Others before me, of course, have helped understand other aspects of the motivations of Trump's base. I want to acknowledge the contributions and explain what I consider the limitations of three notable previous analyses. *Listen, Liberal* by Thomas Frank details economic reasons Trump's supporters feel abandoned, no doubt a force partially accounting for their rejection of previous leadership, but one too rational to account for the rage and hatred evident at Trump rallies. *Strangers in Their Own Land* by Arlie Russell Hochschild, a sociologist using participant observation to get to know Trump supporters in Louisiana, metaphorically describes their sense of unfairness as waiting in a long, barely moving line to reach the top of a huge hill to achieve prosperity and security while watching the federal government assist others—blacks, other non-whites, immigrants, and women—cut in line (136–40). As with Frank's contribution, what

Hochschild offers to understanding is persuasive but partial. As a participant observer she cannot ask informants to engage the unfairness of the historic and geographic inaccessibility of the “line” to the groups being allowed in. In other words, her method excludes any possible transformation of their understanding and assumptions about unfairness. “President Trump and the American Selfie” by Jungian Tom Singer, one of the originators of the concept of the cultural complex and a theoretician of psyche shared by a group, argues that “there is a good fit between Trump’s personal narcissism and the narcissism of our culture and the wounded collective Self of many Americans” (31). This pinpointing of the importance of narcissism is penetrating. His description of the American group spirit, however, fails the possibilities in the conceptual tool that he is contributing. He offers the following description of the core of the American group Self or group spirit: “The Self or group spirit of America is built on more than 300 years of progress, success, achievement, resourcefulness, and ingenuity, accompanied by almost endless opportunity and good fortune. We love and believe in our heroic potential, our freedom and independence . . . and eternal innocence” (35). As I read those lines, I stumble over the “we.” Native Americans, deprived of lands and way of life, have not experienced 300 years of progress and success. Most Black Americans didn’t have even freedom from slavery until a little over 150 years ago; they had little access to civil rights until a little over 50 years ago, and their right to vote is still being suppressed (Goldstone). Women still do not have a constitutional guarantee of equal rights. Gay people, their sexual alliances long criminalized, were not allowed to marry as a federal right until 2015. I could keep adding to this list, but I think the point is made. Who is the “we” in Singer’s understanding of the American group spirit? It apparently excludes more than half the American people. And in so doing, it undercuts any claim of the group spirit’s being “innocent.”

While Singer’s contribution, in collaboration with Samuel Kimbles, of the theoretical concept of the cultural complex, has been profoundly important, and his theoretical concept of a group spirit is potentially useful, his understanding of the American group spirit would be better named the white, largely Christian, primarily male-supremacist group spirit of a portion of Americans. I have addressed the sense of victimization experienced by this group in “Trump’s Base, Ahab, and the American Dream.”² Before proceeding to analyze the power aspect of the support of narcissism by Trump’s base that I wish to clarify, let me briefly review reasons for attributing certain basic traits of narcissism to the public behavior of Donald Trump.

In *A Clear and Present Danger: Narcissism in the Era of Trump*, co-editors Steven Buser and Leonard Cruz list a number of Trump’s statements demonstrating the narcissistic trait of grandiosity with regard to his own power (xv–xvii). In addition, Trump’s public self-portrayal reveals classic traits of narcissism: an incapacity to relate to the feelings of others (Symington 18), a sense of entitled specialness (Lowen 125–26), cruel use of power (Moore 272–73) and obsession with one’s image. His callousness about separating children from their parents bears witness to his lack of empathy and his cruel use of power (Ainsley and Bennett). His efforts to place himself above the law and block the Mueller probe testify to his sense of entitled specialness (Benac et al.). His constant attacks on the free press, among other implications, reflect his obsession with his image. Trump’s exhibiting of these traits is so extreme that Craig Malkin raises the question of whether he suffers from “malignant narcissism,” a term coined by Erich Fromm and developed by Otto

Kernberg to describe totalitarian leaders like Hitler, Kim Jong-un, and Vladimir Putin, all of whom seek the total power of a monotheistic god (57–58).

Clarifying the connection between absolute power, like that attributed to God the Father almighty, and the support of Trump's base for a narcissistic leader is the heart of this inquiry into an aspect of what in the psyche of many Americans has not been brought to consciousness and is being lived out in the fate of living with Trump's presidency. When referring to God, I am referring to human projections onto divinity, what Jung calls the God image.

The German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, absent the concept of the unconscious, argues in 1841 in *The Essence of Christianity* that people create gods in their own image. Almost exactly a hundred years later Jung writes that people don't create, but rather choose images of divinities (CW 11, par. 143). He makes this distinction because he wants to insist on unconscious powers overwhelming human egos leading to projections of divinity, but wants also to recognize that the images do not communicate the reality of the unconscious forces themselves. He writes: "Though our choice characterizes and defines 'God,' it is always man-made, and the definition it gives is therefore finite and imperfect. . . . The definition is an image . . ." (CW 11, par. 144). He writes further that the characteristics we ascribe to our gods are unconscious projections, as in the absorption of the historic Christ in "archetypal projections upon him" (CW 11, par. 228).

A striking feature of Trump's supporters has been the fealty of fundamentalist Christians, even in the face of the sexual scandals and suspicions of economic corruption that keep haunting Trump's image. Trump himself refers gratefully to their support in his speech accepting the nomination of the Republican Party for President: "At this moment I would like to thank the evangelical community because I'll tell you what, the support they've given me, and I'm not sure I deserve it . . . [laughter] has been so amazing and has had such a big reason for me being here tonight. [Applause] True, so true" (Beckwith). The surprising affirmation by these self-identified Christians of Trump may be connected to an unconscious conditioning concerning man-made, imperfect images of God the almighty Father as narcissistic. Christianity, a religion whose very name indicates the centrality of Christ, has a long history of incorporating the almightiness of the God of the Hebraic religion from which Christ arose. The second century Old Roman Creed (a short predecessor of the later Apostles' Creed), the Nicene creed established during the First Council of Nicaea in the early fourth century, its amendment later that century at the First Council of Constantinople, and the earliest record of the Apostles' Creed toward the end of the fourth century all extol God the Father almighty. The Apostles' Creed, for example, begins, "I believe in God, the Father almighty. . . ." As Vladislav Solc and George J. Didier explain in *Dark Religion: Fundamentalism from the Perspective of Jungian Psychology*, "Creed prescribes and proscribes what is to be believed and what is to be rejected based on a frame provided by those in authority" (45). Almightyness, that is, limitless power, characterizes the man-made, imperfect image of the Judeo-Christian God the Father.

The image of a monotheistic God as almighty Father did not always appear as kindly. This God is imaged using power arbitrarily as in the testing of Job and demanding the sacrifice of Isaac; punishing those who defy him as in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and insisting on being adored as in his first commandment given to Moses: "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods before me." Nathan Schwartz-Salant

recognizes these manifestations of narcissism in his discussion of what he calls *the black magician*. He says this figure:

represents that factor in the psyche that drives for control and exhibits extreme grandiosity. It insists upon total determinacy of events. . . . [R]eality is equated with *its* thoughts and needs, and the power to “know” and control is continually exhibited. This omnipotence simultaneously demands mirroring, without which its very existence is threatened. A good example of this quality is the dark side of the Old Testament Yahweh. (67, emphasis in the original)

The Old Testament Yahweh, whose “dark side” Schwartz-Salant describes in terms of narcissism, becomes in Christian ideology God the Father who so loved his only begotten son that he sends him to suffer and die for all mankind in order to appease Himself for their disobedience. The issue of obedience to the father occupies a pivotal position in Brown’s *Wieland*.

Trump has manifested all the aforementioned “divine” traits: a need for his reality to be reality (e.g., insisting that the American Southern Border is under attack and in a state of national emergency); a need to control and have his will be the law (e.g., ordering border agents to separate children and parents of immigrants in spite of a court order making such separations illegal); a need to have his will fulfilled (e.g., firing one appointee after another); and a need to be adored (e.g., choosing to spend time again and again, after having been elected, at rallies with his mirroring crowds). Elizabeth Mika characterizes malignant narcissists as having “an insatiable drive for power and adulation” (299). Vindictiveness, as in punishing enemies, is a defining trait of malignant narcissism (307). Trump’s character-assassination of persons formerly associated with him, such as his former lawyer, Michael Cohen, and his firings of FBI Director James Comey and Deputy Director Andrew McCabe illustrate his punitiveness. The timing of the firing of McCabe so as to prevent his receiving a pension illustrates his vindictiveness. His ragefulness is documented in painful detail in *Fear: Trump in the White House* by Bob Woodward.

Trump’s public personality parodies that of the image of God as almighty Father. The points of comparison make conscious that that version of God divinizes narcissistic traits. Divinizing narcissistic traits has consequences. Among them, arguably, is that persons socialized in religions divinizing narcissism unconsciously grant to human fathers and leaders powers claimed by narcissists and expect those powers of them. Theirs will be the power to define reality, to judge what and who is good or bad. Theirs will be the right to be obeyed or else inflict punishment. Theirs will be the power to demand that reality manifest their will.

Remarkably, a version of such a god image is portrayed in a novel published in the first decade of America: *Wieland, or the Transformation, An American Tale* by Charles Brockden Brown. Jung’s proposition that visionary artists bring to consciousness what lies unconscious in the collective psyche does not depend on the artist’s having conscious understanding of that function. Authors do not intentionally draw revelations from the collective unconscious for collective edification any more than a dreamer consciously draws from his or her unconscious the dream needed to image a psychological situation requiring attentive reflection. The imaginative work, in this case, *Wieland*, contains materials emerging from the unconscious psyche and thus potentially communicates across

centuries. Even though Brown does not describe his novel in terms of narcissism or the image of America, one may read his depiction of the rule of the father in the New World as not only undercutting the American sense of representing an exceptional ideal to be emulated, but also as rendering horrific a narcissistic understanding of God the Father almighty.

From the time of its discovery, America has been imagined by European immigrants as a New World, one in which colonists could escape societal evils in the lands being left. Think of the City on the Hill of John Winthrop or the words of President John Adams rescued by his son after he, himself, omitted them from his *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*. The excised passage reads: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth." Brown, a child of a Quaker family in pre-revolutionary Philadelphia, a teenager during the American Revolution, and a published novelist in 1798 was one of the earliest skeptics of this ahistoric dream of America. Yet he passionately cared about the promise of the new country. He dedicated his professional life to bringing the newly joined colonies into a coherent nation. Brown attempted almost singlehandedly to generate a common culture out of the disparate cultures of the American colonies. In 1798 in the former colonies there was no common language, no common religion, few passable roads, and differing economies—agricultural vs. manufacturing—with conflicting interests. Brown wrote fiction and an annual Register of contemporary events to try to forge a common culture and help birth a national soul. *Wieland, or the Transformation, An American Tale*, his first successful novel, was read and praised by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, William Hazlitt, William Wordsworth, and Mary Shelley (Trubek).

In this novel Brown creates a family, the Wielands, descendants of a German immigrant, living in cultured domestic contentment in their Mettingen estate in rural Pennsylvania. Their serenity is interrupted by the return of a religious calling to the male head of the family. He had been born in Europe to a father who had been disinherited because he had defied his aristocratic father by marrying a merchant's daughter. The conflictual nature of obedience to the father, seeded in Europe, originates the Wieland line. The outcast father and mother die when their son, referred to only by his surname, is of age to be apprenticed. His new master works him so relentlessly that he finds life gloomy and boring. His dissatisfied psychological state makes him a ready religious convert.

He happens upon a book written by a teacher of Albigenianism, a twelfth- and thirteenth-century form of the Manichean heresy that a good deity created the world of spirit and a bad deity created the world of matter. Brown thus introduces the idea of evil as metaphysically embedded in reality, not to be escaped in a supposed new world. Reading this Albigenian book, the apprentice Wieland learns of the Camisards who militantly opposed the imposition of Catholicism on the French people by Louis the XIV.

The book inspires Wieland to undertake a painstaking study of the Bible, which he reads through a Camisard lens, a perspective, according to Brown, that prevents a critical grasp of relationships: "Every fact and sentiment in this book were viewed through a medium which the writings of the Camisard apostle had suggested. [Wieland's] constructions of the text were hasty, and formed on a narrow scale. Every thing [sic] was

viewed in a disconnected position. One action and one precept were not employed to illustrate and restrict the meaning of another” (15). This characterization faults individualistic interpretations of the Bible, that is, interpretations not guided by previous authority. The prevalence of such interpretations was partly a consequence of the spirit of individualism sweeping Europe (partially through the theories of John Locke whose writings were available and known in early America), a spirit undercutting obedience to authority. Wieland’s being the grandson of a defied, punitive patriarch and his internalization of Camisard religious teachings thus form him into a representative of the psychological conflict concerning patriarchal authority—that of church, state, and family—informing his times. Brown’s focus on Wieland’s inability to see interrelationships, a failing of narcissists, links this conflict to narcissism.

Gripped by a religious conversion, Wieland becomes beset by the conviction that God wills him to spread the gospels to the “unbelieving nations” (16). This experience of being directly charged by God the Father can be read as Wieland’s unconscious coping with the authority conflict of father and son that he has inherited. When his apprenticeship ends, he takes his savings and immigrates to Philadelphia, intending to teach the gospels to the peoples known as Indians. Upon his arrival, the reputed savagery of his intended pupils gives him pause. Since land is cheap, he buys a farm and uses African slaves to tend it. After fourteen years of success, he marries a “meek” woman, enjoys leisure while others work his farm, and returns to Bible reading.

This history evokes aspects of the history of immigrant Americans up to the time of Brown’s writing: the European legacy of disinherited aristocracy, the practice of apprenticeship, the religious wars between Roman Catholics and Protestants, immigration to the New World, and the religious fervor forming the spiritual background of parts of the European settlement of America. Most significantly, it portrays the development of material wealth and leisure through the use of America’s cheap resources and the labor of indentured servants and slaves. It highlights the material prosperity that replaces the religious mission with which the journey to New England and mid-Atlantic states such as Pennsylvania began.

On his resumption of Bible-reading, Wieland’s sense that God has called him to convert the Indians returns, and after much struggle he leaves his wife and children to preach. He is met with insuperable obstacles. In Brown’s words, “His exhortations were attended with no permanent success. . . . The license of savage passion, and the artifices of his depraved countrymen, all opposed themselves to his progress” (17–18). When he believes his task to be hopeless, he gives it up and returns to his farm where he is haunted by his not having fulfilled the divine command of God the Father. He builds a small temple on a hill reminiscent of Governor Winthrop’s city on a hill, Winthrop’s image of the European settlement of America—a shining image of God’s people for all the world to see. The elder Wieland goes to this temple twice daily to pray. He becomes progressively agitated, reluctantly explaining to his wife that

his peace of mind was flown, in consequence of deviation from his duty. A command had been laid upon him, which he had delayed to perform. He felt as if a certain period of hesitation and reluctance had been allowed him, but that this period was passed. . . . [A]ll that remained was to endure the penalty. (20)

With great anguish, he expects this penalty to be a “strange and terrible” death (20).

Wieland dreads punishment for having failed in his divinely assigned mission, and indeed the plot suggests that he is dreadfully punished. When his anxiety has reached fever pitch, he goes at midnight as is his custom to pray at the temple. But there, in his sacred temenos, he suffers a loud explosion followed by a suffusing light that leaves his clothes in cinders and himself horribly burned. Found and returned to his home, he suffers fever, delirium, and crawling putrefaction that literally drives everyone from the house as he dies.

Brown accounts for his death as a case of spontaneous combustion and even provides a footnote verifying the existence of such in a published case in 1783. Metaphorically, guilt over his failure to obey his understanding of God’s will, that is, his failure to live his life converting “unbelieving nations,” destroys Wieland. His dying of such putrefaction that others could not remain near him evidences for those he leaves behind, including his son, Theodore, the fate of those disobeying God the Father.

Brown’s novel then turns to prognostication through the characters of the dead Wieland’s children, his daughter Clara who narrates the story, and Theodore who is referred to as “Wieland” throughout the rest of the novel.

Alongside the religious plot, Brown twists and makes thematic use of a common subject of the eighteenth-century novel, male attempts to seduce women.³ Brown, himself a feminist influenced by the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, creates a seducer who only plays at seduction in order to test the courage of his victim, Clara Wieland. The pretend seducer is Carwin, a European who secretly is escaping from enemies he made through his nefarious ventriloquist practices of mimicking and projecting others’ voices. Seen through the Narcissus myth, his character is an eerie inversion of Echo into an initiator of words never spoken by the persons being imitated. He is a living carrier of a false inner voice, anticipating the fourth generation Wieland’s—Theodore’s—future mystical delusion. He practices imitating others’ voices to get out of various dilemmas and thus creates illusory experiences for Wieland, for Wieland’s friend—Henry Pleyel—and later for Clara herself.

Carwin joins the little society of Mettingen. That society consists first of Theodore, who marries Catherine Pleyel, with whom he has four children. They adopt an orphan, Luisa Conway. Catherine’s brother, Henry Pleyel, a dear friend of Theodore’s and an unannounced admirer of Clara, becomes a constant visitor. Together Wieland, Catherine, Henry, Clara, and Louisa compose a social group with leisure to convert the temple on the hill into a salon where they converse about books arriving from Europe and, in general, about philosophical and cultural matters. They are a test group for the rationality of man celebrated by Deism.

Carwin’s arrival adds the spice of an outsider’s personality to their idyllic, middle-class life in rural Pennsylvania. He is welcomed to the group through Henry Pleyel. On the run, Carwin takes refuge in the vicinity of Mettingen and there encounters Pleyel who introduces him to the Wieland family society. As a ventriloquist, he imitates others’ voices for the thrill of power. His purpose in hiding in Clara’s closet, for example, is not to jump out and rape her but to terrify her with fear of murderers planning her death. In this way Brown subordinates the lust force, prominent in seduction narratives such as *Pamela* and *Clarissa* by Samuel Richardson, and the contemporary early American best seller, *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth* by Susanna Haswell Rowson, to sexless enjoyment of sadistic power. Carwin indulges this perverse pleasure by creating distant conversations that

convince Pleyel and Theodore that Clara is sexually involved with him. Brown's improvising on the common subject matter of contemporary English novels is yet another implicit argument that the "New World" is constituted with cultural elements of the "Old." By depicting the European roots of the characters and their culture Brown insists on the New World's being permeated with the European past, particularly its religious heritage.

The conclusion of the novel dramatizes the role of religion in corrupting fatherhood when filtered through American narcissistic individualism. Clara, driven to near-despair by her loss of reputation and of Pleyel's respect through Carwin's antics, discovers, to her horror, her beloved sister-in-law Catherine dead in her bed. She immediately afterwards learns that her four nieces and nephews, as well as Luisa Conway, have also all been found brutally murdered. For a while she is protected from discovering who the murderer is, but eventually is devastated to learn that the killer is her brother, the pious and rational Theodore Wieland. He calmly affirms these killings in court as his fulfillment of a command he heard from the voice of God. He publicly prays,

"I thank thee, my Father, for thy bounty; that thou didst not ask a less sacrifice than this; that thou placedst me in a condition to testify my submission to thy will! What have I withheld which it was thy pleasure to exact? Now may I, with dauntless and erect eye, claim my reward, since I have given thee the treasure of my soul" (189).

Theodore Wieland's relation to fathering as revealed in his actions and speech testifies to his understanding of God the Father. He imagines the God whom he addresses as "Father" to desire his murdering his wife and children. Without purpose or spiritual claims of their own, his spouse and children exist in his mind only as appurtenances to the meaning of his life. Depriving them of their lives, he assumes, earns him God's reward. His belief in this revelation depends on the assumption that individuals could know God's will and thus on the cultural development of individualism that characterized Americans' understanding of their rights and freedoms. Ian Watt, in his perceptive history of the development of the novel, explains that the rise of individualism differentiated the eighteenth century. He writes,

[W]e can say that the novel requires a world view which is centred on the social relationships between individual persons; and this involves . . . individualism, because until the end of the seventeenth century the individual was not conceived as wholly autonomous, but as an element in a picture which depended on divine persons for its meaning, as well as on traditional institutions such as Church and Kingship for its secular pattern. (84)

The community at Mettingen represents the replacement of the authority of church and king with human reason, and Brown depicts it as being taken over by irrational beliefs concerning God the Father. Wieland enacts the murderous father he believes God to be.

Wieland is an early American version of Narcissus in his infatuation with his image and in his unrelatedness to the welfare of others. Toward the end of the novel, he escapes incarceration and returns to Mettingen to complete what he perceives to be his divine mission by murdering his sister, Clara. There he encounters Carwin who has returned to explain to Clara his role as ventriloquist in the recent history of their society and to insist that he had no part in Wieland's heard voices. Carwin persuades Wieland that the voices he heard were not of divine origin. At first, Wieland is devastated. In the words of the

novel, “his respiration became hoarse, like that of a man in the agonies of death” (249). He sends Carwin away and for a moment seems to have let go of his belief that he has enacted God’s will even as he clings to the rectitude of his motives. His countenance a portrait of sorrow, Wieland asserts his belief in the virtue of his murders as he reassures his sister. He says, “Once it was the scope of my labours to destroy thee, but I was prompted to the deed by heaven, such, at least, was my belief. . . . I am pure from all stain. I believed that my God was my mover! . . . In thy sight, Being of beings! I am still pure. Still will I look for my reward in thy justice” (253–54). This claim that unconsciousness of having been deluded frees him from guilt and does not interfere with his murderous acts deserving divine reward reflects an old European heritage. He is a cultural descendant of Sophocles’ Oedipus who thought himself innocent because of the virtue of his motives and his unconsciousness of who it was he murdered at the crossroads and married as his queen. Again, the inescapable legacy of Europe appears in the character of American descendants of European immigrants.

Even though Carwin dissuaded Wieland for a moment from believing that the voice he heard was God’s, Wieland cannot let go of his image as dutiful son of God the Father, and he soon persuades himself that Carwin is a demon, that he, himself, has acted as an obedient child of God, and that God’s original command to kill his family must still be fulfilled. As he threatens Clara once again, Carwin does, in fact, imitate God’s voice. He projects it as coming from above, and cries in a thunderous voice to “*Hold!* . . . Man of errors! Cease to cherish thy delusion; not heaven or hell . . . have misled thee to commit these acts. Shake off thy frenzy, and ascend into rational and human. Be lunatic no longer” (259). Believing as he does in personal divine revelation, Wieland is crushed by this obliteration of the image of himself as divine executioner and fatally stabs himself in the neck.

Carwin’s imitation of God’s voice ironically preserves Clara’s life while Wieland’s authentic inner experience of what he believes to be God’s voice leads to murder. Wieland’s having heard God’s voice command him to kill his family constitutes an immanent experience of God, the kind of experience that Jung and theologian John Dourley after him think is a religious conversion of the experience of the ego being overwhelmed by a numinous encounter with the unconscious. Jung refers to the discovery of the limitlessness within in an “enlightened individual’s” relation to “the One who dwells within him, whose form has no knowable boundaries, who encompasses him on all sides, fathomless as the abysses of the earth and vast as the sky” (CW11, par. 758). Dourley comments on Jung’s statement by asserting that the immanent experience of the numinous power of psyche leads to understanding of the transcendent:

In this profound text it should be noted that this sense of the divine moves from within, the immanent, to a sense of the all-encompassing transcendent. Without the within the divine without remains ambivalent. . . . This external divinity is a heteronomous divinity. It can only act as a repressive and authoritarian imposition on the human and so [as] the extreme form of an alienation between the divine and a humanity unconscious of the inner origin of all the Gods none of whom are wholly other or wholly foreign to the humanity from whose depths they are born. (17)

As with Cambray's translation of emergence theory into psychological equivalents, Dourley's appropriation of Jung's paradigm concerning ego encounters with the "divine" in unconscious psyche assumes positive development, an assumption that Wieland's inner experience of God's voice belies. The "divine" voice which commands Wieland to arrogate to himself the power of deciding life and death enables him consciously to kill in obedience to God's command, unconsciously to identify with his image of God the Father. He has the dual satisfaction of behaving as virtuous son deserving reward and of wielding divine power over life. Theodore Wieland attempts to resolve the father-son conflict concerning obedience through identifying with both the obedience required of the son and the power over life possessed by the father. This attempted resolution, rather than leading to positive evolution, results in wholesale slaughter.

Wieland experiences a profound inner relationship with the divine, but this relationship does not prevent the God image from acting as a "repressive and authoritarian imposition on the human" as in Dourley's description of the relation to a transcendent divinity without the inner experience of an encounter with one's unconscious. *Wieland*, as a visionary literary expression of the unconscious in response to a blindness in collective consciousness of Americans, both demonstrates the murderous underbelly of narcissistic worship of an almighty God and the liability of inner experiences of such a God image to horrific inflation.

Brown's *Wieland* records a multigenerational repetition of pairs of fathers and sons struggling with whether and how to obey their fathers, human and divine. Theodore's fate may be seen as an illustration of what Kimbles some two hundred years later was to name a phantom narrative, that is, an unresolved psychological conflict inherited by successive generations and acted out as if descendants were caught in a script. The originating patriarchal Wieland, an aristocrat, disinherits his son who defies him by marrying a merchant's daughter. The disowned son begets Theodore Wieland's father who experiences the conflict concerning authority not with his biological father who died when he was young but with his acquired image of his divine Father. He believes himself divinely commanded to be God the Father's emissary and comes to America to fulfill God's command to preach the Bible to the "unbelieving nations." Failing successfully to do so, he dreads divine punishment for his disobedience and in fact mysteriously either is divinely destroyed or psychologically self-destructs. His son Theodore apparently unconsciously inherits his father's religious experiences and fantasies in his seeking to know God the Father's will and to execute it. He thinks himself successful in obedience to God where his father had failed, but ultimately realizes he has murdered his family out of a self-delusion. Having esteemed himself for having killed his wife and children at the apparent command of God, he is devastated when deprived of this gratifying image of himself. He then, like his father—and their psychological ancestor, Narcissus, who iconically failed to become one with his self-image—also self-destructs. Brown's novel does not resolve the conflicts over authority between fathers and sons, human and divine, but rather articulates a psychological step toward a resolution. He climaxes the themes of his novel with Clara's wishing that "*Wieland had framed juster notions of moral duty and of the divine attributes . . .*" (276, emphasis added).

I propose that the surfacing of Trump as president raises for Americans the issue of framing "juster notions of . . . divine attributes." Kimbles describes recurrent phantoms as

“images of group life that reflect the specific dynamics operating in groups and individuals through various social attitudes and structures that are alive in current events” (20). Current technology has provided literal images of the group life of Trump supporters during political rallies, showing them worshipful of a narcissistic leader claiming almighty power. At the rallies, they affirm Trump’s every assertion, an enthusiastic mirroring of him as he makes impossible claims that he is the only one who can protect America, the only one who can “fix the system,” the only one who can “make possible every dream you’ve ever dreamed” (Benen). As he repeatedly lays claim to almightiness, his supporters meet him with roars of approval. His ascendance to the presidency reveals the ongoing enthrallment of a significant portion of Americans with a fantasy of the almighty Father. Mika claims that “the people see in him their long-awaited savior and a father substitute” and that “through the process of identification [they] absorb his omnipotence and glory and imagine themselves as powerful as he is” (305).

Brown’s depiction of Theodore Wieland anticipates Trump’s impassioned supporters. Theodore imagines that God wills the deaths of those he is responsible for and that He will reward him as a good son for murdering them much as Trump’s followers imagine that Trump is willing to have immigrants seeking asylum die in their home countries and that he will reward those who elect him by preserving America’s resources for their use. Theodore imagines that he is sacrificing to divine authority in murdering the appointed victims when he is in fact enjoying the traditionally divine prerogative of taking lives much as extremist Trump supporters experience the satisfaction of violently attacking and ousting protesters in obedience to Trump’s command at rallies or of actually killing those opposed to Trump’s support of racism as in the murder of the counter-protestor at the White Nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, Heather Heyer, in August, 2017 (Stolberg and Rosenthal). Divinizing narcissistic traits transfers to worshipping narcissistic leaders, apparently providing a sense of legitimacy to enacting violence.

Brown’s critical depiction of the narcissistic interaction of the father-son relationship implicitly calls for a reconceiving of the relationship between humans and our projected divinity, perhaps even relinquishing the projection of all-powerful parent altogether. Dourley outlines Jung’s development of the image of God the Father: “[Jung’s] psychology depicts the Father as the wholly undifferentiated source of creation in a psychological age prior to a sense of individuality. The Son represents the evolution of consciousness . . .” (150). Jung envisions the trinity as an evolution of human projections upon our god-images. The conclusion of Brown’s novel offers a similar call for evolution of the image of God the Father: the development of “juster notions of moral duty and of the divine attributes” (276).

Jung writes of the immaturity of conceiving of God as a loving parent: “Faith . . . tries to retain a primitive mental condition on merely sentimental grounds. It is unwilling to give up the primitive, childlike relationship to mind-created and hypostatized figures; it wants to go on enjoying the security and confidence of a world still presided over by powerful, responsible and kindly parents” (CW 11, par. 763). How the image of God may be reimagined so as to surrender both fantasies of parental almightiness—its powers to punish and reward, and its powers lovingly to protect—poses a profound psychological challenge raised by Trump’s election. Juxtaposing this challenge with Brown’s rendering of the phantom narrative of conflict between fathers and sons conveys a need to transform

the understanding of authority partially through recalling projections on divinity. The call for fundamental change voiced in *Wieland* has become ever more urgent—to form “juster notions of moral duty and of the divine attributes.”

This essay has attempted to weave together a number of threads to propose that a vein of American culture has unconsciously divinized certain narcissistic traits through worship of a necessarily imperfect image of God as a narcissistic almighty Father demanding control and obedience—a Father who will reward subservient worshippers and punish any who oppose his will. Brown’s novel *Wieland* portrays human relationships with such an imagined god at the beginnings of America. Trump’s impassioned supporters elected a man who attempts to embody such an authority. Because the narcissism in this image of God the Father almighty is cloaked in religious garb, the worshipping of narcissistic traits has remained unconscious, unexamined. The election of Trump to the American presidency has prompted this analysis identifying the unconscious divinization of narcissistic traits. Thinking of God the Father’s almightiness as suffused with narcissism will appear blasphemous to those who do not accept the idea that the image of God is a projection issuing from human imperfections. As asserted earlier, the consequences of unconscious materials becoming conscious are uncertain and in this case are dependent upon the collective psychological capacity to accept responsibility for what has been projected.

The effort to discover a basic aspect of what has lain unconscious in the collective psyche enacts a Jungian “notion of moral duty.” Jung writes of the power of individuals recognizing the evil within ourselves to mitigate the evil in the world: “Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world is in himself, and if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day” (CW 11, par. 140). Jung prescribes the development of self-knowledge as necessary for dealing with the “wholesale murderer” in man (CW 11, par. 86). Trump’s election spurs collective development of such self-knowledge. Theodore Wieland and his narcissistic relationship with his imagined grandiose, divine Father offers Americans a mirror from which to gain self-knowledge, an opportunity to withdraw narcissistic projections from a multi-generational image of God, and a challenge to accept as a collective our responsibility for human murderousness.

Contributor

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Notes

¹ The American experience of elevating a dictatorial leader occurs during an international paroxysm of handing over power to such men. See, for example, “Crazy like a Fox vs. Crazy like a Crazy” in which Michael J. Tansey points to Trump’s admiration of dictatorial leaders in North Korea, Syria, Russia, the Philippines, and Turkey (115).

² I propose there, using Singer and Kimbles' theoretical tool of a cultural complex, that the sense of victimization suffered by this group is a complex stemming from the loss of privileges accorded to whiteness and maleness from the beginnings of American history. Singer and Kimbles describe cultural complexes as similar to individual complexes, "tend[ing] to be repetitive, autonomous, [to] resist consciousness, and [to] collect experience that confirms their historical point of view" (6). Naming the sense of victimization of Trump's base a complex indicates that these people are not consciously in control of the passions of resentment, anger, perhaps hate, and cannot become so until they deal consciously with the irrationality of the expectation that whiteness and maleness should confer privileges. When members of a privileged group feel victimized by the erosion of their privileges, their wound, based on a sense of entitlement and unrelated self-interest, exposes narcissism.

³ Seduction was the theme of the first best-selling novel in early America published in American edition four years prior to Brown's *Wieland*. *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth* by Susanna Haswell Rowson was a cautionary tale depicting the seduction of a young woman who became pregnant and died, abandoned, in the aftermath of childbirth.

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Puer-pater-senex:
Toxic Masculinity and the Generative Father in an Age of Narcissism

Elizabeth Eowyn Nelson

Abstract: There is a suppurating father wound in the Western psyche that has manifested today in toxic masculinity and regression to patriarchy embodied in political strongmen. The wound is represented mythically by a recurrent classical theme of fathers who destroy their children rather than nurturing them—who, in fact, refuse to become fathers in any real or meaningful way. The wound also is inscribed in contemporary archetypal theory by an omission: Hillman's (2005) discussion of the *puer-senex* tandem names youth and elder but without the crucial role that mediates them, *pater*. Restoring the archetypal father to this tandem, one who values beneficence not brutishness, creates the more stable triad *puer-pater-senex*, a triad that is parallel to the female developmental pattern, maiden-mother-crone, drawn from goddess traditions. Supporting the emergence of the generative father, and seeing where he already exists in contemporary culture, can detoxify masculinity and help us recognize and confront toxic patriarchal leaders.

Keywords: father, maiden-mother-crone, malignant narcissism, politics, *puer-senex*, toxic masculinity, archetypes, Greek mythology

Mature, generative men seem to be rare among today's political leaders, or they simply may be overshadowed on the world stage by populist strongmen who resemble schoolyard bullies. Political bullies, like their childish counterparts, successfully draw attention away from the quieter margins where numerous competent leaders, men and women, daily sacrifice their time for the public benefit. Our gaze returns repeatedly to the noisome bully.

Focusing on those who abuse power may be symptomatic of the painful struggle to know how to turn our communities, nations, and species toward the serious problems we face. Such focus alerts us to the presence of soul: it exemplifies what Hillman (1992) calls *pathologizing*, one of the soul's natural activities that describes its "autonomous ability to create illness, morbidity, disorder, abnormality, and suffering" and "to experience and imagine life through this deformed and afflicted perspective" (p. 57). Our afflictions and our eye for them show "the concrete mess of psychological existence" (p. 56) as we live it day by day. Being faithful to that pathology, rather than rushing to fix it, can deepen political events into psycho-cultural experiences because "only when things fall apart do they open up into new meanings" (p. 111). This essay adopts the pathological eye to explore the archetypal and mythic background of our present communal strife.

The pathological eye exposes the toxicity of political strongmen who symbolize and intensify nostalgia for patriarchal tradition and what it supposedly offers: social order, gender certainty, and the restoration of cultural greatness. Nostalgic regression to an idealized past is neither creative nor sustainable. It is a defensive response to a suppurating wound in the Western psyche related closely to malignant narcissism. The wound is

represented mythically by a recurrent theme of tyrannical fathers who destroy their children, refusing to become fathers in any real or meaningful way. After probing this mythic wound and its contemporary relevance, I turn to the ways in which the wound is inscribed in archetypal theory by an omission: Hillman's (2005) extensive discussion of the *puer-senex* tandem that names youth and elder without the crucial role that mediates them, *pater*. The emergence of the generative father in this tandem, one who values beneficence rather than brutishness, creates the more stable triad *puer-pater-senex* that is parallel to the female triad maiden-mother-crone. How might generative fathering enlarge our understanding of masculinity in its many manifestations and help us recognize and confront toxic patriarchal leaders?

Diagnosing political elites

Many observers, laypeople and professionals, have attributed the behavior of political strongmen—which includes unapologetic efforts to promote themselves, extend their power, and consolidate their prestige among fellow elites—to psychological causes if not actual diagnosable mental illness (Cruz & Buser, 2016; Brooks, 2017; Comey, 2018; Henderson & Stein, 2019; Lee, 2017, 2019; Lee & Glass, 2018; McCabe, 2019; Schwartz-Salant, 2016; Singer, 2016, 2017). Specifically, such leaders exhibit many of the traits associated with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) described in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), a painful and potentially destructive condition that manifests in “poor empathy and problematic intimacy”; grandiosity, which is “feelings of entitlement, either overt or covert, and self-centeredness, a belief that one is better than others;” as well as “excessive seeking for admiration” and “need for approval” (Paris, 2011, p. 220). In its more pathological forms (Kernberg, 1970), sometimes referred to as malignant narcissism to distinguish it from healthy self-regard, NPD can include paranoia and aggression. Malignant narcissists frequently have fantasies of unlimited power and success, exploit people and situations to achieve it, and surround themselves with others of high status (Cruz & Buser, 2016, pp. xii-xiii; Mika, 2017, p. 299). In the last two decades, malignant narcissism has been equated with another sociopathic disorder, Machiavellianism, “a cynical, ruthless, and deceptive approach to interpersonal and organizational behavior” (Stellwagen 2011, p. 35).

The scholarly literature rarely addresses the inverse relationship between the self-aggrandizement of malignant narcissism and the service orientation of generative fathering from which the father derives his moral authority. Samuels's works on the father (1985, 1989) are the exception. Yet the relationship is hiding in plain sight within the Jungian community. For example, on the dedication page of *A Clear and Present Danger: Narcissism in the Era of Donald Trump*, the editors quote Nelson Mandela's 1990 speech following his release from prison. Mandela declares himself a “humble servant” of the people who will “place the remaining years of my life in your hands” (2016, n.p.) Also cited for his leadership is George Washington. Known as “the father of our country,” Washington “declined to serve more than the two terms and risk establishing a new monarchy” in the fledgling American nation (2016, n.p.). Mandela and Washington, although separated by more than 200 years, both exemplify generative men. Concerned for the welfare of others, they fulfill themselves through contributing to the public good and creating a beneficent legacy that outlasts their personal wealth or social prestige.

Readers familiar with Western personality theory will undoubtedly hear echoes of Erickson (1982) in the word “generativity.” His mid-century development of psychoanalytic theory, which was profound and substantial, remains relevant as a model for males. (Feminists including Jordan et al., 1991; Gilligan, 1993; Hancock, 1989; and Miller, 1986 argue that female psychological development follows a different trajectory.) Erickson made important modifications to Freud’s stages of childhood development by emphasizing social influences—helping to move psychoanalysis into its present focus on relational psychology. His significance for this paper is the extension of stage theory beyond childhood. “Erikson is the first Freudian and one of the few developmental writers of any persuasion to propose separate stages for the adult years” (Crain, 2005, p. 289). His ideas might best be considered a sketch of a theory “but if so, we should remember that he is writing about an uncharted area” (p. 289). Erickson (1982) identified central tensions at each stage of life, which he describes as a basic orientation that persons must negotiate. In adulthood, the choices are generativity or self-absorption. Whereas the former is growth-oriented and creative, the latter leads to stagnation (p. 67).

Although Erickson tended to literalize generativity as raising children, the concept also has symbolic meaning as the production of things and ideas, suggested by the metaphorical question *What will I give birth to during my life?* Generativity requires personal sacrifice, a patient and disciplined focus on durable values as opposed to the momentary satisfaction of one’s own vanity, and caring for another more than oneself—unless, of course, the aim is simply to produce a “mini-me.” It should be evident that malignant narcissism is antithetical to Erickson’s generativity, which may explain why his developmental theory defined generativity as the goal for late middle age and beyond (1982, pp. 67–69). Devoting oneself to others is an achievement, not a given. The mythical Narcissus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was devoted only to his own reflection, blind and deaf to everything else.

It is one thing to live with a paranoid, aggressive, malignant narcissist in one’s own family. But what if “aggressive, paranoid, malignant narcissist” describes the individual who represents one’s nation on the world stage? What if he is the political patriarch, meant to embody moral authority, the ambassador to other nations, and the face of one’s country who has the power to shape its social, economic, and political future for decades to come? Then we are speaking of a profoundly wounded, psychologically unstable leader who is joined to the citizenry—all citizens. Those joined to him include, most painfully, citizens who do not support him, refuse to recognize him as “their” president, find in him a total absence of moral authority, and know full well that he lacks a popular mandate to be commander in chief. Then we are speaking of a fresh cultural wound: millions of people who are appalled and humiliated that this man is their emissary.

On the one hand, of course, I am speaking of Donald Trump. His election exposed the deep, painful fissure in the American psyche between who liberal Democrats thought “we” were and who “we” are. It is nearly too much to witness, let alone understand—yet any one of us who has not entirely retired from the social world is confronted, sometimes hourly, by fresh reminders of the pain his presidency symbolizes. Trump supporters, nearly a majority of the U.S. population—that is, 46% of voters in the 2016 election—love him to the same degree that liberals loathe him. Elsewhere I have quoted Jung (1966) who said

that “hatred is tremendous cement” (pp. 5–6) to explain why Americans on the political Left and Right are stuck, glued, fastened to this president (Nelson, 2019).

On the other hand, I am *not* speaking of Donald Trump. In many respects, he is superfluous to the larger, older movements of psyche that manifest in the soul of a culture as well as the individual soul. From the lens of Jung’s “complex psychology” (Shamdasani, 2003, p. 13), the present political moment can be understood as a type of psycho-cultural wound having a distinctive mythological pattern. When the age of Trump is examined through this lens it is not adequate to think of our circumstance simply as a political situation in which citizens take sides and fight for their beliefs. Rather, we think archetypally and historically, imagining our circumstance as a cultural condition in need of psychological attention. The twisted and sick, the abusive and cruel, belong and cannot be eradicated (Hillman, 1992, p. 57). In fact, illuminating the archetypal background of our present pain renders superfluous all diagnostic labels despite the perverse fact that labels remain useful in helping us speak to one another.¹ If Americans reach backward toward a more ideal time—the presidency of Barack Obama for liberals, 1950s white patriarchy for conservatives—we are not reaching far enough. Instead, we must seek “a display of the recurring forms that do not change through time and which repeat in every age and society” (Hillman & Moore, 1989, p. 163). Then the chronic disorders of culture help citizens “become present to the timeless incurable aspects of soul” (p. 164). The discussion below begins this shift in perspective.

Cultural narcissism

Psychological terms such as narcissism, usually reserved for trait assessment of individual persons, also help explain the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of social groups. For example, a cross-cultural study of Americans and Japanese (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) reported striking differences in conceptions of the self, which has personal, social, and political implications. The “independent construal of the self” may also be labelled “individualist, egocentric, autonomous, idiocentric, and self-contained” (p. 226). The “interdependent construal of the self” emphasizes fundamental connectedness and is referred to as “sociocentric, holistic, collective ... and relational” (p. 227). Paris (2011), focusing on western culture, correlated “excessive individualism” with modernity, conjecturing that “individualistic values, if held too strongly, shade into narcissism” (p. 222). These two essays only hinted at the considerable scholarly attention devoted to the question of how individualism and narcissism affects culture.² The question has also been discussed in popular media. Wolfe (1976) noted the widespread narcissism in contemporary American culture in response to the progressive and communitarian 1960s. His *New York Magazine* essay, which popularized the phrase “the Me decade,” asserted that rising wealth afforded the possibility of self-determinism for the average American. The prevailing ethos shifted from public service, enshrined in John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address, toward preoccupation with getting ahead. Shortly thereafter, in 1979, Lasch published his bestselling book *The culture of narcissism: American life in an age of diminishing expectations*, a title that could easily describe contemporary American life 40 years later. For the purposes of this essay, Lasch made a telling point about the impact of narcissistic world leaders. They “thrive on the adulation of the masses” and, from a position of eminence, “play a conspicuous part in contemporary life” by setting the tone in both the

private and public spheres (2018, p. 231). As de Vos (2010) pointed out in his critique of Lasch,

Lasch had to distinguish the contemporary narcissist from the rugged individualist of old. If the individualist saw the world as “an empty wilderness to be shaped by his own design,” then for the narcissist, the world is a mirror. Apparently free from family ties and institutional constraints, the narcissist can only overcome his insecurity by seeing his grandiose self “reflected in the attentions of others, or by attaching himself to those who radiate celebrity, power, and charisma.” (p. 540)

Since the industrial revolution, empty wilderness has given way to built environments filled with man-made objects. In them man can contemplate the grandeur of his own achievements. What better sustenance for the narcissist?

Though care should be taken in diagnosis, people have a long history of sketching the character of their leaders, as they should. The powerful are always scrutinized by those whom they dominate, just as prey species keep a wary eye out for local predators. Vigilance is a matter of survival. Brooks (2017) noted in the *New York Times*, for example, that the Trump administration has produced “a perverse situation in which the vast analytic powers of the entire world are being spent trying to understand the guy”—but, he asks, “what if there’s no there there?” (n.p.). Brooks, a keen social observer without psychotherapeutic training or clinical experience, nonetheless spotted Trump’s vacuity, his “empty self”—a concept discussed by Cushman (1995) in *Constructing the self, constructing America*, a fine example of applying psychological insight to culture. Cushman’s description of the empty self eerily foreshadows a president whose true symbols are not a white house but a gilded high-rise on Fifth Avenue and, once upon a time, a pristine star on Hollywood’s walk of fame.³ Cushman linked the empty self “that strives, desperately, to be filled up” with “America’s consumer-based economy and its charismatically-oriented political process” (p. 79). The one without the other “would be inconceivable” (p. 79). Now psychological emptiness, personal charisma, and material success appear to be united in the figure of the American president.

Cushman’s work uniting psychological insight with cultural observation is equally apparent and highly controversial in the two bestselling books edited by Bandy X. Lee (2017, 2019). Lee’s collection of essays by dozens of mental health experts exemplify the “vast analytical power” (Brooks, 2017) that has been devoted to understanding Trump. The experts’ findings are neatly summed up in the last line of Lee’s (2017) Prologue: “Collectively and with our coauthors, we warn that anyone as mentally unstable as Mr. Trump simply should not be entrusted with the life-and-death powers of the presidency” (p. 8).

Even before Lee’s books were published, they drew considerable ire from the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA believed that the contributors were overstepping their professional boundaries by diagnosing someone from afar, thus obviating the Goldwater Rule. Two of the authors responded, “without diagnosing Trump in a specific way, as the Goldwater rule prohibits, it is not only acceptable but vitally necessary to have a public conversation about the mental state of our nation’s leader” (Lee & Glass, 2018, n.p.). The premise of psychocultural observation is that mental health experts have a right to comment on “the traits” of leaders “only in relation to the public

office he [or she] holds” (n.p.). Moreover they have a duty to do so, since expert observation contributes to “the betterment of public health” and upholds the “principles of medical ethics” (n.p.). Lifton, in his Foreword to Lee’s (2017) book, called this stance the *activist witnessing professional*. Therapeutic work addresses individual suffering as well as cultural ills as it “either affirms or questions the directions of the larger society” (p. xviii). In fact, a key premise of Jungian and archetypal psychology (Jung, 2009; Jung & Sabini, 2005; Jung & von Franz, 1964; Hillman, 1982, 1992) is that the individual cannot be divorced from her surroundings; if one is ill, both are, and the mutual wounds need to be carefully and thoroughly probed from multiple directions. Viewed in this way, the activist stance of analysts like Lifton is necessary and socially responsible, not grandiose or self-serving. As Lifton (2017) noted, publishing their expert assessment “does not make us saviors of our threatened society, but it does help us bring our experience and knowledge to bear on what threatens us and what might renew us” (p. xix).

Jungian theories of culture and politics

Jung and Jungians have offered psychological commentary on political leaders and those they purport to represent. Jung (1977), for instance, spoke candidly in a 1939 interview about the rise of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. Were Jung alive today, he would be keenly interested in Trump as a “character type” said Stein (Henderson & Stein, 2019). Stein then offered his own observations. “In Trump we see a different type of the alpha male, a titanic adolescent, undisciplined and impulsive, often comically so, with grandiose fantasies of himself as King” (Henderson & Stein, 2019, n.p.). Stein’s description is provocative, but focusing on Trump’s titanism risks missing the crucial psychocultural issue: Trump speaks for a large percentage of American people. Removing Trump only obfuscates the deeper issues, including the longstanding cultural complexes that his improbable election revealed (Singer, 2016, 2017). As painful as this moment of conflict is, Trump’s election has been a psychological boon because he has given Americans eyes with which to see. In particular, Trump as president has made visible our collective wounds and the wounds to the collective—the ways in which our cultural persona is shadowed by shameful events from the past that persist in the present.

The theory of cultural complexes, developed by Singer and Kimbles (2004), addresses the psychological working of collective life, which “more often than not has fallen into the Jungian shadow” (p. 4). Cultural complexes are built up over time and, when activated as they are now, in the era of Trump, “are lived out in group life” in addition to being “internalized in the psyche of individuals” (p. 20). Like personal complexes, they are involuntary and autonomous, “and tend to affirm a simplistic point of view that replaces more everyday ambiguity and uncertainty with fixed, often self-righteous attitudes to the world” (de Shong Meador, Samuels, & Singer, 2010, p. 234). Cultural complexes aggregate a blend of facts and alternative facts about societies and their members. “Perhaps most potent,” said Singer, “when cultural complexes are activated, very primitive, destructive affect states of fear, hatred and murderous rage—as well as more positive affect states of joy and sharing—are generated in individuals and groups of people” (p. 234). Informed Americans witness and feed on destructive affective states in their daily news feeds such as fear, hatred, and murderous rage of the other. Fixed, self-righteous attitudes are plainly evident on both sides of the political divide.

As a citizen and liberal Democrat, I feel my fear, hatred and murderous rage in private. Like many of us, these are the intolerable affects I live with each day. As a Jungian, I am obligated to accept the unpalatable fact that even though Donald Trump is not “my” president, he is the American president. To borrow from Jung (1973), we ourselves “are a conflict that rages in itself and against itself, in order to melt its incompatible substances” (p. 375). It is torturous psychocultural work. It is work for grownups.

***Puer* and *senex* in Jungian theory**

Narcissism is associated with youth, in part because the mythical Narcissus is a beautiful young man in Ovid’s (2009) *Metamorphosis* and in part because a healthy amount of self-regard is needed for the lifelong project of knowing ourselves in the midst of a demanding culture. In fact, Erikson’s (1982) developmental stages agree in spirit with Jungian individuation in that psychological aims and difficulties mutate as one ages. “It seems to me that the basic facts of the psyche undergo a very marked alteration in the course of life,” said Jung (1929/1982a), “so much so that we could almost speak of a psychology of life’s morning and a psychology of its afternoon” (p. 39). In a stronger warning, Jung (1933) declared that “we cannot live the afternoon of life according to the programme of life’s morning—for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true will at evening have become a lie” (p. 108). Whereas youth is associated with self-absorption as Narcissus was enchanted with his own reflection, individuation raises one’s eyes to the trees, then the forest, and beyond to the surrounding hills and mountains and all those who inhabit it. In the words of Hollis (2006):

Of each critical juncture of choice, one may usefully ask, “Does this path enlarge or diminish me?” Usually, we know the answer to the question. We know it intuitively, instinctively, in the gut. Choosing the path that enlarges is always going to mean choosing the path of individuation. The gods want us to grow up, to step up to that high calling that each soul carries as its destiny. (p. 15)

Although Hillman (1996) describes this same impulse as growing down rather than growing up, Hollis and Hillman agree that the soul demands growth not stagnation, which always means looking beyond the self. Individuation “must lead to more intense and broader collective relationships and not to isolation” (Jung, 1921/1971, p. 448). Echo is only one of the creatures who seeks Narcissus’s attention; the whole world is waiting. Instead, he falls into his own image and dies.

The mythical Narcissus is an archetypal *puer*, the Latin word for “youth” or “young man.” In archetypal theory he is frequently paired with the *senex*, Latin for “old man.” Although *puer* and *senex* may be employed as developmental concepts that reference linear age, they are useful in thinking about archetypal patterns of thought and behavior at any stage in life. “The *puer* suggests the possibility of a new beginning, revolution, renewal, and creativity generally,” welcome qualities whether one is 6 or 60, whereas “the *senex* refers to qualities such as balance, steadiness, generosity toward others, wisdom, farsightedness” (Samuels, 1989, p. 3), archetypally available, and perhaps necessary, at 6 or 60. In their extreme forms, *puer* and *senex* can become pathological.

Unmitigated *puer* is redolent of impatience, overspiritualization, lack of realism, naive idealism, tendencies ever to start anew, being untouched by

age, and given to flights of imagination. Pure *senex* is excessively cautious and conservative, authoritarian, obsessional, overgrounded, melancholic, and lacking imagination. (p. 3)

Samuels's emphasis on the extreme poles of thought and behavior in both patterns, *puer* and *senex*, is important cautionary information, and it is echoed in the work of Hillman.

Hillman (2005) explores archetypal *puer* and *senex* in a series of essays now collected as volume 5 of the *Uniform Works*. The *puer* has trouble with "timing and patience. It knows little of seasons and waiting" (p. 51), whereas the *senex* has learned, patience, right timing, and is willing to wait. "Commitment as duty clips the wings and binds the feet" of the *puer* (p. 56), a painful condition for one who is flighty. On the other hand, the visionary boldness of the *puer*, his insouciance, is essential to the creative process. He is associated to birth, new life, and Spring; the *senex*, an Autumnal figure, "presides over the harvest" (p. 37). Hence Hillman's critical point: *puer* and *senex* function best in tandem, although not without tension.

Psychologically, when the *puer* is disconnected from its archetypal complement, the *senex*, the result is dangerously one-sided and impulsive thought and behavior. Attacks on authoritative sources, expertise, and professionalism manifest resistance to the *senex*, the one who thinks before speaking, weighs alternatives before deciding, and considers the consequences of his choices for all. Part of the cultural resistance to the *senex* is inability or unwillingness to envision long-term moral, social, and political consequences. We have little imagination of the harvest. Whereas this breadth of vision requires slowness and patience, Western culture is enraptured with speed. As a result, few are tending the delicate organic balance that is America, with a long view towards what we are sowing and what we will eventually reap. In words that have political and cultural relevance for the Trump era, Hillman (2005) says, "we struggle with the psychological connections between past and future, old and new, expressed archetypally as the polarity of *senex* and *puer*" (p. 31).

The missing third?

The *puer-senex* tandem discussed at length by Hillman (2005) is a fitting counterpoint to the mother-son tandem emphasized by Jung (1954/1969c): the *puer* is a heroic son whose successful struggle for consciousness is a "life-delivering escape from the primal warmth and primal darkness of the maternal womb; in a word, from unconsciousness" (p. 96). Neumann (1955/1983), who extended classical Jungian theory, focused an entire book on *The great mother*.

Whether as son-hero or son-lover of the Great Goddess, the *puer* is male. The closest linguistic equivalent is *puella*, Latin for girl, which is akin to the Greek *kore*, the maiden who is the youthful aspect of a woman. Mythically and psychologically *puella* and *kore* are not paired with the *senex*. In fact, it is rare for females to be generationally paired at all—Athene, as her father's daughter, being the noteworthy exception—since the archetypal and developmental female pattern favors threes. Even when a strong mother-daughter theme emerges in stories such as the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (Boer, 1970), there is another female figure in the background symbolizing a third generation, a wise woman, elder, or crone. The young woman or girl is one part of a complete female triad, maiden-mother-crone, symbolizing all stages of biological life, derived from earth-based religions centered on a goddess (Haruach, 2008, p. 381).⁴ Mythological sources offer no

male equivalent, no male triad, excepting Laertes (*senex*), Odysseus (*pater*), and Telemachus (*puer*), who are separated from one another by time and geographical distance long before their reunion in the *Odyssey* (1996). Instead, pairs are prominent: *puer-senex* (two males) or *puer-mother* (male and female).

Pairs and triads are different mythically and energetically. Triads, or the third, figure prominently in Jungian thought as a reconciliation of opposites (Jung, 1957/1969d), the volatile uniting substance in alchemy (Jung, 1955–1956/1970), and the creative space of therapeutic work (Jung, 1946/1982b). Discovering the third is a psychological achievement, the recognition of a middle way that offers another quality of thinking and being. It is “the place of soul,” Hillman (1992) told us, “a world of imagination, passion, fantasy, reflection that was neither physical and material on the one hand, nor spiritual and abstract on the other, yet bound to them both” (p. 68). Because it is its own realm or space, “psyche has its own logic—psychology—which is neither a science of physical things nor a metaphysics of spiritual things” (p. 68). Psyche itself symbolizes the third.

Discovering the third may, in fact, be rediscovery, finding what has been lost. Thirds and threes call to mind the humble yet sturdy three-legged stool, useful for sitting close to the earth as our ancestors did for millennia. In calling attention to the third, it seems rather obvious that the male tandem emphasized in archetypal psychology, *puer-senex*, is an unstable pair when imagined alongside the female triad maiden-mother-crone. The key question is *What is the missing figure in the male pattern that corresponds to the mother in the female pattern?* The answer is that the father (Latin, *pater*), provides the missing figure. *Pater* is an image of generation and generativity. Without *pater*, the male tandem literally names the playful, mutable boy child and the stern, brittle elder but without the middle stage of fathering that relates them to one another and also introduces a related quality in the pattern.⁵ Inserting *pater* into the *puer-senex* dyad draws attention to when, where, and how *eros* is expressed across all three ages from youth to old man. It is politically relevant in the elder male, the age of most elites, because the *senex* without fathering is different from the crone, whose pattern connects her to mothering. Their wisdom manifests differently.

The Latin word *trivia*, which describes the three-fold female pattern maiden-mother-crone, suggests how the wisdom of the crone is different from the *senex*. *Trivialis* means “of the street, common, usual, and everyday. In European languages trivial denotes—commonplace, common, trite, ordinary, rubbish, trifle, of little worth or importance” (Popovic, 2008, p. 389). Trivia is easily overlooked, yet trivia is catnip for depth psychologists. Where people neglect to look is frequently the source of treasure in dreams and in life.⁶ There is much about actual fathering (and mothering) that is common and ordinary: wiping a child’s runny nose, preparing a snack, helping him with homework, listening to her laments. As a culture we denigrate ordinary tasks, yet family life is constituted by such trivia. The man who knows the trivia of fathering understands the deep ground of relatedness: he is shaped by the lived experience of vast responsibility accompanied by vast humility. Actual fathering is far removed from the exalted spheres of political gamesmanship because nothing will destroy the illusion of control more quickly than pacing the floors of a hospital emergency room while a child’s life hangs in the balance.

Toxic masculinity, dominance hierarchies, and the “Dark Triad”

Without the related and generative archetypal pattern of *pater*, whose guiding principles include beneficence, a lacuna opens for toxic masculinity. As an academic concept in women’s studies curricula, toxic masculinity “has been around forever” (Salam, 2019, n.p.). In the Trump era, it has gained popular attention and controversial social acceptance. The Good Men Project defined toxic masculinity as

a narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status and aggression. It’s the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything while emotions are a weakness; where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured, while supposedly “feminine” traits—which can range from emotional vulnerability to simply not being hypersexual—are the means by which your status as “man” can be taken away. (O’Malley, 2016, n.p.)

In toxic masculinity, sex is conquest, and women are property. Since aggression and violence establish superior manhood, it is clear that adherents of toxic masculinity view the world as a dominance hierarchy. Life is deadly serious predation, a zero-sum game in which winning is the only goal. Generosity, beneficence and generativity never enter into it. Veering between *puer* grandiosity and *senex* cruelty, those who play this game do their utmost to exert control over what they perceive as weakness and chaos, both of which are coded female.

Fontelieu (2018) describes the political tenor of the last two decades as the resurfacing of “a kind of hypermasculine leadership” and “neoconservative undercurrent” (p. 1). I fully agree—and argue that the two go hand-in-glove. Sustaining a dominance hierarchy justifies all manner of manipulation because those who rise to the top of the political, social and economic heap are winners and, by definition, the fittest. Dominance hierarchy is also supported by the presumption of entitlement: whatever I have the power to take is mine to have, by any means necessary. Historically, America’s sense of entitlement is enshrined in the concept of Manifest Destiny, which reached its zenith about a century ago during the presidency of Teddy Roosevelt (Bederman, 1995). Entitlement is also at the core of the #metoo movement, in which powerful men have abused their positions to treat others as objects that they can play with at will—and without consequence. The #metoo movement reveals a key aspect of toxic masculinity and malignant narcissism: profound relational incapacity that manifests as the presumption that others are objects, not people, who can and ought to be manipulated at will. Although women clearly suffer in such a system, vulnerable men do, too, which means any man who values and expresses so-called feminine emotionality and personal qualities of kindness, compassion, love, and self-sacrifice. Toxic masculinity works alongside conservative, repressive patriarchy to put “the feminine”—wherever and by whomever it is expressed—in its proper place.

Of course the contemporary resurgence of repressive patriarchy was certainly not the first time when winning at all costs was valorized. For that we need to look 400 years earlier at Machiavelli’s (1532/2005) treatise *The Prince*. In fact, describing American culture as “narcissistic” is inadequate. The prominence of toxic masculinity and the rise of white supremacist hate crimes (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019, p. 1) attests that something deeper and much darker is at work. A cluster of related personality disorders,

narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, which clinicians call the “Dark Triad,” has more cultural explanatory power.

The Dark Triad was given its name by Paulhus and Williams (2002) due to the “high degree of theoretical similarity in the conceptualizations of psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism” (Stellwagen, 2011, p. 26). All three disorders revolve around egotism and antisocial behavior. Machiavellianism, like malignant narcissism, is “an insatiable drive for power and adulation” (Mika, 2017, p. 299) in which ruthlessness and deception are standard, acceptable practices (Stellwagen, 2011, p. 35). Other power theorists throughout history offered advice similar to Machiavelli’s, but *The Prince* “provided a uniquely illuminating inner glimpse of the psychology of interpersonal exploitation” (p. 35). Machiavelli’s view of humanity was transparently cynical and entirely rejected traditional morality as a guide to social and political behavior. It is an operational philosophy of callous expediency. Others are not merely objects to be manipulated; they are resources to be abused and ultimately destroyed when they have no more value. (Shortly, we shall see that this is true even between fathers and their children.) Thus, although narcissism describes the character of our twenty-first century putative princes, Machiavellianism better attunes us to their zero-sum worldview—and the behavioral outcome as they shape international politics as well as the fate of the planet. How are such zero-sum fields constituted? Custodians of patriarchy past and present (Goldberg, 1973; Stevens, 1982; Peterson, 2018) argue that dominance hierarchies are natural and necessary; without them, the world would degenerate into chaos. True, there are numerous examples of hierarchies in nature. In many of them, displays of dominance are important to maintaining order. In the last 6,000 years of recorded human history, patriarchy—in its simplest definition, “rule of the fathers”—is the dominant dominance hierarchy. Patriarchy has so dominated culture that some individuals seem to think that it is natural and right, the only legitimate form of social organization. The king is dead; long live the king, so long he can mandate order out of chaos.

Toxic masculinity and gender uncertainty

I would like to point out what will probably be obvious to all: One person’s chaos is another person’s diversity. To conservative, probably religious, and straight-laced Americans, heteronormative gender conformity is “orderly.” Anything else is chaotic. After all, if toxic masculinity and patriarchy both require sexual dimorphism and gender binaries to create social order and maintain the superior rights and status of males, then challenges to beliefs about sex, gender, and society are, by definition, a threat. They create anxiety. The nostalgic longing for regression to simpler, less confusing times makes psychological sense even as it perpetuates systematic misogyny and feeds toxic masculinity. Those of us like me who welcome gender diversity and fluidity and thought that it would simply continue were naïve. Wiser Jungians, which includes me now, explain the resurgence of dominance hierarchies to control chaos as a compensatory psychological regression. The resurgence is the longing (by some) for a return to strict, orderly sexual dimorphism and white-male dominance—which was never a fact but was, and is, a potent fantasy (for some).

To understand rather than condemn the nostalgia inscribed in movements such as “Make America Great Again,” Samuels’s (1989) theory of gender certainty and uncertainty are helpful. Samuels began by wisely stating that “it is hard to write flexibly and fluidly

about what is flexible and fluid” (p. 94). He was speaking of “our current preoccupation with gender” 30 years ago (p. 94). Yet the same danger, “that we might become too clear and too organized” in our gender theories, applies today and, I argue, for the same reason: conscious gender clarity can be

a reaction formation to the inevitable anxiety (and guilt) we experience at finding that what we thought was solid and fixed is perforated and shifting. Humanity is not just divided into women and men but also into those who are certain about gender and those who are confused about gender. (p. 94)

Samuels advocated leaving in “suspension” the “question of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ ... even, and the word is used advisedly, in some confusion” (p. 94). Some gender confusion “is a necessary antidote to gender certainty and has its own creative contribution to make” (p. 97). Among other things, gender confusion helps shred the gender scripts, or at least prompt questions about what is posited as “natural” and “right,” to encourage gender fluidity and gender play. Yet gender fluidity is precisely what threatens the institutionalized dominance hierarchy known as patriarchy and erodes the justification for toxic masculinity. Neither can withstand the anxiety and instability of gender confusion.

The cultural transformation wrought by feminists and LGBTQ activists in the last few decades is immense. Cultural transformation has been furthered by advances in medical technology that facilitate remaking the sexed human body in ways that challenge strict sexual dimorphism. Moreover, contesting the biological categories “male” and “female” can intensify uncertainties about traditional gender classification. If male and female—biological distinctions that once seemed so manifestly clear, unchanging, and self-evident—are now fluid, then gender must necessarily be even more so. What do “masculine” and “feminine” really mean and to whom do they apply? Any thoughtful person engaging with these issues readily perceives how gender uncertainty can breed anxiety about how one is supposed to live and act in the social world. As Samuels (1989) suggested, unconscious gender uncertainty can foment conscious and aggressive gender clarity as a reaction formation whereby the rigidity of one’s displayed attitudes about gender is a measure of one’s dissociated fear.

Nearly three decades ago, Butler (1990/2006) asked, “is the breakdown of gender binaries... so monstrous, so frightening?” (pp. viii-ix) For many social conservatives today, the answer is yes. The restoration of social order and national greatness goes hand-in-hand with distinct gender roles: men and women know their proper place *as* men and women and *in* the social hierarchy—and they remain there, teaching the next generation its proper place. Gender uncertainty is the monstrous idea that must be killed as Marduk heroically slayed the female monster Tiamat in the ancient Babylonian creation story *Enuma Elish* (Dalley, 2009). Toxic masculinity is Marduk in modern dress: a coercive cultural movement in which modern-day alphas use aggression and violence to maintain dominance hierarchies.

Seeking Machiavelli’s kin: Classical origin stories and the tyrannical father

Depth psychologists attuned to archetypal patterns like dominance hierarchies and zero-sum thinking notice the continual flux of belief systems over time and across cultures. From a Foucauldian perspective, the broad movements in culture are *discourses* that underscore, share, and perpetuate distinctive ideologies. Such ideological discourses are so

powerful, however, that adherents take them to be reality, not a discourse. They grow blind and deaf to other coterminous discourses and suffer from the monotheistic disease that persuades them that *their* story is *the* story. They have all the facts; the rest is just fake news.

For example, when looking broadly at Western intellectual history we can detect traces of both Heraclitus and Hesiod in Machiavelli's political advice. The 130 fragmentary statements by Heraclitus (Wheelwright, 1959), all that is left of a scroll he deposited at the temple at Ephesus, are considered foundational to the Western intellectual tradition. Before the sixth century BCE, "there are virtually no evidences of anything that could be properly called philosophy" (p. 3). Heraclitus asserted that strife, war, or conflict "is both the father and king of all" (fragment 25, p. 29) and that "all things come to pass through the compulsion of strife" (fragment 26, p. 29), declarations that contemporary Machiavellians would find agreeable. In the absence of strife, "all things would cease to exist" (fragment 27, p. 29). Those same Machiavellians might be less sanguine with Heraclitus's philosophical theme of unceasing change since it threatens their dream of perpetual dominance. "Everything gives way and nothing stays fixed," Heraclitus declares in fragment 20, which, according to Wheelwright, means that "what we call [perceive as] permanent is simply an example of change in slow motion or in hidden guise" (pp. 29, 30).

Heraclitus expressed his philosophy of conflict approximately 200 years after the appearance of Hesiod's (1988) *Theogony*, circa 800 BCE. Described as a "Succession Myth" (p. xi), *Theogony* narrates the creation of the world by personified divine powers who symbolize the physical universe. Heaven, Earth, Sea, the Mountains, the Rivers, the Sun and Moon "are treated as gods and put in a genealogical relationship with the rest. Genealogy thus takes the place of cosmogony" (1988, p. x). In the first generation, Heaven (Ouranous) mates with Gaia (Earth) to give birth to the race of Titans. Heaven and Earth, the first generation, is overcome by the second generation, the Titans, who are in turn overcome by the next generation, the Olympians. Hesiod's succession myth "is a story of crude and bizarre acts of violence, of gods castrating, swallowing, and generally clobbering each other" (p. xii). West, who translated Hesiod's (1988) tale, did not make explicit that the "crude and bizarre acts of violence" are perpetrated by *fathers*. In fact, if the first father, Ouranous, had had his way, there would have been no next generation and no generativity. There would have been no father or fathering. Instead, the tyrannical ruler would have become the first male to treat his female mate (the world) as a convenient object to be dominated for his sexual pleasure.

Like other endeavors in psycho-cultural analysis, this essay links archetypal patterns of thought and behavior found in the mythic tradition to contemporary events. Clearly, pointing out the missing father in the *puer-senex* tandem is ripe territory for scholarly investigation.⁷ Such investigation must extend far beyond the toxicity of any single political leader. Instead, the task is to seek the larger story that can inform long-term depth psychological citizenship and nurture our "capacity for destiny" (Dunlap, 2008, p. 14). An archetypal perspective frames the question this way: which gods are present in our contemporary political dis-ease, and how shall we listen? Amplifying our understanding in this manner will, I hope, lead to a more generous and soulful sense of the strife that besets us.

Theogony tells us that “Earth bore first of all one equal to herself, starry Heaven” then mated with him to produce “the most fearsome of children” (Hesiod, 1988, p. 6). From the beginning, however, “their own father loathed them ... As soon as each of them was born, he hid them all away in a cavern of Earth, and would not let them into the light; and he took pleasure in the wicked work, did Heaven, while the huge Earth was tight pressed inside, and groaned” (p. 7). In response, Gaia created a great sickle out of adamant and addressed her children: “Children of mine and of an evil father, I wonder whether you would like to do as I say? We could get redress for your father’s cruelty. After all, he began it by his ugly behavior” (p. 8). Her son Kronos agreed to help, whereupon Gaia “set him hidden in ambush, put the sharp-toothed sickle into his hand, and explained the whole strategem” (p. 8). When Ouranos “desirous of love ... spread himself over Earth,” Kronos followed his mother’s plan: “he took the huge sickle with its long row of sharp teeth and quickly cut off his father’s genitals, and flung them behind him” (p. 8).

One may wonder what Kronos the son learned about fathering from Ouranos. Kronos’s behavior toward Rhea, his sister, mate, and fellow Titan, duplicates the Ouranos pattern almost to the letter. “Rhea, surrendering to Kronos, bore resplendent children” (Hesiod, 1988, p. 16). Kronos swallowed them all, one by one, except Zeus, who was preserved only through Rhea’s stratagem.

None but he of the lordly Celestials should have the royal station among the immortals. For he learned from Earth and starry Heaven that it was fated for him to be defeated by his own child, powerful though he was, through the designs of great Zeus. So he kept no blind man’s watch, but observed and swallowed his children. (pp. 16–17)

Speaking psychologically, we see a repeated pattern of fathering that is selfish and undermining rather than generous and related. It does not end there. Zeus, who helped defeat his father Kronos, recapitulated this father pattern with his first great wife, the Titaness Metis. He was warned that Metis will give birth to a clever child, “a pale-eyed daughter, Tritogeneia [Athena], with courage and sound counsel equal to her father’s, and then a son she was to bear, king of gods and men, one proud of heart” (p. 29). Zeus, concerned about the birth of an equal and then a potential successor, circumvented this outcome by swallowing Metis, his mate.

When she was about to give birth to the pale-eyed goddess Athene, he tricked her deceitfully with cunning words and put her away in his belly on the advice of Earth and starry Heaven ... so that no other of the gods, the eternal fathers, should have the royal station instead of Zeus. (p. 29)

Zeus clearly learned something from the experiences of his father and grandfather: The greatest danger to tyrannical rule arises from angry, clever, and bold females. Rather than deal with Metis’s potential rage as an external opponent, Zeus swallows her, symbolically incorporating her wisdom. Their child Athena is born from Zeus’s forehead, remains a virginal father’s daughter, and gives birth to no rival. Instead, she takes his part to consolidate the Olympian patriarchy and “ensures that [Zeus’s] power is secure forever” (p. 71). Zeus, another patriarch who feels entitled to appropriate his mate in the most literal way possible—swallowing the pregnant Metis whole—may have created the first “father’s daughter.” The provocative question remains: what other creative possibilities, including the genuine child of a mother and a father, did he thereby lose?⁸

Conclusion: The emergence of the generative father

This essay has adopted the pathological eye to explore the archetypal background of our present communal strife. The pathological eye, however, can miss the generous and compassionate exercise of power elsewhere in our communities. The key point is that no eye, whether attuned to pathology or to health, sees the whole picture. Any attempt at psycho-cultural analysis must be modest for at least two reasons. First, we join with other disciplines to understand and explain political events; analysis is a conversation with many threads. Second, as depth psychologists, we acknowledge that the deep structure of the psyche is archetypal, that is, organized in patterns, which are “modes of apprehension” (Jung, 1919/1969a, p. 137). The archetypal basis of perception asserts that we see differently depending upon context, situation, and players. An eye for generativity may support the emergence of the *pater* as the third necessary figure in the *puer-senex* tandem.

The psychocultural lens I have used in this essay bridges history, mythology, cultural studies, and psychology. By going deep, psychocultural analysis helped us think more clearly about both fathering and leadership over the long and complex-ridden history of our species to show the crucial difference between toxic patriarchs and generative fathers. Examining ancient mythic patterns reveals a wound at the heart of the western tradition—fathers who dominate their mates as sexual objects and destroy their children rather than nurture them. Recognizing the absence of the related, generative father in the *puer-senex* dyad and imagining the *pater* as the missing third begins to assuage this wound. It is a new model of twenty-first-century leadership. It may even be possible to re-vision patriarchy itself, transforming it from a dominance hierarchy into a system of social relations centered upon an ethic of respect and care. Integrating *pater* into the *puer-senex* tandem—as well as recognizing the generative, ethical fathering that is already occurring in our communities—could be archetypal medicine for the contemporary sickness of narcissism and Machiavellianism, offering a new standard of male behavior and a new definition of masculinity to replace the regressive 1950s fantasy of turgid patriarchy. The generative father, the *pater*, stabilizes the *puer-senex* tandem in the same way that a three-legged stool can stand. *Puer-pater-senex*, like the female triad maiden-mother-crone, is a more complete image of psychological development.

Jung urged us “to conceive of death as a goal and a fulfillment” (1934/1969b, p. 405) that is “pregnant with meaning” (p. 409). The toxic, tyrannical father resists death through empire building. He attempts to consolidate himself as the center of his own created order in a misguided effort to approximate immortality. The generative father accepts death by dispersing himself through loving service. He understands dissolution as nature’s way, and follows his soul’s trajectory downward to embody earth-centered wisdom.

Contributor

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Notes

¹ Diagnostic labels can start conversation, but they carry a hidden danger of simplifying and reducing lived experience. Hillman (1992) describes this as the temptation of nominalism (pp. 58–61) in which naming and categorical definitions, seemingly clear and descriptive, serve to deprive person and situation of their subtle, complex, and soulful dimensions.

² Interested readers might begin with the work of de Toqueville (1835/2000) who described the outcome of individualism as “leaving society at large to itself” (p. 98). More recently, Bellah et al. (1985) asserted that the divide between public and private experience undermines democracy because few individuals actively participate in political life. Feminists who recognize this problem include Gilligan (1993) and Miller (1986). For a comprehensive review of this history, see Dunlap (2008), *Awakening our faith in the future: The advent of psychological liberalism*.

³ Trump’s star, which has drawn intense controversy since he announced his candidacy for president, is a symbolic place where supporters and detractors express their views. For more information, see <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-trump-hollywood-star-20181209-story.html>.

⁴ The female pattern maiden-mother-crone and goddess-centered religions are contested historical facts but of enduring importance as archetypal fantasy; goddess traditions are a potent inspiration for some contemporary men and women.

⁵ Cautious readers will detect that I am indulging in gender essentialism and assuming, for the moment, that the male developmental pattern speaks primarily to men whereas the female developmental pattern speaks primarily to women. This provisional assumption is worthy of a deeper look, which I undertake in a future work.

⁶ In Latin, however, *trivia* refers specifically to the place where three roads meet. In our tradition this immediately calls to mind Oedipus, the myth that conferred its name to the central archetypal pattern identified by Freud: patricide. At “the place where three roads meet”, said Sophocles, Oedipus fulfilled his Fate by killing his biological father, Laius—without knowing what he did. Using association and amplification, two key moves in Jungian dream work (Whitmont & Perera, 1992), we move from *puer-senex* to *puella* to maiden-mother-crone to the *trivia* to the place where three roads meet to Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex* to Oedipus’s patricide to Freud’s Oedipus complex and the desire to kill the father to the absent father in patriarchy back to the *puer-senex*.

⁷ As an example of the theoretical work that remains to be done, consider the phrase “devouring father.” Mythologists and depth psychologists, particularly Jungians, make much of the devouring mother as an archetypal pattern but I can recall no reference to the devouring father, which is another way of describing the subject of this essay.

⁸ I have limited this discussion of archetypal fathers to the Greek mythological tradition. In an earlier rendition of the essay (June 2018), I noted that the Judeo-Christian pattern describes a patriarch who shares some similarities with Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus. “Almighty God” the father is punitive and unforgiving in the original testament (Genesis 1 & 2). In the New Testament, he consents to the suffering and sacrifice of his only son Jesus, but is unrelated to a wife, consort, or lover, a putative mother figure to Jesus and has

nothing to do with fathering. Instead, the Holy Spirit inseminates Mary, the mother of Jesus. The historical Jesus, as far as scholars can tell, was a male figure with a well-integrated feminine side; that is, in scripture he exemplifies many so-called feminine traits, including compassion, gentleness and love, and attracted the unyielding devotion of female disciples. Before Jesus could literally become a generative father with biological progeny, the toxic patriarchy of Rome—a civilization characterized by hyper-masculinity—sentenced him to death.

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“Aperture” by John Dotson

Shapeshifter

Carol Burbank

i

We are all shapeshifters,
but we take our skin as stone,
and command the world to change
to mirror, imaginary.

Human folly, this
empty consistency,
this blank unchanging face
we make mask, we make God.

Greatness, we say, is being
one form to the world, and the soul
tells us so when we dream
when we are young and small,
and hope to stay
there we stay there.
But there is no there there.

Still, the net we weave catches us,
rewards the wholly one thing
when we are it, until it is The self,
until it is the only road to the dying sea,
until thick ropes catch us,
no comfort, no way home,
and we drown.

so madness is the art of a singular story.
the shrinking, suffering soul
salted with regret, dissolves:
I could have been
so many ways walking.
the shapeshifter gift
pales into jokester trick,
played only on ourselves

if we forget
many nature
free soul
we are lost

ii

In the womb's brine,
when we open our blue blue eyes
and know, for the first time,
there is no story that holds us,
only the dance of the flesh
in which we dangle,

we are only soul
and so we are
at once all things:
fish, lizard, bird, bear, fox, girl, boy
light and pulse and what we call darkness

then contract and then flood
the story net grips
but the lucky learn –
it is not a noose but a ladder,
and we are in one skin many,
shapeshifter born,
story masters

some never forgot
most only need to remember....

iii

So imagine the Kracken,
great beast serving the Gods
purifier of seas, mother of the dead sailor,
welcome pull of the wine-black below.

Remember yourself in her,
the undulating current your wake,
your vastness shrinking frigates to dories,
and dories to dust. She is your voice
when you speak truth to power,
when you deny nothing,
own everything.

She is the octopus in every orgasm,
the bright unknown, spark in the dark
that surfaces, larger and shining
until the water boils with her motion,
and there you are, awake and funneling,
so huge that the only answer
is yes.

iv

Imagine Cerridwen,
seasoning her life-birthing cauldron
with an impish, driven twitch
of her herby fingers
wrinkled with magic.

Remember yourself in her,
the ancient child, the bearing branch
all alive in your heart and hands
as you shape the cinnamon scented air
of your life, day by day stirring
sugar, salt, bitter, good.

She is you are all ways
the three-bodied maker of your world:
child, parent, crone,
all spirit and all body,
dancing the dragon and the damsel fly
and time takes nothing from you,
shudders with pleasure when you
lift your feral eye
to the spinning clock.

v

Imagine Inanna,
born in beauty, man and woman both,
so bright her uncle gives her all his all,
wisdom, knowledge, riches,
seeing in her the ruler born.

Remember yourself in her,
the strength of your arm
and the gentle feather of a touch
that opens the heart of the dawn.
Wanting nothing, in yourself all
lives, reaching for the hand
of love, the with without we die.

You are man and woman
born in one soul to rule.
the questions you ask
ring knowing and choosing,
choosing and the known and the emergent
and the castle that falls as it rises.

king and queen, your transmuting beauty
is always ready to answer,
lead you to the water of freedom.

vi

Imagine
who and what you will...
let your body be a laughing lie
that holds a thousand, a thousand,
a prism for the shapeshifter born,
selves upon selves, and the soul
released, owning each in each
self and self

we are wilderness
we make ourselves
or we are undone



“Imperfect Mirror” by John Dotson

Emergence Through Playwriting: Jung, Drama, and Creative Practice

Bianca Reynolds

Abstract: Jungian artistic criticism is a thriving field of scholarship, with strong representation in the literature across numerous disciplines. However, there is relatively little Jungian representation in critical studies of dramatic writing. This essay adopts the dual perspectives of playwright and dramatic critic to argue for the utility of a Jungian theoretical framework for the creation and analysis of play texts. Such utility is demonstrated through analysis of a case study genre, termed the “contemporary family homecoming drama.” C. G. Jung’s theories of individuation and the psychological complex provide the theoretical framework for this discussion, along with a post-Jungian understanding of emergence theory. The central argument is substantiated via critical case studies of Tracy Letts’s *August: Osage County* and *Eventide*, an original play. This essay proposes a model for a Jungian playwriting methodology, transferable to other playwrights wishing to create drama within a Jungian framework.

Keywords: playwriting, contemporary family homecoming drama, C. G. Jung, analytical psychology, complex, individuation, emergence

Introduction

As contemporary scholarship demonstrates, C. G. Jung’s analytical psychology offers a unique and viable lens through which to interpret works of art. Jungian literary criticism, for example, is a thriving vein of inquiry, with numerous representations in the literature. Examples of texts receiving this analytical treatment include Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (Dawson 25–34), Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (Moores 71–82), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” (Fike, *One* 21–26), Jack London’s short stories (McClintock 336–47), and Haruki Murakami’s *Kafka on the Shore* (Martinez 56–65). Jungian film criticism is a similarly fruitful discipline, yielding thoughtful psychological critiques of films as diverse as Alfred Hitchcock’s *Strangers on a Train* (Palmer, “Hitchcock’s” 266–75), Roman Polanski’s *Chinatown* (Hockley, *Frames* 48–61), Jane Campion’s *The Piano* (Dougherty 227–42), Darren Aronofsky’s *The Wrestler* (Lennihan 243–52), and Tom Hooper’s *The King’s Speech* (Palmer, *King’s* 68–85), to name only a few.

Because of its disciplinary similarities to both traditional literature and to film, the medium of playwriting would seem to lend itself to Jungian critical interpretation in much the same manner. However, a survey of the scholarly literature reveals limited examples of published Jungian critiques of dramatic texts. There is evidence of Jungian ideas being employed in some critical readings of classic Greek plays (Edinger 67–89) and Shakespearean plays (Aronson 1–343; Coursen 1–217; Edinger 9–66; Fike, *Jungian* 1–203; Mikics 531; Porterfield 1–136; Rowland, *Ecocritical* 127–53; Rowland, “Shakespeare” 31–46; Tucker 1–175). However, it appears that the Jungian interpretive

paradigm has not been employed with any real consistency and rigor in studies of dramatic text, particularly post-Shakespearean dramatic text. Indeed, the literature reports that psychological criticism of dramatic writing and its neighboring forms traditionally favors the Freudian school of psychoanalysis. Freud is granted primary status in psychological criticism of literature (Delahoyde, par. 1; Rapaport 41), dramatic writing (especially Shakespearean) (Mikics 529), and theater and performance (Campbell 2–3; Fortier 86–87; Mikics 536; Pellegrini, par. 1; Wright, “Psychoanalysis” 175–90). As a practicing playwright I am interested in redressing this lack of Jungian representation, with a particular emphasis on studies of playwriting. Whereas film and literary criticism have both evolved to include a uniquely Jungian interpretive tradition, which can stand alongside its Freudian counterpart in each case, such evolution is lacking in my own discipline. It is my contention that Jungian psychology offers many unique theoretical principles that can not only deepen and expand psychological readings of dramatic texts in innovative and informative ways but also act as a fruitful conceptual basis for the writing of new drama.

Given the almost infinite thematic and structural variability of dramatic texts, this essay focuses on one genre as an example. I term this genre the “contemporary family homecoming drama.” A rarely examined sub-genre of family tragedy, and sharing some characteristics with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s “bourgeois tragedy” as described by Fleming (44–70), contemporary family homecoming dramas are psychologically realist plays in which estranged adult siblings return to the home they grew up in, at the demise of the patriarch or matriarch. Their reunions are characterized by immense relational tension, which derives from the surfacing of old wounds, rivalries, and long-held secrets. I use “contemporary” to refer to plays written in the last thirty years; that is, they are contemporary at the time of their critical analysis. Plays currently in this tradition include *The Memory of Water* by Shelagh Stephenson, *Radiance* by Louis Nowra, and *Hotel Sorrento* by Hannie Rayson. A noteworthy recent example is Tracy Letts’s *August: Osage County*, which won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

This essay provides Jungian case studies of both *August: Osage County* and my own original family homecoming drama, *Eventide*. In undertaking my critical analysis of these texts, I have drawn primarily on Jung’s theories of complexes and individuation, as well as invoking a post-Jungian understanding of emergence theory. Understanding these principles from Jungian and post-Jungian psychology allows for a deeper appreciation of character and relationship when analyzing plays within the family homecoming tradition, in which psychological complexes and individuation themes pervade. Moreover, an understanding of how characters may be governed by their psychological complexes and by their journeys of individuation provides Jungian-oriented playwrights with a unique toolkit for creating psychologically credible characters with complex and compelling relationships, thereby elevating the drama. As this paper will demonstrate, complex, individuation and emergence theory together provide a viable theoretical framework in which to critique and generate works of family drama. In particular, a post-Jungian understanding of emergence theory offers a powerful lens through which to appreciate the transcendent character of such plays, both for their content and for the manner of their creation.

Jungian Complexes and the Contemporary Family Homecoming Drama

Jung defines psychological complexes as clusters of emotional and intellectual association around a common thematic core (Jacobi 8–9; Miller, par. 1; Noll 357; Ulanov 306). They are autonomous, unconscious contents highly charged with emotion and, when triggered, are prone to cause unexpected affective outbursts in the individual who possesses them (CW 9i, par. 497). A readily understandable example, and one with thematic resonances for this discussion of the family homecoming drama, is the mother complex. In the mother complex, an individual unconsciously groups together all experiences of his or her own mother, as well as the universal, timeless (that is, archetypal) concept of “Mother,” forming a hub of psychological understanding, a summary conception of what Mother means to him or her. Whether the person’s experiences of m/Mother have been predominantly negative or positive will determine the emotional tone of his or her maternal complex. A person with a negative mother complex, born of negative associations with the personal and archetypal m/Mother, may be triggered into hostile or defensive behaviors when in his or her mother’s presence, or even when the idea of motherhood is raised in conversation with others. Jung explains that the “supreme example” of a negative mother complex is one in which a child exhibits an “overwhelming resistance to maternal supremacy,” being driven by the motto, “Anything, so long as it is not like Mother!” (CW 9i, par. 170). By contrast, a person with a positive mother complex, born of positive associations with the personal and archetypal m/Mother, will likely experience positive emotions when presented with his or her own or the archetypal Mother, and respond accordingly.

Complexes, maternal and otherwise, are highly visible in the characters who populate family homecoming dramas. Crucially, a character’s familial and childhood complexes, born of his or her cumulative interactions with parents and siblings during his or her formative years, are activated in the return to the family home. I argue that the family home functions symbolically in these plays, standing for childhood roles and dynamics, the dependent state of family identity. It is the realm in which the parents still rule, and in which the second-generation characters are forced back into a deferent relational state. This imposition of hierarchy creates significant tension, since the adult children experience the return to the family home as an unnatural regression. The reassumption of childhood roles awakens their hostility, and they forcefully reject the pull back to the dependent state and its negative associations.

This hostile rejection can be seen, for example, in the Australian family homecoming drama *Radiance*, by Louis Nowra, in which three Indigenous half-sisters reunite in their mother’s home in North Queensland at the time of her funeral. Long absent from her childhood home, sister Cressy in particular exhibits discomfort upon her return. The playwright describes her as seeming “tense, uneasy to be back in the house” (6). Cressy’s behavior here can be read as evidence of a dormant complex being activated by exposure to an environment that holds powerful, negative associations for her. Such a reading is substantiated by the revelation, late in the play, that the house is in fact the site of a major trauma in Cressy’s past: her rape and impregnation by one of her mother’s many boyfriends (53–54). The scars from this formative experience have substantially contributed to her negative complexes around both motherhood and her family home.

Similarly, sister Mary in Shelagh Stephenson’s *The Memory of Water* experiences deep unease in returning to her childhood home in Yorkshire and is particularly

uncomfortable at having to sleep in her late mother's bed (Stephenson 8–9, 37, 79). This discomfort indicates that the house and all that it represents to her continue to exist at the level of unintegrated complex material. That the house wields psychic power over Mary shows in her comment: "Everything I look at makes me want to cry. I see things and a life unravels in front of my eyes. I can't sleep for remembering" (38). Like Cressy in *Radiance*, Mary's defensive reaction to her environment is justified when the play reveals the traumatic experiences she suffered there, which she still struggles to integrate years later. In particular, mother Vi's insistence that Mary give up the son she had as a teenager fuels her negative mother complex. The resentment she feels toward Vi manifests in a visceral fear and distaste in the present, with Mary complaining that her mother's bed is "full of bits of skin and hair that belong to her," which make her "feel uncomfortable" (9).

An uneasy or panicked reaction to the family home is just one example of complex material that frequently appears in family homecoming plays, demonstrating how unresolved trauma and decades-old disputes can still trigger violent emotional and/or bodily responses to an environment charged with negative psychological associations.

Jungian Individuation and the Contemporary Family Homecoming Drama

Jung's theory of individuation is similarly central to the present study of homecoming dramas. It must be acknowledged that individuation attracts numerous definitions within the Jungian community. In the traditional view, the individuation process begins with recognition and mastery of the personal shadow (Kotzé 515, 517; Bassil-Morozow ix, 19). The shadow contains everything that the individual finds unacceptable within himself or herself and therefore rejects from conscious life (Casement 143; Dougherty 229; Hauke 109; Kotzé 514–15), including his or her unconscious complexes. Traditionally, once the shadow is mastered, individuation continues with the individual gradually integrating all his or her personal archetypes: ego, the center of consciousness; persona, the idealized self; shadow, as discussed; and anima/animus, the contrasexual side of the psyche. The integration of these conscious and unconscious identities forms the cohesive—albeit contradictory—archetype of the Self. Importantly, individuation is a lifelong process. As Urban states, "One individuates but is never individuated" (65). Nevertheless, perseverance in service of the goal offers rewards; in individuation one finds wholeness, balance, psychological health, and a significant transformation and enlargement of ego-identity (CW 8, par. 430; Indick 18–19; Ulanov 304).

Individuation is a crucial theme for Jungian critics and playwrights alike when working within the family homecoming genre. Plays in this tradition are concerned with the development of individuals in relation to their family and the ways in which familial complexes impact on the growing children's psyches and their ability to differentiate themselves as individuated adults. Much of the conflict within family homecoming plays derives from characters' feeling torn between loyalty to their parents and familial values, and loyalty to their own needs. This is an example of what Jung calls the "moral conflict," wherein a person is unable to satisfy the whole of his or her nature and suffers as a result. The moral conflict is one of the chief causes of complex formation in the individual (CW 8, par. 204; Easter 136; Stephenson 3), as well as being readily identifiable within texts in the family homecoming genre tradition.

A potent example of this moral conflict's impact on individuation in the drama can be seen in Hannie Rayson's *Hotel Sorrento*. The action of the play is catalyzed when daughter Meg, high achiever of the Moynihan family, publishes a Booker Prize-nominated novel, *Melancholy*, which depicts the childhood of three Australian sisters in the 1950s. While Meg claims that the novel is fictional, other characters in the play frequently challenge her, insisting that it is autobiography. The debate comes to a head when Meg's sister Hilary finally declares, "You know as well as I do that the only difference is, you haven't used our real names" (75). Meg's act of writing *Melancholy* can be interpreted as an unconscious exercise in individuation, in which she seeks to integrate her formative familial experiences by writing and reframing them. The therapeutic and individuating potential of creative practice and self-narrativizing is reported in the literature (Duncan 148–50), and Meg ultimately realizes that this cathartic self-narrativizing was the motivation behind *Melancholy*. She tells her sisters, "It's about time we all started. To own what's happened to us" (87).

Meg's moral conflict comes into play when her act of writing her history in service of her individuation puts her at odds with the values of her family, particularly those of father Wal. When the family gathers in the second act of *Hotel Sorrento* to mark Wal's passing, the subject of Meg's novel is raised in conversation. While Wal was reading *Melancholy* prior to his death, and was proud of his daughter's achievement, Meg's nephew tells her, "He said he didn't think you understood about loyalty" (71). Loyalty is established as Wal's most esteemed value, even more important to him than truth (71). The negative reactions of Meg's sisters toward the novel indicate their alliance with this value and implicitly reinforce Wal's view that *Melancholy* has transgressed the boundaries of familial loyalty. Youngest sister Pippa tells Meg, "It's our integrity. That's what you've stolen" (87). Pertinent here is the finding from Jungian analyst and author Betty Meador that cultural groups—of which the individual family is an example—establish absolute collective truths over the course of generations, which are absorbed by the children of the group during their formative years and which cannot be questioned within the group culture (172). The implication, in Meg's case, is that the familial value of maintaining loyalty outweighs the perceived validity of Meg's quest for individuation. In the eyes of her family, she can only reflect on and articulate her experiences of her childhood so long as such articulation does not wound or defame her family members. Inevitably, no family unit is without faults, and no experience of childhood is unproblematic. Therefore, Meg's moral conflict is that she is forced to choose between honest self-reflection and expression leading to greater Selfhood, and the approval and acceptance of her family culture.

Variations on this theme pervade the family homecoming drama; Meg's experience in *Hotel Sorrento* is only one example. Consistently, the dramatic families enact the pattern described by Jungian analyst Marcus West, whereby parents encourage some natural traits in their children while discouraging others (par. 24). West explains that the repeated signalling to a child that some aspect of his or her personality is unacceptable constitutes an "early relational trauma," causing the child to split off and surrender to the shadow whatever trait is forbidden, thereby causing a complex formation (par. 16). Reclaiming the banished facets of one's Self is part of the individuation journey the dramatic characters must undertake, although doing so inevitably brings them into conflict with the family

culture that initially forbade such facets, meaning that the act of homecoming is laced with dramatic and interpersonal tensions.

Post-Jungian Emergence and the Contemporary Family Homecoming Drama

While complex and individuation theory form the Jungian basis for this study of the contemporary family homecoming drama, such an investigation is elevated through the inclusion of a third principle: emergence theory. Emergence is a transdisciplinary principle that has been embraced by the Jungian community in recent years (Cambray, "Towards" 7). Joseph Cambray explains that emergence occurs with "more complex levels of organization arising out of interactions from agents at a lower level in a manner unpredictable from the known properties of those agents" ("Jung" 455). Both within and beyond its usage in the Jungian community, emergence theory relies on two essential principles: that emergent properties cannot be predicted from the interacting agents that "gave birth" to them (Cohen 138; Kim 129–30); and that emergent properties are irreducible to their constituent elements or, simply, are greater than the sum of their parts (Kim 129; Sawyer 12).

I propose that an individual may undergo a process of emergence in his or her own life through the experience of Jung's transcendent function, whereby the interaction of conscious and unconscious material achieves psychological growth, a move toward individuated Selfhood. The emergent Self depends on the interaction of these oppositional forces but ultimately transcends them to possess an overarching, unpredictable, and irreducible character. In the following statement, Jung highlights the nature of the transcendent function in ways that strongly resonate with emergence:

The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites. The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing—not a logical stillbirth in accordance with the principle *tertium non datur* but a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation. (CW 8, par. 189).

Elsewhere, he reinforces the birth of a "third thing" out of conflicting forces as an essential aspect of human development, stating: "We are [all] crucified between the opposites and delivered up to the torture until the 'reconciling third' takes shape" (Jung, *Letters* 375). Jung was, essentially, ahead of his time, conceiving of emergence theory through his transcendence model, despite not having "the language or the model for the science of emergent phenomena" (Cohen 138). For the purposes of the present discussion, it is therefore appropriate to consider the transcendent function within the individual as an example of an emergent process, with the idealized Self serving as an emergent property. In this identification of the Self as emergent, we see a universal principle activated at the level of personal psychology, the purpose of which is to foster individuation and the mastery of one's complexes.

Through a Jungian lens, I view contemporary family homecoming dramas as examinations of the transcendent function. The characters who populate these plays illustrate via embodiment and dramatic action that the task of integrating the conscious and unconscious selves can overwhelm or paralyze the individual, limiting his or her capacity for emergent Selfhood. Plays in this genre explore how a character's relationship with his

or her family impacts his or her ability to individuate. The gathering in the family home triggers each character's familial complexes, and variously prompts and stalls his or her efforts at individuation. On the surface, these are stories about estranged siblings dealing with the loss of a parent. On a psychological level, I see them as laments for the pain of attempting to emerge as an individuated Self while preserving family relationships. Herein lies the power of the family homecoming drama for its audience: it communicates an archetypal experience of moral conflict, the birth of a complex shared by humankind. This realistic mirroring not only creates a high degree of accessibility for audiences, but poses the question of each reader or viewer's own individuation journey in relation to his or her family.

While the characters in the family homecoming drama may typically fail to achieve a transcendent realization of Self, unable to overcome the complexes and moral conflicts that plague their familial relationships, the play text itself is an emergent property. Bringing together psychologically complex characters, each with his or her own agendas, secrets, and blind spots, the interactions in the play are a combusive force that explodes into a broader narrative. The rapid-fire bickering and one-upmanship that exists between the sisters in *The Memory of Water*, for example, propels the narrative and dictates the unfolding of the plot. Much like the Self in Jung's transcendence model, dramas such as this one are emergent in that they depend on the characters who populate them, but transcend each of these characters as individuals. They create a powerful, overarching portrait of the psychology of the family unit. The collective family psyche is unpredictable, complex, and irreducible to the sum of its parts, and this emergent quality is captured in the drama. It is an emergent content expressed in an emergent form. The play is not reducible to its lines of dialogue, stage directions, or character descriptions. Nor is it reducible to classifications of character psychology, the terms in which I elect to present a Jungian reading of the genre. As Susan Rowland surmises in her summary of Jungian approaches to art, "No criticism will ever wholly penetrate the art object" ("Introduction" 3).

The drama, like other forms of art, is larger than categorization, open to innumerable acts of interpretation. Its emergent character shows in the emotional and interpretive experience of the reader or viewer who engages with it, bringing his or her own history, complexes, and archetypal projections to the work, creating an entirely personal and inimitable experience of meaning. As the author Ursula K. Le Guin muses, "Although most writing is done in solitude, I believe that it is done, like all the arts, for an audience. That is to say, *with* an audience. All the arts are performance arts, only some of them are sneakier about it than others" (197, emphasis added). This phenomenon of reader participation in the creation of meaning in a text mirrors Luke Hockley's Jungian-inflected concept of unpredictable personal meaning-making in the experience of cinema, termed the "third image" (*Somatic* 1, 9, 135).

In addition to the emergent quality of the family homecoming drama and its characters, I argue that the act of playwriting can itself be an emergent process. I have experienced this process firsthand during the writing of my own homecoming drama, *Eventide*. My experience of emergence in playwriting will be discussed in more detail toward the end of the paper.

Generative Tension in Jung and the Drama

The relevant scholarly literature reveals numerous natural intersections between Jungian theory and the contemporary family homecoming drama, and these intersections provide a strong foundation for the creation of a transcendent text, one that demonstrates emergence both within characters—through their individuating processes—and among characters—through their unpredictable and complex interactions, which drive the drama. One intersection of particular significance is the central importance of generative tension.

Tension and its ideational neighbor, conflict, are vital in both Jungian psychology and dramatic writing. Abundant literature evinces the fact that tension is an essential part of psychological health and development from a Jungian perspective. Jung states outright, “Man needs difficulties; they are necessary for health” (CW 8, par. 143), and elsewhere, “There is no birth of consciousness without pain” (CW 17, par. 331). Indick argues that the “need for an opposing force is crucial” in Jungian psychology (19), and Wehr even goes so far as to say that, for Jung, “The cessation of tension in the psyche would end in death” (44). Psychic conflict is vital because it prompts growth and forward movement. As Jung explains, “It is the old game of hammer and anvil: between them the patient iron is forged into an indestructible whole, an ‘individual’” (CW 9i, par. 522).

Similarly, tension and conflict are imperative factors in the creation of successful drama. In *How Plays Work*, Meisel claims, “It is dissonance that stimulates our need to know what comes next. It engages us with what is going forward, and then works on our appetite for order, clarity, stability. It creates a tension and the need for resolution” (139). Not only does drama engage its audience by dangling the proverbial carrot of irresolution, but, as seminal drama theorist Susanne Langer claims, theatrical audiences presume and more actively perceive conflicts in dramatic work than in real life. She claims that the suspense for audiences in understanding both the dramatic present “and its yet unrealized consequent” is “the essential dramatic illusion” (311). Rowland observes that drama essentially “consists of conflicting voices” (*Ecocritical* 132), which supports Meisel’s claim that the competing demands of character within a dramatic text serve to shape its arc of tension. He explains:

If they have any life at all, characters come equipped with plots of their own—with plans, goals, desires, and interests—each character wishing to shape the action towards a particular outcome. Such projects can be wholly or partly at odds with each other, and they can be wholly or partly reinforcing. The final outcome will be the result of these plots, these forces intersecting . . . (140)

This quotation directly reinforces the point raised previously, that the dramatic text emerges from the combustive interactions of complex characters and their differing agendas.

Evidently, both the Jungian psyche and the play text rely on the conflict of opposing forces to create a generative tension, one that drives change and growth. Dramatically speaking, this tension applies to both the creation of text and the final product that spurs readers and audiences on to seek understanding and closure. Both the dramatic and the psychic situations reflect a transcendent—or emergent—pattern: the creation of new circumstances out of the complexity of lower-level conflict.

Critical Case Study: *August: Osage County*

At numerous points in his writings, Jung's comments on the psyche have strikingly clear parallels to the contemporary family homecoming drama. These parallels can be appreciated through critical consideration of a case study play, Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County*, in which estranged sisters Barbara, Ivy, and Karen return to the family home in rural Oklahoma following the disappearance of patriarch Beverly and grapple with vitriolic matriarch Violet and her advanced drug addiction.

Although they may betray a comedic streak, family homecoming dramas are, as a rule, deeply tragic. They possess traits of the "infernal comedy," a term inspired by Dante, used to describe comedies that are "gritty, frightening," rather than funny, in which the hero survives his or her journey but "usually at great cost" (Bower, par. 4). Some homecoming dramas manifest qualities of the more optimistic "purgatorial comedy," also inspired by Dante, in which the hero recognizes his or her complicity in creating a hellish scenario and changes his or her behavior accordingly; he or she "vanquish[es] the evil *within*" (Bower, par. 8). In family homecoming dramas, this purgatorial arc is enacted by those characters who acknowledge their shadow and take individuating steps toward its integration. Such purgatory is essentially Jungian; for, let us remember, "Jung considers the confrontation with the shadow, with one's own evil, to be of the greatest psychological value" (Walker 34).

The arcs of the characters in *August: Osage County*, however, tend to the infernal much more than the purgatorial, with the individual family members little able or willing to mend their tragic personal and familial fractures. The tragic structure of the play makes pertinent the following statement from Jung: "There is no form of human tragedy that does not in some measure proceed from this conflict between the ego and the unconscious" (CW 8, par. 706). While Jung is speaking about the psyche, there are clear parallels to the Westons of *August: Osage County*, whose tragedy is brought about by their unwillingness to face the shadowy secrets that haunt their shared familial psyche.

A clear example of this internally motivated tragedy is found near the end of the play. Following the announcement from the local sheriff that patriarch Beverly has drowned, eldest daughter Barbara learns that her father had an affair with his sister-in-law, Mattie Fae, years earlier and fathered Mattie Fae's son, Little Charles. The implications of this secret and its revelation are immense. Although it is never explicitly stated, the playwright strongly implies that Beverly committed suicide, in no small part due to his ongoing sense of shame about the affair. Beverly and Mattie Fae have spent nearly forty years burying the truth, relegating it to the realm of the family's unconscious, its shadow. Here, the denied knowledge behaves in accordance with Jung's definition of the repressed shadow, sabotaging the family in revenge for its suppression (see, for example, Kotzé 515–16). The knowledge of the affair manifests in Beverly's lifelong shame and in Mattie Fae's unwarranted cruelty towards Little Charles, the constant and embodied reminder of her mistake.

Jungian theory suggests that the shadow loses its destructive power if it can be raised to consciousness, acknowledged, and integrated, and this potentiality is illustrated in *August: Osage County*. The tragic and ironic reveal of the play's final scene is that Violet, Beverly's wife, has always known about the affair but was never willing to speak this knowledge or offer her forgiveness for fear of appearing weak. When Barbara

challenges her mother, “If you could’ve stopped Daddy from killing himself . . .” (Letts 100), Violet evades her, this time allowing her complicity in Beverly’s death to fall into the shadow realm, into her own unconscious and that of the corporate family psyche. *August: Osage County* therefore aligns with and exemplifies Jung’s view that human tragedy always “In some measure proceed[s] from this conflict between the ego and the unconscious” (CW 8, par. 706).

Another claim from Jung that applies equally well to the psyche and to the family homecoming drama is as follows:

The most intense conflicts, if overcome, leave behind a sense of security and calm which is not easily disturbed, or else a brokenness that can hardly be healed. Conversely, it is just these intense conflicts and their conflagration which are needed in order to produce valuable and lasting results. (CW 8, par. 50).

At the level of the psyche, this observation relates to the just-discussed idea that the individual who contends with his or her shadow has the opportunity to overcome its destructive power, although doing so may be a difficult and damaging process. In the contemporary family homecoming drama, characters are forced into situations of intense conflict, which they must choose to face or reject. In theory, the plays could end on a note of optimism, with the characters working together to overcome their differences and achieving some measure of “security and calm,” a dramatic manifestation of integration. However, more often than not, the latter outcome Jung proposes is played out in the drama. Unable or unwilling to integrate the shadows that appear with full force in the projection hotbed of the family home, characters usually withdraw to safety, their relationships unmended, and the house—the site of their conflict—is abandoned, sold or destroyed.

In *August: Osage County*, hostile conflict and confrontation progressively drive each member of the family away, and the prospect of relational repair seems distant at best. Finally, only matriarch Violet remains, resting like a child in the lap of her housekeeper, and her descent into fatal illness and insanity appears immanent and inevitable. There is no sense of what will become of the family home, which is itself depicted as ramshackle and volatile, an architectural metaphor for its one remaining possessor. Despite the tendency to unhappy outcomes in the contemporary family homecoming drama, one notes that Jung’s words still ring true; without “these intense conflicts and their conflagration,” there would be no momentum or impact in the plays. In fact, they would not exist at all. These are stories *about* failed integration, surrender to complexes, and stalled individuation. They acknowledge the incredible difficulty of facing the unconscious, whether personal or shared. They illustrate the burden of Jung’s moral conflict, through the struggles of their characters to balance the demands of family with the pull toward independence.

Practitioner’s Case Study: *Eventide*

Conscious versus unconscious conflict in the drama reflects Jung’s notion of grappling with the complex, just as the genre convention of the unhappy ending speaks to the theme of individuation and its deep-seated challenges. These same areas of tension operate in my original family homecoming drama, *Eventide*, a play set in the present day in a fictional small town on the east coast of Australia. The title is a reference to the Jungian interpretive convention of associating light and day with consciousness and darkness and night with

unconsciousness. As “eventide” is an archaic term for evening, using this word as the name of the town where the play is set subtly suggests that home is the place where the dramatic family’s conscious and unconscious—their light and darkness—meet. The act of homecoming intrinsically involves facing what remains unintegrated, both in the individuals’ lives and in the shared life of the family. The coastal setting is another Jungian metaphor; in keeping with symbolic convention, the unconscious appears in the form of ocean waves, breaking constantly against the shore of the beachside home, demanding the characters’ acknowledgment. Ironically, the tide does not appear “even”, rather escalating and de-escalating in correlation to the acts of integration that are undertaken or avoided by the characters during the play.

Eventide follows the reunion of the Murdoch family after the patriarch’s diagnosis with a terminal brain tumor. The characters of the drama—patriarch Dex; his three adult daughters, Michelle, Jemima, and Heidi; and granddaughter Kendra—manifest unique complexes and represent different degrees of individuation. Therefore, complex and individuation theory provides a viable framework in which to understand the characters’ psychological motivations and relational behaviors.

Eventide is in many ways an examination of father-daughter relationships and it is therefore appropriate to emphasize the paternal complexes of the three daughter characters in this discussion. The nature of each daughter character was determined in part by the parameters of Jungian and dramatic theory, and in part by my instincts as playwright. Analysis of the contemporary family homecoming drama revealed a consistency of daughter “types” across plays in the genre: a high achiever, a noble sacrifice, and a free spirit. In the interests of exploring the family homecoming genre and its psychological implications thoroughly, I deliberately crafted the central generation to mirror this pattern. The specificities of each character’s personality and circumstances were, however, more organically led. Beginning with an instinctive idea of who Michelle, Jemima, and Heidi should be, I was then guided by my reading of Jung and post-Jungian commentators to develop a cohesive and realistic psychology of each character, and of their relationships to one another. Jungian theory and creative practice informed one another through a dialogic process of writing and rewriting. The nature of this dialogic process will be discussed more fully in the section that follows.

The paternal complexes at work in Michelle, Jemima, and Heidi can be illuminated via Maureen Murdock’s Jungian-oriented writings on fathers and daughters. Murdock nominates many possible kinds of father—good enough, absent, pampering, passive, seductive, domineering, addictive, and idealized (3–4). I propose that Dex most conforms to the model of the domineering father, who “demands his daughter’s submission and leaves her perpetually fearful and insecure” (4). Murdock explains, “The *daughter of a domineering father* is easily bullied into compliance or spends her adult life rebelling . . .” (4, emphasis in the original). Dex, largely typical of White Australian men of his generation, has firmly established, conservative assumptions and values, under which he has governed the Murdoch family from his empowered position as patriarch. His late wife, although voiced only minimally in the play, subscribed to the patriarchal model of family and, to use Jemima’s words, “never said boo to him.”

Michelle, who has modeled herself after her mother, similarly complies with the patriarchal family model and represents the daughter “easily bullied into compliance.” I

chose to have Michelle embody the compliant daughter type because of my scholarly interest in the psychological inheritance that can be passed down the maternal line in families, whereby mothers and daughters alike allow themselves to be ruled by the patriarchy that oppresses them. The more independently minded Jemima and Heidi, however, have transgressed Dex's rule systems with their alternative lifestyles, acts that may be construed as "rebellious." Jemima and Heidi are a deliberate point of contrast from the submissive Michelle; they demonstrate what happens when the maternal line of internalized patriarchal oppression is rejected. Jemima and Heidi's unwillingness to be domineered by their father costs them his approval. This outcome reflects Murdock's statement that "Bad girls—daughters who are disobedient, rebellious, confrontational, loud, or precociously sexual—are usually rejected for being too much to handle" (21). Forced to choose between retaining Dex's approval and honoring their individuality, Jemima and Heidi are invested with the eternal moral conflict at the heart of the family homecoming drama. Since the whole of their being is not acceptable to their father, parts of them split off, fueling their paternal complex.

In much the same manner as *August: Osage County*, the characters in *Eventide* reach the end of the play having failed to integrate their personal and collective shadows. Dex passes away in a state of anger and desperation, unable to complete the home renovation project that would have given him a sense of ownership and closure over his life. His relationships with his daughters remain similarly unresolved. Michelle, who has projected her entire sense of worth onto serving her family, faces the crippling loss of both her father—to illness—and her teenage daughter—to a world beyond the small coastal town of Eventide. Jemima is exiled in shame from the family when her long-unspoken affair with Michelle's ex-partner is finally voiced, and she remains too paralyzed by fear to confess the truth to her husband. Heidi, who abandoned her family at age sixteen to join a surrogate family of traveling show people, returns to this life, denying the pain her choice continues to cause her biological relatives. Michelle's daughter Kendra, the most optimistic presence throughout the play, feels the weight of her family's failures and is left to choose between pursuing her passions in an independent life and following her mother into a life of disembodied servitude. For each of these characters, individuation is stalled at the point where unconscious integration appears too painful to endure.

Playwriting as Emergent Practice

The intersection of Jungian theory and dramatic writing convinces me that playwriting is itself an emergent practice. Part of my intention in writing *Eventide* was to explore the possibility of a uniquely Jungian approach to playwriting, proposing a model for other Jungian-oriented playwrights who may come after me. Over the course of approximately two years, a new understanding of my playwriting process emerged, one deeply informed by Jungian principles.

As a playwright, I have historically been slavishly devoted to planning, mapping out characters and story beats in advance of writing the words of the play itself. In the case of *Eventide*, I deliberately opened myself up to new, more instinctive methods of creation. The original concept for *Eventide* came to me in a dream in September 2016. I felt that writing based on the content of a dream was probably the most Jungian origin possible for the work, given Jung's deep respect for the power of dreams, his belief that this medium

communicates ideas from the collective unconscious, and his claim that the collective unconscious is “the pure source of art” (Wright, *Psychoanalytic* 72). I took extensive notes the morning after this initial inspiration, and the first draft of the play was my attempt at faithfully rendering the characters, setting, and striking imagery of the dream. Although I had not yet learned the Jungian term “active imagination”, my writing process here mirrored the phenomenon, whereby, in Jung’s words, “a sequence of fantasies [is] produced by deliberate concentration” (CW 9i, par. 101). In a therapeutic setting, the analysand engaging in active imagination deliberately invites and dialogues with images from the unconscious in order to grow psychologically through interpreting their messages. Bassil-Morozow describes active imagination as “spontaneous creativity,” which can be “managed and directed to produce a creative product” (3). In the case of my playwriting practice, this took the form of a sustained and intentional dialogue with the characters and images that had arisen out of my unconscious.

Although deliberate engagement with the unconscious material of my dream provided a sound Jungian basis for writing a new play, I was forced out of pure active imagination by practical considerations. The first draft of *Eventide* was littered with problems: a rushed pace, over-explicit discussions of too many major reveals, and one-dimensional characters without a sense of personal growth. I was discouraged, concerned that my attempt at Jungian playwriting had failed, that trusting unconscious inspiration could not lead to a suitably polished work of drama. A quotation from the playwright Eugène Ionesco proved invaluable as I grappled with the tension between intuition and structure. Ionesco states:

I believe that . . . a writer must possess a mixture of spontaneity, of subconscious impulses, and of lucidity; a lucidity which is unafraid of whatever the spontaneous imagination may give birth to. If one were to insist upon lucidity as an *a-priori* condition, it is as though one were to dam up the sluice gates. The waters must be allowed to come flooding out; but *afterwards* comes the sorting, the controlling, the understanding, the selecting. (qtd in Coe 31).

Through Ionesco’s insight, I came to understand that an effective approach to Jungian playwriting must allow room for both conscious and unconscious imperatives. The unconscious must lead initially, bringing to consciousness those themes or images of great symbolic weight with which the playwright’s unconscious is burdened. But then it is both appropriate and necessary to mould these instinctual properties with the conscious tools of the playwright, shaping them into a form that an eventual audience can find accessible and credible.

Through the drafts that followed, I rewrote *Eventide* with a more deliberate structure. I introduced genre conventions I had identified elsewhere in the family homecoming tradition, such as the central generation of three sister types, as well as focusing on the whole ensemble rather than a single protagonist. Importantly, my ongoing studies of Jungian and post-Jungian theory also informed revisions of the work. In these scholarly sources, I found psychological explanations for the temperamental, behavioral, and relational tendencies I had instinctively embedded in my characters, and through this fuller understanding I was able to round them out into complex, psychologically realist facsimiles of human beings. I came to understand their familial and personal complexes

more fully and could situate them more intentionally along the continuum of individuation. Moreover, I took a deep interest in statements from Jung about the *participation mystique* that takes place within family units, and the concept of intergenerational inheritance. These considerations impacted my playwriting practically in that they led me to relocate my drama to the Murdoch sisters' childhood home, wherein I could activate the metaphor of the house as a threat to individuation. It was Jungian theory that allowed me to develop such hypotheses about the metaphoric potential of the home and family, therefore substantially shaping my writing practice.

Following an in-progress reading of *Eventide* with professional actors in December 2017, I took a break of seven months from the writing process, needing time to absorb feedback from the reading and contemplate my approach to future drafts. Far from being wasted time, this fallow period was vital in that it paved the way for me to return to a truly Jungian methodology of writing. I had begun the play in an unconscious-led manner, then moved necessarily through the stages of more conscious structuring and editing. However, in returning to the play text in June of 2018, I found that it was once again time to let the unconscious lead. Here, I began to revisit Jung's active imagination as a way of reinvigorating the work.

In the months they had lain dormant, my characters had solidified themselves as self-sufficient identities in my deeper consciousness. Each member of the dramatic family had now developed a strong enough independent voice that I could invite each one to the forefront of my mind and invite him or her to speak freely to the other characters and to me. Akin to my original process in rendering my dream, I then attempted to reproduce faithfully on the page the dialogue through which the characters articulated themselves. My process here echoes Harding's account of active imagination, which states:

This is exactly what happens in active imagination when we engage in dialogue with a mood or other unconscious part of the psyche. We personify it, give it a name, or, more likely, *it tells us its own name*; then the mythical story can begin to unfold, with the result that consciousness is enlarged by the inclusion of a previously unknown part of the psyche. (Harding 48, emphasis added).

Letting my characters lead created some vast differences in the later drafts of the play, the consciousness of *Eventide* being enlarged by the active imagination process, just as Harding suggests. The changes made elevated the organic quality of the writing.

The process that emerged for me as a deliberately Jungian playwright was one of unconscious inspiration, giving way to conscious improvement and shaping through the application of Jungian and dramatic theory, followed by a return to the elevating and clarifying power of the unconscious. In line with Ionesco's advice, the middle stage of conscious structuring was indispensable in strengthening the text, creating firm parameters within which my emergent characters could then freely roam. In this middle phase I was able to embed and activate findings from my Jungian and genre-based research within the play. Then, in relaxing my grip on theory and pre-planning in the later drafting stages, once again yielding authority to my unconscious instincts, I allowed the emergent character of my Jungian writing process to come emphatically to the fore. My understanding of Jungian and post-Jungian theory translated from my intellectual, scholarly comprehension into my instinct-driven process. As a practitioner, I invited my own transcendent function to operate

once again, raising material out of the unconscious so that it could be translated usefully to consciousness through the conduit of dramatic expression.

Conclusion

This paper serves a number of purposes. At a basic level, it partially redresses the lack of Jungian representation in psychological critiques of playwriting. It considers how Jungian and post-Jungian theory might influence an understanding of dramatic writing, from both a critic's and a practitioner's standpoint. To demonstrate the utility of this endeavor, I have offered the example of the contemporary family homecoming drama as a genre in which Jung's complex and individuation theories can be identified and usefully explored. Specifically, the potency of familial complexes can be seen in the metaphoric power the family home holds over the dramatic characters who return there, triggering profound and visceral reactions. Jung's moral conflict is exemplified in the characters' divided loyalties to the family culture and the individuating Self.

This essay also makes a case for the emergent character of family homecoming dramas, as an example of emergent works of art more broadly. While individual characters, lines of dialogue, developmental arcs, and so forth may shape a drama, the resultant play ultimately transcends these constituent elements, mimicking Jung's transcendent function in creating an irreducible and unpredictable identity for itself based on the combustive interactions of these lower-level agents. In support of this claim, the scholarly literature demonstrates that generative tension is crucially important in both the Jungian conception of the psyche and in the creation and sustenance of dramatic work.

The critical case studies of *August: Osage County* and *Eventide* illustrate Jung's claim that tragedy proceeds from the conflict between consciousness and the unconscious, as in the case of long-held family secrets coming to light, or in the destructive potential of a parental complex that puts one at odds with his or her individuation. The endings of these plays, grounded in confrontation and fracture, emphasize the painful necessity of confrontation with shadow material and the cost of denying integration. A genre littered with tensions, within characters, among characters, and in the haunting and constrained environment of the family home as setting, the contemporary family homecoming drama is a powerful site for exploring Jung's theories of psychological development and its failure.

Finally, my experimentations with process in tandem with my studies of Jungian theory convince me of the potential for experiences of emergence through the practice of playwriting. Through developing a method of writing that moves through the stages of unconsciousness-consciousness-unconsciousness, I have not only learned how to work more authentically as a Jungian playwright but also developed a model for use by other playwrights who want to work within a Jungian framework. Of course, experiences of emergence are possible in all forms of art-making; playwriting is but one example. I argue that Jungian theory is an eminently appropriate and generative complement to research grounded in creative practice, with many possible avenues for theoretical exploration beyond those I have employed in this paper. Moreover, Jung's theory offers immense generative potential not only for various genres of drama but also for any number of artistic disciplines. As multidisciplinary Jungian artistic criticism gains increasing exposure in the

scholarly community, it is important that the literature expand to report the findings of both critics and creators. As the essay has demonstrated, Jungian theory is the province of both.

Contributor

Bianca Reynolds has recently completed her Ph.D. candidature at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia. Her doctoral thesis explores the complementary relationship between Jungian theory and playwriting, with a focus on the family homecoming genre. She advocates for Jungian theory as a valuable tool for both playwrights and critics of drama.

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“Triapeture” by John Dotson

Umber no. 3

Mădăina Borteș

eve of night
 awaits
no stronger than a lullaby
the dew prepares
 its morning feast
oh no, a celebration!
my feet, it bathes
 cool, brisk
the moments fall
emerges tingling
through the air
 announcing
a perfect equanimity of hues
to come, come,
this is what balms my soul.



“Pavanis” by John Dotson

Dream Tending and Play: The Vital Dimension

Douglas Thomas

Abstract: Dream Tending is a system for working with dreams that draws from elements of Jungian psychology and archetypal psychology, focusing on encountering dream images as living entities. The element of play is a vital but unarticulated aspect of Dream Tending, which merits exploration. The concept of play has been a significant topic for psychologists such as D. W. Winnicott, as well as contributors to the fields of social history and philosophy such as J. Huizinga and H. G. Gadamer. This article reviews the theoretical basis of Dream Tending emerging from the ideas of Jung, Hillman, and H. Corbin, and then applies the idea of play as developed by Winnicott, Huizinga, and Gadamer to the Dream Tending skills set. It concludes with a discussion of the clinical implications of focusing on play as a mediator of what Corbin referred to as imaginal space.

Keywords: dreams, play, Jungian psychology, archetypal psychology, Aizenstat, Hillman, Corbin, Winnicott, Huizinga, Gadamer

Introduction

Dream Tending is a system for working with dreams based on principles of post-Jungian and archetypal psychology. Developed by S. Aizenstat (2011), it shifts the emphasis of therapeutic attention from dream interpretation on a personal developmental level to phenomenological animation on an archetypal level based on a multi-dimensional conceptualization of the psyche and its images. In presenting the skills sets that comprise the Dream Tending method, Aizenstat emphasizes the notion of tending the living image. The historical impetus behind this approach stems from an oft-repeated maxim of Jung's (1934/1966b, p. 149 [CW 16, para. 320]) that was carried forward by Hillman (1975/1979, p. 194) and the archetypal school, to stick with the image. A vital component of the Dream Tending method that is less explicit in Aizenstat's own description is the element of play, which facilitates the active participation and engagement of the dreamer in relationship with the image.

In the clinical setting, play is a therapeutic factor that frequently receives attention in work with children (Crenshaw & Stewart, 2015; Dodds, 1987; Halfon, 2017; Meany-Walen, Kottman, Bullis, & Taylor, 2015; Ray, Pursweel, Haas, & Aldrete, 2017; Turns & Kimmes, 2013). The work of Klein (1957/2011) and Winnicott (1971) in particular called attention to play in infant and childhood development as the facilitator of symbolic thought essential for a healthy maturational process. Although Winnicott was emphatic that play remains a vital part of psychotherapeutic work with adults, it is less common for clinicians to describe metaphorical and symbolic modes of expression as play. Despite Winnicott's articulating play as an enduring feature of human psychology, there persists a tendency to associate play with the world of the child. Even in Jung's (1961/1989) own description of his confrontation with the unconscious, he recounted a sense of humiliation in the games of children as part of his personal experiment with the deep psyche:

This moment was a turning point in my fate, but I gave in only after endless resistances and with a sense of resignation. For it was a painfully humiliating experience to realize that there was nothing to be done except play childish games. (p. 174)

From the inception of depth psychology, play in the life of the adult appears to be awkward and difficult to negotiate. One noteworthy exception to this bias is the development of sandplay therapy by D. M. Kalff (1991), which has proven to be an effective play-based therapy for both children and adults based on Jung's concepts (Doyle & Magor-Blatch, 2017).

There is evidence on a cultural and collective level that the psychic barrier between adult concerns and the impulse to play transcends the field of psychotherapy. Regardless of one's personal theology, the oft-quoted passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians sets a cultural standard: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, and thought as a child, and reasoned as a child; now that I am a man, I am through with childish things" (1 Cor. 13:1, Lattimore, Trans.). Even before adulthood children learn a similar lesson through the songs we teach them: "a dragon lives forever but not so little boys" (Yarrow & Lipton, 1963). Even the euphemism for that which is laughably simple, *child's play*, is a reminder that the world of the adult is too sophisticated, too complex, and too dignified to risk the humiliation of embracing play as psychologically valuable after the exodus from childhood.

Despite this apparent collective censure from professional and cultural spheres, play seems to have a mischievous capacity for working its way back into our adult lives. Cultural historian J. Huizinga (1938/2014) posited that play is an element that emerges throughout the human lifespan in the world of sports, the arts, commerce, finance, law, politics, and religion. Despite Jung's (1961/1989) ambivalence over his own return to childhood games, he also fondly quoted Schiller: "Man is completely human only when he is at play" (Jung, 1929/1966a, p. 46 [CW 16, para. 98]). Both Huizinga and hermeneutic philosopher H. G. Gadamer (2013) affirmed and elevated the importance of play as an indispensable factor in social progress, in the development of ethics, and in understanding the nature of our very being in the world.

In seeking a working definition of play, this article follows Bitan's (2012) suggestion: rather than attempting a reductive definition, he delineated characteristics of play, emphasizing its movement through time, and its paradoxical nature, which oscillates between dichotomies of "real and unreal, inside and outside, present and absent, etcetera" (p. 30). Building on the work of Winnicott and Derrida, he asserted that in play, dichotomies are allowed to peacefully co-exist without resolution. As will be seen, these play characteristics along with those identified by Huizinga (1938/2014) and Gadamer (2013) serve a vital role in the techniques of Dream Tending. This article will present the theoretical sources of these techniques from the depth psychology tradition, and will then discuss points of correspondence and complementarity between the work of Winnicott, Huizinga, and Gadamer to bring into focus the play element embedded in the Dream Tending skills set. The paper concludes with a discussion of clinical implications that emerge from a clearer understanding of play in the Dream Tending model, and the therapeutic benefits of play as an adult activity in the context of tending dream images.

Theoretical Background and Postulates of Dream Tending

Although Jung (1917/1977 [CW 7]) emphasized the affective element in dreams as a key to understanding the personal complexes of the dreamer, he also made the more fundamental assertion that psyche is image:

From what has been said, it should be clear that the psyche consists essentially of images. It is a series of images in the truest sense, not an accidental juxtaposition or sequence, but a structure that is throughout full of meaning and purpose; it is a “picturing” of vital activities. And just as the material of the body that is ready for life has need of the psyche in order to be capable of life, so the psyche presupposes the living body in order that its images may live. (Jung, 1926/1969b, p. 325 [CW 8, para. 618])

Hence, Jung’s (1934/1966b) admonition to “stick with the image,” emphasizes his ontological and epistemological commitment to stick with the autonomous psyche (p. 149 [CW 16, para. 320]). In this sense, an important dimension of Jungian psychology is image-centered. However, Jung’s intention with the word “image” needs to be taken under some advisement. Jung (1926/1969b) clarified that “image” designates the apperception of all forms of sensory data including visual forms:

We hear an indistinct sound the initial effect of which is not more than a stimulus to listen in order to find out what it means. In this case the auditory stimulus releases a whole series of images which associate themselves with the stimulus. They will be partly acoustic images, partly visual images, and partly images of feeling. Here I use the word “image” simply in the sense of a representation. A psychic entity can be a conscious content, that is, it can be *representable*. I therefore call all conscious contents images, since they are reflections of processes in the brain. (p. 322 [CW 8, para. 608])

In these two quotations, we see Jung making the case for a psychology of image, which interacts with and conditions our experience of the physical world.

Jung’s assertion that image signifies the apperception of all forms of sensory experience relates to his later conceptualization of the archetype as a “psychoid factor” (1947/1969a, p. 213 [CW 8, para. 417]). The concept of the psychoid, what Addison (2009) described as “a deeply unconscious set of processes that are neither physiological nor psychological but that somehow partake of both” (p. 123), enabled Jung to posit that archetypal images exert an effect on our embodied physical experience. Hence, dream images are not only seen; they are also heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. The embodied experience of the dream image becomes a key element in Dream Tending (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 26).

The effect of the archetypal psyche on embodied experience became a central point of interest for J. Hillman (1992) as he asserted that aesthetic experience (the sensuous gasp of surprise at the beauty of an idea, a work of art, or a deeply felt moment) is fundamentally psychological (p. 39). For Hillman (1975), the aesthetic is psychological because it derives from what might be called conditions or expressions of *soul*, the term he privileged as the etymological equivalent to *psyche* from the ancient Greek (p. 2). The logos of psyche, then, is the true task of psychology, learning how to talk about and how to elicit the language of

soul in the world. Hillman's (1975) other preferred term for this activity was *soul-making*, a phrase inspired by the British Romantic poet Keats (p. 189).

Hillman (1975/1979) regarded dream images as soul images, which function independently from our personal developmental histories and the waking life associations we attach to them. This perspective was a departure from Jung's (1917/1977 [CW 7]) assertion that dreams are the affective expression of the dreamer's personal complexes. Hillman built instead on Jung's assertion that psyche is composed of images (1926/1969b [CW 8, para. 618]). Dream images arrive as visitors or emissaries from the underworld of the deep psyche. Our task as dreamers and devotees of psychology is not to analyze or interpret them, but rather to enter into a dynamic living relationship and thereby understand them by allowing them to speak in their own way, on their own behalf. This conceptualization informs Dream Tending's primary postulate: dream images are alive, presenting with their own perspectives and modes of knowing (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 24). Consequently, an orienting principle in Dream Tending is to replace the causal person-centered questions, "Why did I dream that?" and "What does it mean?" with the phenomenological questions, "Who's visiting now?" and "What's happening here?" (p. 33). An extension of this same principle is the core technique of phenomenological animation. It elicits a contemporaneous vivid description of the dreamer's lived experience encountering the dream image as an autonomous entity. A living image is animated; it is intrinsically imbued with *anima*, breath, or soul. To witness the animation of the dream figure is to experience its inherent vitality. The dreamer encounters the image's own sense of body, pulse, and intelligence. This fact does not negate the dreamer's affective response to the dream; rather, it affirms the dream image as having an autonomous existence independent of the dreamer's affect. Play is the element that allows both affective realities, that of the dream and that of the dreamer, to coexist peacefully as an unresolved paradox.

In addition to according the dream the ontological status of an autonomous embodied entity seeking relationship and understanding, the temporal aspect of the dream's phenomenology also contributes to the Dream Tending approach. Hillman (1975/1979) noted in *Dream and the Underworld* that dreams are always in a present-tense state of occurring in the atemporal space of the underworld. Based on this observation, Dream Tending makes two further postulates: dreams are now, and psyche is always dreaming (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 26). It is customary in Dream Tending to share the dream in the present tense and to acknowledge the presence of the dream figure as an animated encounter in the present moment. This practice supports the unfolding of a dynamic relationship with the image occurring in real time, which simultaneously evokes the dimension of the timeless. By positing that psyche is always dreaming, a concept that echoes the indigenous beliefs of Australian aboriginals, Dream Tending acknowledges the atemporal dimension of the dream. New possibilities open in an ensouled world where the animated imagination discovers a poetic basis of mind. Dream figures active in a timeless now occasion a new receptivity in the dreamer, an attitude of openness, engagement, and participation with a dynamic multi dimensional psyche. As we shall see, these are the qualities necessary to enter into play.

Winnicott: Potential Space, Play Space, Imaginal Space

A preeminent figure in the object relations school of psychoanalysis, D. W. Winnicott (1971) was unequivocal in his assessment of play as a critical factor in psychotherapy for adults as well as for children:

The general principle seems to me to be valid that *psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist*. If the therapist cannot play, then he is not suitable for the work. If the patient cannot play, then something needs to be done to enable the patient to become able to play, after which psychotherapy may begin. The reason why playing is essential is that it is in playing that the patient is being creative. (emphasis in original, p. 72)

There follows an equally strong assertion: “only in playing is communication possible” (p. 73). For Winnicott, play is a universal given of the human condition, and a form of therapy in and of itself.

How does Winnicott define play in this bold formulation? To answer this question, it is necessary to briefly review his concepts of transitional phenomena and potential space (Winnicott, 1971). Throughout the life span we are subject to a particular psychological strain “relating inner and outer reality” (p. 18). This separation between the inner subjective and the external objective is a zone of critical importance in the object relations model. If a mother or caregiver can establish a holding environment to mitigate the stress of incongruence between inner and outer, then the child is able to play and develop symbolic thought. The division between inner and outer is not distinct and leads to Winnicott’s formulation of an in-between region in which *transitional phenomena* occur (p. 2). In this region, where there is a transition from internal psychic reality to an external objectively real world, play occurs. Playing facilitates the relationship between the child and the maternal figure, and it allows for an unchallenged paradox: in *potential space* both inner and outer reality co-exist peacefully in the same dimension (p. 71). The term *potential* refers to the potency of playing in the zone between inner and outer to create multiple meanings and to hold the paradox of that which is and at the same time is not. According to Winnicott, this ludic paradox is the origin of symbolic representation and a poetic basis of mind.

Those familiar with Jung’s (1958/1969c [CW 8]) concept of the facilitating third and the transcendent function of the psyche will likely recognize a point of correspondence here. Similar to potential space holding the paradox of inner and outer reality, active imagination in analytical psychology holds the tension of opposites between conscious and unconscious, generating the living symbol that facilitates psychological growth. However, the contrast with Winnicott and the object relations school is equally significant and becomes even clearer in Hillman’s elaboration of an archetypal image-centered psychology.

Winnicott’s (1971) model has provided invaluable insights into the vicissitudes and the delights of human relationships (including therapeutic relationships), and a recognition of playing as a vital intersubjective agent in psychological growth and well-being. A significant contrast appears in the conceptualization of the psyche between object relations and the Jungian and post Jungian schools, which leads to fundamental differences in how they imagine the location and the agency of the play element. This contrast concerns

differing values ascribed to the role of the person and Jung's conceptualization of an autonomous archetypal unconscious. Winnicott's model is person-centered: the primary contrast between inner and outer exists inside and outside the person of the infant. The transitional phenomena of an emerging relationship occurs in an interpersonal zone. Winnicott's child is born into a Cartesian cosmos in which a person is at the epicenter struggling between chaotic internal subjective states of omnipotent madness, and an external objectively real world that requires adaptation. In contrast, Jung imagined what might be called a gnostic cosmos, in which the objective psyche surrounds and subsumes subjective personal reality. In this model, psyche is not within us; it is we who are within psyche (Jung, 1946/1973b, p. 433). In Hillman's (1975) re-visioning of psychology, this displacement and relativizing of the personal ego became even more explicit. His concept of *de-humanizing*, which concludes his major opus, makes the radical assertion that the images of the soul are more enduring and ontologically more real than the fantasy of the person. Because we are unable to accept ourselves as "unreal," we mount a collective manic defense: "We cling to the naturalistic and humanistic fallacies—facts, materialism and developmental historicism, empiricism and positivism and personalism—anything to shore up and solidify our frailty" (p. 209). For Hillman, it is our inability to accept the objective reality of the psyche, and its superior position in a taxonomy of the ontologically real, that has led to the disappearance of soul from the field of psychology.

Given this contrast, what becomes of Winnicott's conceptualization of playing as a facilitator in the intermediate region of potential space? And how does Dream Tending with its theoretical orientation toward archetypal reality find a modification of playing as a primordial form of therapy? In responding to this question, it is helpful to revisit the work of French anthropologist H. Corbin and his importance to both Jung and Hillman (1992). Corbin was a pioneer in the Western study of ecstatic Islam and Sufism. He identified the need to craft a new term to accommodate a dimension of Islamic thought that describes a world of images (the *mundus imaginalis*) that is as ontologically real as the material world (Corbin, 1972). To this end, he introduced the term *imaginal* to designate such a dimension in distinction to the Western term imaginary, which connotes something unreal. In Corbin's world of the imaginal, we find an archetypal adaptation of Winnicott's potential space. Here, the intermediate zone is not between the internal psychic reality of the person and an objective external reality. Instead, the intermediate region occurs between the autonomous reality of the image (the *mundus imaginalis*) and the material reality of the physical world.

In Dream Tending, play occurs between these two dimensions: the reality of the dream image and the material reality of our daily lives. Dream images present themselves through animation as a reality of "subtle bodies" (Jung, 1944/1968, p. 278 [CW 12, para. 394]) that beckon to us to turn our consciousness away from the concretized reality of the material world. In this modification of potential space, the dream image speaks not as a fragment of developmental history from the interiority of the person's subjective psyche, but from the timeless archetypal world of the *mundus imaginalis*, a dimension that corresponds with the classical underworld of the soul. It bears repeating here: in this model, psyche is not inside us; it is we who are inside psyche, inside a world of images that are waiting to come into authentic relationship with us. It is through playing with the reality of the image that we discover its particular modes of experience and knowledge. Without the play element, the imaginal falls back into the unreal dis-ease of the imaginary and the

potential space of new meaning collapses. Here is the therapeutic opportunity of play in the context of Dream Tending: to liberate the dream image from the confines of personal associations and the painful details of a developmental history and to bring our imaginal sensitivity into relationship with the image's capacity to reveal the unexpected and the yet to be known. To paraphrase Jungian psychologist R. Lockhart (2013), when we greet the dream image and play with it in potential space as a messenger from the unknown, we are greeting and playing with an angel.

Huizinga and the Play Element in Society

In his influential work *Homo Ludens*, Dutch cultural historian J. Huizinga (1938/2014) developed the concept of play in the context of social evolution. For Huizinga, play serves an indispensable role promoting cultural progress. He found evidence of play in some of our most earnest and sacred activities, including law and politics, warfare, and religious rituals and festivals. Play for Huizinga is something that transcends its popular associations with frivolity and caprice, although play characteristics are undeniably present in our lighter moments. They are also present in the mythopoetic function of the psyche, that deep impulse to bring order and meaning to the rhythms of nature within us and around us through imaginative representation in story and metaphor.

Huizinga (1938/2014) offered a phenomenological reduction of play in its essential characteristics: it is voluntary and free; it occurs outside of so-called "ordinary" or "real" life; its locality and duration are secluded and limited; it creates order ("into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" [p. 10]); it involves tension; it has rules that are clear and binding; it enjoys an air of secrecy (pp. 8–12). The correspondence between these characteristics and the Dream Tending skills set may not be immediately apparent in all instances. Let us consider each characteristic more closely as it applies to Dream Tending.

Play is voluntary and free. The decision to develop a personal practice working with dream images is something one arrives at voluntarily and without coercion. In addition, the play element in Dream Tending asks for a voluntary suspension of disbelief, a departure from the materialist skepticism that posits dreams are unreal and of little meaning or consequence. It is the play element that encourages this agreement with the dream. Taking the dream and its autonomous images seriously as partners in play suggests the need for a legitimate invitation to join in the game: "Will you play with me?" If play is voluntary and free, then living images retain volition and freedom as part of their autonomy, and they too have a capacity to accept or decline the invitation.

Play occurs outside of so-called "ordinary" or "real" life. Dream Tending facilitates a reorientation away from familiar daytime consciousness toward a different dimension of psychic reality. It is customary to light a candle or create some other symbol to designate the move into this intermediate region between material reality and the reality of the image. The practice of tending the image as a living embodied presence involves a conscious slowing down and careful noticing of the image's details and capacities (Aizenstat, 2011). Play is the element that facilitates this transition away from the ordinary and so-called real.

Play's locality and duration are secluded and limited. In Dream Tending, as in many Jungian-based activities, the importance of the *temenos*, a contained space designated for hosting and tending the images of dream, receives special attention. Similar to the concept

of the alchemical vessel or the therapeutic container, the notion of a special location for transformative work with dream images reflects the element of play as conceptualized by Huizinga (1938/2014). The discussion of potential space from the preceding section is germane to this question of locality. Where exactly does playing take place? To reference only the physical space of material reality is to collapse the intermediate region of potential space. This concretizing negates the poetic dimension of the imaginal. In Dream Tending, the locality of playing occurs within a *temenos* of potential space that comes to life through the tension between the realities of matter and soul. Accordingly, like Jung's (1947/1969a) later conceptualization of the archetype, playing is a "psychoid factor" (p. 213 [CW 8, para. 417]). It is neither wholly an activity of material reality, nor entirely a phenomenon of imagination, but it somehow partakes of both. Play mediates the realities of matter and soul.

This particular characteristic of play also references the temporal dimension. The activity of Dream Tending is time bound. Aizenstat (2011) outlined a series of steps to create the *temenos*, deepen into the proper attitude of reverie, encounter and engage with figures from the depths of one's own nature, and allow a time for concluding the encounter and closing the space. Because the space of the encounter is a form of potential space mediated by playing as a psychoid factor, the activity is both time bound and timeless. Dream Tending posits that dreams live in a state of continual being and that psyche is always dreaming, yet the encounter with dream images paradoxically takes place in a time-bound sequence. It is the play element that is able to hold this temporal paradox without negating it.

Play creates order. Huizinga (1938/2014) contrasted the order created by play with the imperfection and confusion of the everyday world. The ancient Greek word for order was *kosmos*, and the sense of an ordered and harmonious whole remains part of its contemporary derivative *cosmos* (Pickett, 2011, p. 414). Perhaps this etymology is the deeper sense of what Huizinga sought to express, that play creates a temporary cosmos within itself, an ordered and harmonious whole. In discussing the classical notion of cosmos, Hillman (1988) offered a statement that relates to this sense of order:

When cosmos is understood as the arrangement and expression of things, as the patterning order each event presents, embellishing each event with its own kind of time and fitting space, cosmos becomes the interiority things bring with them rather than the empty universal envelope into which they must be brought. (p. 299)

This characterization of cosmic order as aesthetic presentation emanating from the interior of events and things brings special significance to Hillman's (1977) remarks regarding the primacy of the image in dream work:

The first assumption is that a dream is an image and that an image is complete just as it presents itself. (It can be elaborated and deepened by working on it, but to begin with it is all there; wholeness right in the image). Next, we assume that everything there is necessary, which further suggests that everything necessary is there. Hence the rule, 'stick to the image' in its precise presentation. (p. 68)

Here Hillman described a form of order based on necessity and completeness: "an image is complete just as it presents itself" (p. 68), and the ordering principle emerges from the

interior of the image itself. Based on Huizinga's assertion that play creates order, one might infer that play is the agent that releases and reveals the aesthetic order hidden in the image's interior.

Dream Tending affirms the multi-dimensionality of the psyche based on the theoretical postulates of Jung and Hillman (1975), which suggest that the impulse toward completion and order can occur on multiple levels: within the individual, throughout the world, and emerging from the underworld of the soul. Although Dream Tending has promoted the benefits of a dream-centered life for personal well-being, it is more accurate to acknowledge its deeper enterprise in service to the Hillmanian soul. When we recognize the integrity and autonomy of a dream image, we liberate it from the confines of our personal narrative. As an image that emanates from archetypal reality, our personal stories about it are forever fragmentary and incomplete. A personal interpretation of the dream, although egoically satisfying, does not allow the emergence of the cosmos that is intrinsic to the image. By tending the image and allowing it to speak on its own behalf, by inviting a revelation of its own particular ways of being and knowing, Dream Tending supports what Corbin (as cited in Hillman, 2004) referred to as the individuation of the image (p. 39). The image is free to reclaim what has been denied by our personal associations and interpretations about it. In tending the image, we are helping it to make itself complete. Play is the factor that facilitates these moments of imaginal order and completion.

Play involves tension. Tension is a concept familiar to Jungian psychology, as the transcendent function requires holding the tension between the opposites (Jung, 1958/1969c, [CW 8]). Historically, this form of tension has been imagined as bridging the gap between conscious and unconscious dimensions of the psyche. While not inappropriate to the work of Dream Tending, which bridges this same gap between the conscious dreamer and the hidden capacities of the autonomous dream figure, there is another less explicit relationship between Dream Tending and the tension characteristic of play. The word tension derives from the Latin word *tendere*, meaning to stretch (Pickett, 2011, p. 1794). The verb "to tend" shares the same root (p. 1793). So the image hidden within tension as a characteristic of play describes stretching, which is linguistically related to reaching and touching. Play within the method of Dream Tending encourages a stretching out from the sphere of personal material toward the world of image. It is a reaching and an invitation to touch and be touched, to be sensuously and aesthetically engaged with that which has come to us from beyond us.

Play has rules that are clear and binding. When playing occurs in Dream Tending, the skills set that facilitates the transition into the intermediate region between the material and the imaginal becomes metaphorically a set of rules that serves to maintain the potential space. There are a number of maneuvers the dreamer can make during play with the image, which serve to reinforce the position of the ego and disengage from the play space. These can include feeling self-conscious and skeptical about the validity of the experience, intellectualizing the encounter with the image, reinterpreting what occurs during imaginal play as a product of personal agency, or literalizing and negating that which lives as metaphor and poetic paradox. When these forms of egoic retreat occur the metaphorical rules of the skills set protect the integrity of the potential space by affirming the validity of the ego's concerns and at the same time encouraging an attitude of curiosity and reengagement with the image.

Play enjoys an air of secrecy. At the end of R. Lockhart's (1980) masterful essay "Psyche in Hiding," he introduced the Roman Goddess of silence, Angerona:

Her mouth is bound so there are no words from her. Her uplifted finger points to her sealed lips as if to let us know there is some point to this silence. How do we learn from her if there are no words? (p. 99)

In Angerona's silence there is an air of secrecy. It is a stroke of psychological insight that Lockhart continued with a comment that affirms Huizinga's (1938/2014) association between secrecy and play:

What can we learn of silence from the name of its Goddess? Every name carries with it a kind of secret. Angerona is a shell covering a hidden image that was once a living experience. When we speak now of Angerona, or any other God or Goddess, or even of ourselves, we do not know or remember that hidden image. We know only the shell of the name. The secret mystery hidden in every name—even in every word—requires a seeking after. We must search for the hidden image. It is looking for psyche. She hides, we seek. It is hide-and-seek. It is a game, a kind of play. (p. 100)

Here Lockhart uncovered the rather surprising relationship between secrecy, play, and psyche's dreaming.

A dream is more than a cipher waiting for us to decode it and reduce it to some personal story about ourselves. A dream is a game of hide-and-seek, a secret from psyche, inviting us to play with its enigma. Dream Tending endorses what is called purposeful not knowing (Aizenstat, 2011, p. 24). The task of a dreamer is not to solve the riddle of the dream as quickly as possible. Instead it is to rest in the paradox of our not knowing and to wait to see what the image will reveal. The value of the riddle is negated when we try to force a premature revelation of the secret. The value lies in our puzzling experience of psyche's secretive nature as we stretch and reach to gain some understanding. As R. M. Rilke (1934/2004) said in his advice to a young poet:

Try to love the *questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. (emphasis in original, p. 27)

By allowing a dream image to retain its secrets, we find ourselves in Huizinga's final enigmatic characteristic of play, enjoying an air of secrecy with the figure. We enter into relationship as we would with a friend or a beloved, understanding that not all can be exposed at the beginning. Secrets will be revealed over time when the other is ready, when the play and our own fluency with the logos of psyche have matured.

Gadamer and Play as an Agent of Understanding

H. G. Gadamer was arguably the most important contributor to the field of philosophical hermeneutics in the generation after Heidegger. Historically hermeneutics addressed the problems of interpretation, but with Heidegger and then Gadamer interpretation became a greater question of how people exist as beings of understanding. Understanding becomes

a primary activity of being in the world (Vilhauer, 2010). In his major work, *Truth and method*, Gadamer (2013) designated play as the mechanism that makes understanding possible. It is through play that we come into existence as beings of understanding (Vilhauer, 2010).

In her authoritative analysis of Gadamer's treatise, M. Vilhauer (2010) identified play as a pivotal factor that makes understanding possible. *Truth and method* is in part a critique of the evolution of the classical scientific method and its pervasive influence on Western thought. For Gadamer, the human sciences have made erroneous assumptions about the nature of knowing, understanding, and truth, assumptions that are embedded in the methodological thinking of the natural sciences. This assessment bears a close correspondence to Hillman's (1975) critique of psychology as having lost its orientation toward soul by adopting the attitudes and practices of the natural sciences.

Gadamer (2013) posited that the process of understanding involves a dialogical encounter with a dynamic Other who has something to say. The Other may be a work of art, a text, or a human being. Understanding does not occur by treating the Other as a lifeless object possessing some hidden truth that is to be known through dispassionate observation, extraction, and analysis. For Gadamer, it is an ethical call to meet the Other as a Thou. The truth of understanding emerges between an engaged participatory subject or interlocutor and the Other as a Thou in the intermediate space of a back-and-forth exchange. Truth lies in the in-between. Understanding as an ontological event is an essentially relational process that requires one's full commitment, engagement, participation, and openness to what the Other has to say. The to-and-fro movement, the Other as it presents its claim on truth and one's recognition of what is presented, is what Gadamer formulated as play, the essential mechanism that makes understanding possible.

In engaging with the Other as a Thou, the presuppositions and prejudices of the interlocutor are placed at risk (Gadamer, 2013). The Other presents a claim that is recognized in part as true, based on one's personal history and tradition. Through a response based on this partial recognition, it is discovered that the Other is presenting something outside one's current claims on knowledge and truth. The Other, by its very nature, is presenting something unknown yet potentially knowable. An open and engaged response requires the interlocutor to risk the prejudices and presuppositions of previously held knowledge claims in order to understand what the Other is presenting. The scope and sophistication of one's identity and what one knows are refined and transformed by this to-and-fro exchange of presentation and recognition. What is gained is a claim upon the truth that was previously unknown, and now it becomes a part of one's being. For Gadamer, this process is what constitutes playing the game of understanding.

The importance of the game in relation to playing is one final element of Gadamer's (2013) philosophy that has particular relevance to the present discussion. Vilhauer (2010) summarized it this way:

Gadamer emphasizes the "*primacy of play over the consciousness of the player*" [*Truth and Method*, p. 104]. He describes play as having an active life of its own, of absorbing the players into itself, of holding the players in its spell, and of drawing them into the game. As Gadamer describes it, play is less of a thing a person does, and more of a thing done to him—or, better, an event in which one becomes caught-up. Gadamer declares that "all

playing is a being-played . . . the game masters the players” [*Truth and Method*, p. 106]. (emphasis in original, p. 35)

Notice here how Gadamer privileged the game as the true subject of play. Similar to the move in Hillman’s (1975) psychology and in Dream Tending (Aizenstat, 2011), the ego of the interpreter (or dreamer) is relativized and displaced as an agent of understanding. Understanding is not something that is done to a dream, or a work of art, or a person. It is a process, an event, in whose game the players are subsumed. The dreamer and the image are caught up in the play of the game.

Now the full significance of the play element in Dream Tending becomes apparent. Following Gadamer’s (2013) conceptualization of understanding as a game of presentation and recognition, Dream Tending recognizes the autonomy and integrity of the dream image as an Other, which the dreamer encounters as a Thou. Gadamer formulated playing with the Other as the way to understand a work of art, a text from another time, or a person. He did not suggest that the Other could be a dream or an image from the unconscious, but this is a reasonable extension of his thinking: the Other confronts one with that which is unknown and not understood. Jung (1946/1973a), in one of his more straightforward attempts to designate what he meant by the unconscious, wrote, “The concept of the unconscious *posits nothing*, it designates only my *unknowing*” (emphasis in original, p. 411). The experience of unknowingness that occurs in an encounter with Gadamer’s Other bears a resemblance to Jung’s formulation of the unconscious. Like a work of art, or a text from another time, the dream presents itself in the truth of its mystery, psyche offering an image with one hand while raising a finger coyly to her sealed lips with the other. Understanding does not occur as an act performed on the image by applying the habits of mind learned from positivism. Understanding is an experience, a game played back and forth between what the image presents phenomenologically, and what is recognized in its presentation. To the extent that some truth is to be found, it is there in what emerges in the playing, in the in-between of dreamer and image.

In Dream Tending, the dreamer does not restrict the otherness of the dream by treating it only as a historical event, as something that happened last night or at some remote time in the personal past. In encountering the dream, the dreamer brings a personal history along with acquired traditions, be they from the natural sciences, from psychoanalysis, or from analytical psychology. But none of these traditions tell what the dream brings in its alterity. The dream comes with its own history, its own tales from the underworld, its own baffling poetic traditions, foreign to the dreamer. In order to understand the dream in its otherness as a Thou, the dreamer has to risk knowledge claims gained through history and traditions. The presuppositions and prejudices that come into play with the first attempt to recognize what the dream is presenting have to be risked.

Through the practice of phenomenological animation, Dream Tending affirms that the encounter with the dream is occurring in the present moment. Dreams are in a constant state of present being, and psyche is always dreaming (Aizenstat, 2011). As Gadamer (2013) might have said, the encounter with the dream occurs at the horizon of understanding, where the dream’s horizon contemporaneously meets that of the dreamer’s. The animation of the image brings the historical and traditional dimensions of dreamer and dream together in the same spontaneous moment. The principle of variability that is at work as part of the play phenomenon means that it is not known what will happen in this

encounter; playing is spontaneous and unpredictable regarding a specific course and outcome. It is not an encounter that is controlled or dispassionately observed. In Dream Tending, the dreamer is engaged, participatory, committed, and open in comportment toward the image; the dreamer surrenders to the game, and is caught up and played out. The game of tending the image takes over, and the play in the imaginal field subsumes dream and dreamer. Two of the preferred questions from the Dream Tending lexicon, “Who’s visiting now?” and “What’s happening here?” (Aizenstat, p. 33) both express this open and engaged attitude of playing that generates understanding through dialogue with the autonomous Other of the image. The encounter is transforming because the image’s capacities for being and knowing, its claims upon the truth, have refined and sophisticated those of the dreamer.

Vilhauer (2010) emphasized the relationship Gadamer saw between playing and ethics. According to this view, expanding the capacities to engage and participate openly in committed dialogue with that which dwells beyond the horizon of understanding improves a person and benefits the social dimension of his or her being. The value of play is both functional and ethical. Jung’s (1961/1989) comment regarding his own confrontation with the unconscious comes to mind: “Insight into them [images] must be converted into an ethical obligation” (p. 193). The call to understand the otherness of psyche’s dream images is an ethical call, and the ethical response is to surrender over to the game of presentation and recognition. We are open, engaged, participatory interlocutors, playing with the living dynamic presence of the unknown.

Clinical Considerations

In the course of this discussion, the concept of play has shifted in its significance and its scope between the object relations perspective of Winnicott (1971), the social science view of Huizinga (1938/2014), and the broader philosophical hermeneutical formulation of Gadamer (2013). How these three authors define play varies widely, which demonstrates the lack of consensus in the fields of psychology and philosophy over how to conceptualize play. Yet these twentieth-century thinkers have all concurred that play remains a vital element of psychological life at all ages. Winnicott’s formulation of playing as a facilitator of psychological growth has provided a particularly valuable clinical model for work with both children and adults. For this discussion, the model’s Cartesian foundation has important clinical implications.

As previously noted, Winnicott’s (1971) conceptualization of playing in potential space is part of a person-centered model. Although he maintains that play occurs in the intermediate transitional space between inner and outer, the model is predicated on a Cartesian split between a person’s inner subjective world of fantasy and an outer objective world where reality exists. The dream’s value lies in its clinical application as an event of the patient’s inner world. In this conceptualization, a large part of the therapist’s job is to interpret artfully the client’s projection of inner fantasy material and dreams on the external reality of the therapeutic relationship. The present discussion’s focus on dreaming and the play element in Dream Tending suggests that there are different clinical opportunities available when the location of inner and outer and what constitutes the objective reality of the psyche shift from person-centric to image-centric, from the personal to the imaginal.

The Dream Tending method takes as its starting point the experience of dreaming itself. “In a dream,” is an expression that immediately affirms the phenomenology of a new psychological orientation. The dreamer is inside the world of the dream and, as Hillman (2007) observed, often does not even have a leading role in the action. Dream Tending accepts the reality of the dream as ontologically valid, following the image-centered commitments of Corbin (1972), Jung (1934/1966b [CW 16]), and Hillman (1975). This phenomenological orientation is a crucial shift in perspective from Winnicott’s (1971) orientation toward inner, outer, and in-between to evaluate what is real, what is unreal, and what becomes the space of play. As dreamers, we inhabit the world of the dream, the *mundus imaginalis*, and play occurs in the space between the realities of that world and those of the material world of daytime concerns. The epistemology of Gadamer (2013) becomes a support for this shift in perspective, which affirms the validity of two realities, two horizons of meaning that meet through the game of understanding. What becomes of the interpretive role of the therapist given this shift?

Shifting the location of potential space from the intermediate zone between inner and outer to a zone between the world of images and the world of material things creates a new role for the therapist or dream tender. For the remainder of this discussion *dream tender* will be the preferred term for the therapeutic role, acknowledging that Aizenstat (2011) promoted the adaptability of his model to operate as a praxis for non-professionals as well as professional clinicians. The focus of clinical attention now becomes the horizon where the image and the dreamer meet, both retaining their integrity, each presenting a unique perspective. To interpret the image as a part of the dreamer’s inner world is to deny the image its own reality, and the vitality of the image as an embodied presence is depleted. In this other paradigm, the role of the therapist or dream tender is to safeguard the play space between dreamer and image, ensuring the integrity of both, facilitating a dialogue between two unique perspectives. The therapeutic goal is no longer adaptation to an external reality but a cultivation and maintenance of a relationship in a game of understanding between two players, the dreamer and the image. This aspect is not dissimilar from Bitan’s (2012) insights into the complementary ideas of Winnicott and Derrida, who both appreciated the paradoxical aspect of play, which holds oppositions in coexistence without resolution, although the focus on protecting the play space between dreamer and image is a significant difference.

Huizinga’s (1938/2014) characteristics of play provide evaluative criteria for this new therapeutic role focused on facilitating play and ensuring the integrity of the players. The dream tender can help establish a play space in which the consent to join in the game of understanding is voluntary and free for both dreamer and image. The therapist as facilitator demonstrates respect for the integrity and reality of the image as one of two players entering the game. The dream tender helps designate the play space as a *temenos* outside ordinary material daily life. Similarly, the seclusion of the play space and the duration of play for a Dream Tending session are ensured. As a relationship emerges through play between dreamer and image, the dream tender can call attention to the inherent sense of order and completion that emerges for both players: the dreamer finds new perspectives and attitudes to integrate in waking life, and the image finds new capacities to exist outside and beyond the personal narratives that had been previously imposed upon it. The dream tender now becomes an expert in facilitating play by

stimulating tension as dreamer and image stretch toward each other in imaginal space, stretching toward a shared horizon of meaning as Gadamer (2013) might have put it. By preserving a metaphorical or poetic basis of mind, the dream tender allows the guidelines for hosting and animating the image to become rules that preserve the game. Finally, what emerges through play in the imaginal space retains an air of mystery and unknowingness, which the dream tender supports even as the time designated for play concludes. Beyond therapeutic rules to protect confidentiality and the privileged information of the client, the dream tender appreciates that the image withdraws from the space of the game retaining its own secrets.

The philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer (2013) introduce a few further implications regarding this question of how the clinical role shifts with a new perspective on play and its role in Dream Tending. One of the fundamental concepts in Gadamer's treatise is the ethical call to meet the Other as a Thou. The game of understanding is a relational game of transformation in which the dreamer risks her or his claims on truth in order to meet the dream in its alterity and allow the back-and-forth play of presentation and recognition to transform those claims. This focus on relationship implies that the otherness of the dream is an essential factor in order for there to be a game. As such, it is the role of the dream tender to safeguard the alterity of the image in order for the imaginal field to remain a ludic field. The therapeutic goal, then, is not to explain away the image, but to sustain the game in which there is always more to be experienced in relationship with the Other so long as the image preserves its otherness, which is to say its unknowness. Because the subject of Gadamer's play is not the players but the game, the role of the dream tender is not limited to serving the dreamer, but now shifts to serving the game of understanding as well. Finally, Gadamer posited that the transformative aspect of play improves the player as it expands the breadth and sophistication of one's claims on the truth. This suggestion introduces the ethical aspect of imaginal play. Vilhauer (2010) made explicit the full force of Gadamer's perspective in this regard:

Because Gadamer encourages in us a recognition that our continued to-and-fro engaged "play" with the Other is crucial for our very way of living and flourishing as human beings, we can see that disengagement, the complete restriction of the Other's possibility for participating in play, the elimination of the Other—or any other "game-stopping" moves—are the worst kinds of violence against our human form of life. (p. xvii)

Here Dream Tending proposes that it is a form of violence against both human and imaginal forms of life; or, to be more precise still, it is violence against psychological life. Gadamer's assertion brings to mind a similar ethical call invoked by Jung (1961/1989) towards the end of his life. When we acknowledge the necessity to articulate and safeguard differentness as play's lifeblood, the deeper dimensions of alterity and diversity fall under the purview of ethics.

Conclusion

This article has featured three perspectives on the conceptualization and significance of play in order to elucidate the value of the play element in the system of Dream Tending. Contrary to popular beliefs that endorse abandoning play as part of childhood's aimless and carefree ways, play and playing are essential to psychological health and well-being

for individuals, for society, and the broader understanding of what it means to exist in the pursuit of truth. Corbin (1972), Jung (1934/1966b), and Hillman (1975) have each made a contribution to recognizing the reality of the image, arguing that its provenance from a nonmaterial dimension makes it no less valid as a mode of existing and knowing. Their work has provided a theoretical basis for the Dream Tending skills set. By introducing the perspectives on play to the theoretical postulates of Dream Tending, this essay views the transformative potential for working with images as a form of play.

Shifting clinical focus from a person-centered approach to one that is image-centered leads to a shift in the play paradigm from a game of adaptation to a game of understanding between interlocutor and Other. The Dream Tending method illustrates this shift and its implications. Acknowledging the reality of the image and its claims on truth leads to the potential for transformation through the back-and-forth play between image and dreamer. The role of the dream tender shifts in turn from being an interpreter of the dreamer's interiority to being a facilitator of the game within the established play space. A new ethical responsibility arises with this shift as the dream tender now has the charge to protect the image from violence by any "game-stopping moves" (Vilhauer, 2010, p. xvii) that deny or restrict the image's possibility to participate in play.

Contributor

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2019 VISUAL ART AND ARTIST STATEMENTS

**“Wheel of Life” by John Dotson
(wood)**



**“Imperfect Mirror” by John Dotson
(wood, mixed media)**



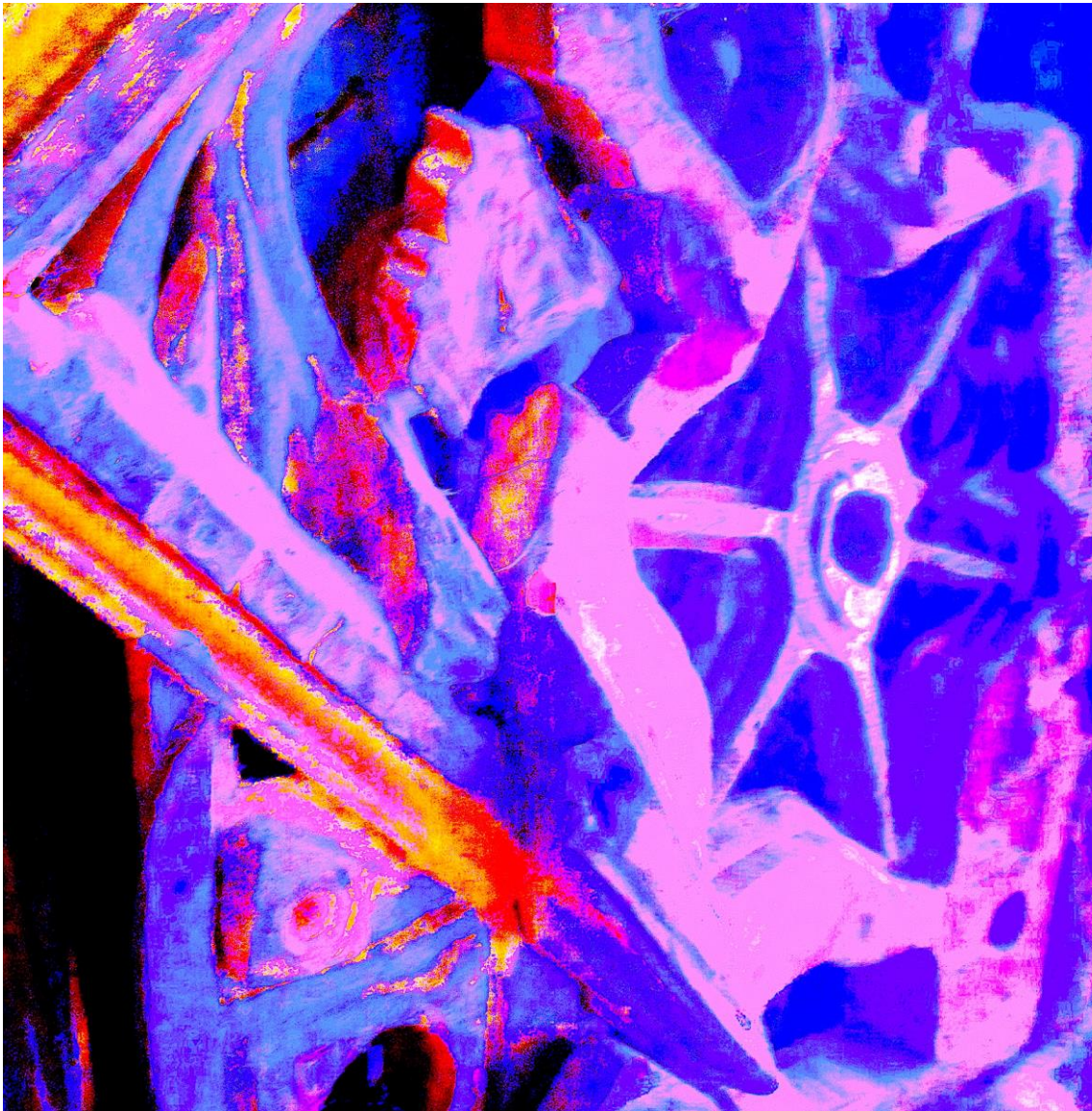
**“Aperture” by John Dotson
(wood, mixed media)**



**“Triapeture” by John Dotson
(wood)**



**“Dawn Fire” by John Dotson
(wood, mixed media)**



**“Antechamber, lower veil” by John Dotson
(wood, mixed media)**



**“Pavanis” by John Dotson
(wood, mixed media)**



John Dotson's Artist Statement

While I am grateful through seven decades of life to have worked in many creative modes—prose, poetry, drama, multi-media, painting and drawing, performance, teaching—I feel thrillingly at home in the Cosmos when I am engaged with sculpting. The process is deeply rooted in my natal soil of Appalachian northeast Tennessee and the magic sandbox of my early childhood. My father built it for me, with a fine canvas roof, and there I felt safe to work the wet sand happily and freely shaping architectures and landscapes. I was always close to my father who was a master craftsman working in metal, having been inspired in his country childhood by my great-grandfather who was a blacksmith. In my earliest years, I also attentively helped my mother with the art of icing cakes.

As my life progressed, with a steady movement westward, my basic material came to be plywood, though I work with whatever materials are available including metal. The true *prima material* is of spiritual origination. I love matter deeply. Matter is alive and revelatory and infused with the Divine Feminine. I am attracted to the mysteries of mass, inertia, and gravity congealing with temporal factors, yet my work is not simply orientable in three-dimensional spacetime. For me the sculpting process is *atemporal* and *aperspectival*. I have no particular awareness of the destiny that may be latent in any given sculpture. In the process, I am free of the ordinary framings of life-and-death which blend in the work as tangibly as midnight and noon, conjoined with the songs of the finches, warblers, crows, and hawks in *plein air* as Dawn arises to Noonday. I do not create objects, rather I serve the tantric renderings that emerge in the nitty-gritty of the studio, with the use of glue and screws, mixed media, and power tools. I am never concerned about finishing, although the pieces themselves rise to the Alpha/Omega occasions when called to delivery and epiphany. Through the decades, I have been acutely aware that this work is dedicated to our collective endurance of the coming phases of planetary life.

**“Maternal Roots” by Heather Taylor-Zimmerman
(acrylic)**



**“Insight” by Heather Taylor-Zimmerman
(acrylic)**



Heather-Taylor Zimmerman Artist Statement

Art has long been a form of inner exploration and observation. Providing a meaningful way to process an innate visionary tendency from childhood, this creative impulse has led me through the years like an individuating path upon which I learned to navigate both personal and collective darkness. Originally offering a way to anchor and remember inner images to gain insight, my paintings and later sculptures evolved to serve as stepping stones upon a collective Way. After studying archetypal and ritual art in college, I realized that this path extended backward through similar art-based ritual traditions from around the world and throughout time. This study culminated three decades later in doctoral work on Jung's art-based pathway upon which I realized how to alchemize our collective lead into gold. As a result, I am learning to see and see through the lens of my soul and the world soul in art and the great work of art of the world. This revelatory insight is alive in my art today.

The paintings that I have included illustrate and animate art's alchemical ability to recreate us as artists in a new image and the creation of our soul. In this process we find that we become the path and the way for ourselves and others. Embodying repressed material, revealed in visions and dreams, this art reforms the *prima materia* or primal matter of creation in images that guide us. Through fairy-tale like flights of the imagination, overlaid as painted images, I have captured some of this process as a metamorphosis of insight and realization in the crystallization of the painted soul. These images are not perfect—and they are not trying to be. They are seed thoughts (idea originally meaning “to see”) or teachings from my soul that guide me home, moving through visions to art and back in active imagination. In this journey I circumambulate the image of Eden, returning through the imaginal realms to find my way back to the mythic garden—to return to the original archetypal seed image of creation in homeostatic balance with the soul in the world.

About the Artists and Poets

Mădăina Borteș

Mădăina Borteș, M.A., is a writer and Ph.D. student at Pacifica Graduate Institute. She works at the intersection of performance studies and somatic depth psychology.

Carol Burbank

Carol Burbank is a teacher, poet, playwright and scholar. Her research focuses on the Shapeshifter archetype as a paradigm for identity and healthy cultural change in the 21st century. Her workbook *Shifting Free: Claim the Resilience of the Shapeshifter*, will be published in 2019.

John Dotson

John Dotson lives an eclectic life, participating as fully as possible in the arts and education. He serves as president of the Monterey (California) Friends of C. G. Jung, and he is a coordinator of the Gebser-Jung Conference set for October 2019, Asilomar Conference Center. John lives in Carmel.

Cacky Mellor

While serving as Creative Director for Psychology and the Other and the Director of Operations, Cacky is pursuing her Ph.D. in Depth Psychology with an emphasis in Somatic Studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute. Her current work centers around the biopsychosocial impact of words.

Heather Taylor-Zimmerman

Living among tall trees and tidal waters, Heather plays with creativity as a transformative practice uniting art and nature. With a doctoral degree (pending publication) on Jung's art-based practice, Heather has created a dynamic online learning platform and nature-based retreat center to explore this fertile ground with others.