

Bushwhacking Through Narcissism: The Making of a Jungian Analyst

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Seven

Dissolving The Boundaries

The theme of the preceding analyses is that the heart of the work always takes place in the self field and that my successes and failures were based on my unconsciousness of this central fact. The analyst who "taught me how to be an analyst" by dissolving my defenses and forcing me to deal with my own woundedness was Kim. She found my name in the Yellow Pages and knew nothing of Jungian analysis. The moment I heard her voice on the telephone, I knew the specter of my profound but ill-fated relationship with Patricia had returned in earnest. Synchronistically, I had finally had my "closure" meeting with Patricia a few months earlier and realized it was time to begin to write about its significance. At the time Kim called, I had just put together a set of lectures for the Boston Jung Institute entitled "Archetypes of Romantic Love" which I billed as a "right-brain course."

My thesis was that the archetypes were, at bottom, *feeling states*, and archetypal imagery constituted a secondary representation by which the psyche tries to make sense of its overwhelming emotions.[1] In order to force the class to attend to the emotions rather than to intellectualize on the imagery, I chose as the primary vehicle for my presentations a series of taped excerpts from operas. There was no doctrine to be learned but rather a set of feeling states to be experienced and discussed -- music being the most direct and unavoidable artistic medium for the expression of emotion and the one art in which emotion cannot be avoided by the audience.

Although I had only the vaguest theoretical grasp of my subject, I had already come to know that the foundation of every relationship -- including that of analysis -- was emotional. I also knew that the forceps and magnifying glass approach to imagery ran the risk of avoiding this central matter. Romantic love was the most common form in which the general public -- not to mention analysts and analytic trainees -- were exposed to archetypal states of *participation mystique*. I had no prescriptions for how to deal with it, but my experience with Patricia and other women including my wife had enabled me to distinguish a variety of different dimensions of erotic and sexual union.

These had left me thoroughly unsatisfied with the published psychological treatments of romantic love. Even Jungian analysts, it seemed to me, treated erotic material in an undifferentiated manner. Everything from mysticism to madness is felt in romantic love, and

the lover may find salvation or perdition through erotic relationship. It all depended on how the experiences were lived and integrated. I envisioned this course as the first step in a study of transference and countertransference. It eventually resulted in my book, *Divine Madness*, which I still see as the introduction to this present book.

As I listened to Kim's voice on the telephone, I felt a mixture of fear and anticipation. There was no question in my mind that a professional involvement with her was going to result in an erotic exchange that might be beyond my ability to handle; and yet to avoid this challenge would be to hide from my fate. Entanglement with Kim was in my mind the next peril my destiny had in store for me. Furthermore, I had an irrepressible conviction that I had the piece she was missing. I could not have articulated this at the time, but knew it had something to do with my certainty in following my destiny. I thought I could tell that she was nearly in touch with her own, but too confused and fragmented to hold to it with confidence. I even knew what she looked like (not much like Patricia) which was confirmed later that week when she appeared for her first session. Thus an overwhelmingly powerful countertransference was already in place before we met.

The transference was also in place, as she revealed in the first moments of our session, saying that she could see from my eyes that I was the "clearest" individual she had met apart from her guru of seven years. Except in instantaneous flashes, however, clarity did not characterize our meetings. She described herself with some pride as "the second most difficult borderline in Boston." The "most difficult borderline" was her own patient. Kim was a therapist with one client when she began with me.

True to her claim, she was never "easy." She raged and wept, maintained pregnant or hostile silences for five minutes or more at a time, squirmed and writhed in her seat on the couch, slithered onto the floor, knelt at my feet, paced, changed the subject hundreds of times, and attacked anything I said. She also attacked my silences and venomously questioned my slightest movement, from scratching my nose to shifting the position of one of my feet. She seemed to feel that any sign of life from me was a threat to her existence. I learned immediately the truth of Nathan Schwartz-Salant's (1982) description of the first period in the treatment of the narcissistic individual as the "shut up and listen stage" (p. 49). But she managed to end every session seeming radiant and together.

I learned very little about her life, as fragments of stories interrupted and contradicted one another. She was thirty-six, six years younger than I, and divorced from an Austrian whom she had met and married in Austria. Sometimes she spoke of him in the most reverend and hushed of tones ("*Er war schn*"), evoking the tone of a fairy tale; sometimes in guilt, implying -- as I mistakenly guessed -- that she might have destroyed the relationship with compulsive infidelity; and sometimes in anger, suggesting that his drinking had driven her out. It was either the happiest or the most miserable period of her life; I learned no specifics. She described her parents with similar extremes of adoration and hatred. She seemed to have lived in nearly every country on earth, but I could get no sense of chronology. All of her relationships seemed highly conflicted, but I could not keep the people straight or determine how recently the described events had occurred.

In short, Kim presented a dramatic picture of fragmentation. One of her former therapists had thought she might be a "multiple personality." This was one area where I felt competent, having familiarized myself with a hundred years of literature on multiple personality disorder for my diploma thesis in Zurich, and I saw no evidence of the essential characteristic of that condition, namely the serial manifestation of dramatically different part-personalities with amnesia for one another. I thought the borderline diagnosis was probably correct, and that it took an hysterical form in that she was highly suggestible and could easily believe that any momentary role she was playing was the "real Kim." What she lacked was a sense of her center, of an identity that persisted through the momentary roles.

Worse, her fragmentation was contagious. Each momentary pose induced a reaction in me. I was wise, stupid, kindly, and cruel by turns -- and not only in her perception of me. She was a force of nature like an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. There was no way I could stand against it. She sucked me into the vortex of her dissolution with her attacks and appeals so that I felt with unshakable conviction that I was as she saw me. I was inflated with wisdom, kindness, and understanding one moment and cast down in despair over my stupidity, cruelty, and lack of empathy the next. She seemed so much sharper and quicker than I, that I was always hopelessly out of breath in my attempts to keep up with her. She read my mind, knew my secrets, and accused me of motives I would never have suspected in myself -- though coming from her in the moment she brought them up, they seemed more than plausible. I felt I no longer knew myself. I was a dull, clumsy oaf harboring the most heinous of impulses. Somewhere inside me was the knowledge that this was all projection on her part, but I was unable to believe it while she was present. It was only a half hour or so after she left my office that the illusion dissolved and I became myself again.

Kim's extraverted intuition was phenomenal. One of her sources of income came from doing psychic readings, and I knew from the incidental remarks she made about me, that her accuracy was remarkable. She was without boundaries in every way, so that other people's psyches were an open book for her. This in itself kept me off balance, but the most challenging thing was that she expected even better performances from me.

She wanted me to know what she wished to say before *she* did. I was expected to be her whole psyche, but in its potential integrated form, and able to articulate any aspect of it in her moment of confusion. If I hesitated to speak, she accused me of withholding the piece she needed. If I thought I knew what she was trying to say and offered a key word to help her out, she accused me of ruining the whole session by stifling or destroying her train of thought just when she was about to come up with the essential word on her own.

She made me feel as though I had no intuition at all and therefore no business in representing myself as an analyst. On one occasion she hit me so deeply with this accusation that I was depressed and felt useless for a week until it suddenly dawned on me that *my* intuition was introverted and that it manifested in my usual certainty about my self-field identity and life course. This is what she lacked completely. In fact, she often tried to piece together an image of her own identity by applying to herself the psychic readings she had given to strangers. She thought she could find herself only in others and had no idea how to look within herself for her own identity.

Complicating this picture of chaos and fragmentation that called even my firm sense of self into question was sexuality. The sexual tension in the room was thick enough to cut with a knife, and she was relentless in her attempts at seduction. I knew before meeting her that I was by no means invulnerable to her wild sexuality. She stirred something in me that I had not felt in twenty years, so that I had frequently to rehearse my reasons for resisting and remind myself of the incompatibility of analysis and "sexual acting out." Still I could not deny my feelings without lying; and I was sure, and remain sure to this day, that no human relationship -- especially an analytic relationship -- can be built upon lies.

As the weeks and months went by, the validity of my reasons for resisting her advances caved in one by one until I had only a single defense left, namely that if it would someday prove that a sexual relationship was "right" for us, we could only be sure of this if we proceeded one step at a time. The danger in sexual attraction was that it encouraged the partners to jump over several important steps in their eagerness to reduce the tension. Fortunately she accepted this argument, and I never had to say how unlikely I thought it was that we would ever find that a sexual relationship was the next step.

The tension never seemed to let up. After three or four months I felt so thoroughly a victim of it that my body was in a constant state of arousal. It was not just that I felt an occasional ecstatic dilation in my abdomen or in my solar plexus, as I had sometimes felt with others; nor even that I felt the shaft of my penis dilating, as I always felt before intercourse. I felt as if the long bones of my arms and legs were dilated and that the marrow had melted and was languorously draining away. I had never felt so thoroughly possessed. My sensations continued day and night for weeks on end.

I began to record my countertransference feelings and to meet regularly with a supervisor in hopes of containing myself. Also around this time, I traveled to Europe to visit relatives and stopped off in Zurich to consult with my second and third analysts about my work -- or failure to work -- with Kim. I felt supported emotionally but gained no wisdom from these meetings.

As the months went on, Kim did begin to show greater and greater facility to feel a contact with her center, if only for moments at a time. By the ninth month, I felt at my wits' end and began a fourth analysis with a strong woman who had about ten years more experience than I and whom I hoped was not unfamiliar with the issues I had to discuss. I said nothing of this to Kim, but the very next week she announced she had found a second therapist and advised me to do the same. She thought neither of us was succeeding in containing our energy.

This was an important synchronistic event, but I overlooked its importance at the time. Kim and I were so completely and inextricably entangled that we had reached the same decision at the same time without consulting one another. We had found our respective therapists in an act of *participation mystique*. I could hardly deny we shared chaos and fragmentation together, but here was evidence of a stabilizing instinct we also shared. Our separate involvements with our own therapists also had the effect of calming our meetings somewhat; and after another three months Kim called to inform me that she was severing contact. Her therapist had been urging her to make this move; and my analyst, who had not yet offered an opinion, said, "Good, I hope she stays away a long time so you can come to grips with what this all means to you."

What it meant was severe depression. The bottom had fallen out of my life. It felt like the end of the only love affair I had ever had and that I had lost my very soul. I was despondent and dispirited for months. I had been ripped open and left an empty shell. I wondered how I could be of any use to my analysands and could hardly have blamed them if they all left in search of a more effective analyst and more adequate human being. But, strange to say, my case load actually increased and the sessions seemed to be more effective. I was more open to everyone's pain and evidently met them at a deeper level, so that I ended every day elated at the work that had been done without the slightest decrease in my personal state of despair. I lost the ability to read and write, and my tremendous love of music had turned into disgust: opera, chamber music, jazz, even rock music had become too painful for me to abide. I had no interest for anything other than the analyses I participated in every day. My friends and colleagues -- to say nothing of my wife and son -- noted the change in my mood with concern, but my analysands seemed to notice only the improvement in their own work.

In Kim's absence, I was left to explore my own woundedness, the borderline piece in my own make-up; and I began to see that if I had only been in touch with it earlier, my analyses with Joe and the others could have been much more effective. I had been so well defended against my own propensity to fragment, that I had been able to appreciate others' self-field pain only unconsciously or as through a wall of glass. It reminded me of another image from the Castaneda books. The shaman opens a gap in his torso, just where I felt ripped and gutted by my encounter with Kim. Luminous fibers from the egg-shaped subtle-body extend through this gap to manipulate the world, to "shamanize." But as long as he holds his torso open, the shaman has to be alert; for his gap leaves him mortally vulnerable. Some day his death will enter him there.

In Castaneda, I never know whether death means corporeal demise or madness. As psychic images, death and madness are often interchangeable, for madness only occurs with the death of ego. But not the death of ego alone. Ego is only our *consciousness* of being an agent in the world, a coherent self. Ego in this sense "dies" every night when we sleep. Madness does not supervene as long as our self remains *unconsciously* coherent. Madness is the state of chaos we enter when "the center does not hold," when our instinctual foundations lose their harmonious balance. That shamanism everywhere flirts with the dissolution of the sense of having a coherent sense of self is reflected in what Eliade demonstrates as the universal experience of "dismemberment" during the candidate's initiation. Castaneda describes his own experience of dissolving and reassembling on several occasions.

Self is the psyche's agent for resisting dissolution into a chaos of mutually antagonistic forces by establishing balance and coherent cooperation among the instinct-archetypes. My self was generally much more successful at bringing chaos into order than Kim's was. But her turmoil was too exorbitant for me to resist. At every meeting I found myself sucked into her fragmentation -- even though my self was able to reestablish a certain order within a short time after the end of her session. But while I was more conscious in myself of the deleterious effects of our association, Kim noticed beneficial results in moments of centeredness and coherence.

My experience with Kim, therefore, has made me take seriously the notion that self is not merely a center of coherence, isolated within each individual's psyche. Self is also a *field*. It is as though each individual self is a more or less successful vortex within a continuous field

that includes all living beings. We are constantly in communication with one another through the disturbances or ripples in the self field itself (Castaneda's image of luminous fibers). It is by this means that plants can be shown to register changes in electrical conductivity when their caretakers experience strong emotion. It is the medium through which my analysts and I were in communication with one another's relative sense of coherence or fragmentation -- regardless of how consciously either of us knew it.

My experience with Kim also required me to take seriously another matter that had bothered me since my training in Zurich, where I had observed patients hospitalized with severe psychotic disturbances. Given Jung's doctrine that everyone's psyche is equipped with an ordering principle, the self, I had to wonder what had happened to it in these unfortunate cases. Had they once possessed a self and lost it through destructive forces of a physiological or interpersonal nature? Or had they never had a self? Was self, perhaps, a personal acquisition, somewhat in line with Kohut's theory of narcissism, whereby a lengthy process of mirroring and empathizing with the infant's natural grandiosity builds or "structures" an internal principle of order? Jung's self was an abstract ideal, never knowable in itself but only in its effects, whereas Kohut's was an implicit or semi-conscious *sense of having* a coherent center.

Psychosis seemed to be the state of lacking not only an ego, but a self as well. Most disturbing for me were the drawings and paintings of these individuals in which figures of divine omnipotence often figured, but with predominantly demonic and destructive features. If self were the most powerful force in the psyche, as Jung claimed, it surely did not seem to be working for balance and harmony in these people. No doubt when they recovered -- if only for a short time -- self was again in evidence. But where was it during the time of psychotic chaos?

As a Jungian analyst, I work with the notion of making contact with and fostering the individual's implicit sense of self, what Neumann referred to as developing an "ego-self axis." But the experience of my own vulnerability to dissolution and fragmentation has forced me to revise my notion of self, to see it as always more or less wounded. Self gathers the instinctual and archetypal forces of the psyche into a whole that is always flawed; self always leaves a gap or wound in its synthesis. Even those of us who have never had to suffer the chaos of psychosis or the borderline's precarious coherence, are vulnerable to fragmentation at least momentarily, at least in situations of powerful psychological stress.

In order to construct a picture of the self's flawed synthesis and to understand what happened between Kim and myself, I have found it useful to make some distinctions in Jung's layered image of the psyche. Jung speaks of three psychic strata: consciousness, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious. They correspond to the three layers of interpersonal communication I have described in Chapter Four: discursive dialogue, personal field, and self field. Discursive dialogue employs ego consciousness; the persona field uses the unconscious images and metaphors of the personal unconscious, i.e., memories and fantasies to which we have access through our life since birth. The self field, however, is only one layer within Jung's collective unconscious. I distinguish three.

For Jung the collective unconscious and the realm of the archetypes are synonymous. But the term "archetype" is used to signify a great variety of different things. Hobson's review

(1980) of Jung's *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious (CW 9I)* distinguishes more than thirty different meanings of *archetype* in that one volume alone. In this book, I have already distinguished what I call the "functional" archetypes (ego, persona, shadow, anima/animus, and self) from the "mythological" archetypes. When it is effective against the potential chaos of the unconscious, self always *functions* as the organizing and balancing constituent of the psyche, although it may be represented by a variety of mythological images: Zeus, Tao, atman, Holy Ghost, mandalas, etc.

Thus self as center and organizing principle is different from the *images* of centrality we may encounter in our dreams or in our study of mythology. Furthermore, self as organizer and the disparate forces it gathers into a flawed but harmonious whole are also different. Thus I distinguish three levels within the collective unconscious.[2] The most primitive of these is that of the disparate forces, what I call the "instinct-archetypes." The next level up is that of the "self" which organizes those forces into a pre-imagistic whole and is sensitive to self-field influences from all the other beings with which we share the world. The highest level in the collective unconscious is that of mythological imagery, by which processes in the deep unconscious are represented to the ego in dreams and visions. All of this is represented in Figure 1.

I envision no direct interpersonal communication at the "collective" level of "mythic imagery." The "instinct-archetypes," in contrast, make themselves felt as disturbances in the self field, where they are experienced as charging us with energy or threatening us with fragmentation. Whether providing coherence or fragmentation, these raw forces of the self field are as impersonal as a sunrise or a volcanic eruption. Mythic imagery, on the other hand, is an abstraction from the primal emotionality of the self field, and it always has a somewhat personal flavor. For example, one individual dreams of Persephone while another dreams of Inanna: two goddesses of the underworld, but each with her own flavor. The little monster I saw crawl out from under Suzannah's couch and the image of Karen and me sitting in a bath were both mythic images referring to self-field realities occurring between myself and my analysand. I never learned if they also saw images at those moments. If they had, I would expect them to be similar to but different from mine, while Kim and I found ourselves victimized by identical emotions.

PSYCHIC STRATA	MODES OF COMMUNICATION
ego	ordinary discourse
personal unconscious	persona field
mythic imagery	no direct mode[3]
self	self-field coherence
instinct-archetypes	self-field disturbance

Figure 1

Jung describes the instinct-archetypes when he illustrates his idea of *archetype* with examples from the insect world: the leaf-cutter ant and yucca moth. Both of these insects live a very short life and cannot have *learned* the intricate procedures their species require for procreation. They therefore have to have been born with the required faculties for recognizing the right conditions and circumstances to lay eggs and fertilize them. These descriptions resemble very closely what ethnologists have called "inborn releasing mechanisms" (cf. Eibl-Eibesfeld).

For example, chickens have been shown to be born with an ability to recognize the shadow of a chicken hawk moving across the ground, and they react to such a moving shadow by running underneath some object for shelter. Artificial models of chicken hawks that will elicit this response when flown over the barnyard on a wire must show very little variation in shape from the actual bird. Similarly, human mothers experience an involuntary response in their breasts when their baby cries. Not every sudden sound and not every cry will elicit this response. It is not learned, it is inborn.

The instinct-archetypes resemble inborn releasing mechanisms in having this extremely well-defined response pattern. Furthermore, each acts in isolation from every other. The chick's flight response from the hawk saves it from one kind of death: not from being devoured by a snake and not from death by starvation. Thus, at the level of the instinct-archetypes, we are each a bundle of isolated impulses, each acting in isolation from one another.

Self organizes our instinct-archetypes into an harmonious whole, and only this whole is the foundation for our sense of individuality and of being a coherent person. The flaw or wound in the self becomes apparent when one or other of the instinct-archetypes flies out of control and gains too much influence over the whole personality. Then the self-synthesis has failed -- either momentarily or for an extended period of time.

The fragmentation I felt with Kim is a perfect example of this situation. The sexual instinct had broken loose from its potential integration by the self, and we both felt overpowered by it. In my life, this disintegration in the face of the sexual instinct was not a frequent experience; but Kim lived with it every day. It fueled a compulsive promiscuity of which she was both proud and ashamed. She brought it into my consulting room with her, where we both felt it as an overwhelming force. The disturbed and rather ineffective "vortex" of her place in the self field was felt by my more competent "vortex" as a tidal wave of undisciplined emotion. As long as she was present, I felt myself in constant danger of being swept away.

As destructive as this seemed to us at the time, there was a good deal of potential good in what we experienced. The sex drive aims at least in part for union and interpersonal bonds. For Kim this surely meant a relational anchor: someone to hold, contain, and value her. We saw a kinship in one another, as do all the sexually infatuated. For me, she represented what I might have been if my defenses and stability had not been so inflexible. If I had had a little of her chaos, I might not have failed with Joe, I might have been more acquainted with my intuition. She dissolved the boundaries that both protected and imprisoned me. On the other hand, I represented the stability, containment, self-confidence, and sense of destiny that she so badly lacked. She needed to *close* the gap of psychic sensitivity through which her death

strolled like an ambivalent lover, while I needed to open mine. The fantasy of physical union therefore symbolized a new wholeness for both of us. She had to own her potential coherence and I my fragmentation.

1. My tentative hypothesis at that time -- largely confirmed, I believe, by the researches of John Kerr (1993) -- was that Jung, too, worked from an emotional connection with the self field. The importance of his analyses with Sabina Spielrein, Toni Wolff, and others being central to his theoretical position but too dangerous to discuss, he had to find a method of describing his work that seemed "scientific." The archaeology of imagery, i.e., finding the deep meaning of his patient's dreams and visions through parallels with mythology, gave his work the quality of demonstrable verification.
2. As stated elsewhere, I first learned this tripartite division of the collective unconscious from Jung's early source of theoretical inspiration, Pierre Janet. Cf. Haule, 1983; 1984; 1990: pp. 50ff.
3. There are *indirect* modes of communication at the level of mythic imagery. Painting, music, story-telling, and the like, can present mythological imagery from one person's psyche to another's. But in this interchange, the ego is used as mediator.