

# Divine Madness: Archetypes of Romantic Love

by John Ryan Haule

Copyright © 1990

All Rights Reserved

<http://www.jrhaule.net/divine.html>

---

## Four

### Love's Wound: Locus Of Agony And Rapture

The previous chapter explored the experience of oneness-even of fusion. In order to understand this from a psychological perspective, it has been necessary to articulate a view of the human psyche. Because we are universally inclined to speak of the "depth" of our love or the "depths" of ourselves that have been touched by our beloved, I have emphasized a model of the psyche based on five "levels" or degrees of depth. At the lowest, "instinctual," level -- which has been left out of consideration until now -- we may imagine a collection of pretty much unrelated giants, powerful and crude. Each possesses awe-inspiring strength, but little sense of direction or ability to cooperate with the others. Jung speaks of a chaotic bundle of instincts:

The bundle of instincts of man, his chaotic ensemble of instincts is not integrated at all. Instincts are most contradictory, and man is torn by them. They are like animals in the zoo, they do not love each other at all, they bite each other and try to run away (1938/84: 108).

Jung cites insect mating rituals to illustrate how the instinct/archetypes work. He mentions the yucca moth and the leaf-cutter ant (1919/48, 1946/54), both of which must perform an extremely complicated series of activities to complete a reproductive episode. As the species makes provision for an older generation to teach younger individuals, an insect must be born with the capability of "recognizing" appropriate weather and plant conditions and then "knowing" what to do with them. Jung calls this inborn capacity for recognizing and performing typical patterns an archetype. It is not a mythic image; and-unlike the Self-it has no appreciation for wholeness. It is less organized than that. "Archetype," in this sense, refers to a blind propensity to repeat the same behavior over and over again.

Those behavior-regulating patterns have also been called inborn releasing mechanisms (IRMs), because it is clear that the individual has no way of *learning* the very well-defined conditions that "release" rigid response patterns (cf. Eibl-Eibesfeld, 20-25). For example a newborn chick can "recognize" the shadow of a chicken hawk passing over the barnyard and "knows" enough to run under a wagon for protection. Experiments with artificial chicken hawks have shown that there are very definite limits within which the hawk shape can be varied in order to obtain the desired IRM behavior from the chicks. This blind kind of knowing, which snaps shut like a steel trap, is also the way our human psyche operates when our level of consciousness is lowered to that of the instinct/archetypes.

As we proceed up the psychic levels toward consciousness, the raw force behind the behavior decreases and its flexibility and refinement increase until we reach the conscious ego, with its ability to make its own decisions and combine old notions into new and creative ideas.

The ego is an extremely important element in holding together a coherent and flexible psychic unity in the face of day-to-day events. But it rests upon a deeper foundation, the Self, which is the source of all unity and balance within the psyche and between psyche and the outer world and other individuals. Externally, the Self unites us with our beloved and with the cosmos in an undifferentiated oneness. Internally, it unites the several instinct/archetypes into a harmonious whole. This wholeness is more primitive than what might be accomplished through imagery, for mythic images arise only at the next higher level of the psyche. There, fragments of what seems to be a comprehensive narrative arise in our dreams and waking fantasies and seem to imply a deeper unconscious knowing in the Self from which they appear to emerge. Jung describes this emerging and fragmentary narrative as a "personal myth," which we are living whether we know it or not:

Myth says a Church Father, is "what is believed always, everywhere, by everybody"; hence the man who thinks he can live without myth, or outside it, is an exception. He is like one uprooted, having no true link either with the past, or with the ancestral life which continues within him, or yet with contemporary human society. . . . The psyche is not of today; its ancestry goes back many millions of years. Individual consciousness is only the flower and fruit of a season, sprung from the perennial rhizome beneath the earth; and it would find itself in better accord with the truth if it took the existence of the rhizome into its calculations. For the root matter is the mother of all things (1912/52: xxiv).

A rhizome is a rootlike plant stem that grows under the earth, roughly parallel to the surface of the ground, and sends out at intervals along its length roots reaching downward and vertical stems with leaves and flowers that extend above the earth. The rhizome that connects individuals with one another and with the earth lies as a de facto source of unity prior to all image and representation. It is the Self-level of the psyche, the origin of the myth image and a partial source of personal image within the psyche. It provides us with an intuitive or unconscious knowledge of the unity and balance within ourselves and within the microcosm.

The greatest possible contrast obtains between the pre-mythic unity of the Self and the snarling tiger pit of the instinct/archetypes of inborn releasing mechanisms. Every individual feels the tension between these levels of the deep psyche as a kind of uncertainty or precariousness in the Self's synthesis. In the language of Buddhism, the flaw in human nature resides in our untamable desire, also a reference to the IRMs. In biblical language it is 'original sin,' the flaw in human nature brought about by the fall of Adam and Eve from a state of paradisaic unity into a world whose very ground is cursed and where we have to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow (Gen. 3: 19).

We all experience ourselves as wounded. But as lovers, we experience the tension between Self and instincts more acutely. Romantic love is experienced as a tension between the love potion and the naked sword, between the bliss of union and the abyss of separation. Pain and delight are always closely linked for the lover. The foremost image for this is love's wound, which is praised and bemoaned by both romantic lovers and mystics. Majnun's condition is in no way unusual; he appears to have fallen victim to the snarling instincts:

On my way through a mountain gorge I met a creature writhing on the stones like a goat, like a madman in pain, like a lonely demon; his body was so wasted that every bone was visible.

. . . now talking to himself in verse, now moaning and sighing. He wept, stood up and collapsed again, he crawled and stumbled, a living image of his own fate. He swooned and was hardly conscious, so that at first he did not recognize his own father (Nizami, 1966: 42f).

Majnun's father tries to get him to pray to God to be saved "from this vain ecstasy." But Majnun prays quite differently:

I ask thee, my God, I beseech thee, in all the godliness of thy divine nature and all the perfection of thy kingdom: let my love grow stronger, let it endure, even if I perish. Let me drink from this well, let my eye never miss its light. If I am drunk with the wine of love, let me drink even more deeply (38).

For Majnun the pain is no mere torment. As the "passing away" of *fana*, it contains within itself the promise of attaining the greater Self and the greater unity of *baqa*. It is not only a torment that cannot be avoided, it is one that we implicitly long for. Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan says, "I do not know what has come over poor Isolde and me, but we have both of us gone mad in the briefest space of time with unimaginable torment . . ." (201). Similar imagery appears in the twentieth century novel of Erich Maria Remarque, *Arch of Triumph*. The action takes place during the German occupation of France; and the lovers, Joan and Ravic, are meeting again in a bar. This time they are enjoying a really fine bottle of calvados. Joan says, "After this calvados I'll never drink another kind." Ravic says she will: "It will taste even better than it really is. It'll be a calvados with the longing for another calvados. That in itself makes it less ordinary" (169).

The notion of the wound resides in that unrequitable longing for the one and only object which can satisfy. We find this sentiment among the mystics no less often than among romantic lovers. For example, Jacopone da Todi, a Franciscan writing in thirteenth century Italy, says:

Oh, that my heart would not stumble and sag!  
That I were able to love more intensely,  
That I had more than myself to give  
To that measureless light,  
That sweet splendor.  
I have given all that I have  
To possess the Lover who constantly renews me,  
That ancient Beauty forever new!

(259)

In his *Spiritual Canticle*, John of the Cross enumerates three traits of a soul sick with love of God. Firstly, such a soul is always longing for health and therefore has her heart fixed on her divine beloved. Secondly, she has lost her taste for all things. And thirdly, she finds all of her dealings with others to be burdensome and annoying (Canticle 10,1). These three traits are equally applicable to romantic love: one has found someone whom it leaves him sick to death to be without.

That is the story of Tristan who was first wounded while fighting for the honor of Cornwall, before he had ever heard of Isolde and without the slightest thought of romantic love in his head. But he was wounded by the sword of Ireland's champion, the Morholt, and thereby poisoned with the deadly compound which Isolde (or her mother) herself wrought. This is characteristic of love's wound: it can only be healed by one who has done the wounding. It is therefore a wound unlike any other wound, as it is shared uniquely by two people. John of the Cross goes farther than this: "Among lovers, the wound of one is a wound for both, and the two have but one feeling" (Canticle 13,9).

One of the *lais* of Marie de France provides a rather complete picture of love's wound.

### **The Story of Guigemar**

Guigemar is a young knight renowned for his physical beauty and his prowess in battle, "but Nature had done him such a grievous wrong that he never displayed the slightest interest in love" (44) -- although women frequently made advances to him. While out hunting one day he comes upon a white hind which has antlers like a stag. His arrow hits the deer in the forehead and rebounds, passing directly through Guigemar's thigh and into his horse's flesh. In its pain, the hind speaks to the knight:

Alas! I am mortally wounded. Vassal, you who have wounded me, let this be your fate. May you never find a cure, nor may any herb, root, doctor or potion ever heal the wound you have in your thigh until you are cured by a woman who will suffer for your love more pain and anguish than any other woman has ever known, and you will suffer likewise for her, so much so that all those who are in love, who have known love or are yet to experience it, will marvel at it. Be gone from here and leave me in peace (44).

After this, Guigemar rides to a harbor where he finds a marvelous ship made of ebony and silk. He enters, finds it empty, and exhausted by his wound, lies down on a magnificent bed and falls into a deep sleep. When he awakes, he finds himself on the high seas, the ship seeming to sail itself. It takes him to an ancient city where a jealous old king keeps his young and beautiful wife in a green marble enclosure, accessible only via the sea and decorated with a painting of Venus burning a book of Ovid's which teaches the art of controlling love. He lands at this enclosure and is taken in by the queen. The two fall equally into a tortuous state of love. For Guigemar, it is so profound that he no longer feels the pain in his thigh. Overcoming his fear of rejection with great difficulty, he declares his love to her and they become lovers for a year and a half.

Just before they are discovered, the queen has an intuition of what is to come. They pledge eternal fidelity by tying knots which no one else in the world can undo without the help of scissors or a knife. She ties the tail of his shirt, and he ties a belt around her loins. Upon breaking in on the lovers, the old king allows Guigemar to set sail in the marvelous ebony ship. It takes him home to Brittany where he becomes known for his sadness and his resolve not to marry any woman unable to untie the knot in his shirttail. Meanwhile, after two years of sorrowful imprisonment, the queen escapes with the intention of drowning herself at the spot where Guigemar's boat had been moored. When she arrives at the harbor, however, the boat is there and it takes her to Brittany, to the castle of another lord, Meriaduc. He wants to marry her. But when he discovers her knot, he arranges for her to meet Guigemar.

Guigemar and the queen barely seem to recognize one another on sight and do not trust themselves until they have untied one another's knots. Guigemar then pledges Meriaduc his own service and that of his hundred knights if he may marry the queen. Meriaduc refuses, whereupon Guigemar joins forces with Meriaduc's enemies and lays siege to his castle. He wins his beloved only after killing the lord and destroying the castle.

The image of the white hind is rather common in tales of chivalry. It generally leads the hunter on a long and mysterious chase which takes him completely out of familiar kingdoms and forests into a truly transformative adventure. The fact that this hind sports antlers only adds to the transmuting power of the symbol. The Guigemar who meets her has mastered the manly arts of knighthood but knows nothing of the relationship realm of feeling, love, and the feminine. Through his love for the queen, he falls completely into that delightful realm and requires distance and military challenge before he can win her completely, i.e., integrate the masculine and feminine realms into his way of life. This, I believe, is the reason he has to kill Meriaduc at the end; the cruel lord of the castle represents the masculine power principle which would take the woman by force. Guigemar, like the antlered hind, has married the feminine with his masculine. He has killed in himself the macho power principle represented by Meriaduc.

The story is *about* this transformation in Guigemar, and the symbol it hinges upon is that of the wound and its analogue the knot. We are told four things about the the wound/knot. First, it is located in his thigh (as with Tristan and the Fisher King) and also pierces his horse, which would symbolize the animal/instinctual side of his knighthood. Secondly, its cure requires an equivalent wound in someone else: no one in the world suffers as these two, and they suffer equally. But, thirdly, in some way the proximity of these two wounds brings about a temporary cure which is as delightful as the pain was dreadful. The pain returns when they separate. And, fourthly, they can only recognize one another again by placing their hands on the knot/wound.

As the story opens Guigemar is unconscious of his need and capacity for relationship. He is not at all in touch with his deep feelings. In recent decades psychology has begun to pay particular attention to this problematic realm. Robert Stein, writing in 1973 before the current interest in actual childhood sexual abuse, refers to it as an "incest wound." Michael Balint speaks of a "basic fault"; and Heinz Kohut has opened new discussion of a "narcissistic wound." Each of these refers to a weakness, a vulnerability, or a precariousness in the unconscious synthesis at the level of Self.

Stein (43) finds three symptoms of this kind of difficulty: (a) frequent rejection in relationships; (b) experience of confusion, loss of identity, and emotional paralysis in intimate relationships; and (c) obstruction of sexuality in all ways -- except in relation to fantasies or an actual person for whom one feels neither love nor respect. Against this picture, Guigemar is a serious case indeed; for he has not allowed himself to get close enough to a woman ever to be rejected. He is so oblivious of women's advances that it appears even his sexual fantasies are completely obstructed.

Balint (18-20) enumerates five indicators that the level of the basic fault has been reached with a patient in analysis. The first [1] of these is that the patient "begins to know much too much about the analyst"; what is thus known is always highly personal and in many ways absolutely correct but may seem to the analyst to be utterly out of proportion. This is the "absolute knowledge" discussed in the previous chapter, the result of a lowering of the mental level to that of Self, a condition enjoyed as the bliss of the love potion's union or utilized as the shaman's tool. Balint singles it out as a fault or deficit insofar as the patient reveals himself incapable of maintaining boundaries between himself and others (in this case the analyst).

Normalcy is imaged as a condition of easy distance between analyst and analysand, or between friends. People who are not narcissistic are evidently able to contain themselves in the face of connectedness at the level of Self. We are able to keep our attention on the contents of the personal imagination as well as on our conscious perceptions and plans regarding our partners. We can ask directions to the post office and not be in danger of being swept away. Not so the narcissistic individual. Such a person finds himself somewhat in the condition of Gilbert in D. H. Lawrence's novel, *Mr. Noon*:

Gathering his courage in both his hands, he managed to look on the naked woman of his desire without starting to grovel. Which, if you have profound desire, isn't so easy. You either grovel or overween. Or else, groveling, you overween. To be neither more nor less than just yourself on such an occasion: well, that takes time and a sound heart (245).

For the narcissistic individual, the Self-level of reality is so much more important that it overwhelms the seemingly more manageable and everyday kinds of issues. As in the case of Lawrence's Gilbert, it is as though the higher levels of the psyche are partially paralyzed by the riveting stare and raw desire of the Self. Consequently, the phenomena of the Self-level preponderate: absolute knowledge, fusion, loss of identity, confusion, emotional paralysis. The analyst finds it disturbing that his or her own psyche seems to be an open book for the analysand. In romantic love it may not be so disturbing, for we may delight in reading one another's soul. The essence of the wound, therefore, seems to consist in the involuntary, inappropriate, and uncomfortable nature of the loss of boundaries and higher functions.

Secondly, according to Balint, the level of the basic fault has been reached when the analyst constantly finds him or herself "in danger of subjective emotional involvement" with the patient. Although every successful analysis includes some degree of emotional involvement, Balint refers, here, to an attraction which feels dangerously compulsive and perhaps beyond one's ability to control. We may say that the analyst has been "infected" with the patient's boundariless woundedness and has lost use of some of the higher psychic functions. The analyst is no longer able to maintain an easy distance. This is described in the story of Guigemar as the painful wounds the lovers have in common and their potential to be a source of bliss when brought into proximity with one another. Guigemar was aware only of a flesh wound before he encountered the queen destiny had selected for him. In her presence for the first time, he became aware of the much greater wound in his soul. Balint implies that this experience is not uncommon for the analyst who encounters a patient badly wounded at the level of the basic fault. Stein (3ff) verifies this in his own experience; my experience has been similar; and I have profited greatly from reading Harold Searles' confessions along these lines.

Balint's other three indicators flow from the first two. The patient relies on his or her sense of oneness or fusion with the analyst so that: (3) it is taken for granted when the analyst provides what is needed; (4) the analyst's failure to meet the patient's expectations causes powerful feelings of emptiness and anxiety; and (5) interpretations are experienced as inappropriately attacking or gratifying. In all these instances, the patient's intense desire to have his or her wound soothed or healed through union with the analyst is decisive. All the hopes, disappointments, rages, misunderstandings and pleading revolve about the wound, its pain and its promise of bliss.

As Heinz Kohut looks at this clinical picture, he sees a lack in the "cohesive self" which is required for stable day-by-day living in which the individual is not swept this way and that by strong emotional winds. Indeed, he speaks of the goal of successful treatment as leading to "an accretion of drive-controlling and drive-channeling structures" (Goldberg, 8). These are what I have called the higher-level activities of the psyche (those associated with the ego) which are lost or weakened when the mental level is lowered.

Our "woundedness" may be seen as inversely corresponding to the degree of coherence, balance, and consistency we sense in our rhizome. For the schizophrenic patient, there is very little of it: "The schizophrenic patient . . . has the same complexes, the same insights and needs [as the normal or neurotic], but not the same certainty with respect to his foundations" (Jung 1958: par. 559). The normal individual also does not enjoy absolute certainty regarding "his foundations." We may be able to go for years without having to confront our woundedness, but it lies there always as a kind of shakiness in our foundations or an unknowability of the rhizome. The myth, as a symbolic narrative, is always inadequate to the wholeness of the rhizome -- which is another name for the Self-level of the psyche. There is always something illusory about it. In his *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Heinrich Zimmer tells a very instructive tale about this illusion, or "Maya," as it is called in Sanskrit.

It seems there was once a devotee of Vishnu, the God of Maya (or Illusion), who had so distinguished himself that the god appeared to the man as he meditated and told him that he would grant him any request. The devotee replied without hesitation that he wished to know the secret of Maya. Vishnu protested that this was impossible, that the man had no idea what he was asking for, etc. But the devotee persisted; and Vishnu had, after all, promised. So eventually the god gave in and said, "Alright, I'll teach you the secret of my Maya; but first, I want you to go over to that farm house over there and get me a cup of water."

The man took a cup and knocked at the door. It was opened by a beautiful woman he seemed to know. And she surely knew him. She invited him into the house and it seemed that her whole family was no stranger to him. Eventually he married her and took over the running of the farm. He and his wife had several children and the farm became more and more successful until our hero was the envy of the whole region. Then one year a series of monsoons threatened to wipe out everything. The nearby river overflowed its banks, and the whole family was forced to flee. Unfortunately, however, they were not quick enough. One child after another was swept out of its parent's arms. The last thing our devotee saw before he himself was swept away was his wife's head disappearing beneath the roiling surface of the river. He came to his senses miles down stream, washed up on a mud flat. The first thing he heard were the words of Vishnu: "Where's that cup of water? You've been gone a half an hour already" (32f).

To know the secret of Vishnu's Maya may be a profound mystical insight, but it is also quite horrifying. One's farm and family, indeed one's whole life, becomes insubstantial. What is to prevent us from rattling around from one life style or profession of faith to another? They are all attractive and promising, but ultimately not one of them can have any substance. Our woundedness is a kind of inchoate grasp of the secret of Vishnu's Maya. Every philosophy, every faith, every standpoint, every lifeworld becomes ephemeral.

Nothing is more obvious to the unreflective farmer than the density, opacity, and rock-solid reality of the ground he plows. For the individual aware of the wound, however, that ground periodically thins out, rarefies into transparency, so that what one stands on is no longer solid. It becomes as wispy and elusive as a rainbow or a bridge of fog arching over an abyss. It is a terrifying vision which saps -- at least momentarily, but all too frequently -- every possibility of hope and trust.

Such a wound takes its greatest toll in the realm of human relationship, where it is experienced as a kind of mystical pain, an eternal longing to return to an original state of oneness: oneness within oneself, oneness with the cosmos, and above all oneness with one's beloved. It is a most exquisitely personal pain, a sense of being marred, deformed, cast out by everyone: a sense of absolute isolation. On the other hand, it is an undefended openness, a raw, bleeding exposure of psychic nerve-ends so that there is nothing in the way of immediate, intense, and very deep intimacy.

We all have a wound of this type. Those of us who are more-or-less normal have learned to protect, defend, and close the wound, whereas the narcissistic personality and the borderline individual suffer the wound very intensely. They have not learned to close it, and their defenses are rigid, brittle, stereotyped, and inadequate. The tremendous aggression associated with the borderline condition is a slashing, hysterical defense of a wound whose pain can be overwhelming.

As experienced in romantic love, the wound is a kind of sweet agony. One has been brought to the shaky ground of one's being by another who also suffers the wound. And our suffering is transformed to bliss as our wounds are brought together. It is as though the wounds fit together like a key in a lock. Remarque makes this clear in Ravic's observation of Joan in *Arch of Triumph*:

She leaned her head back and drank. Her hair fell over her shoulders and in this moment she seemed to be nothing but drinking. Ravic had noticed this before. She gave herself completely to whatever she did. It occurred to him vaguely that therein lay not only fascination, but also danger. Such women were nothing but drinking when they drank; nothing but love when they loved; nothing but desperation when they were desperate; and nothing but forgetfulness when they forgot (119f).

She gives herself completely because there is nothing between her momentary consciousness and the gap of the wound. She keeps nothing in reserve; she acts directly, without reflective mediation. But still, there is something unnerving about the way she acts. There is a "nothing but" quality, a sense that only one act is performed where several might be expected. If she loves from her wound, how can she forget? How do things fall apart so readily? How does the meaning fall away? The balanced, coherent synthesis, which is the Self, threatens to give way. The archetypes/instincts, whose harnessing into a coherent myth is the job of the Self, come unglued. The mental level drops another notch to the *instinctual level* of the psyche. At this level Jung describes archetypal behavior in terms of insect mating rituals. He mentions the yucca moth and the leaf-cutter ant (Jung 1919/48, 1946/54), both of which must perform an extremely complicated series of activities to complete a reproductive episode. As the species makes no provision for teaching and learning to take place between generations, the insect must somehow "recognize" appropriate weather and plant conditions and then "know" what to do with them. This in-born capacity for

recognizing and performing typical patterns, Jung calls an archetype. It is not a mythic image, and it has no appreciation for wholeness. It is less organized than that. "Archetype," in this sense, refers to a blind propensity to repeat the same behavior over and over again.

Romantic love is experienced and enacted at the level of Self, where coherence, consistency, balance, wholeness, and meaning are created. The shakiness of this synthesis is the wound. When the wound rips open, when the center cannot hold, its several instinctual components become autonomous. Should consciousness drop to the instinctual level, the individual is no longer truly a lover. Ravic's Joan is capable of forgetting. Our contemporaries become addicted to sex or to seduction or the chase -- or, perhaps, cuddling or conquests or basking in praise or being humiliated. In all these cases, a single archetype has separated from the Self-synthesis and dominates consciousness. Beneath the rhizome of the Self-level of the psyche, snarls a chaotic bundle of instincts:

The bundle of instincts of man, his chaotic ensemble of instincts is not integrated at all. Instincts are most contradictory, and man is torn by them. They are like animals in a zoo, they do not love each other at all, they bite each other and try to run away (Jung 1938/84: 108).

Remarque's heroine, Joan, shows the fragility of the Self-synthesis at every turn. Her wound shows even in her gait: "She always walked as if she were walking against a light wind and as if she had no goal" (205). It is an endearing image. We know why Ravic is taken with her. She promises something deep, an intimate absorption of which Ravic is incapable on his own. It is as though her wound opens and we can see the powerful forces which give her personality its mysterious, magnetic powers. Ravic cannot stop meditating on it. "He was looking at her face, which was enchanted and absorbed in the music. How easy that was for her, and how he had loved her for this easiness which he did not possess" (271).

Joan reveals the wound as promising. Something deep and untapped is there latently, visible in a wound which is not badly infected. The Self-level synthesis is tentative but not wholly lost. In contrast, Hardy's Bathsheba, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, shows a deliberately self-inflicted wound, an abandonment of her mythic rhizome. She is consequently demoralized and distorted during her infatuation with the faithless manipulator, Sargent Troy:

Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self-reliant women love when they abandon their self-reliance. When a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away.

. . . Had her utmost thoughts in this direction been distinctly worded (and by herself they never were), they would only have amounted to such a matter as that she felt her impulses to be pleasanter guides than her discretion. Her love was entire as a child's, and though warm as summer it was fresh as spring. Her culpability lay in her making no attempt to control feeling by subtle and careful inquiry into consequences (179f).

Bathsheba is demoralized because she has given up her own foundations and tried to supplant these with an unjustified dependence on Troy. She has relinquished her integrity for a kind of frantic clinging. This is quite different from traversing the bridge of fog because it is the only bridge there is. She is not working with the shaky synthesis which is the woundedness of the human condition. She has gone farther than this, out onto a fragile limb

which soon breaks off.

In time, after the pain of Troy's faithlessness, Bathsheba is able to restore herself, for her mythic rhizome is coherent and resilient. Such is not quite the case with Joji, the hero of Junichiro Tanizaki's early novel, *Naomi*. Joji is a petty clerk, afraid of women, when he "adopts" the fifteen-year-old Naomi with the plan of educating her and providing what her poor family cannot afford. He hopes to make of her an ideal wife, but she turns the tables on him completely. Four years later, Joji describes her as follows:

The truth is that I still didn't trust her at all, but the animal in me forced me to submit blindly to her; it led me to abandon everything and surrender. Naomi wasn't a priceless treasure or a cherished idol any more; she'd become a harlot. . . . I was being dragged along by her physical attractions. This degraded me at the same time it degraded Naomi, because it meant that I'd abandoned my integrity, fastidiousness, and sincerity as a man, flung away my pride, and bent down before a whore, and I no longer felt any shame for doing so. Indeed, there were times when I worshiped the figure of this despicable slut as though I were revering a goddess (163f).

Joji is wholly in the grip of an archetype; he has lost all sense of a myth, even one like a bridge of fog. His mental level has fallen completely beneath the Self to autonomous instinct. He has lost his freedom.

Guigemar and his lady never sink so low. In their bliss they ride the rainbow bridge, but even in their despondency they have not lost all sense of balance and harmony. They maintain consciousness at the level of Self, and therefore entertain a certain awareness of the unity and coherence of things. The shakiness of this awareness (the wound) may be rather like the visual effect we have on viewing a line drawing of a transparent rectangular box: first one side leaps out of the page at us and then, just as quickly, an opposite side flips forward so that for a moment we cannot remember how the box used to look. When we look at our wound, order and chaos oscillate in a similar manner.

What we experience in our wound is closely analogous to what Rudolf Otto describes in his classic, *The Idea of the Holy*, as a "mystery which fascinates us and makes us tremble."

We are dealing with something for which there is only one appropriate expression, "*mysterium tremendum*." The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass into a set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its "profane," non-religious mood of everyday experience. It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy. It has its wild and demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. It has its crude, barbaric antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious (12f).

This passage reveals it to be no accident that Jung's descriptions of the Self rely on images of the Absolute from the various world religions: Christ, *atman*, Tao, emptiness, and the like. Images of the irascible, jealous Yahweh of the Hebrew scriptures and the blood-thirsty Kali of Hinduism are set side-by-side with the Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God, and the playful Krishna. The divine is the absolutely powerful factor in the universe and within the psyche. In Jung's language, that is Self. Insofar as it is the source of all life and harmony and unity, it may be called the mythic rhizome out of which flowers

transcendent meaning with its capacity to make life secure and soul-satisfying. Insofar as its synthesis is tenuous, doubtful, fragmentary, a bridge of fog, it may be called the wound.

The fact that we encounter our woundedness most frequently in two contexts, religion and relationship, goes a long way toward explaining the close parallels between romantic love and the love of God. It also suggests the reason for our ambivalence regarding intimacy, for to become intimate means to expose our wound. It means to be seen -- and to see ourselves -- in terms of the flawed unity which is our shaky foundation. Tolstoy hints at this when he describes the disturbing effect which Anna Karenina has had upon Vronsky's ordered worldview:

Vronsky's life was particularly happy in that he had a code of principles, which defined with unflinching certitude what should and what should not be done. This code of principles covered only a very small circle of categories, but in return the principles were never obscure, and Vronsky, as he never went outside that circle, had never had a moment's hesitation about doing what he ought to do. This code categorically ordained that gambling debts must be paid, the tailor need not be; that one must not lie to a man but might to a woman; . . . Only quite lately, in regard to his relations with Anna, Vronsky had begun to feel that his code did not quite meet all circumstances and that the future presented doubts and difficulties for which he could find no guiding thread (327).

Vronsky's code is a far cry from his mythic rhizome, a reality which lies much deeper than his adventures in Tolstoy's novel ever lead him. Still the disruption of that code, its falling into doubt, is very much akin to discovering one's wound. In the story of Guigemar, for example, the naive knight at the beginning of the story has no need for any realities outside his duties of honor and military service. Women had no effect upon him. He was blissfully unaware of his wound until an arrow caromed off the head of an antlered white hind and sank into his thigh. Even then he believed his wound was only fleshly, although he gave up the hunt immediately and began to look for succor.

We frequently discover our wounds in similar indirect fashion -- for example through a dream, even when it seems abstract or incomprehensible. I recall a young monk, for example, who dreamed just about a month before he was scheduled to pronounce his vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, that he had inadvertently cut off his own penis. His concern in the dream was that his self-mutilation would render him ineligible for vows, so he decided to hide it from his superiors. But then he discovered that, lacking a penis, he could no longer speak and this would mean that he could not pronounce the vow formula. He knew the dream meant that he should not take vows, but it was the only indication he had had. He loved his monastic life and was aware of no dissatisfactions. As he knew nothing of psychology, he decided to ignore the dream and go ahead with his vows. Approximately a year later he met a woman who opened his wound and revealed to him the narrowness of his former view of himself and of the world. He found his certainties replaced by doubts, but he also found his interests broadened and energy increased. What impressed him most was that his prayer life improved. He lost no enthusiasm for the monastery, and it took him another two years before he became convinced that his larger personality was unduly confined within the cloister walls.

Such is often the case: as romantic love brings one's consciousness down to the level of Self, one is impressed first with the comprehensiveness and balance of the mythic synthesis. Objections do not occur or cannot be taken seriously. Thus Guigemar and his lady

enjoy one another for a year and a half before the realities of the outer world intrude upon them. For Tristan and Isolde, there are at least two such periods: the voyage to Cornwall during which they drink the potion and their three years living together in the forest.

Ultimately, though, it seems to be the flaw in the synthesis and the pain of the wound which draws the lovers together. Their experience is that they know one another through their wounds. Because my pain is as it is, I find I am able to understand you deeply; and because you know my wound, I feel uniquely understood and appreciated by you. Our woundedness "fits" and is the glue which binds us. This is symbolized in the story of Guigemar by the knots which the lovers tie in one another's clothing. It implies that the wound is a kind of organ of intimacy.

We know instinctively that other people are accessible through their vulnerabilities. By this means narcissistic patients get "under the skin" of their analysts. By their own wounds, they recognize those of others. I recall a borderline patient, an unmarried woman of forty, who recounted one anecdote after another of her failures to establish lasting relationships with men. She would recognize their potential by catching sight of a major vulnerability which she would zero in on and want to talk about. The man invariably fled in the face of her intensity and neediness. She did not have the stability, emotional control, or "distance" to be effective, but she had recognized the utility of her wound, that it can be used as a kind of magic knot to unlock other people's capacity for intimacy.

Although intimacy itself is not mentioned, the notion that the wound can be an effective tool or organ is suggested by don Juan Matus, Carlos Castaneda's mentor. He says that when the shaman (or sorcerer) "sees" a human being with shamanic eyes, he sees a bundle of luminous fibers in the shape of an egg. In the abdominal area, there is a dark spot, or gap in the egg. The shaman's "will" emerges through this gap to accomplish the extraordinary acts of shamanism. This language is quite compatible with ours, the notion of a flaw at the level of Self which is both our greatest vulnerability and the organ of love's accomplishment.

"Death enters through the belly," [don Juan] continued. "Right through the gap of the will. That area is the most important and sensitive part of man. It is the area of the will and also the area through which all of us die. I know it because my ally has guided me to that stage. A sorcerer tunes his will by letting his death overtake him, and when he is flat and begins to expand, his impeccable will takes over and assembles the fog into one person again."

Don Juan made a strange gesture. He opened his hands like two fans, lifted them to the level of his elbows, turned them until his thumbs were touching his sides, and then brought them slowly together at the center of his body over the navel. He kept them there for a moment. His arms shivered with the strain. Then he brought them up until the tips of his middle fingers touched his forehead, and then pulled them down in the same position to the center of his body.

It was a formidable gesture. Don Juan had performed it with such force and beauty that I was spellbound.

"It is his will which assembles a sorcerer," he said, "but as his old age makes him feeble his will wanes and a moment unavoidably comes when he is no longer capable of commanding his will. He then has nothing with which to oppose the silent force of his death, and his life becomes like the lives of all his fellow men, an expanding fog moving beyond its limits" (239f).

We say it is the Self which assembles our myth and that the wound in that synthesis presents us with the specter of meaninglessness, chaos, the abyss. It is the point at which the death of meaning and order enters our life. It is here that the naive knight of military honors (Guigemar and Tristan) dies and the incomprehensible greater is born, the one who has come to know confusion, pain, loneliness, and the deepest uncertainties.

With this imagery of death and the abyss, is there any wonder people are afraid of intimacy? Guigemar appears wholly ignorant of intimacy at the beginning of his story. This may be a well-defended fear of intimacy -- so well-defended that Guigemar can maintain a blissful naivete. To some extent, this kind of ignorance is nearly always the case before one has been forceably exposed to the wound through falling in love. For in each case the fall in mental level [2] is surprisingly abrupt, and one's prior ignorance of the anima or animus will be rather abysmal. But what I see quite frequently in my practice is people who have just enough intimation of their woundedness to be ready to flee involvement at a moment's notice. These are generally people who have never explored their wound, but they are scared to death of "getting hurt" in relationship. What "getting hurt" might mean is never clearly known. They speak of a fear of being abandoned and seem to want some kind of assurance that this cannot happen before allowing themselves to enter more deeply into a relationship. They find themselves in a "catch 22" kind of situation, where they know enough to desire intimacy and fear enough to flee it. They remain stuck between the alternatives.

The fundamental need of the soul in any relationship is union with another person. This cannot take place unless we open our wounds to one another. When we protect ourselves too much, we cannot make deep contact and our needs are frustrated. We may try to compensate for this by cultivating many relatively superficial friends or by opening ourselves sexually as a substitute. But these solutions are never successful. We may also project our fear of intimacy onto our partner and escalate our demands so as not to have to confront our own woundedness. Generally the best solution is to take the risk of exposing our own wound, for the magnetism of that is nearly irresistible. To do so, we need to be confident that we can trust our partner; and if we cannot do that, we have no business sleeping with him or her. We also need to know that we will not fall apart when we expose our wound; that is to say, we need to know ourselves. Finally, we need to know that the risk is worth it. Tristan and Guigemar would have no trouble assuring us of that.

Our existential woundedness poses us the central questions not only in romantic love but in life. This situation is symbolized by the fifty-first hexagram of the *I Ching*, "Chen/The Arousing." It is comprised of the trigram for thunder, repeated twice. The text reads as follows:

The hexagram Chen represents the eldest son, who seizes rule with energy and power. . . . This movement is so violent that it arouses terror. It is symbolized by thunder, which bursts forth from the earth and by its shock causes fear and trembling. . . . The shock that comes from the manifestation of God within the depths of the earth makes man afraid, but this fear of God is good, for joy and merriment can follow upon it (197).

The young monk described above dreamt and day-dreamed repeatedly of a black horse whose hooves struck thunder and lightning from stones and which he could ride through the air. His painting of the horse bespoke terror, but he was consciously unaware of that emotion. He knew his love affair was right because it expanded his awareness and because,

as he repeatedly explained with great wonderment, his prayer life had markedly improved. He suffered torment he had not previously known but never doubted it was worth it. His wound, it seemed, had begun to function like a lens. It is like the thunder which strikes fear but also brings joy.

---

1. For purposes of clarity in my exposition, I have changed the order of Balint's presentation of these symptoms. This in no way affects the content of his position.
2. Jung uses Janet's French expression *abaissement du niveau mental* (lowering of the mental level), to refer to a loss of conscious control over our psychological life. We may drop from ego consciousness to any of the unconscious levels of the psyche. For example, we may fall into the dreaminess of the mythic images, as Elsa did, or to the unity of the Self level, or all the way to the snarling tiger pit of the inborn releasing mechanisms.