

Divine Madness: Archetypes of Romantic Love

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The Lovers' Quarrel: Fight For Renewal

Accounts of the affair between Aline Bernstein and Thomas Wolfe occasionally contain indications of what might have been, if relations had not been severed so obstinately. For example, she describes a sultry Brooklyn noon hour in Wolfe's basement apartment, sitting beside his bed as he sleeps, enjoying their nearness and afraid to wake him lest he prove irascible and rejecting. She thinks, "Before I die I must break the distorted mirrors where he sees me" (Journey, 208). We catch her sense of injustice and being misunderstood as well as the patience to wait, and almost -- but not quite -- to accept him on his own terms. Although there is some violence suggested in the image of breaking, it is not directed against him but against his "mirrors." She has a sense for what she believes to be "reality" over against his "distortions." She would like to have it out with him, if only it were safe. From her point of view, it is not safe because her smallest demands might provoke him to sever the very minimal contact which remains between them.

He was scared, too; but differently, as we saw in the previous chapter. He simultaneously feared his destruction and deemed her his "destiny," for she was "beyond comparison the most determined, resolute, and formidable antagonist he had ever known" (Web, 613). It is only unfortunate that he had to hold her at such a distance with explosive quarrels. Progress in their relationship required that each affect and be affected by the other. Antagonism, if it did not manifest itself too formidably, might have accomplished a great deal. But for this it was necessary that some flexibility be allowed both in his sense of identity and in her sense for their union.

An erotic relationship may very well flourish beyond the fireworks of the quarrel. A squabble is an indicator of problems in perceptions and behavior between the partners. A quarrel indicates these irritants are beginning to feel intolerable. But rather than a flare up in which the partners slap each other down with complaints, protests, and defenses, the relationship would be served by stretching the antagonism out into a calmer conflict of longer duration.

Tom and Aline needed a sustained opposition in which each not only expressed his grievances but heard those of the other. Patience and flexibility were required on both sides, so that they might find opportunity for changes in their perceptions of one another and shifts in their standpoints. They needed a commitment, each to allow himself to be changed, and not only to try change the other party. They needed to be one another's "worthy opponent," each standing up for his own vision, but tolerantly.

There are as many different styles of worthy opposition as there are couples. In some cases conflict may become tenacious and almost savage, whereas in others it may be so slow and quiet as to be nearly unnoticeable. As an example of one of the more slowly-moving and distanced cases of worthy opposition, we may consider Blanca Trueba and Pedro Tercero from Isabel Allende's recent novel, *The House of the Spirits*. Their relationship began in childhood, very much like that of Cathy and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. She was the daughter of the land owner and he was a son of the servant-manager. As children, they were one another's primary interest; and they became sexual partners as soon as she entered adolescence. She was married appropriately for her class, and he became a charismatic Marxist revolutionary. Like Cathy Earnshaw and Aline Bernstein holding onto their respectable marriages, Blanca wanted to be able to continue with Pedro Tercero as the primary relationship of her life -- purely on the strength of their bond at the level of Self. She believed that there should be no conflict between this relationship and the commitments and events of her everyday world.

Pedro Tercero did not find this solution acceptable, and his life-style did not permit anything like a standard connubial arrangement. At bottom, though, he fled sustained intimacy -- albeit less frantically than Thomas Wolfe. "He discovered many roads and many bodies trying to distance himself from her, but at the moment of greatest intimacy, the exact point of loneliness and the foreknowledge of death, Blanca was always the only one" (264). We do not learn much more than this about the erotic development of Pedro Tercero. But this is quite a bit. We know that he is at least partially conscious of the nature of his bond with Blanca.

About her we learn somewhat more:

The only man in her life was Pedro Tercero. . . . The strength of this immutable desire saved her from the mediocrity and sadness of her fate. She was faithful to him even in those moments when he lost himself in a sea of straight-haired, long-boned nymphs, and never loved him any the less for his digressions. At first she thought she would die every time he moved away from her, but she soon realized that his absences were only as long as a sigh and that he invariably returned more in love and sweeter than ever (264).

Probably few would endorse this as an ideal relationship. Blanca and Pedro Tercero have achieved more than Aline and Tom, in part by reducing their expectations. Still there is the very clear suggestion that each is growing and that their moments of union are becoming more rewarding; such was surely not the case with Wolfe and Bernstein. By allowing Pedro Tercero a great deal of latitude, Blanca enjoys him more and arrives more gently at a sense of her own self-sufficiency than did Aline.

The quarrel manifests a particular stage in the joint woundedness of the lovers. Typically, there is a three-stage process. In the beginning when all seems glorious, the conjoining of the two wounds seems to promise eternal happiness. Audre Lorde came to understand this very well through her affair with a woman named Muriel:

Each one of us had been starved for love for so long that we wanted to believe that love, once found, was all-powerful. We wanted to believe that it could give word to my inchoate pain and rages; that it could enable Muriel to face the world and get a job; that it could free our writings, cure racism, end homophobia and adolescent acne. We were like starving women who came to believe that food will cure all present pains, as well as heal all the deficiency sores of long

standing (209f).

The quarrel is designed to destroy this illusion. For at least one of the parties, quarreling is the means to reassert individuality over against the relationship's tendency toward fusion and loss of identity. The expression "to fall in love" suggests a passive movement. One finds oneself opened and drawn in by a force which is not one's own. In the quarrel, we try to pull ourselves out of this centripetal collapse. But the quarrel can only accomplish a break. Thomas Wolfe is driven to deny the value of union -- and indeed of love itself -- in order to recover his personal resolve.

Something different occurs between Blanca and Pedro Tercero. They do not attack, deny, or injure the archetypal foundation of their union, their oneness at the level of Self. Respecting and honoring it, they each explore ways to develop their own individuality while giving the other scope to do the same. Worthy opposition distinguishes itself from the quarrel in precisely these two ways: (a) it is patient enough to realize that solutions cannot be achieved overnight; and (b) it builds on the bedrock provided by the love potion. Worthy opponents may surely engage in a great deal of arguing and negotiating. These may be the means of their communicating their needs to one another. They may even require the assistance of a referee, in the form of a marriage counselor. These matters differ from couple to couple, but the essential mark of worthy opposition is the recognition that the erotic bond at the level of Self is a pearl of great price, the precondition of a fulfilling relationship.

In order to sketch an overview of what worthy opposition can accomplish, let us consider another of the lais of Marie de France.

The Story of Yonec

In Britain there was once a rich old man, the Lord of Caerwent, who took a wife in order to have heirs. He loved her for her great beauty and nobility, but out of jealousy kept her locked in a tower so that she could not even go to church. After seven years of this misery, and still childless, she cursed her parents who had consigned her to this fate and cried in anguish to God to send a knight to free her. At this, a giant hawk flew into the room and changed into the form of the handsomest and noblest knight she had ever seen. He declared he had long been in love with her but required her asking before he could leave his own country and come to her. He requested that they be lovers; and she agreed, providing he believed in God who would make their love possible. To test his word, the Lady of Caerwent called her chaplain; and the hawk-knight took on her lovely form and received the sacrament. Then they made love. As he departed, again in the form of a hawk, the knight declared he would visit her within the hour of any request she might make -- only warning her to observe moderation, that they be not discovered.

The lady's mood was now joyously transformed, and she became content in her prison cell. Her old husband noticed the change and had his widowed sister spy on his wife when the younger woman thought she was alone. The old man very shortly learned the truth and prepared a trap of iron spikes which he fixed outside his lady's window.

On his next passage through that window, the hawk-knight mortally wounded his breast on one of the razor-sharp points. With his blood soaking into her sheets, he told his beloved that she was with child and would give birth to a boy who would avenge his death. She was to name the lad Yonec. With this, the hawk-knight left her. Reeling with joy, sorrow, and despair, the noble lady jumped twenty feet to the ground and followed the trail of blood through a hollow hill to a walled city of silver and into the palace. She found him pale, weak, and near the end, stretched out in a golden bedroom. He embraced and comforted her tenderly but then sent her back to her husband. She was frightened and begged to be allowed to stay with him in his kingdom and even to die with him rather than to return. He was adamant that she had to return. But to make it easier for

her, he gave her a ring which would make her husband forget what had happened and free her from the tower. The knight also gave her a sword to keep for Yonec's vengeance.

One day when Yonec had grown up and been dubbed a knight, the first family of Caerwent found themselves guests at a marvelous fair castle on the feast of St. Aaron. On being shown about the court by a monk, the three encountered a tomb covered with a cloth of gold brocade and honored with twenty candles and continually burning incense. Tearful inhabitants of the town explained that this was the tomb of their last and greatest king, who had been killed at Caerwent for the love of a lady. At this news, the lady pulled out the sword she had kept hidden nearly two decades and handed it to her son, declaring that this was the tomb of Yonec's father who had been killed by her husband's treachery. As she fell dead across the tomb, her son believed her and beheaded his stepfather.

The people laid the Lady of Caerwent in the royal tomb with her knight-lover and made Yonec their king.

The story opens with the depiction of a relationship in grave need of renewal. The wife, who wed to fulfill the expectations of her parents and social class, experiences the marriage as a prison. Indeed, it is a union in name, only, for there appears to be no affection or psychological connection between the two. The husband's interest is centered on the bodily and social attractions which make his wife an excellent ornament for him. She is not a person for him, but only a possession, a device to further his acquisitive purposes by providing him with heirs. Apparently because of their failure to relate, even this aim goes unrealized, and the lady is barren for seven years. Very likely she is as infertile as he is sterile.

Things begin to change when the wife prays to God, i.e., consults the Self-level of the psyche. She is rewarded almost immediately with the Lohengrin-like figure of the hawk-knight. She tests him, somewhat as the citizens of Brabant tested the swan-knight, to see if he comes from God. This means she is determined not to fall for the same kind of superficial connection as she did the first time.

When we take a tale like this as a psychological document, we need to ask ourselves what the story accomplishes. The Story of Yonec begins with a dissatisfied, acquisitive old man, almost wholly ignorant of his desperate need of relationship. In his unconscious, however, lives the repressed and misunderstood anima/wife who is capable of making the connections he so badly requires. She conjures up the kingly hawk-knight who, being a figure of the Self, personifies everything the stultified old man lacks. The old greedy attitude represses even this, but not before something new and hidden is produced in the unconscious. Yonec, the child, represents a new attitude which requires a long maturation before it is prepared to replace the old, tired point of view. Thus the Story of Yonec is about how an inadequate approach to life is replaced by a fresh, vital, and far more comprehensive attitude.

The means for this transformation is depicted in the story as the struggle with a limiting and imprisoning marriage. It is clear that the crucial first move toward change is Lady Caerwent's prayer, her appeal to the divine spark which appears to be missing in her marriage. That it is not wholly missing, we know from the subsequent appearance of the hawk-knight. But he does not live long. The wound in his breast is caused, we may say, by her narcissistic defenses; for the iron spikes come from the same parental complex which led her into an imprisoning marriage in the first place. She has not dared to be herself or to

consult her own feelings, much less to explore the deeper dimensions of interpersonal union. She has kept herself from becoming familiar with these realities by clinging to values handed down from her parents and supported by the proprieties of the social order. They function to defend her wound and to keep her ignorant of her very deep needs. That it works for seven miserable years, testifies to the terror her wound inspires in her and the gravity of her dependency on her defenses.

It is clear that even the hawk-knight is not immune to these automatic, cruel, and highly effective defenses. As is nearly always the case, the narcissistically excessive defense of *her* wound results in *his* being struck to the heart. A pair of lovers always shares a distinctive woundedness. Worthy opposition begins with the attitude we take to our joint woundedness. Whereas quarrelers would turn their backs on one another and stumble off in opposite directions, accusing one another, and trying to bandage their bleeding wounds with their anger, worthy opponents attempt to use their pain to come to a new understanding of themselves and one another. Lady Caerwent, for example, follows the trail of her lover's blood. Her sensitization to his wound gets her out of her narcissistic cocoon, and she finds a leap out of her tower window no longer unthinkable. Suddenly the imprisoning defense is a manageable obstacle.

That she wants to die with him in his kingdom, however, rather than returning to her own life situation, means she wants to rest in a timeless archetypal realm -- the love-death or the Venusberg. There is no opposition in this eternal dimension of relationship, and the hawk-knight cannot permit her to rest here for long. Personifying the wisdom and harmony of the Self, he offers her two principles which balance one another and make it possible for her to establish a worthy opposition: the ring and the sword. The ring symbolizes transcendental union around the divine spark. Her dawning realization of this has already begun to free her from the rigid defenses which have been preventing love. Thus the ring keeps her connected with the Self-level of the psyche. The sword, on the other hand, is the tool she needs to bring discrimination, definition, and clarity to the everyday world of space, time, and individual differences.

With the sword of discrimination, she can begin to live in the real world. As the sword sunders illusion from necessity, she can begin to see that what imprisons her is a false picture she has cultivated of her husband's absolute authority. She projects this image onto him and awaits the maturity of Yonec until that projection can be beheaded, and she can begin to consult the authority of her own feelings, intuitions, and ideas.

Yonec is simultaneously a symbol of her living union with the hawk-knight and the hero who takes on the tasks of the real world for Lady Caerwent. While the other sword, the naked sword of separation, keeps her alone with her memories of her union with the hawk-knight, the process of her soul's journey to find her is symbolized by her son's maturation.

It is significant that he begins his knightly and royal career on the feast of St. Aaron. It is a hint that his kingship has something to do with the Exodus of Israel. Aaron was God's spokesman, brother of Moses the stutterer, and co-expositor of the Mosaic vision. It was above all Moses and Aaron who preached the oneness and authority of God as the foundation of the people of Israel and of Israel's destiny. Similarly Yonec is the product of a

union ordained by God to express the transcendent foundation of a fulfilling relationship. In the story this is symbolized, too, at the end, when he unites his people, seeming almost to bring them back to life. Psychologically speaking, these dejected and uncentered people are the fragments of a personality which have been kept apart by overweening narcissistic defenses. Yonec leads them across the Red Sea of psychological transformation to a land flowing with the milk and honey of integration and intrapsychic cooperation.

It is no accident, either, that Lady Caerwent dies at this moment across the tomb of her lover. This is a very complicated love-death. Isolde's *Liebestod* occurs at the same time as Tristan's death, and that is the point of the story -- the primacy of eternal, transcendent union over the requirements of the social order. In the Story of Yonec, however, the love-death is postponed some two decades after the hero's death because the tale describes not simply the importance of Self-level union, but the integration of that eternal union with temporal differentiation. It is not a modern story; consequently we learn none of the details from those two decades. We know only that Lady Caerwent remained steadfast to the twin principles of the ring and the sword. And we know that she died at the same time as Lord Caerwent. This means that once the sword has vanquished the illusory and narcissistic defense which prevented a deep and fulfilling love, she can finally enter the sacred precincts of eternal union. Finally, her death means that the anima has been "withdrawn," and need no longer to be projected. In Jung's words, she is transformed "into a function of relationship between the conscious and the unconscious" (1928/35, par. 374). The new attitude which has been incubating in the unconscious for two decades, Yonec, now becomes the conscious personality and Lady Caerwent functions as an integrated anima, as mediatrix between ego and Self.

It would have been convenient for our argument if Marie de France had been able to give us some details about how Lord and Lady Caerwent had lived during the two decades of Yonec's maturation, for that was the period when they were worthy opponents. Perhaps they fought a great deal -- violently passionate arguments like those of Wolfe and Bernstein, but without losing sight of the ring and the sword. Perhaps they found a referee, something like a modern marriage counselor, who could help them contain and refocus their conflict. Or perhaps, like Blanca and Pedro Tercero, they had to take separate paths -- a peculiar kind of faithful infidelity in which they came to understand and enrich their own relationship through their interactions with third parties.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez tells a story of this last type in his novel, *Love in the Time of Cholera*. The central narrative concerns Florentino Ariza's sixty-year pursuit of Fermina Daza. At the beginning of the story seventeen-year-old Florentino was almost rooted to a park bench, where he could see Fermina, age thirteen, and her duenna pass by on their way to and from school. Between her passings, he read sentimental love poetry and wrote voluminous letters he dared not send. Eventually, when they did start leaving notes for one another in hollow trees and under stones, he wrote every night, sometimes all night long. Her letters were short, distracted, and "intended to keep the coals alive without putting her hand in the fire, while Florentino Ariza burned himself alive in every line" (69). In a year's time, he learned to play the violin well enough that he could serenade her from the choir loft at Sunday mass. When she was fifteen, he proposed marriage to which she replied, after a very long delay: "Very well, I will marry you if you promise not to make me eat eggplant" (71). Her father took Fermina away with him for two years, but Florentino became a telegraph

operator and continued to manage their correspondence. The idyll ended shortly after her return, one day in a shop:

She turned her head and saw, a hand's breadth from her eyes, those other glacial eyes, that livid face, those lips petrified with fear, just as she had seen them in the crowd at Midnight Mass the first time he was so close to her, but now, instead of the commotion of love, she felt the abyss of disenchantment. In an instant, the magnitude of her own mistake was revealed to her, and she asked herself, appalled, how she could have nurtured such a chimera in her heart for so long and with so much ferocity (102).

She married the respectable Dr. Juvenal Urbino, and never knew or dared to ask if their marriage was based on love or convenience (26). Still, she reached a kind of oneness with him: "they felt uncomfortable at the frequency with which they guessed each other's thoughts without intending to" (224). Fifty-one years, nine months, and four days later, Urbino died and Florentino took over management of the funeral details with firmness and subtlety. When everyone had gone, he stayed behind to tell Fermina that he was still waiting for her. This was the first time in their lives that they had ever been alone together. She threw him out in a rage.

The relationship between these two strong-minded people developed through three distinct phases: four years of puppy love, fifty-two years of estrangement, and the final stage after Dr. Urbino's death. Florentino lived more than two-thirds of his life in dialogue with her silence. He found it a worthy opponent and teacher.

His education began while he was still a telegraph operator, when -- in order to get out of the room he shared with his mother -- he moved into a bordello owned by his boss. His virginity was neither tempted nor embarrassed by the naked women who shared their daily lives with him. Nor did they challenge his devotion to the image of Fermina Daza. This quiet period of reading and love letters ended when he was raped by a naked woman on a riverboat. "At the height of pleasure he had experienced a revelation that he could not believe, that he even refused to admit, which was that his illusionary love for Fermina Daza could be replaced by an earthly passion" (143).

At home, Florentino's mother provided him with an easy opportunity for an affair with the Widow Nazaret. Although she turned out to be "an uninspired lay" (151), they remained intermittent lovers for thirty years and taught one another a great deal. He taught her that nothing is immoral if it perpetuates love, and he developed an unerring eye to spot the one woman in a crowd who was waiting for him (152). He also began the first of twenty-five notebooks in which he gathered and collated the data from his 622 affairs during the fifty-two years of his separation from Fermina Daza (152). Although he met with his regular mistresses "in strict rotation" (218), he enjoyed a distinctively different intimacy with each. He wept when they travelled on or died, though after a few hours the memory of Fermina Daza "once again occupied all his space" (270).

He learned, too, from his rare encounters with Fermina. Perhaps the most important of these occurred when she was pregnant with her first child and he could see what a woman of the world she had become. He immediately determined "to win fame and fortune in order to deserve her" (165). He gave up telegraphy and became a shipping clerk for his uncle, gradually rising in the river trading firm until he became its president. His mercantile

correspondence, however, had an amorous lilt unless he exerted the utmost discipline to eliminate poetic phrases and rhymes. These latter he indulged in the Arcade of the Scribes, where he wrote love letters for inarticulate lovers -- sometimes writing both sides of a correspondence. What he learned from these activities, he developed into a massive manuscript, a *Lovers' Companion*. He imagined all the situations in which he and Fermina Daza might find themselves and described as many alternative stratagems as he could devise (172).

Fermina Daza was not satisfied throwing Florentino Ariza out of her house on the day of her husband's funeral; she followed up with several pages of vituperation which he read as a love letter. Mastering the typewriter more easily than he had the violin sixty years earlier, he began a series of epistles which, after the passage of a month, he began to number. They amounted to extensive meditations on the relations between men and women, couched as an old man's memories. They actually comprised a new *Lovers' Companion*, designed to "teach her to think of love as a state of grace; not the means to anything but the alpha and omega, an end in itself" (293).

Until he began visiting her regularly on Tuesday afternoons, he did not know whether she was even reading his letters. She studied them. They gave her "serious and thoughtful reasons to go on living" (298). Soon the Urbino house rang with their quarrels, and eventually he talked her into a cruise on one of his trading company's riverboats. Marquez leads us to believe they will sail up and down the river forever.

In my view, Marquez has succeeded far better than Peter Sellers at giving us a modern version of the *Tannhaeuser* legend. For what is Florentino Ariza but a minstrel of love, an alchemist of the erotic, in search of the ultimate integration of flesh and spirit? His odyssey encompasses an amazing set of transformations. He moves from puppy love's dreamy enclosure in its own narcissistic cocoon to an ability to read Fermina's unconscious demands and direct the details of her husband's funeral empathically, efficiently, and unobtrusively. He grows beyond the "whipped dog" and "disgraced rabbi" persona of his youth into a distinguished president of the river trading company. He begins in an abysmal state of anima possession, overwhelmed by undifferentiated sexual and emotional needs, but becomes a refined and considered septuagenarian wooer.

As he moves from telegrapher, to clerk, to chief executive officer, he never loses his anchorage in the timeless unity of the Self. That is the "given," the unchanging touchstone of reality. His transformations take place in the everyday realm of space and time, where he becomes not only more and more adequately adapted to the realities of commerce, but to those of sexual and emotional communication, as well. Like Tannhaeuser, he could never have become the extraordinary mad genius of his magic song, had he fulfilled his original intention of honoring her with perpetual virginity. Had he done that, he would still have been a sexual and emotional teenager when his "unknown lady" had become a seventy-year-old widow. It is important, too, that he began with the physical and emotional nudity of the bordello to depotentiate the youth's overvaluation of sex and to learn the primacy of interpersonal intimacy. His subsequent sexual explorations were built upon this foundation. Marquez emphasizes again and again that what Florentino and his mistresses enjoyed above all was being naked together, sharing their deepest interests, joys and sadnesses.

His entire education is characterized by dialogue: response to the unvoiced demands of Fermina Daza and reply to the verbal and bodily communications of his lovers. The seriousness with which he took this intercourse, is suggested by the twenty-five notebooks, wherein he rendered his life of dialogue conscious. A similar development is represented by the love letters he wrote for strangers. There he had to explore not only the full range of his own emotions but also the plight of his individual clients, so as to be able to adapt poetic sentimentalities to real-life situations. Simultaneously, he was working to extricate his professional correspondence from his romantic obsession and thereby to develop an ego which knew the difference between the two.

The *Lovers' Companion*, in its two versions, represents the culmination of this work of consciousness-making. Here he brought together the exploration of his own psyche and the many encounters with his idiosyncratic partners and clients. But, in using his imagination to push beyond what he knew through his own experience, he creatively opened up a worthy opposition with the Fermina Daza of his fantasies. By this means he prepared himself for anything the real woman might concoct. I am inclined to believe that the thoroughness and sensitiveness of his work on the *Companion* is proven by the success of his final wooing.

Most impressive is his ability to read evidence of the erotic bond hidden behind the insults and provocations of her letter -- which she herself saw as "the vilest act of her long life" (284). To Florentino it seemed "that Fermina Daza's misfortune glorified her, that her anger beautified her, and that her rancor with the world had given her back the untamed character she had displayed at the age of twenty" (322). Here, it seems to me, Florentino's vision has been so clarified that his anima is now functioning as a lens. He does not let the superficial display of her anger distract him from the deeper issues in her soul, and he does not let cherished fantasies about what he would like her to be cover her identity like a mask.

His typewritten letters carry this project forward. In them, he is undoubtedly disclosing his own soul in the most gentle and seductive manner possible -- i.e., not in the form of crude and sensational confessions which may titillate and disarm but discourage reciprocity. Rather, as he discloses his own soul, he feels his way into hers. It is a project of active empathy which goes beyond merely understanding her as she deliberately represents herself. He probes his way into recesses of her soul which she herself does not yet know. This is why she finds his letters so interesting and helpful. That he can do this without alarming her and mobilizing all her defenses is a tribute to what fifty-two years of worthy opposition have accomplished in his capacity for empathy.

When he has wooed her close enough, their quarrels begin. This is evidence that the work of worthy opposition is not complete -- indeed, it will never be complete so long as a relationship is still vital. He finds their disputes exasperatingly familiar: everytime he tries to move their relationship forward, she blocks the way. For example, at one point, he reminds her that they had used the familiar form, *tu*, "before." As soon as the word *before* is out of his mouth, he knows he has made a mistake, reminded her of the past and of his wooing. She says nothing is the same as it was. He says *he* is the same, is she not also? She says it does not matter, as she is seventy-two.

Florentino Ariza felt the blow in the very center of his heart. He would have liked to find a reply as rapid and well aimed as an arrow, but the burden of his age defeated him: he had never been so exhausted by so brief a conversation, he felt pain in his heart, and each beat echoed with a

metallic resonance in his arteries. He felt old, forlorn, useless, and his desire to cry was so urgent that he could not speak (309).

It is a shame they have to go on hurting one another like this. Perhaps they can learn to soften the blows somewhat, but as long as they are two individuals attempting to hold both the ring and the sword, emotional blood will be shed. Florentino's refusal to let go of the ring is what enables him to bear the pain and come back for more.

Three pages before the end of the book, as the lovers are concluding their first up-river voyage, Marquez emphasizes the eternal, Self-level unity they have attained: "It is as if they had leapt over the arduous calvary of conjugal love and gone straight to the heart of love" (345). Marquez is convincing, here, only to the extent we accept the possibility that his characters can continue indefinitely sailing up and down the Magdalena River under a yellow cholera flag -- totally outside of real space and time. It is again the image of the love-death. For, short of a quarreling break up like that between Wolfe and Bernstein, death is the only way to avoid worthy opposition.

Death, too, is the solution in Wagner's *Tannhaeuser*. The errant *Minnesinger* is saved by Elisabeth's self-sacrifice and dies beside her bier, an apparent love-death, in which the two attain eternal oneness on the other shore. The reason this is disappointing is that Tannhaeuser had already tried immortality on Venusberg and found it wanting. The structure of the opera is as follows. Tannhaeuser, bored with the eternal sameness of Venusberg (A), quarrels with Venus, and leaves in search of the temporal world (B). He takes up penitence (C) in order to put Venusberg behind him, but this only keeps him suspended in an unresolved limbo without vigor or memory. The name of Elisabeth (D) brings him to his senses and gives him a reason to live; but he offends her social world (B) by referring in the song contest to his experience in Venusberg (A). Elisabeth sends him back to penitence (C), which again fails. In the end she saves him herself: her name (D) calls him to his senses again, and her willing death (A) saves his soul.

The story oscillates between eternity (A) and time (B), between archetypal and personal relationship. Tannhaeuser's task is to integrate the two dimensions, but apart from Elisabeth's sacrifice, the narrative provides only two images for how this might be accomplished. One is the name (D), and by implication, the person of Elisabeth. Musically, the most powerful moments in the opera occur when Tannhaeuser sings that magic name and awakens from his confusion. Clearly, Elisabeth personifies the integration for which Tannhaeuser is searching. For him, she is an image of what might yet be, if only he can find a way to live what she represents. His faux pas in the song contest was to refer too frankly to the depth (A) with which he understands this integration -- that it cannot be some ethereal, angelic platitude. Love is not in the stars, as Wolfram would have us believe, but in our earthy, bodily selves. And we, through the body and soul of our union, can scale spiritual heights Wolfram only prates of.

This is too dangerous a truth for society to tolerate. As wife of the next ruler of Thuringia, Elisabeth cannot be party to such subversive notions. Psychologically, this means that we cannot simply marry the piece we need to complete our wholeness. We have to develop it in ourselves. Tannhaeuser has to "become" Elisabeth, just as Majnun "becomes" Layla. He needs to be sent away from her to suffer the "sword of separation" for the same reason Florentino Ariza has to fill his notebooks and write love letters for strangers.

Elisabeth sends him on a penitential pilgrimage "To Rome!" (C), and he embraces the option with the whole orchestra. "*Nach Rom!*" is sung on the note which resolves the harmonic tensions of Act II. It plays a similar role as does the name "*Elisabeth!*" in Acts I and III. Elisabeth and penitence are the two means offered to Tannhaeuser to try to resolve the tension and integrate the archetypal and personal dimensions of life. He might have accomplished this with Elisabeth (D) if they had been able to become worthy opponents. But as that was politically not feasible, Tannhaeuser is sent outside the civil domain to the church, the preserver of society's myth and source of political investiture. If the pope can forgive him, it will be safe for the state to accept his marriage to Elisabeth. The means to the pope's forgiveness is penitence (C).

The incompatibility between Tannhaeuser and penitence is unmistakable in Wagner's music. The *Minnesinger* is an heroic and inspired madman, ranting and soaring, rough hewn but audacious, a loner who is utterly convinced of the truth of his experience. The chorus of pilgrims, on the other hand, surges along, hugging the ground like a stray tongue of sea, without individuality, confident only in its collectivity. Unlike the humble Florentino Ariza, Tannhaeuser throws himself as heroically into penitence as into the song contest. He inflicts the most austere measures on himself, goes the longest time without water, carries the heaviest burdens. There is no room for dialogue in this. No opponent is worthy of this endearing but bull-headed hero.

The purpose of penitence is to tame the heroic tendencies of the ego, to expose its vulnerabilities, to acquaint us with the pain our grandiose defenses hide -- even from ourselves. But Tannhaeuser wants to win his pardon on the model of a knightly joust; consequently he never submits to the discipline of loneliness and inner struggle. He seeks to flee his pain rather than to understand it and learn from it. Pain is the very stock-in-trade of relationship. We are joined by our common experience of pain, find relief when our wounds "fit" one another like a key in a lock, quarrel when our wound is irritated, and become worthy opponents when we decide to accept the challenge of our joint woundedness. A proper penitence would have revealed this to Tannhaeuser. But his penitence is a kind of "ego-trip," a kind of self-hypnosis which keeps him in a limbo in which both Venus and Elisabeth are vague dreamy memories; Confusion reigns, and he has lost all conviction.

In the last analysis, Elisabeth's self-sacrifice is disappointing because it saves Tannhaeuser from the task life has set him. Indeed, he is the individual who needs to undergo sacrifice. His heroic ego understands only glorious combat where laurels await the winner and knows nothing of a worthy opposition which goes on for years and exploits the strength hidden in vulnerability. He has not realized that to know our beloved, and be known by her, we must be in an important sense alone while we are together with her. Relationship moves forward by a dialogue which continually circumambulates the wound which is the secret source of our bond. Worthy opponents carry on that dialogue by remaining conscious of their unity at the level of Self while exploring the differences in their personal needs and aspirations.