

# **Bushwhacking Through Narcissism: The Making of a Jungian Analyst**

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Unpublished book, written in 1993. The autobiography of how I learned from my mistakes and changed my mind about what an analyst does.

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## Introduction

In November, 1978, I had been in Zürich a little over two years, training to be a Jungian analyst, when I took a two-week Swiss charter flight to San Francisco to read a paper at the National Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. It turned out to be an overwhelmingly rich two weeks. I was seeing America for the first time as a *visitor*; I had important discussions with my colleagues in the academic study of religion, establishing relationships that persist today; and I stayed two weeks with my brother who had himself been in Jungian analysis the past several years. I came away with new and exciting perspectives on my scholarly work, a much fuller appreciation of my family of origin, and a new relationship with my brother that became the closest friendship of my life until his death last summer. I saw America, where I had been born and lived my first thirty-four years, in a completely new light. And I had been inspired with an outline for the diploma thesis I would write in Zürich. I had been flooded with dreams, insights, and memories, and wondered how I would ever be able to retain them all.

When I returned to my wife, my infant son, and my analyst, in what now seemed to be the neatest, most civilized, and up-tight city on earth, I dreamed repeatedly of being on charter flights. The dream planes were even draftier than the ones I had ridden in my waking life. Everyone was chilly, and I was opening my luggage and passing out sweaters and jackets to total strangers. I felt warmly connected to these fellow victims of the charter company who had each had his or her own two weeks in the foggy city on the Bay. Invariably, however, by the end of the dream I would be worried that I would never recover all my stuff. I had no idea who had borrowed what or how much I had given away.

My analyst asked me what the dream referred to in my waking life, and I answered in terms of all the psychological booty I had brought back with me from the land of the gold rush. I needed all the impressions and insights that had flooded me, but I had no way of organizing or cataloguing them. I was afraid I would lose them all. I had probably already lost most of them. She agreed it was an impossible job for the ego to gain control of all that material. There was only one solution. I had to trust my unconscious to return the necessary pieces in the moments they were needed.

I had a double reaction to this. On the one hand, I saw in a flash of intuition that she was right, that nothing would ever be lost, that I could relax my guard. On the other hand, I doubted. I was "Mr. Alzheimers," in the words of one of my friends. My mind is riddled with ever-shifting lacunae. Some of the things I know best can be counted on to vanish the moment I want to name them. I panic at the prospect of having to introduce an old friend to a new acquaintance. One of the names is sure to elude me, and it is not unusual for both of them to do so. I am completely inconsistent. One day I can give a two-hour lecture without a single jotted note, citing chapter and verse of books I have not opened in ten years. The next day I cannot recall the name of the institution that sponsored that lecture. "You know, it's across the street from the park that has the whatta-ya-call-it."

In spite of all this, though, she was right. Things come back to us when we need them. They get blocked when we worry about them.

The intuition I had in 1978 of the truth of my analyst's remark has been an important guide for me. Like most intuitions, it was almost empty when it first flashed its light into my mind. It has guided me by being a kind of collection basket for all the experiences that have confirmed its truth. These subsequent experiences fill it out, give it form, prove its dependability. This book is the present fruit of that intuition as it applies to my work as a Jungian analyst.

When we analysts meet with a client or analysand, we do not do so without a mental file cabinet full of experiences, theories, and hypotheses. But if we cling to them out of a fear of not being able to contribute something professional, we fail to let our analysands be fully present to us. And we fail to be personally present to them. Analysis is always a personal relationship between two souls who are far more unconscious than conscious. It is a journey into the unknown for both parties, grounded on emotional facts and guided by intuitions about their meanings. Old certainties are constantly in danger of challenge and rejection. New possibilities are constantly emerging. We cannot work without trusting the unconscious to give us what we need at the right moment.

This book is the story of how the earnest blunders and uncertain ventures of my fifteen years or more of work as an analyst have revealed to me the unconscious forces that have been guiding me, and how I have had to reformulate my premises to bring my conscious thinking into line with these subliminal facts.

Above all I have been troubled by trying to conceptualize the two-person field that analysis always is in terms of a theory that speaks almost exclusively of a single psyche. In spite of Jung's frequent statements that *both* parties are involved in the analysis and both parties are *changed*, there are very few conceptual tools for articulating such a process. In *Divine Madness* (Shambhala, 1990), which I originally conceived as a preface to this book, I have tried to deal with the reality of the other party in a two-person exchange--specifically the intercourse we call romantic love. This book carries that project forward by making the theory more explicit. Still it is not primarily a book of theory. It is a book of stories and experiences. Theory is the empty, intuitive form. Stories are the flesh and blood that give it life.