

One
The Love Potion and the Sword of Eros

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Something interesting always happens when a pair of psyches fall into one another's orbit. We forge our way through life in our habitual and unreflective manner, and one day we're brought up short. We look into the eyes that are the windows of another's soul, and something powerful but ineffable is revealed. We embark upon an adventure that's likely to turn out tumultuous. We discover brand new things about ourselves -- some rather gratifying and uplifting, and others quite shameful and defeating. For better or worse, there's no going back. Erotic involvement takes us to a new awareness of ourselves.

Romantic love is a blockbuster of an experience. When Jung was under the influence of his infatuation with Sabina Spielrein, he sought to explicate the power of the Oedipus legend as a blockbuster. He compares it to coming upon the capital of a Corinthian column from ancient Greece "amid the noise and bustle of a modern city street."

A moment ago, and we were completely absorbed in the hectic, ephemeral life of the present; then, in the next moment, something very remote and strange flashes upon us, which directs our gaze to a different order of things. We turn away from the vast confusion of the present to glimpse the higher continuity of history. Suddenly we remember that on this spot where we now hasten to and fro about our business a similar scene of life and activity prevailed two thousand years ago in slightly different forms; similar passions moved mankind, and people were just as convinced as we are of the uniqueness of their lives.

This passage comes from the first paragraph of *Symbols of Transformation*, and it resembles very closely what Jung said nearly forty years later about his original motivation in writing the book:

The whole thing came upon me like a landslide that cannot be stopped. The urgency that lay behind it became clear to me only later; it was the explosion of all those psychic contents which could find no room, no breathing-space, in the constricting atmosphere of Freudian psychology and its narrow outlook. . . . It was an attempt, only partially successful, to create a wider setting for medical psychology. . . . Thus this book became a landmark, set up on the spot where two ways divided. . . . Hardly had I finished the manuscript when it struck me what it means to live with a myth, and what it means to live without one. . . . [T]he man who thinks he can live without a 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 . . .

For decades we were able to see these passages as Jung no doubt intended them to be seen -- as motivated by a pure interest in what he calls "medical psychology." Today, however, now that we have the research of Aldo Carotenuto and John Kerr at our disposal, we can hardly deny that what Jung found on the busy streets of Zurich and that transported him two thousand -- or twenty thousand -- years back into the emotional foundations of the human race was neither a Corinthian capital nor an account of the Oedipus legend. It was what transpired between his psyche and that of the little Russian Jewish girl who had learned to retain her feces by sitting on her heel. He wanted to give her the place in his life that Toni

Wolff later occupied. She opened up the same archetypal door into his psyche that his cousin Helly Preiswerk had opened some ten years earlier and that had led to his doctoral dissertation on "so-called occult phenomena." Spielrein ended his infatuation with Freud through "an explosion of all those psychic contents that had found no breathing space." She brought him back to himself, to that "Personality Number Two" that had dreamed of the underground phallus and saved the pieces of the knife that inexplicably shattered while lying in his mother's drawer.

This is not only a rough hint of what *always* happens through erotic involvement, it also identifies a blockbuster erotic encounter as the foundation of what we today call Analytical Psychology. Jung's *Symbols of Transformation* obscures the erotic nature of its foundation behind the theme of the "dual mother" and Chiwantopel's longing for Miss Frank Miller, the only one to understand him, for whom he would wait "ten thousand moons."

Sabina Spielrein also wrote about what had happened between herself and the thirty-five year-old Jung. But her doctoral dissertation, *Destruction as the Origin of Becoming*, is far more straight forward than Jung's book. She opens her work with the image of the union of sperm and ovum:

Conception brings the male and female cells into a unity. Thereby the unity of every cell is annihilated, and out of this annihilation new life arises. . . . Corresponding to the uniting of sex cells in the act of conception, the most intimate unification of two individuals takes place: one penetrates into the other. . . . The male part dissolves in the female, and the female falls into agitation, receives a new form through the alien intruder. The change in form affects the entire organism; . . . Just as rapturous feelings corresponding to this new life are part of the procreative drive, so also the defensive feelings, like anxiety and disgust. It would be a false association to attribute our disgust for sexual activity to the fact that the sexual organs are close to those of excretion [-- as Freud asserts]. What explains our disgust, rather, is the destructive component of the sexual instinct [itself]. (*My translation, slightly simplified*).

Jung's elaborate argument in *Symbols of Transformation* moralizes what Spielrein calls destruction. Jung makes it more conscious, and calls it "sacrifice." He believes he's sacrificed his sexual attraction to Spielrein for the higher ends of his marriage and career. She calls his bluff. She says that sexual attraction itself involves destruction and that this is as fundamental as a law of biology. For her, the notion of "sacrifice" is a secondary and optional piece in the destruction that brings about transformation. I agree with Jung's student and lover. She has made no effort to hide the reality -- simultaneously "rapturous" and "disgusting" -- that she and Jung encountered. In a time before Jung had come up with the notion of archetypes, she roots it in biology. Evidently she means that destruction and new being are the universal law of erotic attraction.

I agree, but with some 85 years of history between me and Jung's brilliant patient, I would put it in somewhat different language. Destruction and transformation are certainly there in our biology, but my aim is to describe the attendant rapture and disgust as we experience it in that blockbuster moment when our psyche falls into orbit with an other.

Whenever Eros enters the space between two individuals, the emotional intuition of our potential oneness becomes so overwhelming that our individual identity, is called into question. *I* and *you* as distinct entities are overshadowed by a numinous *we* -- that would terminate us as independent persons -- and dissolve us into a unity. Eros lends to this *we* such

a compellingly attractive force that we do not simply *wonder* if we can stand against it. We *want* to dissolve. Generally it seems to us that we have never wanted anything so vitally in all our lives. We view the impending unity of our *we-ness* as momentarily significant. Our familiar sense of our isolated selves seems paltry in comparison. We would gladly shuck the confining limitations of our past and present self-image as a cruel delusion, now happily outgrown.

The *we*, however, does not simply fascinate us as a distant possibility. We find we are already part of it. Although dissolution lies before us as a seductive opportunity, we feel we are even now incomparably more than we were a moment ago. Enlargement, numinous becoming *is already underway*. *Paradoxically, we find we have never been so much ourselves as we are at this instant. We are in the hands of a benevolent fate, witness to a glorious revelation, transformed at the root of our being. We stand on new ground, understanding profoundly and for the first time the unity of all beings.* Our sense of *we-ness* is the window and door upon a new life. Our eyes are opened, the world becomes animate.

But the *we* comes to presence only through *you*. It may even seem to me that you constitute our *we* more essentially even than I. For I have been "just myself" all my life, but you seem to have brought our *we-ness* with you. It was unimaginable without you and distinctively *belongs* to you. Its every precinct is redolent of *your* unique personhood. You dominate the *we* so thoroughly that I may even forget my own participation and believe that it is in *you* that I wish to dissolve. It never occurs to me that you are a mere occasion for my entering this *we*. You hold my fate as no other individual ever could. For I have no fate more momentous and compelling than that which appears in the *we* which you and I comprise.

This is the work the Greeks ascribed to Eros, the Bringer of Union. He infects us to the core of our being, transforming us into a single pole of a dyad that yearns to trade its duality for a luminous oneness in which all meaning and vitality seem to dwell. But in the midst of this immense draw, a dissent rings out. Deep in our conservative and habitual sense of being our own unique selves, we rebel against this union. We view with horror all that we have known of ourselves being lost irreplaceably.

We find ourselves on the brink of disaster, our balance deeply compromised, an instant away from plunging into the death of our individuality. All our instincts for self-preservation are mobilized and thrown into high gear. We steady ourselves against the rock of our remembered identity and prepare to flee. We shield ourselves with notions of having been deluded and blinded in our longing to dissolve. We rehearse a catalogue of our life-long beliefs and aspirations and hope they are strong enough to hold out against a demonic force that would destroy them. We step back from the precipice, and breathe deeply to calm our beating heart. But we do not turn tail; for the moment we lean away, our *we-ness* calls out to us with even greater urgency; and we prepare again to jump.

As we oscillate thus between the forward urge to dissolve and the panic to retreat, our anxiety becomes overwhelming. This is the work of Eros, Son of Chaos. Temptations to terminate the tension abound. Among the most common forms are rage, lust, and flight.

When I react with rage to the intolerable anxiety our *we-ness* generates, I hold you responsible for the pain of my fragmentation. I hardly recognize myself as the victim of this

devastating urge to dissolve and equally powerful need to flee. Your appearance has confronted me with such an insuperable inner division I fear I may never be whole and intact again. I convince myself that you are personally responsible for this state of affairs.

I can hardly avoid the conclusion that you actually *wish* for my destruction. You embody all the evil forces of seduction, malice, and hatred that would bring me down, humiliate, and annihilate me. In self defense I believe I must either destroy you or erect an impenetrable wall between us. My rage is that murderous and frantic that it distorts and denies your unique personhood, replacing you with a distorted and demonic cipher that is not at all you but the projection of all my fears. In destroying you I destroy as well the *we* that emerges between us. I seek to banish Eros and return to my narrow and isolated sense of *I*, my illusory independence and self-sufficiency.

If rage radically denies erotic mutuality in an attempt to restore the former state of things, lust would seem to be its polar opposite. For lust moves me to approach you as aggressively and one-sidedly as rage would drive you away. But lust seeks to terminate my anxiety just as resolutely. When I lust for you, I gaze upon you with eyes of desire, seeing in you all that I have failed to be myself. You are the apple of my eye. You are a revelation of numinous otherness, an embodiment of all I might become. I feel I cannot fully exist without you. I am obsessed with the need to leap the distance between us, resolve the tension that separates us and drives me crazy with desire. I need you as I have never before needed anyone or anything.

I believe that if only you will give yourself to me, I will be able to possess both our *we-ness* and myself. I want to join you to myself and end the torment of my indecisive oscillation between the *me* and the *us*. I would avoid the dissolution of my identity in the seductive *we* by adding *you* onto myself. In so doing, I reduce your unique otherness and autonomy to a set of qualities that I may employ for my own purposes. Lust, therefore, denies the *you* while hoping to preserve the *we*. But it deludes itself in so doing, for there is no *we* without *you*. Eros, God of Lust, appears as a distortion of the Son of Chaos, a narrow and self-defeating ruler confined to the bad lands of his former domain.

Ultimately, although they move in opposite directions, lust and rage seek the same end. They want to truncate the call of Eros in order to escape chaos and anxiety. They are modalities of flight. Rage flees the tension between the *I* and the *we* by attacking the *you*. Lust flees that same tension by trying to absorb the *you* into the *I*. In flight we may avoid both lust and rage by turning tail at the first sign of anxiety before we have a chance to discover our capacity for either of those dark emotions.

If these are the main features of that blockbuster experience we call erotic entanglement, at least one conclusion seems unavoidable. The call of Eros can be heard and responded to only when the two of us can maintain *both* our own separate integrity *and* our mutuality. Only when I am able to bear this tension, do I enable *you* to come to presence in your full and unique otherness. I allow you to be yourself. I get to know the many facets of your being and how they express your center. A process of revelation takes place, as I get to know you over time and enjoy your becoming. You do the same with respect to me. We reveal ourselves to one another; and as we do so, each of us comes to discover his and her own identity anew.

This is the sublime "new being" that we intuited in our original erotic rapture. Its attainment, however, is never achieved through quiet reasonableness, but through the destruction of our former personality. Spielrein was right. The dissolution of the old personality is the pre-condition for becoming. Everywhere we look on the plains of Eros, we find the scattered limbs and hearts of those who are no more.

The well-known fairy tale, "Bluebeard," makes this dimension of Eros unmistakable. A mysterious thug of a man with a blue beard and a shady but merely rumored past seduces one woman after another into marriage. They are rewarded with a lonely life in his fabulously wealthy castle on condition that they never seek to know his secret. He keeps himself aloof. There is to be no mutuality for him, no dissolution. He wants them on his own terms exclusively. He personifies the power-hungry shadow of lust.

Inevitably, however, his wives cannot resist the impulse to use the smallest key on the key-ring he has given them, the one that opens the smallest door. Inside lies the bloody evidence of his past -- the chopped-up bodies of the wives that went before. One by one they earn their punishment for discovering the secret of Bluebeard's shadow, and the bloody fragments of their bodies increase the evidence of his cruelty.

A narrow-minded feminism takes "Bluebeard" as an indictment of the patriarchy. We can follow that course of interpretation if we wish, but in doing so we literalize the destructive component in Eros and project it upon the other: only men are power-hungry bastards who destroy mutuality and love for the sake of self-aggrandizement. A deeper and more honest evaluation of the fairy tale, however, recognizes that we are all Bluebeards. We all chop up our lovers. And all of us are his chopped-up victims. For Eros himself is the dissolver. To get chopped up means to lose all integrity, to fall apart, to have one's cohesive sense of self destroyed. The story of Bluebeard is really about the destructive effects of an unconscious encounter with Eros.

There are many tales in which the woman does the violence -- especially when a princess refuses all the suitors her father can find by subjecting them to a series of impossible riddles. If they answer them correctly, they can marry her. If not, they are beheaded. My favorite is told by the Persian poet Nizami as the story of Turandot. The Princess Turandot is both beautiful and brilliant. She has mastered all the arts and sciences -- including magic and the occult disciplines. She builds a castle of iron and steel on a mountain top and erects magic swords along the mule path that leads to her fortress -- swords designed to behead the unwary. Then she paints her own portrait, life-sized, on a banner of silk and displays it at the gate of her father's castle with the promise that she will marry the man who can disarm the swords, discover the hidden door of her castle, and then answer a series of riddles.

The man who succeeds in this task is by no means the first to try. When he comes upon her portrait, the walls of her father's castle are already festooned with the grizzly heads of her victims. As he stands before her portrait, however, he realizes that -- emotionally -- he has already lost his head. His heart is pounding too furiously, and he knows that if he leaps into this adventure he will lose his life. So he takes a wise and circuitous course. He apprentices himself to all the greatest gurus in the world, gains control of his headlong emotions, and studies mysticism, magic, and the occult. He succeeds, in short, by mastering himself.

Although the oriental princess, Turandot, and her wise and mystically-initiated lover live happily ever after, Bluebeard's last wife takes a cruder, more Western approach. She conquers him and has him destroyed. Perhaps with a man like Bluebeard, there is no other option. Nevertheless, the decisive element in the two stories is pretty much the same. Like Turandot's suitor, Bluebeard's last wife keeps her wits about her. She disobeys his orders and keeps her own counsel, so that he never suspects she has learned his secret. She masters herself.

Successful lovers do not leap headlong into the dissolution of a rapturously imagined oneness. Nor do they imperiously set impersonal and pre-meditated conditions. They hold the erotic tension between loyalty to themselves and submission to the transcendent oneness of the *we*. They use their overwhelming infatuation to discover their own deeper, unconscious identity, and become not victims but worthy opponents. They leave behind their old, naïve identity and are transformed. They willingly embrace their own dissolution -- agonizing and repugnant though it may seem. Remaining conscious, they achieve transcendence.

The central message, here, is that Eros makes a *dual* demand upon us; and wherever we find Eros described with sensitivity and wisdom, we find both sides of Eros. During the Age of Courtly Love in the West, the two dimensions of Eros were expressed in powerful symbols. The rapturous pull into dissolving oneness took the form of an almost alchemical drink, the Love Potion. Those fortunate, or unfortunate, couples who drank the potion -- generally without knowing it -- found themselves bound inextricably to one another. Their inner essence was drastically changed. They felt as though they had traded identities with one another. Tristan says, in Wagner's opera, that he has become Isolde, and she concurs; for at bottom, she is Tristan. The Islamic lovers, Layla and Majnun come to the same conclusion. Majnun, whose name means "madman," says, "I am but the veil that hides the face of Layla." And she says, "I have become madder than a thousand Majnuns."

The Love Potion of the Middle Ages recapitulates an ancient theme that finds its most famous expression in Plato's legend whereby originally we were spherical beings with four arms, four legs and two heads. In this condition, we were more powerful than the gods, so that out of jealousy they clove us in two, producing male and female halves. This is a story designed to account for the experience we all have when we find we have drunk the Love Potion with another. We find ourselves filled with new power. We have become like gods. We have found our missing half, our "soul-mate." We have found the archetypal bond that connects us. Our "hectic, ephemeral life in the present," as Jung calls it, is interrupted by a timeless and overwhelming discovery. The bottom falls out of the everyday, and the scope of life becomes unimaginably greater.

The Love Potion has always been something of a rare and magical substance. We don't drink it everyday. It has nothing to do with marriage, harmonious companionship, or even living happily ever after. The Brontë sisters knew this very well. This is why Emily's novel *Wuthering Heights* distinguishes so carefully between the ordinary affection of a well-made marriage and the tumultuous uncanny love of erotic entanglement. Her heroine, Cathy, explains it this way:

My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath -- a source of little

visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind -- not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. (84)

The marriage that Cathy is planning with Linton is her persona strategy. She needs a place in society, the comfort of a means of survival. She can't give up her quasi-gentility for the sake of the dark-complected primitive whose soul is molded after her own. In planning for a marriage in the realm of persona, she takes too much for granted in the deeper domain of Self. She's paying attention to the changeable trees rather than the eternal rocks. She drives away her very "own being." She violates what Jung calls her "personal myth." With savage revenge, Heathcliff manipulates both families until he possesses the land and can finally be buried with her in the same grave.

Heathcliff is caught in the same archetypal pattern that motivates Tristan and Majnun, obsession with his soul-mate. But the madness of those earlier heroes is divine and leads to sublime union in a realm far from the conventions of society. Heathcliff's obsession is demonic. Something vital is missing. We can hear it in his raving at the end of the book:

I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree -- filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object, by day I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men, and women -- my own features mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! (307)

He brought this shadowy fate upon himself on the day of Cathy's burial, when he made it clear that he had no intention of changing his grasping and primitive ways:

Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you -- haunt me then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers. I believe -- I know that ghosts *have* wandered the earth. Be with me always -- take any form -- drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul! (163f).

While Heathcliff's madness is characterized by clinging to the absence of his lost beloved, Majnun and Tristan, also living alone in the wilderness of their deprivation, have become one with their beloved in a wholly new way. Here is how Majnun appears as Lord of the Animals:

[E]ven a Majnun has companions. His were the animals. . . . He had crept into their caves without driving them out. . . . He possessed a strange power, unlike that of the lion, the panther or the wolf, because he did not catch and devour smaller animals. . . . [T]hey came flying, running, trotting, creeping, drawing narrowing circles around him. Among them were animals of every kind and size, but -- what a miracle -- they did not attack each other, and lost all fear, as long as this trusted stranger stayed in their midst. . . . It was a peaceful army that traveled with Majnun as he roamed the wilderness, his animals always at his heels. . . . Many [people] pitied him and brought him food and drink, knowing that out of love of Layla, he had become a hermit. But Majnun accepted no more than a bite or a sip. Everything else he gave to his animals. (126-9)

In the symbolic language of this passage, we learn that Majnun, in the loneliness of his separation from Layla, has made friends with his anger, pain, and despair, so that far from being rent to pieces and devoured by these powerful emotions and instincts, he gives them their due and they become the source of his strength. He has become far greater than he was before. He is, indeed, the veil that hides the face of Layla.

Majnun has accepted the second dimension of Eros, which Heathcliff has rejected. Having drunk the Love Potion of rapturous oneness, he has also embraced the Naked Sword that invariably separates those whose Self-to-Self connection with a beloved has removed them from the "hectic and ephemeral life of the present" and plunged them into that blockbuster timeless world where archetypal realities hold sway.

The image of the Naked Sword comes from the tales of courtly love, when the couple who drank the Potion find themselves in a place where they have to spend the night together. Invariably, they are lovers who suffer an impediment to their union. Usually one of them is married to someone else. This is the case with Isolde, who drank the potion with her husband's greatest and most loyal knight. Tristan and Isolde are caught, therefore, between conventional loyalty to King Mark and their archetypal loyalty to the insuperable love that binds them to one another. King Mark -- who probably loves Tristan even more than he does Isolde -- comes upon the lovers asleep in their bower in the forest. His heart is touched, however, as he looks closer and sees that they have placed a Naked Sword between their sleeping bodies.

The Naked Sword is a symbol of separation willingly accepted. The Love Potion binds a couple Self-to-Self in a union that no force -- not even God -- can sunder. But it holds sway only in the world of the archetypes. In conventional, everyday reality, the lovers encounter obstacles. Layla's family keeps her virtually imprisoned so that she won't disgrace them by marrying Majnun, the madman. The pious knight of the West dedicated his gallant warfare and occasional jousting to an unattainable lady far above his station. He had no *hope* of marrying her. Physical union with her played no part in his plans.

Such romantic notions may seem absurd to us in the waning days of the twentieth century, but they conform to an archetypal pattern that is universal. Eros is characterized by a pair of opposites: union and distance, the Love Potion and the Naked Sword. Even if, improbably enough, we find no obstacles to marrying our soul-mate, we are never relieved of the requirement of the Naked Sword. Our love has no hope of succeeding -- even in such an apparently ideal marriage -- unless we can find some way of accepting the Naked Sword as well as the Love Potion. The rapturously promising *we* can only be sustained as long as we temper our dissolving union by retaining our own separate identities. The essence of Eros lies nowhere else than in the tension between this pair of opposites. "Soul-making," to borrow Hillman's felicitous phrase, occurs only when our oneness is tempered by distance and our distance by union.

This is so much the case, that even when the Naked Sword becomes insurmountable -- as Catherine Earnshaw's death was for Heathcliff -- his refusal to accept it brings disaster. Tristan and Majnun embrace the sword of separation and are transformed. Heathcliff refuses and becomes a grotesque distortion of a lover, a demonic hag-ridden monster. Unfortunately, we know too many Heathcliffs -- men and women whose lives have been destroyed because they insist that Eros fulfill the hectic and ephemeral needs of their busy lives.

Eros is a dangerous god. We'd rather romanticize him as the bare-assed cherub whose tiny darts prompt us to buy heart-shaped boxes of chocolates on Valentine's Day. The rapturous potential of the Love Potion, however, may not be disposed of with sentimentality. Those who think it can have very likely never tasted it. They can blather all the pious platitudes

they wish. They'll never convince those of us who have been there.

Richard Wagner presents such an instance in his opera *Tannhäuser*, when the troubadour Heinrich Tannhäuser becomes fed up with the platitudes he has been hearing and silences his critics for a moment with an angry declaration: "If you want to know what love is, spend some time at the Mountain of Venus." He has drunk the Potion with Venus herself and knows whereof he speaks. Furthermore, no one doubts him. All are outraged. He has violated the pious ideals of the Christian persona. There is no hope for him but to make a pilgrimage to Rome and beg forgiveness of the pope. But the pope is -- if possible -- even *more* horrified, and refuses. Even the Vicar of Christ on Earth has not the power to forgive such a transgression. Tannhäuser is cast out of all human companionship and welcome only in the Halls of Venus. This is what it means to drink the Love Potion -- a terrible fate, indeed.

No wonder Jung hides his experience behind references to the Oedipus legend and Corinthian capitals that turn up in busy twentieth century cities. The blockbuster reality of an erotic entanglement has to be silenced. It's more dangerous than pornography. For it *ends* the hectic and ephemeral life everyone takes for granted, while pornography is merely a discordant note in the quotidian swirl. Eros opens an abyss beneath the tame world of sociability, where wild and ruthless emotions rage.

If all this is true of the Potion, how much more so the Naked Sword! At least the Potion's effects *begin* in rapture and enlargement. We feel like gods. We seem to have uncovered an obvious but long-hidden truth. We become aware of dimensions of ourselves whose existence we barely suspected. We unfurl the wings we never knew we had and soar.

Generally we learn the lesson of the Naked Sword only much later. It comes down with a vengeance when our beloved says, "Good-bye." Or when we get into that fight that chops us to bits and throws us into the smallest room behind the smallest door with all the fools who've gone before us. The Sword brings devastation. It takes away from us the only life worth living. The hands of time move back to that moment eons ago, *in illo tempore*, in that eternal time before time began, when jealous gods swung the first sword that severed our spherical bodies and left us -- not in halves -- but bereft of our very selfhood. We become Heathcliff beside the fresh grave of Cathy. We want to beg for our beloved on any terms at all. Better as a vengeful ghost or a blood-thirst demon than this absence. We *cannot* live without our life! We *cannot* live without our soul!

This is the blackest loneliness of all. We're back again to our old selves. But nothing could be emptier. We know *now* why we had to leave it behind. Once upon a time, we thought that the rapturous *we* was pulling us in on the strength of its splendor. Now it's a wonder we needed such a Corinthian capital to induce us to leave our hollow and senseless existence. There's no room or breathing space in the constricting atmosphere of our old Freudian psychology and its narrow outlook. The world that came to life such a short time ago mocks us with its deadness. The paving stones of the Bahnhofstrasse sing "Sabina" with each passing tire. We glimpse the hem of her skirt or the shine of her hair disappearing around every corner, just out of reach. Gone before we can get there.

Jungian psychology has a dementedly simple answer for this condition. All we have to do is

"withdraw the projection"! Oh yeah? You think this is *projection*? When did you last visit the Mountain of Venus? You've never even *smelled* the Love Potion. A *projection*, eh? What am I supposed to do? Reel her in like a trout?

What a euphemism! Withdrawing the projection sounds like some supreme act of will. All we have to do is just to *want* to strongly enough. Trouble is, we have no intention of forsaking this shining beacon, this water of life, this philosopher's stone that is our Isolde. We cannot help it if we keep hallucinating that her ship has just hove into sight. We strain to see whether she's flying the white sails to announce that she's on board and will heal us of our mortal wound. Or whether she's refused us a final time and flies the black sails that announce our death.

When we're in a situation like this, our analyst can make no more serious mistake than to tell us to withdraw the projection. It's a failure of empathy. What we have to do at a time like this is descend into our blackness. What did Jung do, after he had forsaken the constricting atmosphere of Freud's fatherhood for the transcendent charms of Sabina, only to beat a retreat back to his bourgeois life?

Apparently the first thing he did was to put on the Canadian Mounty hat and cowboy boots he had acquired in America and organize games of "Englishmen and Indians" with his son and nephews on the grounds of his in-laws' estate. He taught the boys to tunnel under one another's forts and set their tents on fire. His mother in law was outraged, and gave him a severe talking-to. Shortly thereafter he had the dreams of northern Europe under blood. It was another three months before he settled into a productive relationship with his madness.

It was during Advent of the year 1913 -- December 12, to be exact -- that I resolved upon the decisive step. I was sitting at my desk once more, thinking over my fears. Then I let myself drop. (MDR, 179)

The phrase, "withdrawing the projection," makes sense only in retrospect, after the work has been done. In the beginning our task more closely resembles *pursuing* the projection. Our friends will tell us to forget that old lover of ours -- he was never much good for us anyway. They'll tell us we're masochists, that we should just "let go," stop dwelling on it, get on with our lives. Easy for *them* to say. As far as we're concerned, there's no life worth pursuing other than the one that's come to so tragic an end. We *can't* let go; and furthermore we don't *want* to.

In the first instance, "pursuing the projection" means to accept our emotions for what they are. Deny nothing. Make no attempt to escape. Dwell in that torture between the longing and the impossibility. Accept what the Sword has done to us. Submit to our loneliness. In loneliness, our inner nature seeks *us*. Starkly and dismally, it recapitulates the theme we heard first in a rapturous key when we drank the Potion. Now that the Sword has separated us, we are presented with a paradoxical fact. We have to relinquish the search and let ourselves be found. This can only be done in the dark minor key that resounds in the abyss of our depression.

It would be dishonest and foolish to renounce the love that is still the greatest truth we have known. It would be no less counterproductive to deny the Sword that separates us from that radiant being who opened our heart and liberated us from the paltry confinement of our

former existence. In this period of profound defeat, when belief in ourselves seems the most fatuous of illusions, we have to hold onto the only realities we know: our memory of the sublime and rapturous truth of the Potion and the inexorable misery of the Sword.

Eros, which appeared first in our oscillation between the pull into dissolving oneness and the flight back to the only self we had ever known, now appears as our mourning for what we have lost and our inability to have it in the way we thought we wanted it. Eros is always a tension. And the temptation is always there to short-circuit it, to end the misery through flight, sexual release, or rage. Transformation is agonizingly slow and generally seems an impossible dream. Unfortunately, however, this is the universal law of psyche: growth, lasting enlargement, and individuation occur only through suffering the tension willingly -- and waiting.

When Jung let himself drop on the Second Sunday of Advent, 1913, when the Christian world was draped in penitential purple and Europe was poised on the brink of the Great War, he encountered rivers of blood and floating corpses that nauseated him. He had no thought of "withdrawing the projection." His misery deepened and frightened him with the prospect of madness. Plummeting further into his Slough of Despond, he began to lose all touch with the ephemeral life of the present. He had to recite daily his address, the names of his wife and children, and remind himself of his professional obligations. His son remembers him sleeping with a loaded gun beside his bed and drawing pictures of circles all day long. Eventually, as we know, his inner self found him, in the form of the lame, winged sage, Philemon, the blind Salome, and the black snake. Sitting at their feet, he was schooled in the lineaments of his own identity, filling his Red and Black Books with paintings and quotations, struggling to understand.

That's all very well for Jung, we may say; for he had plenty of time to devote to his terrifying descent. He had very few patients at the time, a wealthy wife to maintain his life-style, a clever method of his own devising in active imagination, and a gifted and erotically endowed guide in the person of Toni Wolff. The legendary Majnun was another special case. He abandoned everything and retired to desert caves to make friends with the wild animals. Throughout the process, although he had no Toni Wolff, he did have the birds of the air who carried messages back and forth between himself and his Layla. What of the rest of us, who have to go to work depressed, come home depressed, continue to make ends meet, and be sufficiently present to our families?

No doubt it's more difficult. We'll certainly function less well at work and be rather distracted with our families. We're not likely to have a Toni Wolff or to understand the songs of birds. But our despondent distraction is also our opportunity -- unwelcome though it may be. If we attend to the intuitions stirring in our soul, they may be as dependable as Majnun's birdsongs.

"Withdrawing the projection" means in the first instance to *pursue* the projection by not avoiding our tumultuous and disgusting moods. It will surely be a bleak tunnel of despair that we'll have to traverse -- very likely for months. As we begin to "become Layla," that is to discover her qualities lurking unconsciously in ourselves, we will probably be humiliated to encounter her worst traits first. The shadow of our Layla emerging within us will horrify us, as we find ourselves saying and doing the very things we tried to overlook in her during

the time she was our radiant companion. All that was repressed into the shadow of our former confining existence will come out, and we'll be ashamed of ourselves. We'll wonder what has gotten into us, where it will take us, and how we could have tolerated such behavior in our beloved.

Integration always begins with the shadow. But because these are *her* traits emerging in ourselves, we'll also see them in a new light. We'll have to understand them and integrate them with the same seriousness that Jung employed with the pronouncements of Philemon -- doubting them, questioning them, turning them over. The whole process is somewhat akin to what the fairy tale heroes go through when the animals speak. We don't have to do everything they advise, but we have to listen.

It's difficult to listen when we're in despair and have the best of reasons to doubt our own reliability. But in my experience, this is the process. There's not much rapture and a great deal of disgust. Spielrein was right. Destruction is the origin of new life. At this stage, Romantic Love is hardly romantic. It's hard work and requires brutal honesty. There are far more self-deluding Heathcliffs in the world than honest Majnuns. But we *do* have a choice. And in the end, I doubt that the Heathcliffs suffer any the less.

Notes:

Much of the material in this essay is reworked from my book, *Divine Madness: Archetypes of Romantic Love* (Shambhala, 1990).

The interpretation of Jung's personality and work is presented more soberly in my article, "Freud and Jung: A Failure of Eros," *Harvest*(1993): 39. 147-58.

The philosophical/poetic riff on the nature of Eros (pp.3-6) is slightly revised from my book, *The Love Cure: Therapy Erotic and Sexual* (Spring: 1996).