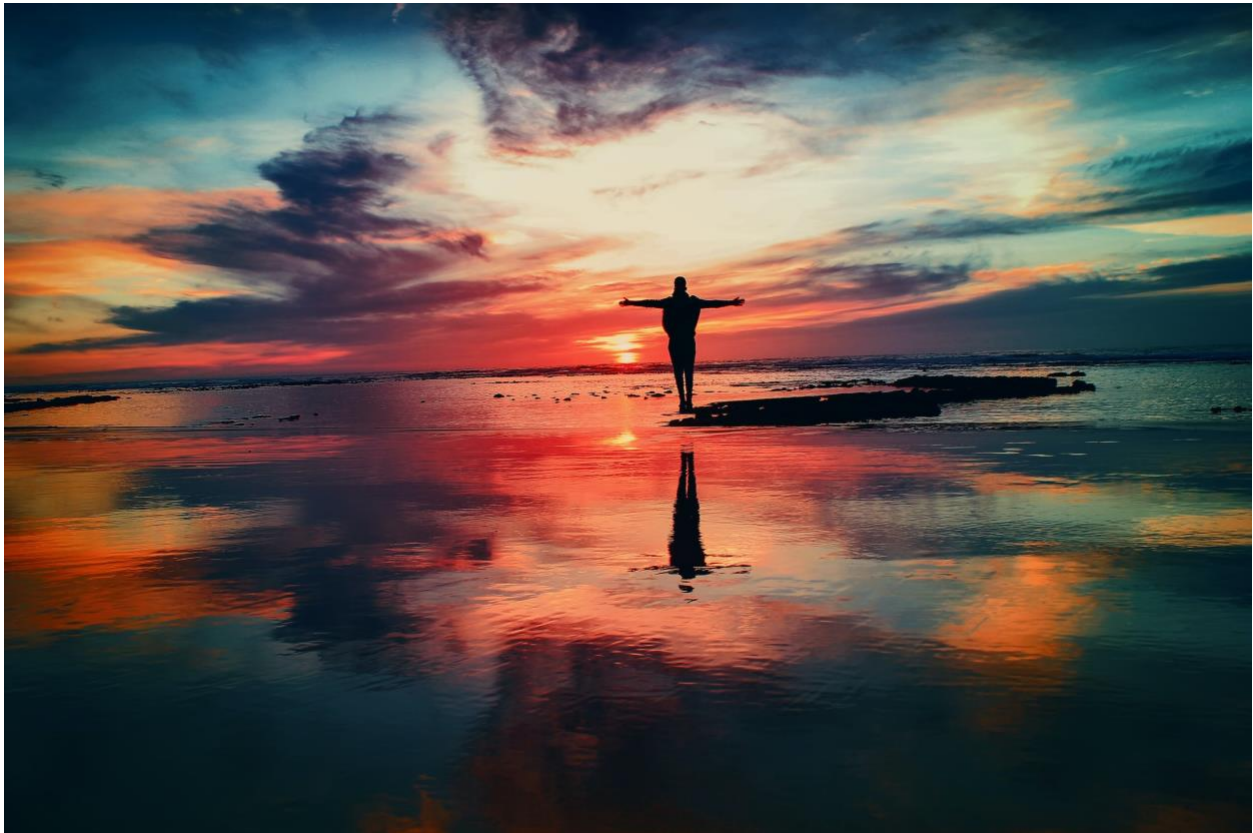




DR. TIMOTHY DUKES

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PSYCHIC IMAGES
AND
THEIR ROLE IN THE RE-FORMATION OF A SELF
by Timothy P. Dukes
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It was a time when "going forward" meant "going back."

This paper will focus on the role of psychic images and their relationship to the re-formation of my own person during a time, beginning in my early twenties, when who I



imagined my self to be, began to dissolve. All that I considered as "me" fell apart and I began a journey, a journey into psyche. This theme arises out of several months of journal writing in response to an in-depth study of developmental theory, at the Human Relations Institute, of the works of Jung, Klein, Winnicott and others.

There are age old themes about life and its meaning that have arisen throughout all of mythology, religion, and psychology, and perhaps there are few so often imagined as that of the "Journey." I saw the images that arose out of my own journey as being both haunting and enticing. Each step I took forward echoed something of the past. And it was in this journey forward that I heard the voices calling me back, insisting, no demanding, an ear.

It is difficult to imagine that as I encountered the "unexpected", what appeared was most often a design woven from the strands of the past. It was as though each truly alive moment contained within it the possibility of all previous moments in my life. These fibers entangled me, and in a not-so-subtle way, reminded me of earlier times when I crossed through the territory from which they originated. The moment became an experience which continued to retain the particulars of the past, informing, molding, and shaping the self I perceived myself to be. Some of the strands I welcomed because of their intricacy, color, and beauty. Others were worn and at times very disturbing to view. However, I was compelled to follow them to their originations, far beyond the "comfort zone" of the moment.

One of the central themes at this time was "how did I get here?" Another was "where am I going?" It was a time when "going forward" meant "going back." To "proceed" something had to be "re-membered." I am reminded of the Dreaming of the Aboriginal's and their description of the "Song Line."

Each totemic ancestor, while travelling through the country, was thought to have scattered a trail of words and musical notes along the line of his footprints, and.



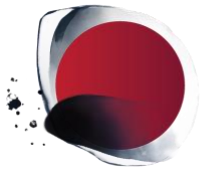
these Dreaming- tracks layover the land as 'ways' of communication... A song...was both map and direction-finder. Providing you knew the song, you could always find your way across the country. (Chatwin,1987, p.13)

I write this paper as a ceremonial enactment of my journeying...my dreaming. I invite the images and call up the feelings and voices, asking that they come to inform and to guide me. This early phase of my life could be described as a psychological breakdown. My experience determined that I was suffering from a mind/body split so severe that to mend the gap a full disintegration had to occur. In some way, I was forced to let go of an adaptive false ego and embark on a journey to recover a truer self that was waiting to take birth. As I followed the threads back, I followed my tracks and saw in the dust the tracks of my ancestors who had walked before me. As I write I wonder, "how had I forgotten my song. — how had I lost my way?" The images, the feelings, and the voices, came to me as I attempted to recover my song and remember my way. Yet it felt like such a lonesome journey, so few seemed to remember and so few were able to guide. There are some who call this form of journeying the "Hero's Journey", the "Path of the Warrior" or the "Way of the Healer." I call it Life.

I will attempt to piece together a picture of what may have contributed to my early retreat from the body and my taking of refuge in the mind.

The mind does not exist as an entity in the individual's scheme of things provided the individual psyche-soma or body scheme has come satisfactorily through the very early developmental stages; mind is then no more than a special case of the functioning of the psyche-soma. (Winnicott, 1965, p.244)

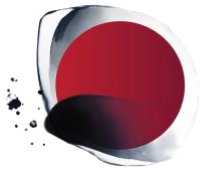
By discussing my awakening to this mind-body split and subsequent journeying back into the body, I ask myself "how do we build a bridge which really holds over the secret area of the body-mind divide?" (Coltart,1982, p.198). My intention is to follow my



path while listening closely to the words of others as an aid to recovering my song. I listen to their story of early childhood in my continued effort to re-member my own.

As a counterpoint to this discussion, I would like to weave in another perspective which sees the concept of the journey as occurring in a body- mind process that is always perceived outside of the moment. That when we are conscious of the concept of being on a journey, we are not in the moment but rather in the past or future as in the form of memory or imaginings. When we are in the moment we are not "on the journey" but rather we are in an in-between place where past and future do not exist. When we are in the moment we are simply "here" and aware of only those experiences which affect our five senses. Any association with this experience takes us out of the moment. When we are imagining a past or a future, we create form or content. When we are in the moment, a space in-between, I will refer to this as emptiness, for perhaps, as the Buddha tells us it is out of emptiness that all form arises.

It is my contention that the "journey" is a process that takes us nowhere. We journey as a way of imaging ourselves back to where we began. In fact, we have never left and that we think that we have is a fundamental error. We only exist here, and we imagine ourselves to be elsewhere. To return, we must venture out into the timeless realities to uncover and release that which we perceive ourselves to be, from the grip of that which we imagine has held us captive, that part of ourselves which we imagine to be missing. In fact, we are always here and have never left, except in our minds. Yet, we imagine that we exist in this world where we share a hallucination that we do not exist "here" but must quest to find ourselves elsewhere, imagining that we have misplaced some essential aspect of ourselves. In a sense, we end up where we began, because in truth we have never left...we only imagine leaving. It is through language and words that we create concepts, and it is in these concepts that we imagine and become lost. It is in the space between the words that



we have an opportunity to return to the moment and it is in the moment that we exist and find our Self and perhaps our Truth. "It is in the space between the words that the Divinity shows through" (Young, October 1988).

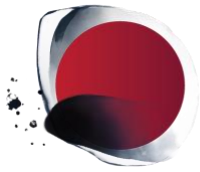
Jung's perspective of development is very similar when he relates of the dream-motifs and of how they return to definite forms whose characteristics define a center.

The way is not straight but appears to go round in circles...the whole process revolves about a central point or some arrangement round a centre. As manifestations of unconscious processes, the dreams rotate or circumambulate round the centre, drawing closer to it as the amplifications increase in distinctness and in scope...the process of development proves to be cyclic or spiral. (Jung, 1953, par. 34)

There was a part of me who was aware of this center and indeed may be considered as the center itself. When I was very young, this part was alive and well. However, as I was to face the difficulties of early life, this center began to retreat - deeply within. Jonathon Young tells us that "there is a strong child quality in the Sage" (November, 1988). There is something in his words that is echoed in the following quote by Frances Wickes, a leading Jungian Child Psychiatrist.

Experiences of timeless realities may come to the very young child...as the child grows older, problems of the outer world press upon him. His ego must grow to meet the demands of greater consciousness and numinous experience may appear to be forgotten by the ego, but it is remembered by the Self - that Sage who from the beginning lives in the psyche of the child and speaks the defining word in time of peril. (Wickes, 1966, p.ix)

Now let us return to the world of form, my imaginings, by talking about my memory of my own journey, which originated in just such a timeless reality. And indeed, I might even

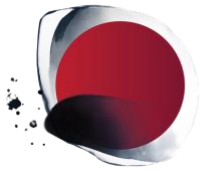


say that this is where my journey began, out of this emptiness. These imaginings will be the "body" of this paper, for it was through the images and their corresponding impact upon my body that the journey unfolded. As I remember it, I left a timeless reality early in childhood. And it was only because I was able to again glimpse this place of oneness that I was able to embark on my journey home. Back to the moment. While on this journey "home," I have had to continually deal with all that separates me from being "here"... over and over... moment to moment.

In my early twenties, during the Vietnam war, my life as I knew it came to an end early one rainy wet-leafed fall morning in Athens, Ohio. I had spent the night working on a single calculus problem so difficult and lengthy that I had to wax the slide rule several times in the process of my calculations. I was not doing all that well in Engineering School, near failing as I remember it. The draft board breathed a hot, dank breath from over my shoulder while I worked through the night. As a matter of fact, all that I feared seemed to coalesce that night into this thing that sat behind me and seemed to mock me as I drove myself relentlessly forward. I imagine it now as a dragon. He had taunted me for years and threatened to emerge from his dark cave whenever I would rest or veer from my steady march... forward.

Because of its unconscious component, the Self is so far removed from the conscious mind that it can only be partially expressed by human figures; the other part of it has to be expressed by objective, abstract symbols. Theriomorphic symbols. the dragon. (Jung, 1959, par. 315)

Guntrip presents a concept he called, "The Basic Human Dilemma," meaning that we are "born into a situation in which... [we are] unable to lay the foundations of a strong ego development, and have grown up feeling at bottom inadequate to the demands of living" (Guntrip, 1969, p. 179). He sees this "ego-weakness" as being at the "core of all

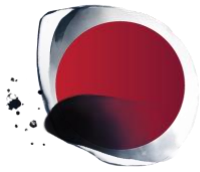


personality disturbance" (p. 179). Winnicott tells us of the "False Self," which organizes to hide and protect the "True Self" (Winnicott, 1965, .p 142). In either case, my identity was closely tied to Engineering School, family business, sports, fantasies of marriage, and children, and the War. These became concerns that filled my every waking moment and made up what I then considered to be my "self". In my attempt to avoid that dragon which lurked in the shadows, I clung desperately to this "picture" I believed to be "me." Guntrip saw such attachments in his patients who "operated all [of] his parents' standards against himself even though he disagreed with them. There is deep loyalty to the parental mores" (1969, p. 203).

However, the dragon emerged with a roar and flames from its dark place of hiding and my picture began to melt.

"I therefore am the One and the Many within me." In these words the dragon makes it clear that he is the chthonic [relating to Gods or spirits of the underworld] forerunner of the Self. (Jung, 1963, par. 296)

I had given my full effort to solving this one calculus problem. Coffee and "No-Doze" pushed and jangled me through the night. In the morning, a close friend and classmate came to my apartment to gather me for our usual walk to class. After he arrived, we were discussing our choice of problems for the take home test. It turned out that we had each chosen the same one. He insisted upon looking at my approach to solving the problem and was beyond curiosity to know my answer. Reluctantly, I handed him my stack of calculations. Within moments I felt him wince. As he tightened, my entire body convulsed and began to shake. Something major was happening; something beyond words was coming to light. It was too much for me to bear. I began to fall, as though down a deep tunnel. As I was receding into this unknown and distant place, I could hear his voice as an echo compassionately telling me that I had made an error early in my calculations.



An Error! I looked on from this distant place and there it was, right on the first page. I had made a calculation that took me onto a divergent path. I had come up with an answer and it was a correct answer; but it was an answer for a different problem. And my mistake occurred at the very beginning!

At the very beginning! In some mysterious way this struck a deep chord within me and the vibration from this began to shake my very foundation. I was able to hold it together only long enough to tell my friend to go on to class. I told him that I would catch up with him later, yet little did I realize, at the time, that "later" meant eight to ten years. As I closed the door behind him, my world as I knew it began to crumble. Indeed, I had made a miscalculation early on, a mistake. I had left something undone... some part of myself was left behind. **This calculus problem became symbolic of my entire life to that point.** Because of what was being revealed, I could no longer deny that for most of my life, I had been "working on the wrong problem." My mind began to flood with images from a time when I was the center of my world. It was a time when color was so brilliant that I could taste it. Smells were not something that would pass by in an instant, they became a vehicle which transported my very being into that from which the fragrance came. It was not a time in which I experienced life...I was life.

Whatever else the child may suffer from, it does not suffer from remoteness of life, normally...it is fully alive...the child is an inner possibility, the possibility of renewal.
(Von Franz, 1979, p. 65)

For just a moment, one timeless moment, I was able to remember all that I had forgotten and that was a moment of revelation. I knew for just a timeless instant that "I" did not exist separately from the "other." There was only One... in the moment... and all things were "it". Was this a moment of "oneness," a moment of "enlightenment," a moment of



"being" fully in the moment? Or was this too just another imagining of the mind? This moment and the many that followed I consider as both timeless and divine.

However, after such an enlightening moment all that was repressed came back with the fury of a tidal wave. The dragon I had fled from for so many years began to emerge from its dark abyss and with nowhere else to go I turned to face it. My relationships, my schooling, sports, goals, everything fell to pieces behind me. I walked inward into the darkness and was alone. Neumann says "it is [in] the darkness where recovery takes place, and also those events in the soul which in obscurity, by processes only the heart can know, allow men to 'out grow' their insoluble crises" (Neumann, as cited in Weinrib, 1983, p. 25). Without a guide and with no maps, I took a step and realized that my life as I knew it was over. If I were to continue, I would have to walk back into this dark place alone. "The way forward is indeed the way back" (Hillman, 1975, p. 22).

My journey began.

I was on an unavoidable journey back, to remember what had happened that caused me to turn away from so vital a part of my life. Stein asks "What is going on inside when we are caught in this ego trap that makes us so mistrustful of our instincts?" (Stein, 1974, p. 90) Yet how can I say that I returned because "I" as was known to me at the time began to dissolve. My experience was like that of a child's and the world became immense. Fantasy and dreams were real! My world, now full of magic, was at times terrifying but was never more alive.

The archetype of the child. as Jung saw...[is the]...prefiguration of every change that we go through in depth... all the faces of the repressed, the personally forgotten and the primordially unknown, will return in a child-like style. (Hillman, 1975, p. 21)

And Jung again points out:



Childhood is not only important because it is a starting point for possible crippling of instinct, but also because this is the time when, terrifying or encouraging, those farseeing dreams and images come from the soul of the child, which prepare his whole destiny. (Jung, 1960, par. 98)

Now I would like to shift to a discussion of what it means to be alone with oneself. Dr. Steven Frank reminds us of Jung's understanding of the necessity for aloneness and Frank questions, "what gets in the way of our ability to do this... to face this aloneness and to find our ground." (Frank, October 1988)? Dr. Frank directs us back to Jung:

The highest and most decisive experience of all... is to be alone with his own self, or whatever else one chooses to call the objectivity of the psyche. The patient must be alone if he is to find out what it is that supports him when he can no longer support himself. Only this experience can give him an indestructible foundation. (Jung, 1953, par. 32)

He goes on to say,

Something in them clings, often with the strength of despair, as if they or the thing they cling to would drop off into the void the moment they relaxed their hold. They are seeking firm ground on which to stand. Since no outward support is of any use to them they must finally discover it in themselves – admittedly the most unlikely place from the rational point of view, but an altogether possible one from the point of view of the unconscious. (Jung, 1953, par. 33)

I recall a dream where I am standing alone on a huge, infinitely large ball and it is black... it is all black. There is another large planet that extends in all directions as far as I can imagine, and it is about to touch down on the exact spot where I am standing. I am paralyzed with fear and the weight is tremendous. This dream occurred over and over in my night dreaming.

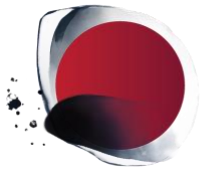


In *The Development of Personality* (1954) Jung says: "The child's psyche, prior to the stage of ego consciousness, is very far from being empty and devoid of content.... The most important evidence... is the dreams of three- and four-year-old children, among which there are some so strikingly fraught with mythological and so fraught with meaning..." (Ryce-Memuhin, 1987, p. 164).

This dream haunted me and left huge holes in my understanding. I worked this dream many times but each time it eluded understanding. Certainly, it spoke to me of a time when the world was too much for me to bear; a time that was too much to endure for a child and therefore repressed. Perhaps it speaks of a time when the anti-libidinal forces began to take their toll. These came in the form of relentless emotional and psychic abuses from disturbed family members and a family minister who deceived me. I possessed a sensitivity beyond which my world could embrace. I could find no place in the world which would receive that which perceived as "me."

They (children] have all developed the art of not experiencing feelings, for a child can only experience his feelings when there is somebody there who accepts him fully, understands and supports him. (Miller, 1981, p. 10)

Eventually, I directed my will against that part of myself which I imagined was causing me the most pain. Guntrip speaks of this as the "antilibidinal ego", a concept of Fairbairn's which acts "against needs and [it] is basically an internalization of the outer world's intolerance of the needy infant who is regarded as a nuisance to be kept quiet" (Guntrip, 1969, p. 183). I left the richness of my play, in the streams and the dirt of the wooded ravine behind my house and attempted to fit into a world that seemed totally alien to me.



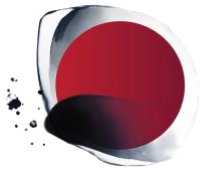
When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things (I Corinthians, 13:11, King James Bible).

I joined everything I could think of joining...sports, choir, orchestra, church and Boy Scouts. I joined to ignore how separate I was becoming inside. To be who I was became too painful to bear. So, I imagined "another" and tried to live up to that image. It is Guntrip who tells us that, "in order to achieve this repression of his original self, the child must borrow an ego from elsewhere to do it with" (1969, p. 205). Dr. Avedis Panajjian tells us that such identifications are formed when a "too strong libidinal energy is attempting to seek a discharge" (December 1988). I distinctly remember, as though seeing through the eyes of an old wise man who lived within me, that I was giving up a part of myself. Balint asks us to:

Consider the universal-i.e., archetypal- human wound that fuels all analytic work: The analysand's initial environment failed, in one way or another, consistently over time, adequately to meet all needs. Out of this initial failure arose a basic fault, a pattern of adapting to an inadequate environment which enabled the individual to cope at the cost of distorting his or her essential nature. (Sullivan, 1987, p. 40)

I have no doubt now as an adult, that when I was perhaps five or even younger, I was aware of losing my innocence and purity. I remember a deep feeling of grief at this loss and a tremendous fear that what I was leaving behind could never be reclaimed.

The story of Adam's exile from the Garden of Eden shows that there is a certain time in a man's life when he is in the Garden of Eden, and after that time he is exiled from there and no longer experiences that joy and happiness and freedom that once the soul possessed. There is not one soul in this world who has not experienced the

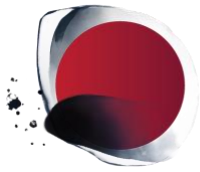


Garden of Eden, and that Garden of Eden is babyhood. (Hazrat Inayat Khan, as cited in Armstrong, 1985, p. 52)

Eventually, as a young adult in college, I became the very thing that I as a child perceived as so threatening to my survival. In a sense, I became self-castrating. I became disembodied and was capable of action, thoughts, and words that too, were disembodied. In other words, I could cause harm to myself or another and not be aware of the pain until long after the action, if at all. Woodman tells us that “the more quickly the ego moves ahead, the more terrorized the body becomes. The task then is to find some means of going back to the point of wounding to reconnect with the abandoned child. The body, like the child, tells the truth...” (Woodman, 1985, p.55)

The truth about our childhood is stored in our body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, our perceptions confused, and our body tricked with medication. But someday the body will present its bill, for it is as incorruptible as a child who, still whole in spirit, will accept no compromises or excuses, and it will not stop tormenting us until we stop evading the truth. (Miller, 1986, p. 316)

Shehorn relates that “it costs everything to go your won way” and reminds us of the sords of Rume with “sell your cleverness and buy your bewilderment” and with the sords of Rank he tells us we are to “live the irrational” (December 1988). This all suggest a will that is capable of withstanding the opposition that arises both from inside and outside when one takes such a stand. Perhaps as an adult this is conceivable; but as a child it would have meant certain destruction. Childhood is a time when survival means adaptation. In all societies, that which sticks out is cut off; so best to hide it or better yet, bury it deep within so that no one is the wiser.



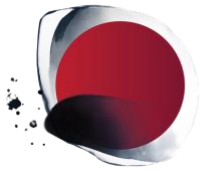
Wilhelm Reich spoke of an armored body and an armored soul. And you can armor yourself, or life can force you to build such an armor. But firstly, such a lot of energy goes into building such an armor. And secondly it doesn't allow you free movement. Last of all it armors you against the good things as well as the bad, which is the vicious thing about armor. You develop it to protect yourself from bad effects. But it protects you equally from the good influences, or should I say, it prevents them from reaching you. And that has something to do with the human psyche. (Bettleheim, 1962, p. 219)

It is only when one has the power to protect and nourish one's own uniqueness that one dare takes the risk of letting others know of its existence. Yet so often we, ourselves, forget that we have something so precious buried so deeply within.

Moments when the original poet in each of us created the outside world for us, by finding the familiar in the unfamiliar, are perhaps forgotten by most people; or else they are guarded in some secret place of memory because they were too much like visitations of the Gods to be mixed with everyday thinking.

(Milner as cited in Winnicott, 1971, p. 39)

In hindsight, I realize that a core part of my being was terrified and under heavy repression. The dragon was an image that embodied all that I had denied and repressed. I can perceive my quest and eventual slaying of this dragon as a spiritual journey back, to free the energies that were laying dormant, and to begin a reclamation of that True Self. By slaying the dragon, I began to reclaim and embody all that was previously hidden within me and denied a place. I can say that I began to heal a split between body and mind. I can see this from the perspective of Young when he tells us that the first half of life is symbolized by the sword (Young, November 1988).

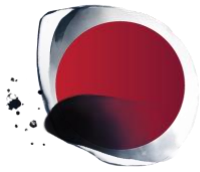


I can acknowledge that what was repressed was seen as a weakness by others and eventually by me. And in denial of this aspect of myself this hostile, unconscious figure arose to embody all that was being repressed "The ego gives more strength in avoiding pain via repression than to accepting it" (Ryce-Menuhin, 1987, p. 173). This figure came in numerous forms to haunt me and to eventually demand my attention. At times this part of myself was seen as something to be disposed of and even despised, for to claim and attempt to hold on to it, would have exacted too great a price. At the time it may have threatened my basic survival.

The False Self was once in the service of my True Self by walling it off and enwombing it, to allow it to incubate, and find protection and nourishment from within. However, that which was once the protector eventually became the jailor and acted to repress this aspect of my Self which lay buried within. This was the beginning of a betrayal; one aspect of self-turned against another and the outer False Self worked to repress and inhibit the True Self that lay within. Eventually the dragons began to emerge to wreak havoc on the False Self as a reminder that something early on was neglected and left behind. This all culminated one night around the calculus problem. It was no longer possible to ignore the "buried life."

A person can give up conscious expectations, but attitudes deeply rooted in unconscious feelings of early childhood cannot be given up until they become conscious and have been experienced not only by the present but in relation to the past. (Miller, 1986, p. 76)

The dragons were loose and had to be acknowledged. The journey began and I found myself on the path. The path to re-covery. This suggests, that the dragon was not something to be slayed, for this negates a whole aspect of the psyche. Rather the dragon was someone to be embraced and as



Young tells us the second half of life is symbolized by the chalice, the container, that which holds and contains (Young, November, 1988). This suggests a very open and receptive posture in relationship to that which we ignore and repress within us. the shadow.

The problem of opposites called up by the shadow plays a great - indeed, the decisive - role in alchemy, since it leads in the ultimate phase of the work to the union of opposites in the archetypal form of the *hierogamos* or 'chymical wedding'. (Jung, 1953, par. 43)

The dragon was, in many ways, my ally. Imagining the dragon allows the invisible to become real. Much like the explorer who returns from a long journey to tell us his tales of the experience, the figures of our imagination emerge and hint at something mysterious and not quite knowable. In a sense, they become the messengers who bring with them a song from a land we may never visit.

How often do we mistake the messenger for the message; and if the message displeases us or we don't understand it, how often do we attempt to slay the messenger? Perhaps the land beyond is not so much the part of ourselves which we have left behind or buried. Perhaps it is something much greater. Perhaps the messengers that speak of this land, the images, are sent from those who have walked a similar path before us...the ancestors. Perhaps what is important is only that, the quest, and not what we imagine finding on the quest. Perhaps it is only necessary to ask the questions and listen to the words of the story. For after all "if you knew the song you could always find your way" (Chatwin, 1987, p. 13).

As I conclude this paper and sit in the moment having attempted to remember and articulate this important phase of my development the nagging counter questions arise. How much of all that I am imagining occurred? Where in fact did, I journey? The images



that I've encountered, where are they now? Where will the images that are about to arise come from and where will they take me?

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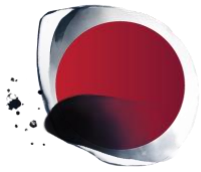
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