

'The Spirit of the Feminine Never Dies': An exploration of the archetype through the death of a princess

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Four months after Princess Diana's death I came across an artist's impression of her in *Newsweek*. It was a portrait, a computer-generated photomosaic, made up of hundreds of minute flowers. It was astonishing. I saw it a few days after a visit to the Royal Academy's exhibition 'Sensation' which included the much discussed image of Myra Hindley, made up of hundreds of small handprints of children. This was frightening. By seeing these portraits within a few days of each other I was shocked into beginning to reflect on what these two images might be conveying. I wish to emphasise that I will not be talking of the actual Diana Spencer or Myra Hindley, but will attempt to reflect on the archetypal projections these two women carried, the images which arose from these



and their possible meaning.

Once more I saw in front of me the thousands of fresh and stale blooms at Kensington Palace, like so many tiny coffins encased in plastic glistening in the sun. I also recalled a recent TV programme on whether Myra Hindley should be released on parole and the violent refusal by a vast number of people.

The eerily neat division of the Feminine was brought home to me yet again through the portrayal of these two women: a wrenching apart of something that is ultimately one and the same. I mean here that an archetype *per se* is not split. It is a paradoxical whole holding the two poles of light and dark together. A quote from Carlyle illustrates this beautifully, I think. He likens nature/woman to a

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sphinx, alluding perhaps also to the mystery and unknowability of the archetype of the Feminine. She is '... of celestial womanly loveliness and tenderness. The face and bosom of a goddess, but ending in claws and the body of a lioness. There is in her celestial beauty . . . but there is also darkness, a ferocity . . . which is infernal.'

It is only when an archetype erupts through images and symbols into human consciousness that it becomes bipolar and divisible. I asked myself for what purpose? Why in this instant the astonishing 'flower woman' and the frightening 'evil woman'? It is interesting to recall that both the Princess and Myra Hindley had profound connection with children. One was known to be killing or involved in the killing of children; the other was frequently seen holding and caring for them. Is it possible that Hindley has gathered to herself the huge archetypal projections of all that is dark in the Feminine (including our own capacity to kill and destroy ourselves) and the Princess all that is golden? That they have drawn to themselves that which we term 'evil' and 'good'? The witch and the saint? Is this in some way necessary? If so, then both need to be known equally. Only if we know the dark side, only if we know that we are capable of killing can we choose not to. Only then might it become possible to resist the destructive energy and stopping it from running amok. Then this energy might be contained as securely as Myra Hindley's picture in the exhibition behind its plastic guard.

Perhaps the horrified and angry response to the question of Hindley's release was in fact also a largely unconscious but valid and sane reaction to the killing of the Future as represented by the

suffocation of children. An awareness of the death-dealing energy could consciously instead let loose the life-giving, nurturing energy which was represented by the brief appearance of Diana, a beautiful princess who was not killing but was caring and compassionate. I think the fact that there is light in dark and dark in light, so naturally held together in an archetype, is often only dimly sensed in our immediate and lived experience. But however myopic, this awareness might account for the handful of people canvassing for Hindley's release, and could also explain the strong negative feelings of some others about the Princess. Several people remarked on the sinister and caricature-like resemblance of the young Myra Hindley (captured in the 'Sensation' portrait) to that of Diana Spencer. This recognition seems to be another example of the twilight awareness some of us have of the existence of light in dark and dark in light, to an extent which is perhaps beyond our human understanding.

The archetype, or in other words, the Divine, is beyond the image. We cannot know it, or grasp what its purpose might be. But if it is just as important for human consciousness to know of the dark side of the Feminine and what it is capable of, then another probability would be that there are individuals who are fated to live out the dark side of the Divine. This, however, is emphatically not my own standpoint. If we have the capability to become aware of the dark force, we have the choice and also the responsibility to withdraw our projections and refrain from living out our destructiveness. At least on an individual level. Could that not be part of the reason for doing analytic work?

While appreciating that we are powerless to stop the Fates holding and weaving the threads of our life pattern, must we not nevertheless strive to steer our own destiny?

We have other images of completeness besides the sphinx, in the arts as well as in our dreams, and now we have also the myth of Innana as described by Sylvia Brinton Perera. This is a much needed Sumerian myth of the Feminine which surfaced after having lain buried in the earth for centuries. In it Innana the Queen of Heaven, either by choice or pushed by forces not entirely in her control, descends into the Underworld to meet her dark sister Ereshkigal. After their encounter and her dreadful ordeal in the Great Below she eventually emerges stronger, richer and truly powerful. Here at least is an example of the possibility of not only facing and overcoming our tremendous fear of the Ereshkigal energy, but also the integration of the radiant with the abysmal into an indomitable fullness.

I would like to illustrate with a personal experience that when one becomes part of an archetypal event one can sometimes realise how the benevolent and the malevolent can sit uncomfortably close together.

For about ten days following Princess Diana's death, I could observe from my sixth-floor window the throng of people walking with their bouquets of flowers to Kensington Palace. What seemed remarkable was that, although what I saw was a crowd, I also saw individual people carrying their unique grief and their specially chosen flowers, united yet somehow alone. It was a moving spectacle. It was only when I decided at one point to join it that I was momentarily overcome with a

distinctly panicky feeling and a curious inability to think. It was as if the mass of people crowding me on either side swallowed me up and my 'I' temporarily disappeared. I felt the tremendous power of the collective.

I continued my journey on the road, instead of the pavement, digesting the appalling knowledge (which surfaced so unexpectedly) that it would take only as long as the flick of a switch for these peacefully walking dignified people to turn into a violent and menacing crowd. What was particularly unnerving was that the quiet manifestation I had witnessed seemed to be quite split off from any darker expression except for the trivial but nonetheless significant examples of thefts of soft toys. I had a private vision also during Earl Spencer's speech that all those people sitting so quietly weeping in the Park could, on his suggestion, turn and storm the palace. This fantasy was particularly disquieting because it was based on experiences I had had of the frightening volatility of crowds while I lived in my native Hungary during two totalitarian regimes.

I wonder whether the unforeseen and unparalleled expression of grief that followed the Princess's death, by a traditionally phlegmatic and reticent nation, might not have been on one level the recognition of the loss of the Feminine, which was unbearable and therefore uncontainable? The Princess proved to have represented for so many people individually as well as collectively that aspect of the anima or soul which includes the attributes of compassion, vulnerability, intuition, expression of feelings and above all relatedness. Diana's exceptional ability to be alongside people of all ages, creeds

and gender with a closeness normally reserved for friends became her hallmark. Her innate skill transcended borders, both political and geographical. In a similar way the shock of the news of her death reverberated around the globe. India, Eastern Europe, America, young and old, men and women, people in villages and cities united in mourning in a way which seemed to go beyond the opportunity to express grief over past personal losses. There seemed to be a tremendous fellow-feeling that 'we are all in this together'.

The 'muchness' of the outpourings of sorrow and of the sometimes exaggerated forms it took has been referred to as mass hysteria. Although hysteria is widely and loosely used to denote exaggerated feelings and extravagant theatricality, it is a notoriously difficult concept to define. Neil Micklethwait describes the elusiveness of hysteria by saying it is 'nowhere and everywhere'. He also points out that hysteria can be a 'mover of culture', a factor which can contribute to 'the transformation of people and the times they live in'. Archetypal events (and I think we can safely say now that the Princess's death was such an occurrence) not only occasion huge projections, but also constellate equally huge archetypal feelings. Whatever the implications of this event, perhaps there was more to it than mere pathology.

As I look once more at the Feminine as captured in the two images of the Flower Woman and the Evil Woman, what I see is the disappearance of both. The one so vibrant and beautiful is now dead, smashed so suddenly; the other is out of sight, incarcerated, seemingly without mercy, for the rest of her life. A depressing

picture. Have we lost sight of soul? But the spirit of the Feminine cannot die. It cannot be banished, or buried underground forever, it cannot be killed, denied, denigrated or dismissed. It will survive, if only in the 'Great Below', and like the Sumerian myth will surface again to surge through and bring transformation into our lives.

A patient dreamed: there is a banquet given in honour of Princess Diana. She is seated in the premier place. Then the patient's father arrives. He is given a similar feast, and it is now he who sits in the premier place. A male servant disapproves of this seating arrangement, saying the Princess must always be given the place of guest of honour.

The dreamer was a middle-aged woman who for most of her life had valued, as she put it, the Father-world, masculine values, rules, logic and the intellect, to the detriment of her own feminine intuitive thinking, feelings, values and beliefs. This woman needed to re-establish her womanhood and realise it utterly. The servant of her soul knew that she needed to put the woman at the top of the table in order to realise herself and live fully. I was told that Jung (in an unpublished conversation) had said that 'a woman needs to be a woman from the top of her head to the tip of her toes' and that only then can she relate to men appropriately.

Though there is much personal material in this dream and much for the woman to learn from it, I believe that in the context of this paper the dream is also relevant for us on a collective level. It is an indication of how important the re-emergence of the Feminine is for this part of the century as we enter the next; how imperative is the return of the lunar side of consciousness

for both men and women, as it brings with it a relatedness, a connection to Eros which is so miserably lacking in the Western world today. Our soul demands this renewal for its and perhaps for our own survival.

Finally an image of the Feminine from the poet Lao Tzu, the source of my title:

*The Spirit of the Fountain never dies.
It is called the mysterious feminine.
The entrance to the mysterious feminine
is the root of all heaven and earth.
Frail, frail it is, hardly existing.
But touch it, it will never run dry.*

Further reading

Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Chapman and Hall, 1906

N. Micklem, *The Nature of Hysteria*, Routledge, 1966

Sylvia Perera, *Descent to the Goddess*, Inner City Books, 1981

Humanistic Practice in Action

David Boadella

A high point of the First International Congress of Biosynthesis, held in Palma de Mallorca in April 1998, was a workshop by a Brazilian biosynthesis therapist in the fishing community off the coast of Joa Pessoa, which changed the self-esteem of a group of fishermen who were in near slavery conditions, and was coupled with a social project based on 'capacitation', which made it possible for the first time in their lives to own their own boats. This was a wonderful combination of therapeutic group work in a community, with social objectives, plans, and political realisation. Two of the fishermen had had their attendance at the

Congress paid by the whole community. The video of the project, and a talk by both fishermen, and the therapist, featured at the insistence of Silvia Boadella, in the closing ceremony of the Congress, over a wonderful Mallorcan meal, held at Finca la Sena, a farmhouse in the foothills of the mountains. At this point four generations of biosynthesis transmission were present, myself as founder, the Brazilian national trainer in Joa Pessoa, the therapist, and the fishermen whose life she had transformed.

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