

Analysis and Individuation in the Mexican Psyche: Culture and Context

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Abstract

This article approaches the unresolved conflicts in the Mexican psyche and culture through an examination of ancient Aztec mythologems, current cultural patterns and their correspondence to patterns and dynamics in the individual psyches of men and women in contemporary Mexico. The territory of this study includes the conflicts and interplay between the cultural and the individual. It analyzes the relationship between the underlying cultural and archetypal patterns. The method is based on the exploration of both regressive and progressive manifestations through the use of clinical narrative, images, dreams, complexes, defensive patterns and symptoms.

Key words: Mexican psyche, cultural unconscious, dismemberment, pre-Hispanic mythology, mother-boundedness, progressive and regressive patterns, machismo.

In cultures that revere family bonds and group values, the needs of the community often supersede those of the individual. When personal autonomy and inner authority are not conscious norms, separation and individuation are less valued than in more individually-oriented cultures. Collectively-oriented cultures expect their members to adapt to familial, conformist, or dogmatic gestalts, whereas cultures that do not idealize *participation mystique* consider

this a developmental lag. Cultural values affect interpersonal connections and impact the conscious and unconscious expectations patients and therapists have regarding their relationship. These values inform patient assessment, the analytic attitude, analytic communications, and training decisions.

As a Jungian analyst in Mexico, I question to what extent analysis must accommodate to prevailing cultural values. I wonder how best to address deep internal individual issues within a collective context where macho ideals, family cohesiveness, and religion are powerful forces affecting the personal experience of male and female patients, the field of the transference counter-transference, and the analytic attitude toward the demand for relatedness to the outer "other" and the inner world of the unconscious. While it is necessary to be attuned to different cultural expectations, the psychological value that informs the analytic effort in any culture is inevitably different from a one-sided observance of prevailing collective precepts.

I will illustrate how a Jungian model addresses cultural values. Jung believed that psychotherapists had to acquaint themselves with the past and present mental and spiritual assumptions prevalent in their patients' psychic milieu (*CW 16*, p. viii). By extension, this includes the personal, the ancestral, and the universal. This is the territory of the "cultural unconscious," although in this context Jung does not

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name it as such. He illustrates this in *Psychology and Alchemy*, where in a patient's dreams he identifies an apparent historical regression to contents the patient did not know consciously (CW 12, para. 113).

It was Henderson who introduced the contemporary Jungian idea of the cultural unconscious, a term which has become part of the Jungian discourse. He noted that what Jung called collective was also culturally conditioned (Henderson, 1985, p. 106). For Henderson, the cultural unconscious is a second order of unconscious material, a subset of the collective unconscious that develops through what he calls "cultural ingraining" (1985, p. 107). Any culture is a combination of the more universal contents of the collective unconscious and the more ego-near contents of the cultural unconscious. The Mexican culture is a syncretic fusion of successive historical layers of indigenous and Spanish elements. The collective Mexican psyche, for example, bears the stamp of patriarchal machismo that has its roots in both the indigenous and the Spanish cultural ground, while the charged matriarchal mother-son and mother-daughter constellations emerge from the indigenous and are expressed specifically in the ancient myth of Coatlicue. Coatlicue is the embodiment of the cosmic-dynamic power that gives life and thrives on death in the struggle of opposites. As expressed psychically in the case material I will present here, the image of Coatlicue is a personification of the archetypal patterning of the Great Mother among the Aztecs. She is depicted as a terrifying figure with snakes and skulls on her head and skirt. She is the devouring mother who holds her children in submission.

In the myth, Coatlicue was sweeping the temple steps, when a tuft of hummingbird feathers fell out of the sky. Coatlicue tucked it into her bosom and conceived a single son, Huitzilopochtli. Coyolxauhqui (the night sky), Coatlicue's only daughter, and her 400 brothers (the constellations), feeling displaced, plotted to kill their pregnant mother. Huitzilopochtli sprang from Coatlicue's womb a full-grown warrior, beheaded and dismembered Coyolxauhqui. Since then, Coyolxauhqui, who thus became the moon goddess, is seen to fragment, wane down to emptiness, only to wax back to fullness in an ongoing cycle. Huitzilopochtli scattered the 400 brothers, who became the Milky Way. The Aztecs used cosmic images appearing in this myth to express their insights into the various constellations of interpersonal and societal forces, as well as intrapsychic patterns.

In contrast to cosmogonic myths in other cultures, in this Aztec myth the mother was not slain. Coatlicue, unlike the earlier indigenous mother goddess Tonantzin, was degraded into a mythological figure that could not hold the opposites, even in alternating form. The mother ground thus remained undifferentiated. Even though this manifested psychically as collusion with attitudes of entitlement, thus leaving the ego in a state of arrested development, we also see the early struggle from both the masculine and the feminine sides with the regressive and progressive pulls around processes of separation.

The ego has not yet engaged the heroic encounter that involves dismemberment and reintegration. Further, the archetypal provisions expressed in the energy of the hero quest are at a standstill. In this constellation, the patterning

that is expressed in the figure of Coatlicue is a hideous image because of the nascent ego's relationship to the overwhelming feminine archetypal layer—the unconscious. Huitzilopochtli was pulled to stay one-sided in the feminine under the wing of the mother. The fact that the mother was not slain manifested as a persistent pattern of the mother-boundedness of the Mexican psyche.

In the myth, Coyolxauhqui paradoxically longed to regress to where she came from: the mother, the matrix, the unconscious. She longed to reassume that paradisaical oneness with the mother, but on the other hand, she wanted to kill the mother. Even though Coyolxauhqui's energy in desiring to kill the mother was reactive, the bright shadow aspect of it is that the energy could serve processes of separation. The 400 brothers, despite representing a masculine force, were expressive of a not-yet coalesced masculine energy constituted by multiple centers, but without a cohesive unified power that could function to support Coyolxauhqui in a separation process.

However, for the first time ever the masculine energy coalesced in the emerging organization of the ego. Although the figure of Huitzilopochtli carried the archetypal provision that could develop into a separate ego, it was overpowered by the one-sided endogamous force and was pulled to stay one-sided in the feminine. At the same time, Coyolxauhqui was left to carry the nascent separating energies as the moon goddess. The patriarchal aspect of the Mexican psyche is a doubling of tyrannical male authority stemming from both the Aztecs and the Spaniards. It is expressed by the destructive aspect of the Tlatoani,¹ the solar ruler of the Aztecs, and by the

patriarchal macho patterns in the Spanish tradition.

In pre-Hispanic Mexico, collective values and in particular the need to serve the value of stabilization prevailed. Men were warriors; women obeyed and served. Discipline, sacrifice, and nongratification were ultimate values. Sacrifice was highly prized among the Aztecs: one person was sacrificed for the sake of the whole. In this cultural context, human sacrifice was a concretization of this value of serving the collective over and above the individual in order to maintain a stable society. The shedding of human blood was believed to feed the gods who maintained cosmic order and secured survival. Death was considered a transition in the continuous cycle of life, death, and rebirth. To be sacrificed was an honor implying a transformation of human energy and an entry into the gods' realm. Sacrifice was thus an instrument to transit the ego-self axis. Psychically, this pertains to a point in process where the well-being of the whole person may be served by reinforcing the needs of stability. Sometimes, however, it becomes a point of stuckness and regression.

This patterning shifted with the conquest of Mexican lands by the invading Spanish forces in the sixteenth century. In 1519, Hernán Cortés landed on the eastern coast of what was to become Mexico. According to legend, his arrival coincided with the prophesized date of return of Quetzalcoatl, the dual, bearded, and fair-skinned god of wind and wisdom who had centuries before left in self-exile from the same shores after having broken his spiritual vows. The activation of the energies of the trickster god Tezcatlipoca, the Smoking Mirror, in

conjunction with Quetzalcoatl's vulnerability to vanity and error had plunged him into shame and disgrace.² He had ended unconsciously being tricked into drunkenness, and incest.

Quetzalcoatl was an ambiguous figure. Even though he had left in shame, he continued to be revered as a divine figure of the highest value. He was both god and man. He was the creator of the human race who took a stance against human sacrifice. He also functioned in the priestly lineage mapped forth from antiquity by the fire-maker and the shaman. Thus in his ambiguity he carried energies of both the exogamous and the endogamous. The culture, in losing the figure of Quetzalcoatl, was reinforced in the one-sided negative patriarchal. At the same time, the Aztecs felt they were left without a figure to transit to the unconscious on behalf of the people, thus creating a yawning gap of yearning.

This contributed to setting the Aztecs up to mistake Cortés as the god-man Quetzalcoatl. Moctezuma II, the Aztec emperor, welcomed Cortés as carrying all the archetypal significance of the mythological figure of Quetzalcoatl. He cataclysmically gave over the whole Aztec culture, along with himself, to this foreign energy that actually erred in the same direction. In taking Cortés to be Quetzalcoatl, the negative patriarchal one-sidedness of the culture was reinforced with the coloring of the negative aspect of patriarchy particular to the Spaniards. This led to a shift that resulted in cultural, psychic, and spiritual destabilization. The archetypal image was transferred to a human figure: an empire and an emperor fell.

For the indigenous, this conquest was an abrupt clash with the unknown foreign reality. They had been aban-

doned by their leader, their prophecy, and their gods, and their view of the universe had been fragmented. In society and in the individual today, we still perceive the continuing imbalance and thereby negativity of this patriarchal dominant as well as the psychic void and deep wounds around the unconscious pull to recover the missing opposite in order to thus achieve a balance.

After the conquest, the indigenous people were subjugated, plundered, and forcefully converted to Catholicism. Despite the resulting overlay of Spanish cultural forms, the dominant energies of the pre-Hispanic people remained organized around the earlier forms of spirituality. Over the centuries, the culture and images of Catholicism have become increasingly amalgamated into the cultural forms, resulting in an ongoing syncretic process. This is expressed earlier on in the indigenous people superimposing Catholic imagery onto their original deities.

The overlaying of the cultural patterns of the Spaniards on those of the Aztecs resulted in the formation of symptomatic and symbolic patterns in the culture that preserved a link to the earlier forms of spirituality despite the subjugation of the conquest. The Virgin Mary of Christianity, for example, was superimposed on Tonantzin, the ancient mother goddess who embraces and embodies the tension of opposites, thus creating the Virgin of Guadalupe. There was, on the one hand, a living subjugation to the Catholic imagery and culture; on the other, there was a re-formation in which, in spite of bowing to the conqueror, there was a disguised preservation of their native spirituality. They were able to maintain a measure of cultural stability even in the face of these abrupt exogamous ener-

gies. At the same time, a link was preserved to the profound creativity of their primordial deities.

The conquerors added new mores to preexisting values. In the Catholic view, feminine sexuality was interwoven with guilt, an association nonexistent among the pre-Hispanics, who linked sexuality to fertility and ritual. Ancient ritual prostitution had played an important function in society. It created a ceremonially-boundaried way in which the feminine, through the role of women as priestesses, could break out of the male-female roles demanded by the stabilizing energies of the culture. Ceremonial participants were enabled thereby to experience an embodied conduit to the divine. This potentially activated the numinous internal psychic fibers that are in correspondence to the divine. The unity of the sexual, the spiritual, and the feminine was ritually enacted and reinforced despite the fact that the continuing dominance of the stabilizing energies in the culture placed women in subjugation to men. This split in the indigenous culture predated the arrival of Cortés and his men. However, with the Spanish conquest the split became radically deeper.

After the conquest, ancient ritual prostitution, which had played such an important role in pre-Hispanic times, was distorted, and degraded. Prostitution was concretized. The feminine itself was degraded on both symbolic and concrete levels, and thus was prostituted in the deritualized, profane sense. The figure that arose in those days to personify the energies carrying these conflictual opposites (the Spanish and Aztec cultures) is La Malinche. A native maiden who was given to Cortés as a slave, La Malinche soon became a poignant and controversial figure in the

Conquest. She was born of an Aztec tribe. According to some historians, however, she was given away at an early age to some passing traders so as to get her out of the way and allow her half-brother to receive her inheritance. She thus eventually wound up as a slave in Mayan lands. Although the details of her birth and her abandonment vary widely, the result in any case was that she learned the Mayan language, which was to prove of great use to the conquerors and enabled her to serve as an interpreter between Cortés and Moctezuma II's representatives via a Spaniard who spoke Mayan. La Malinche was nevertheless soon to learn Spanish and was able to interpret straight from Nahuatl, the Aztec language, to Spanish, and vice versa. Without La Malinche, the Spanish attempts to negotiate with the Aztecs would not have been possible.

La Malinche functioned as a bridge between the two cultures. In psychological terms, this corresponds to the energies or functions that mediate from one form to another. Considered a double traitor by the Aztecs, she was accused of allying with the conquering enemy and of breaking native conventions by becoming Cortés's mistress, with whom she had a son, the first Mestizo of historical note. La Malinche was degraded in the relationship with Cortés. She was effectively his slave, his servant, his prostitute in a negative sense. At the same time, she was demeaned as a traitor to the Aztec culture.

Her paradoxical contribution to the success of the Conquest is immense, but she can by no means be held responsible for the violence and bloodshed that ensued. In fact, La Malinche to a degree steps into her own authority, not just by functioning as an

enslaved enforced mistress to Cortés, but also by gathering energy through the many layers of their relationship so as to be able to influence Cortés in a way that made the terribly bloody conflict less bloody than it would have been. At the same time, she served as a continuing link back to the vitality of the earlier culture.

Having been betrayed by the dark patriarchal shadow aspect since an early age, when she was given away, La Malinche was degraded and lost her position of power and authority within the endogamous. However, this loss constellated an opening to her potential to develop along exogamous lines. In fact, it was through speaking Mayan that she was able to be the bridge to the Spanish cultural patterns. It was her fate to be degraded by one-sided negative patriarchal energies. At the same time, she was to be the one to hold the dubious privileged position of bridging both realities and giving birth to a new culture: the Mestizo culture. Fatefully, her life unfolded with her in the ambiguous position of being used both concretely and symbolically to reinforce the degraded anima values of the patriarchal ethos.

Both La Malinche's betrayal of her people and her violation were experienced by the indigenous people as an effective challenge to the prevailing masculine authority of their native culture. This threat makes her a symbol of female sexuality that is both denigrated and controlled in the Mexican society. The dual aspect of La Malinche's legendary history shows that a woman's dependence on men for her importance and security leads to forced passivity, loss of identity, violation, and abandonment. Despite the continuing scapegoating of what La Malinche stands for

in the culture today, her press to develop herself and her independence, as well as her bridging function, has a still perceivable lineage, albeit in nascent form, in the individual Mexican psyche. According to Octavio Paz (1985), the well-known Mexican poet and philosopher, the symbolism of Cortés and La Malinche represents a secret conflict at the heart of the Mexican identity, still unresolved today (p. 87). The progressive part of this conflict has yet to be fully claimed.

Today Mexican Spanish-speakers wrongly use the word *malinchista* to mean "one who prefers foreigners and foreign things." In La Malinche's case it was not that she was able to choose the Spanish culture over and above the pre-Hispanic civilization. It was imposed on her. The fact that the word *malinchistas* has also come to mean those who want Mexico to surrender to the outside world rather than those who bridge to foreigners is a clear statement of the prevailing attitude of fear of the progressive, of the unknown other, of the exogamous. Society, in seeing La Malinche as a traitor or even in the contemporary form as the one who prefers foreign things and people over what is Mexican, is not aware of the fact that she was placed in this in-between realm in which she came to serve with consciousness as a sacrificial object. Despite being subject to these prevailing negative forms, La Malinche's patterning evidences both an understanding and a fulfillment of the potential in her role. Even though she was thrust into this role against her will, she became the one who was able to bridge creatively to the new out of suffering the tension of the opposites.

These myths and personifications are alive in the Mexican psyche. The sacred rituals of the past have

reemerged in the distorted patterning through which families may sacrifice a member for the sake of the clan. Abusive practices within families, religious domination, and socioeconomic rape by political leaders have continued since the time of the conquest.

Case Example 1

Using both this historical cultural patterning and the archetypal underpinnings that manifest in the myth of Coyolxauhqui, I illustrate how in my analytic practice I weave the individual and the collective, the reductive and the progressive-teleological. I place special emphasis on the relationship between the collective heritage underlying individual process and a reading of the progressive psychic meaning that manifests in the current narratives, images, defensive patterns, and symptoms in the male and female psyches.

When the individual cannot thrive in the collective, the pressure for both ego development and individuation may appear as symptoms. Participation mystique may constellate imagery of necessary dismemberment for the sake of psychological separateness from the collective and the family. It may also activate the beginnings of a discrimination of the internal psyche.

A prevailing dynamic in the Mexican male psyche is the perpetuation of the dominant matriarchal ground that undermines any possibility of the heroic. This dynamic is represented by the aforementioned Great Mother motif in the myth of Coatlicue and her solar son Huitzilopochtli, who dismembered his lunar sister in order to protect the mother.

What appears from the outside as a shift to the patriarchal is experienced

from within as the man remaining in the role of the son of the mother. Huitzilopochtli's failure to slay the mother, dismembering the sister instead, injures the capacity to have a relationship based on equality and mutuality.

Another interrelated dynamic I see in my practice is how patterns of male violence and rage and/or subjection and passivity in the Mexican psyche are expressed in varying degrees by an unconscious identification with the figure of Cortés, the controlling macho abusive conquistador, and/or Moctezuma, the sacrificial victim victimizing himself and his people. These male imagos often emerge in dream imagery as motifs of power and/or surrender.

Federico's presenting problem was his sadomasochistic relationship with women. In his early thirties he was engaged to Claudia, an extremely sensitive woman he deeply loved and with whom he had been able to fully express his sexuality. However, he abruptly broke the engagement without any explanations. His father, who did not approve of the match with a woman who was both a foreigner and who belonged to a different social stratum, had exerted a determining influence upon this decision. Federico, having humiliated Claudia, left her in great pain.

Later in his life, he married a woman of his same social standing whose control and abusive violence toward him represent the Cortés energy in their relationship. He now experienced Moctezuma-like masochism with his wife, with whom he had no sexual intimacy. Her tyranny so terrified him he only dared listen to music in hiding. Identified with collective values, he could not consider divorce as an option. Besides, even to imagine being alone without his wife terrified him. Rather

than confronting her, he discharged his negative aggression in sadistic behavior toward prostitutes and sensitive women, subsequently suffering overwhelming pangs of guilt. In these relationships, Federico became the devaluing conqueror, whereas with his wife he remained the Moctezuma-like victim.

Federico's symptoms functioned both to express submissiveness and lack of separation, on one hand, and the refusal to be defined by that restrictive family mode, on the other. In the patterning that reverberates to the Cortés energy, we see both sadism and aggression in contrast with the yearning for the sensitive. Federico was stuck in a pattern that aggressed against the sensitive anima figures he came across. The yearning that carried the sensitivity was embedded in this negative pattern. On the side of the Moctezuma-Malinche energies, he was the submissive one, the one who had not achieved separation. Despite his being subject to domination, the potential for making his way toward independence and creativity was embedded here.

When he came into analysis, he was unable to bear the compelled tensions of these exogamous and endogamous pulls in himself. Clinically, I needed to hold both the symptomatic and the latent purposive aspects of both of these pulls in him.

Federico, of both European and indigenous ancestry, received an oppressive religious education. When he was eleven, his mother abandoned him and his brother in order to remarry. When their father died, leaving a considerable fortune, the brothers continued their parents' war around money, with Federico as the father's son and his brother as the mother's. Federico attached his self-worth and his psychic

and phallic energy to his inheritance. In seeking revenge, he grabbed at whatever the brother had. The conquistador's historical greed is thus enacted in him, as it is in the tendency of an extroverted society to attach value to the external.

Federico portrays one of the primordial images of greed and power in the Latin American psyche described in Axel Capriles's (2000) interpretation of the myth of El Dorado held by the conquerors: ". . . the fate of the myth of El Dorado has been to be considered not only as a story of greed, excessive ambition and the concrete and insatiable desire for material riches, but as the search for social hierarchy and power, glory and worldly fame..." (p. 6).

Federico was stuck in a tribal narcissism of unresolved separation, which left him entangled in a conflictual dynamic of reactivity with a mother who had left him before he could separate. He remained fixated in vengeful fantasies that compensated for his submissiveness and lack of separation. This made his masculine ego porous and his anima indulgent or prostituted to his overpowering wife/mother.

Federico's La Malinche anima, with its dual nature, likewise functioned as a double energy in his psyche. On the destructive and degraded side, it betrayed him to the aggressor, that is, to patriarchal macho values, leaving him with no emotional integrity. Out of this aspect of the anima energy, he was living subject to the cultural values in a way that left the enlivened part of him consorting with prostitutes. This patterning constellates relationships with women whose internal structure draws them to power struggles, where they identify with being either submissive or tyrannical, rather than to relationships based on reciprocity. On the bright

side, reverberating to the progressive aspect of La Malinche, Federico was also striving to reach out to a life that was quite the opposite of being in the grip of the societal norms of the patriarchal structure.

Federico had the following dream:

"I went to the red-light district, looking for a prostitute. I got lost. I could only find women who were insensitive, unable to give of themselves."

When Federico typically went to a red-light district he went as the conqueror and the victimizer. In this dream, he is initially in this mode. However, the unconscious has him getting lost. He is blocked from his typical path of switching back and forth: being submissive and victimized or victimizer and degrader. By being lost there is thus an opening that is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Following this dream, we were stuck for several sessions. Federico became aloof and impatient; he kept looking at his watch. I drowsily struggled to keep myself present for him. I would sometimes even hope that he would not show up. In my desperation, I tried to interpret his defenses. After profound consideration regarding what was being constellated in the transferential field, I took an accommodating stance to the inductions that were taking place, thus lifting these affect states out of concretistic expression into imagination. It was only when I opened up and pressed into the symbolic aspect of the particularity of the image of the prostitute as an anima figure that things started to move. A whole new lengthy and painful process opened up in Federico's analysis, of which I will give but a glimpse.

In his dream, Federico steps into the realm of the prostitute looking for a

connection to his negative anima energies. He fails to find it. In an attempt to open to the press of the unconscious, I invited him to walk me through this territory where he was confronted with a conjunction of the negative familiar aggressive sadistic Cortés energy in himself in search of the submissive La Malinche energy and the novel unsettling experience of being lost in this hitherto partial but familiar place. By opening up the imaginal space, I accompanied him and supported him to bear the unbearable tension, since holding together two opposing worlds that were so ego-dystonic was terrifying to him. At that moment, there was a radical shift in Federico's energy: his impatience turned to engagement; time was no longer a burden.

In his associations, for the first time ever Federico shared his activations and fantasy life with prostitutes, one of which involved two call girls. One of them he forthrightly rejected because he thought she was "deteriorated and run down." The other one he had found seemingly perfect, but once in bed, she showed him a scar from plastic surgery under her breast. Federico's complex was activated. He felt disgusted, thought she was a fake, and dismissed her. In the subsequent phase of analysis, he gradually took back his projections and realized he himself was inauthentic and deteriorated. He eventually assimilated these projections into consciousness. Deep self-reflection unfolded; he suffered the realization of how he had split from his emotional life and needs in order to maintain social appearances that compensated for his inauthentic forms of adaptation.

During this critical stage of his process, Federico had another experience that furthered his self-awareness

and opened him up to unknown parts of himself. While his wife was away, Federico went to a bar and became enthralled by the aliveness, vitality, and lack of inhibition of a table dancer. He contained his desire to act out and went back home “whole” to listen to music. He gained access to the starry source that held the energies of his own center. He retrieved the feeling of aliveness and experienced enjoying his aloneness.

As an inner image, the dancer served as a bridging function between his male ego and his relatedness to the inner self, thus reconnecting him internally with missing and disavowed parts of himself: his desire, aliveness, and connection to his body. His ensuing urge to be with his wife was met by her rejection and attack. For the first time ever he put a stop to her aggression and stood up for himself. In that moment, he did not split his anima; his sadistic wife no longer carried the conquistador aspect of his anima. In taking back this projection, he was able to own his aggression and voice. Federico's response to the image of the prostitute/dancer constitutes a positive exogamous thrust in his psyche leading him out of the one-sided, destructive, endogamous, incestuous entanglement with his wife. This pulled him closer to himself in an expansive creative way that had not been available to him ever before. However, Federico may well have to contend with these patternings, in a relativized form, throughout his life.

In my male patients whose emotional development has been arrested, I see a split between the Cortés/Moctezuma energies and their anima. In Mexico, where the mother is worshipped, prostitution plays a central role in the discharge of male sexuality. This expresses concretely the intense

psychic dynamism seeking to unite the ego to the inner self via the anima function. However, since this is a reaction to the mother, the anima remains contained in the mother. Male patients caught in acting out with prostitutes might favor their own transformation if they suffer the containment of the fiery source level, while they pull back their projections and assimilate them into consciousness. This implies the equilibration back and forth between energies of stability (metaphorically, the family) and expansion (in this case, the archetype of the inner prostitute). While acting out cuts the potential in this process, containment and nongratification are acts of conscious sacrifice for the pressure toward wholeness. This bearing of the tension of opposites expresses the recovery of the ancestral strain of the Aztec warrior within the Mexican psyche willing to sacrifice instinct discharge for a higher meaning.

Case Example 2

The following case depicts a variation of the same general patterning in the male psyche: the primacy of the mother and men's difficulties in separating from her both relationally and intrapsychically. As I said earlier regarding the dynamics expressed through the patternings of the figure of Coatlicue, the ego has not yet engaged the heroic encounter. Like Huitzilopochtli, men attached to the overpowering mother figure are restricted to the role of the son of the mother. To feel empowered and counteract this overwhelming possession, they indulge in grandiose fantasies that all will be provided and no conflict has to be suffered. Equality in relationship is atypical of men with this pattern; rather, they tend toward reactivity and

submissiveness to the values of the culture. Carlos typifies this pattern.

Carlos was compulsively attracted to abusive relationships with handsome, light-skinned men, living a Moctezuma-like projection on them as if they were Quetzalcoatl. This carried the impulsive seeds of masochistic destruction and a profound yearning for the self. Carlos came into analysis at the age of 42, addicted to drugs and alcohol and burdened by an undifferentiated rock of guilt for being homosexual. His father served as a personification of the negative archetypal sadistic aspect of the Tlatoani; his mother, as a personification of the merged parasitic aspect of Coatlicue. Failing to be a separate person, she lived her life through her children, particularly Carlos, following a pattern in the Mexican family where the youngest has no choice but to care for the parents.

The relationship pattern between Huitzilopochtli and Coatlicue illustrates the archetypal configuration in which Carlos was trapped with his own mother, remaining in a uroboric relationship to her. Even as an adult, he did not dare defend his convictions, always laying back and allowing somebody else to be the hero.

Carlos had been educated in a religious boys' school, where he became aware of his homosexual attractions. In his teens, a priest sexually abused him. As an adult, he replicated this behavior with adolescent boys. Through deep suffering of his patterns before and in analysis, he freed himself from this compulsion.

Carlos risked his life through compulsive sexuality, a reactive enactment against his environment and mother dominance. His dependence on family was transferred to dependence on sex

and substances in a grandiose entitlement. He gradually realized that these falsely gratifying substitutes for the maternal, life-protecting factor were self-destructive.

Carlos then brought the following dream: *"I'm watching a bullfight. A bull gets out of the bullring, causing panic. It comes straight at me...In a heroic act, I magically make the bull stop and walk back to the arena. I lecture the public. At first they jeer, but I show my superiority and dominate the bull."*

At the time of the dream, Carlos was at the peak of his cocaine use and uncontrolled debauchery, indulging in the most destructive and promiscuous behaviors. He was profoundly depressed, his mother was sick, a close friend was dying of AIDS, which triggered in him an excruciating pain he wanted to obliterate.

In some ancient cultures, the sacrifice of the bull was a ritual that in a deep archetypal sense represented a collective means of celebrating the drama of the killing of the mother. However, this became degraded into the pseudo-heroic form of the bullfight that serves the cultural complex that does not support the individual's need to sacrifice the primitive mother grip, the destructive grip of the unconscious matrix. On the contrary, it repeatedly celebrates this drama of remaining contained in the mother, living the illusion of being the grandiose hero who symbolically killed the mother, a false experience of differentiation.

In Carlos's dream, the bull breaks out of the bullring, meaning the illusion of differentiation, as a heroic ritual, is shattered. The rampaging bull represents a provision in his psyche to confront his regressive desire in a form that differs from both the archaic bull sacri-

fice and the pseudo-heroic bullfight. He does not make the heroic passage of symbolically killing the mother by creating a new form of transforming instinctuality. This was imaged in the dream as the magical subduing of the bull. This magical act means that the ego is not yet capable of undergoing a committed confrontation with the instinct in need of transformation.

In this context, returning the bull to the arena is not an authentic heroic act. However, within the weaving of his life situation, the heroic act consisted in his doing what had previously been impossible: keeping his voice in the face of the jeering without collapsing. Within his familial and cultural context, Carlos had long been looked at in a diminished, jeering way. The dream compensates for his continuing inability to have a voice and also dramatically expresses his potential to heroically claim his authority. This compensation and potential are hinted at in the mandalic form of the bullring. Although he was not yet ready to function this way in waking life, the dream provided a strong support for the continuation of the still extremely difficult analytic work.

Carlos was not yet ready to renounce his addiction and would invariably relapse into alcohol and drugs. This was his worst regression. In a session following this dream, the desperation I felt for his life and my helplessness in the face of his acting out led me to tell him I felt powerless and that I could no longer witness his self-destruction. This remark, although spoken out of desperation, was a turning point in Carlos's analytic process and life. In retrospect, I realize that I broke the grip of the archetypal energies of the almighty Coatlicue constellated in the transference field, relativizing the

power of the mother and the unconscious matrix. The burden of action was now on him.

He had never conceived the possibility of responding to the unconscious content in any way other than self-destructive addictive behavior. I pointed out that this could not be done magically through degrading the archetypal provision of the Magician energy. Holding these two pieces—the body-instinct-feeling level and the magic-related aspect—there had to be a heroic interweaving of the natural and the supernatural, the ego and the self. He took limited, step-by-step ego actions, bowed to the power of the unconscious, and engaged with the provision for a genuine heroic transformation. This was a phase during which he started to come to analysis three times a week and joined an AA program. It has been nine years, and Carlos has not had a single relapse. Only after consciously suffering his dualities and conflicts was Carlos able to free himself from possession, break out of this family pattern, and step to the fore.

Nine months later, the following dream initiated a whole new awareness in Carlos's life. *"I'm in my mother's patio. I'm told mother has died. I sit in the middle of the patio and cry."*

The death of the mother can be seen as the death of Carlos's identification with the hopelessness of ever changing. His tears allowed him to mourn the loss of the familiar, albeit false, form of mother protection and his old mode of adaptation. He was able to feel grief at the loss of the loved mother and mourn the death of the confounding fusion of protective ground with abuse and submission. Carlos is no longer a mother's son who hides his authentic nature. He is now outside on his own.

During this phase of treatment, Carlos allowed himself to flow without attachment to mother, family, or forbidden forms of desire. He dared challenge his submission to patriarchal values and his father's expectations by exhibiting his artistic photographs of men in the nude, an expression of his creative endeavor revealing an authentic relationship to beauty and life. Carlos went from his debauched, self-destructive acting out toward contained, joyful self-expression, thus fulfilling his spiritual yearning to transcend.

When Carlos was stuck in submission to his family, he could not potentiate the path of gaining access to the inaccessible buried in his own self. Working step-by-step with the energy of his compulsions, Carlos found the pathway to his own wholeness. The analytic process of circumambulating the material of his symptoms, his shadow, the energy of his unhappiness with his life situation, and, embedded in that, its implicit drive for wholeness opened that pathway. In *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung refers to the twofold source of compulsion: the shadow and the Anthropos (*CW 14*, para. 153). Engaging in the work in this territory was dramatically life-altering.

This heroic stance of embracing his own individuality required committing the necessary crime against the collective, that is, going against the "natural man," the "ancestral *habitus*" as Jung called it.

Case Example 3

Macho ideals, family cohesiveness, and repressive religion in the Mexican culture also typically hinder women from developing their own separateness. These elements are a significant

aspect in the psychic patterns of most women in my practice who are stuck in their psychological development. The collective does not support their claim for individuality, encouraging instead dependence and regression.

An inner pattern that has filtered down into the female psyche is self-identification as sacrificial object in the service of the family psyche and restrictive cultural values. Another inner dynamic I have observed is that women bear in their psyche the double negative roots of the archetypal image of the patriarchal Spanish macho and the indigenous self-attacking and self-diminishing voice of the Tlatoani. These patterns have a specifically Mexican character and are also expressive of universal aspects of any transference work. This requires supporting patients to get to a place where they can claim their own authority and reach separate selfhood without feeling these two energies are destroying each other on the intrapsychic level. In addition, this furthers the resolution of the pattern of acting out of the victimization of the other on the relational level.

The following case illustrates the unfolding of these inner dynamics.

When Mariana came into analysis, she was depressed and in crisis. She was 30 years old and recently divorced. Mariana, like many Mexican women, was facing the dilemma of living in a culture that gave her no viable options. She was torn between the urge to live on her own for the first time ever and the cultural pull to go back to the parental home.

For Mariana, being adopted carried a dual energy: illegitimacy, and a sense of specialness for having been chosen. The relationship to her father was ambivalent. Although he was a full-

fledged Tlatoani demanding submission, a part of her felt loyalty and gratitude toward him. Mariana, versed in shaping herself around her father's malignant narcissism, found it difficult to break the grip of the Tlatoani code that says either you submit or go into exile. She could not create space to develop her own separateness and out of that to allow a third to emerge.

Mariana's sense of womanhood was split between the regressive internalized values of a grotesquely restrictive upbringing and a symptomatic disregard for conventional forms that often spring from the progressive energies of the self.

In keeping with the cultural paradigm, she, albeit unconsciously, followed step-by-step the path the culture marked out before her, agreeing to marry a man approved by her father and society. Upon finding out she was not a virgin, he walked out on her, thus deeply humiliating her.

Mariana then fell in love with a bohemian and ran off with him, creating a social scandal and leaving her the shame of the family. She left the family in this way in response to a pull from inside, thus foregoing that part of her that represented the loyal, grateful daughter. Mariana's father disowned and disinherited her. This intensified her complex of illegitimacy.

She eventually married her lover, who held for her the desire for aliveness, but his bisexuality and abusiveness led to divorce. For Mariana, her partner personified a positive and negative exogamous energy. The positive side was a forward press in her psyche that pushed her out of her binding constraints and took her far into the opposite direction, thus compensating her previous one-sidedness and enabling

her to go out into the world and explore horizons beyond the father's realm. The dark shadow side of the exogamous did not fully account for the need for stability, since what was constellated was similar to the previous endogamous negative energy.

After her divorce, Mariana moved into her own apartment, but could not tolerate living by herself. The guilt emerging from the internalized restrictive voice of the Tlatoani and the internal pressure from that part of herself representing the loyal daughter concretely and psychically pulled her back to the father's house, i.e., to the inner and outer father ground.

Although cultural norms are very gradually shifting, the dominant energy in the Mexican culture has been the expectation that a divorcée will return to the parental home, thereby reinforcing a regressive pull to the collective that results in a submission to old symptomatic patterns and the degradation of individuality at the cost of losing a more encompassing stance. Mariana's desire for the support of this negative cultural form was greater than her ego's strength to stay in relationship and be informed by her inner images and symptoms. Mariana's pull back to the stabilizing world of the father could either leave her in danger of remaining one-sidedly stuck in the regression, thereby derailing her press toward individuation, or, if worked through, allow her to re-root herself in the positive, secure seat of her own legitimized and personal authority.

Henderson (1985) comments that we need to be aware of how cultural similarities and differences affect the field between analyst and analysand (p. 11). As a Mexican analyst, I experience a very intricate interplay between the cultural and the universal aspects. From

the perspective of the Mexican culture, this regressive attitude was culturally acceptable. From the point of view of the universal aspects of the psyche, whether such a regression is creative or destructive hinges on the way in which psyche stands in relationship to it. The progressive potential favored a further point of development in Mariana, thus allowing the laying of the foundations for her future independence.

As her analyst, I pointed out that it was not a question of choosing between the one-sided extremes of running off to have a separate life or submitting to the norms of others, challenging her to find room for expansion within these two poles. At this point, she left treatment. Moving back and forth between the exogamous and the endogamous pulls, Mariana was caught in the ups and downs of the archetypal field underlying her father complex. Unable to bear the challenge of accepting both sides of the conflict simultaneously, she misused herself by sacrificing her wholeness for the sake of the collective. This corresponds to Jung's remark in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*: "The one-after-another is a bearable prelude to the deeper knowledge of the side-by-side" (para. 206). From an ego perspective, it was better for her to leave analysis, because she could hold neither the pressure from within to separate nor the guilt resulting from the necessary crime she had committed of not staying within the prescribed lines dictated by this cultural patterning.

During the time she was away from analysis, feeling estranged from her own life, Mariana experienced intense despair and anger. In this chaos, a new order was emerging from within.

A year later, she returned to analysis with a dream in which she was sit-

ting halfway up the staircase of her father's place of business. In the dream, this place became the internal space of my office.

Mariana's unconscious was pointing to her capacity to break through the ups and downs of the one-sided father realm and sit still halfway up the stairs, making space between the levels, establishing a midpoint which supports the holding of the opposites: above and below, stability and expansion, the endogamous and the exogamous, the vertical and the horizontal.

There is an archetypal indication that she could face these dynamically related opposites and spread out from that place without leaving it. In her dream, the age-old patriarchal attitude, her authoritarian father's office, was transformed into a self-creative and self-exploratory place, the internal space of my office: this point in the middle where she can create a world of her own stretching into the realm of individuality and psychic separateness without leaving that nexus point of the realm of stability.

Through a lengthy analytic process, Mariana claimed her own authority without feeling she was destroying anyone else. The father-daughter relationship changed and her father reinstated her inheritance. With this, her legitimacy as a daughter was symbolically expressed and concretely acknowledged. In addition to having finally found her place in the world without resorting to one-sidedness, she laid the foundations that could hold her as she made her way through subsequent equilibrations between the opposites. Mariana married. She had come to have the freedom to choose a man based on her own knowledge of herself.

Case Example 4

Although the next case illustrates the same overarching patterns, the destructive patternings are more specifically organized around inner, wrong-order sacrifice and subjection to the all-embracing mother, denying all possibility of separateness. The relationship between Coyolxauhqui and Coatlicue resonates with the dual mother archetypal configuration in which my patient was caught: an abandoning aspect, which provides no basis for bonding, accompanied by a devouring aspect that demands the submissive use of the daughter.

Susana was 38 when she entered treatment, shattered by the death of her depressive and alcoholic mother. Despite the appearance of family containment, there was a lack of positive emotional presence in the parents. Her mother had failed to be a separate person and used Susana as a sacrificial object of fusion for her narcissism. Susana's need to let herself be used in order to make a mother for herself led to a gradual and worsening depletion of her inner resources. Her individuality could not thrive, leading to a negative merger with the mother. Even after her mother's death, she experienced any attempt to reach her own individuality as a betrayal to the mother.

Her dependence on the mother had been transferred to dependence on alcohol, an activity she had shared with her mother as an essential part of their fusion. One of the tasks of analysis was to allow this dependence to be transferred to our relationship.

She had this dream: *"I'm sinking in a quicksand swamp. I'm trying to grab hold of a hand of someone I can't see. I can't grab hold of it because my hands are sweaty."*

Her sweaty hands were a sign of the anxiety resulting from Susana's endless attempts to grab her mother's hand, only to meet a poisonous merger. Her anxiety expressed an autonomous, protective agency of the psyche that thwarted her from making the only kind of bond she knew. This placed her in a double bind: on the one hand, the anxiety protected her against contact, preventing her from the illusion of rescue through fusion with the mother; on the other, it left her in the swamp, lost and groundless. Either way, she was absorbed in a threatening way, personally or archetypally, into the mother—into the boggy earth or into the patternings of the mother complex.

This conflict left Susana without a secure, healthy relationship to the ground under her feet, and at an ego level hindered her use of her already established ability to reach out. At the same time, it made it impossible for her to achieve a relationship to these unconscious contents. This interfered with her healthy ability to be dependent on her analyst and her own internal matrix.

As her analyst, I met the overwhelming anxiety in her that had made it hard for her to rely on a helping hand. I trusted in what her unconscious was pointing to: the internal provision of the objective psyche, her potential capacity not only to reach out for a hand (as a scream for help) but also to actually grab hold of it. At this stage of the work, it was essential that I stand for the place of potential activation of the salvage-diver archetype in her. In *Freud and Psychoanalysis*, Jung (CW 4, para. 417) refers to the diving work of analysis. He compares a patient to a person who has unintentionally fallen into water and sunk. He claims that it is no mere chance that led him to fall in

just at that spot, and that psychoanalysis wants him to act like a diver, for only a diver can bring sunken treasures back to the surface.

In the transference-countertransference relationship, for a long time I stood in for this function in Susana where I guided her to stay outside and in relation to her unconscious contents. Because of her extreme anxiety, she was unable to perform this function for herself. In the dream, the figure on solid ground reverberates to this function in the countertransference. As she became secure in this need being met, she was able in this slow, step-by-step process to shift from being in a merged state, i.e., victimized, to one in which she achieved a separate stance and could consciously suffer the regression. I had temporarily carried the not-yet potentiated function in her of being able to stand separate and to prepare the not-yet solid ground. Over time, particularly through the dynamics of transference-countertransference, the positive aspects of provision of the archetypal maternal energies were accessed through ego growth or ego consolidation, thus facilitating the emergence of more positive images through the symbol-making function of the psyche.

Case Example 5

So far I have focused on the interweaving of developmental issues and the forward press of the psyche in the lives of patients with backgrounds that did not encourage autonomy. I will now present a dream of a middle-aged woman who has submitted to intensive self-examination from her twenties to the present.

She recalled a terrifying dream from her early twenties: an unknown

man tying her to a chair and cutting her body into pieces. The dream image expressed the terror and potentially destructive energies my patient faced as she was pressed toward the process that would support her individuation. At that time, she was dissecting her life meaning and dismembering her traditional self: she was then a young mother considering whether to resume her university studies and to redefine the course of her life. There was a psychic agency in her that allowed her to take the risk of forging ahead despite powerful cultural energies working against her and keeping her in the chair. The unknownness of the animus figure attests to how terrifying it can be to face the potential of the unknown other.

In pre-Hispanic mythology, the archetype of the chair stands for both a masculine expression, since it makes reference to the throne on which the Tlatoani sat,³ and also to a feminine aspect. As Neumann (1974) states in his study about Coatlicue, the symbol of the chair has been invested with the absolute power of the Great Mother (pp. 98-100). Thus, the archetypal spectrum of the image of the chair ranges from the mother's lap to the royal throne, suggesting the base of identity growing into autonomous authority.

From a progressive perspective, her old identity was cut into pieces and at the same time she was forced to stay in her own established, though insufficiently encompassing ground. For my patient at this crossroads, at this critical turning point of her life, not to be confined, pierced, and dismembered for the purpose of differentiation and elaboration of right-order containment would have led her to live her life as scripted. This involved the kind of terror and suffering of being cut up and

losing everything that existed as she had known it. This dream was the seed of what would unfold 20 years later. My patient's culture held the family unit as being of greater value than her development as an individual. Her struggle with these conflictual energies and the resultant step-by-step process of their integration was a formidable psychic achievement.

Conclusion

In cultures where group norms carry greater value than individual choice, adulthood is not defined as emergence from the family. Family life in the Mexican culture tends to be tightly knit; when this closeness becomes merger, it is an expression of neurosis. If worked through, the individual can press beyond the stultifying aspect of the culture and break away from neurotic constrictions.

I began this article questioning to what extent analysis must accommodate to the prevailing culture and yet not collude with negative regression. Through this article, I hope to have given a glimpse of how I work with the careful equilibration back and forth between these two opposing modes: the roots and the wings, the old and the new. I analyze, differentiate, and support the light and dark aspects of each polarity of the archetypal spectrum: the culture's stabilizing roots and its stultifying regressive aspects. On the side of the press toward expansion, I elicit the development of individuality and creativity and work through the destructive aspects, those that threaten to overwhelm and destroy roots. As Henderson (1964) states: "We have learned from Jung that individuation in modern man presupposes a stable polarity between

individual expression and social adaptation (as relationship) even though this may be maintained precariously and with frequent conflict between the two poles." (p. 10). Since a patient's psyche resonates with the images and motifs of the objective psyche as expressed through Mexican myths and historic personifications, I support their opening to the potentials for new understanding through the archetypal provision expressed in them.

In this process, the analyst provides the analysand with the container and secure ground for him/her to move through a process of separation and integration that leads to wholeness. This archetypal passage, as expressed in myths, is experienced as a crime against the collective, which is accompanied by a sense of deep suffering, aloneness, guilt, or orphanhood that results from breaking the old value code.

Each time an individual struggles with these personal and cultural issues, he/she bears the burden of all those who could not do it before them. There is a debt owed, odd as it may seem, to the ones who were unable to break free and to those who have gone before. This is a struggle not only against personal history and present-day culture, but it is also an historical burden one may actively take upon oneself. Individual change, multiplied many times over, ripples out into the creation of a new world.

Notes

- 1) There is a bivalent aspect in the figure of the Tlatoani. In its negative form, it represents the sadistic tyrannical aspect. In its positive form, it stands for the ruler, authority, and solar consciousness.
- 2) Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl, the two main creator gods, forever express their polarity on the cosmic stage: they worked together in creating the Earth and the Heavens while,

on the other hand, they are constantly adversaries at war with each other. Tezcatlipoca, the sorcerer, ended up tricking Quetzalcoatl into breaking his vows of selflessness, soberness and chastity.

- 3) The word *tlatoaicpalli* (throne) comes from *tlatoqui*, which stands for leader, chief, great master (*Tlatoani*), and *icpalli*, which means “armchair with a back, sign of power of the ancient chiefs, the only ones with a right to use it” (Simeon, 1984, pp. 168, 173).

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