AFTERWORD

Image and Archetype

The artist says "I seem to have touched upon a universal journey and an underlying collective memory". Her statement is provocative, challenging us to envision that collective and universal memory. Carl Jung's conceptualization of the archetypes as sources of universal motifs, forming a collective human psychological inheritance, may aid us in our effort to grasp the experience depicted here. Archetypal patterns emerge both in individual images and in collective folklore. For the purpose of deepening our understanding of Frances' journey we will use Estella Lauter's methodological distinction between archetype and archetypal image, in which she suggests that "we continue to use the concept of the archetypal image to identify images with recurrent attraction and the concept of the archetype to refer to the tendency to form images, in relationship to patterns of development that are widespread and relatively constant through the centuries.....the archetypal images would be our sole means of inferring the presence of archetypes". (1985, p. 49) The images here certainly meet the criterion of recurrent attraction, meaning that they reflect motifs which people in innumerable cultures and over many ages have used for the depiction of transformative processes.

There are innumerable images in the first journey record which reflect developmental patterns that are traceable in ancient myth and ritual. The overall structure of separation, descent to some version of the land of the dead, and return, which is readily discernible in the record, is an archetypal hero's journey. (Campbell, 1968) Such a journey is typically undertaken for personal and cultural renewal. Experiences of skeletal disembemternt (like those depicted in Series 1, images 2-4) are an aspect of crossing over into the underworld that appear in the earliest known versions of hero journeys, those in which a tribal shaman enters an alternative reality in order to seek special healing or balancing knowledge. Shamans frequently used hallucinogenic substances to facilitate these spirit journeys and were inspired to develop ritual practices, which would preserve and build on the insights afforded by the journey. In much the same way Frances developed a ritual practice of drawing which she could use to return to her source of balance and renewal without the use of a drug.

Although this pattern is ancient, recurrent and widespread, it is, in most literature, male-identified—the archetypal hero's journey. The journey we seek to understand is, on the other hand, essentially female. Conquest, dragon slaying and trophy taking play no part here. Com-
necessary steps in the process of profound change, deconstruction leading to renewal. Frances states "I found...my death, the total disintegration of my sense of self, the reintegra-
tion of which...is still going on". This dismemberment in the underworld leads to rebirth, as did Inanna's.

According to Sylvia Perera, a Jungian analyst, Inanna's journey is the archetypal model of a process, which is particularly important to women who have tried to form themselves in a patriarchal mold. She perceives the process as "an initiation essential for most modern women in the Western world; without it we are not whole. The process requires both a sacrifice of our identity as spiritual daughters of the patriarchy and a descent...because so much of the power and passion of the feminine has been dormant in the underworld—in exile for five thousand years". (1981, p. 14) Frances' descent functioned as an initiation into wholeness for her as an individual, leading to the retrieval of exiled aspects of herself; it also reflected a collective situation for women, who were and are struggling with the divisions within self and world created by patriarchal culture.

The record of the first journey shares another feature with the descent of Inanna, in that both Inanna and Frances emerge from the underworld through the intervention of helpful male figures. Enki, the God of Wisdom, by sending his emissary to the underworld to aid Inanna, takes the step that catalyzes her re-embodiment and return. Similarly a male figure, seemingly an emissary from an open horizon of paint colors (See Drawing 9) reaches out to raise Frances back into the upper world. Then a flame-winged bird (See Drawing 10) restores her flesh. These two images are typical symbols of the masculine spirit guide, the animus, which is pivotal to the view of female individuation put forward by Jung sixty years ago.

The Animus

The notion that it is normal for a woman to experience and develop masculine aspects of herself is now widely accepted. Simply put, these masculine aspects form the animus, the "inner man". The concept of the animus is controversial, however, particularly among feminists. A major difficulty with Jung's theory comes from his portrayal of the animus as an embodiment of stereotypical masculine traits, such as assertiveness, rationality, control and abstraction. He touts that portrayal as a description of an eternal, universal and archetypal masculinity (all of this is mirrored in his theoretical construct of the anima in men); Jung showed little awareness of the impact of culture on the construction of gender traits. Conse-

sequently his theory came to resemble a form of biological determinism, with all of that notion's oppressive history and potential.

Many efforts have been made by post-Jungian writers to disentangle the concept of the animus from its problematic aspects. They have expended this intellectual effort in part because animus figures continue to take significant roles in women's dreams and symbolic expressions. The animus is an aspect of the unconscious, which mediates between the ego and the depths of a woman's inner world. Mediation, in this sense, means that a masculine figure or image facilitates and guides the relationship between different parts of the self. In the drawings of Series 1 we can readily see masculine figures engaged in both helpful (See Drawing 9, in which the man is reaching down to aid in her ascent) and hurtful (See Drawing 13, in which the husband/boulder crushes her) mediating action. Frances' relationship to her artist-self is being supported by a positive animus figure in the first instance and punished by a negative animus figure in the second.

The key to what is still useful to women about the concept of the animus lies in this function of mediation. It may be that for women who are saturated by patriarchal values the mediation provided by masculine symbolic figures is necessary to the process of making a viable relationship to the "phenomenon of difference". (Samuels, 1985, p. 136) When a woman is identified with the conventional gender role she relates to different, unconventional aspects of the self through internalized masculine complexes which are repressive and scathingly critical, like the husband/boulder which crushes the impulse toward art in Drawing 13 from Series 1. In this way the internal values, which guide the individual personality, reflect the repressive way in which patriarchal culture responds to difference, to the "other". This negative mediation must be consciously confronted and brought to awareness before a constructive relationship can develop between the ego and the "other" within. For many women, positive mediation, as depicted in Drawing 9, must happen initially through masculine figures that act as a counterbalance to the negative internalizations. This may be only a stage, but a vital one in changing the nature of the connection to exiled parts of the self. We can see these processes continuing in the bull, father and Allan images which occur in the post-LSD drawings. All of these figures play an important part in changing the relationship between Frances and her inner, repressed self, the artist "other".

The journeys depicted here not only transformed the nature of the connection between Frances and her artist-self but also connected her to an archetypal source of transformative
imagery. Our hyper-rational culture does not perceive the transformative resources of the unconscious as legitimate and so there are no approved cultural activities, which mediate a connection to those resources. Consequently, each individual must discover her own relationship to this exiled part of the self, her own internal mediators. The drawing process and its visionary products provided this for Frances.

Medea's Cauldron

Jung felt that visionary works of art have an impact analogous to participation mystique, which is the phenomenon of experiencing a personal identification, a "oneness" with the transpersonal. The transpersonal may be embodied in a group, in nature or in spiritual experience. "In works of art of this nature...It cannot be doubted that the vision is a genuine primordial experience....It is not something derived or secondary, it is not symptomatic of something else, it is a true symbol—that is an expression for something real but unknown." (Jung, C.W. v.15, p.94)

The image of the artist as a mystagogue who journeys into the unknown and brings back images of a different reality is not unique to Jung, but Jung placed the artist in a key role concerning the individuation of society itself. The artist's work, if it is inspired by the "real but unknown", serves as a compensating dream, balancing the conscious attitude of an entire culture with images of unacknowledged aspects of both self and world, aspects for which consciousness does not have ready words. Jung suggested that we allow a work of visionary art to "act upon us as it acted upon the artist". (Ibid. p.105) What might that mean in relationship to Frances' drawings? How did they act upon her? How might they act upon us?

Frances describes the way in which these drawings connect her inner and outer worlds. By making a personal relationship to the archetypal images in this narrative of drawings the viewer may activate a parallel process in herself. My own relationship to the drawings has centered around the image of the cauldron. This association was prompted by a combination of things. The openings at the top of the drawings in the first series gave me the feeling of a vessel. The images are composed of stirring, swirling parts (See Drawing 2 as an example), boiling with energy, cooking into a rich, nurturing stew where meat falls off of bones and paintings liquefy. This evoked for me a bubbling cauldron in which the mixture of disparate images produces new forms. That association connected in my mind with Frances' Greek heritage and soon I was thinking about Medea's cauldron of regeneration.

When I read this statement of Frances' — "I had failed... my culture's expectations of its good Greek daughters and wives and I was...the destroyer of my husband's dreams, his serenity, our marriage and our children"— and when she states that by continuing to paint she "had somehow placed my children in the shadow of death", it seemed that she saw herself much as Euripides saw Medea. Medea is portrayed in the famous play as an unnatural, demonic woman who abandons her proper role and betrays her family for selfish, vain reasons.

Medea is the first recorded witch in Western literature and a famously bad wife and mother. She was the daughter of the King of Colchis, a sorceress and priestess of Hecate, who fell in love with Jason and helped him to carry off the Golden fleece. Medea's magic arts, desperately needed by the Argonauts at many junctures in their adventure, included the use of a fabulous cauldron of regeneration from which disemboweled, stewed animals and people could be reborn with new power and vigor. After ten years of marriage Jason deserted Medea for another Princess. According to the classical version of the myth Medea killed her children and her rival, burned down her palace and flew away in a dragon chariot. Medea never died but rules in the Elysian fields, the land of the dead.

Mythographers and poets (like Robert Graves) see Medea in terms that differ greatly from her portrayal in classic Greek drama. From their point of view, her cauldron of regeneration, dragon chariot and her immortality as a Queen in the underworld may be important remnants of a divine origin myth. She may, originally, have been a Goddess of death and regeneration, probably associated with the moon in both its light and dark aspects.

The primordial motif of the Destroyer/Regenatrix portrays, in female imagery, the linked cosmic forces of destruction and creation. (Gimbutas, 1989) These forces were working in tandem in Frances' conscious life; the creative drive to paint was inextricably bound up with her experience of personal destruction. We can see destruction and creative regeneration at work together in many of the universal, cosmic images from her underworld journeys. The feminine forms of the paradoxically joined powers of death and regeneration have long been exiled to the underworld, as we saw in the story of Inanna and her descent to recover connection to Ereshkigal, the 'dark sister' of death and regeneration. Frances was intimately involved with these powers and her culture provided her with no functional way of containing, or processing them. Fortunately, the LSD research project, in combination with her art, ultimately provided the necessary process and container.

Frances moved away from her emotional identification with the witch-mother/demon-
wife that is analogous to Medea’s usual image. The artist began to pursue an experience of the process embodied by the ancient goddess Medea’s cauldron of regeneration. This is a process lost to everyday culture but apparently still accessible in the unconscious. The cauldron of regeneration is an archetypal image of ancient lineage, appearing in Celtic as well as Mediterranean myth, which provides us with a way to picture a mysterious and powerful process of fragmentation and renewal. Grasping and picturing this process requires the recovery of a primordial image because Western culture has virtually no picture or concept of destruction as necessary or potentially fruitful.

The Western deification of progress and perfect order leaves little room for the messy reality of natural cycles of creation and destruction. This dualistic, split worldview creates absolute good (objectivity, progress, control, light) and absolute evil (subjectivity, decay, chaos, dark). These absolutes are associated with and projected onto social groups in ways that have both cultural and personal implications.

Women, and other disenfranchised groups, tend to bear the projection of the deep cultural shadow that is created by the obsessive emphasis, in the West, on the absolute value of transcendence, light and perfect control. The forces of, and connections between, destruction and regeneration have been feminized and simultaneously demonized in patriarchal culture. Women as a group and as individuals are perceived as embodiments of chaotic destruction, particularly when they slip out of conventional roles and expectations, as Frances did. The imagery and story of Medea’s cauldron resurrects a non-dualistic experience of destruction and regeneration; it gives us a way to conceptualize and feel the fruitful connections between fragmentation and rebirth.

Cyclical Journeys

I have not touched upon numerous important questions in this discussion. Frances documents six journeys to the unconscious. After the sixth use of the drawing process Frances no longer felt the need to actively engage in the process, although she continued to use the existing drawings as sources of guidance and inspiration. This essay has only addressed the imagery in the first series and has not done a comprehensive survey of that. What about the many other rich archetypal symbols that recur and develop in this record? How can we understand the fact that the impact of the drawings, on the artist and on the viewer, does not seem to depend on an intellectual decoding of the symbolism? This discus-

sion will conclude by addressing these questions.

The LSD experience gave Frances access to a powerful aspect of her psyche. That aspect, the unconscious, has its own timeline and, as we have said, one of its purposes is to balance conscious life. The ways in which Frances’ life and experience of self were split at the time of the first journey were not entirely resolved by her journeys to the unconscious. However, these six journeys created a bridge, a viable relationship between waking, everyday life and the artist within, a relationship which was no longer experienced as annihilating but as life-giving. Once the split was healed to that extent, a special process or container was no longer needed and the natural self-regulating processes of the psyche could take over.

One can be profoundly and authentically impacted by Frances’ narrative of transformation without identifying and explicating each significant archetypal theme in the record. In fact, such a project might well prove impossible to complete. The multileveled nature of the unconscious and the multivalent nature of symbols are not adequately addressed by such a linear process. Reductionistic decoding and categorical assessments of transformative images tend to strip them of their visceral power, ignoring the way in which such images impact the self through multiple ways of knowing.

I have employed a method of personal and mythological association to guide my exploration of the psychological import of the drawings. This method allows a deepening of understanding and avoids reductionism. It is congruent with the associational flow of the drawing process itself. It also leaves many provocative images and symbolic themes to be amplified and explored by the reader. In the previous section I made the following statement: “By making a personal relationship to the archetypal images in this narrative of drawings the viewer may activate a parallel process in herself (meaning parallel to the drawing process).” The reader, by choosing the images which most affect her, may trace the development and elaboration of those chosen symbolic elements through the cyclical journeys documented here. By allowing personal associations to flow and by researching mythological connections, each reader will evolve a uniquely individual, yet universally rooted, web of meanings and insights in response to the drawings. In this way the drawings can act as doorways to the transformative resources of the unconscious, facilitating the ability to produce new imagery, giving access to the cauldron of regeneration that lives in everyone’s unconscious.

– Tanya Wilkinson, Ph.D.
REFERENCES


