

5

Animus Development

When a man controls his anima, or a woman her animus, they are doing something no one dreamed of doing before; because mankind has always been possessed. When you dare to free yourself, you get into a new order of things, and that means a challenge to the old order

If a man makes a modest attempt at controlling his anima, he will at once be forced into a situation where he is tested to the limit . . . and it is the same with a woman: every devil around will do his best to get at her animus . . . it is as if a vacuum has been created and everything rushes in to fill it. That is why people who attempt to control these figures get into new situations that almost force them back to their former state; it works quite automatically.

For one should realize that one risks an unusual loneliness in controlling the animus or the anima. This is because a *participation mystique* is created by not controlling them; when one allows a piece of one's self to wander about and be projected into other people, it gives one a feeling of being connected. And most connections in the world are of this sort. *Participation mystique* provides this appearance of a connection, but it is never a real connection, it is never a relationship; it only gives one the feeling of being a sheep in the flock. And that is, of course, something; for if you disqualify yourself as a sheep, then you are necessarily out of the flock, and you have to suffer a certain loneliness. Yet then you have a chance to reestablish a connection, and this time it can be a conscious relationship which is far more satisfactory.

—C.G. Jung, *The Visions Seminars*.

The habit of charting development is the prerogative and penchant of psychologists, who rely on systems, statistical norms and comparative techniques to create a language and an order for their observations. Without such ordering processes there is only the chaos of random observation and "common sense."

Developmental theory is a valid approach when seeking abstract

knowledge of humankind, but it is risky to generalize or to judge persons according to where they are or should be on some linear scale. Any particular person may develop certain characteristics prior to or later than statistical expectations. Carefully examining the process of an individual personality, we see aspects of the future as well as vestiges of the past, resulting in rich, fascinating differences.

Analysts seldom find it fruitful to evaluate patients in terms of developmental levels or norms of behavior, including psychiatric diagnoses, for this tends to impose an inhibiting structure on the analytic work. The goal of analysis is to explore the embodied psyche, to touch the untouched and believed-untouchable parts of the psyche without judgment or bias, and to allow the patient to follow the energy of the individuation process.

For example, it was not uncommon until recently to hear a critical judgment of women who never married. The word "spinster" carried an aura of lacking something. On closer examination we might find quite the opposite—complex personality resources, extremely refined sensibilities, a powerful capacity for dedication or sacrifices made consciously and with great integrity. Only after thorough understanding of a woman's experiences, choices, values and inner world, her dreams and creative expressions, can we begin to see whether she lacks something, and even then we are evaluating on the assumption that her lifetime on earth is all there is.

To name only two, the writers Flannery O'Connor and Emily Dickinson not only never married, but never ventured far from their parents' home for long; yet one could not judge either of these creative women as undeveloped. The many-splendored imagination of each implies more experience than some world travelers acquire. If we were to judge by the events in their lives, we might come to the false conclusion that their development was somehow impoverished. Such is the effect of overvaluing the exterior life, a common failing of an extroverted culture.

Nowadays there is a collective bias against the woman who chooses to be a homemaker and/or mother rather than have a career outside the home. These traditional roles have been so devalued by men and women who are possessed by the achievement-oriented masculine attitude that they are misperceived as simple and unchal-

lenging. Although child care can be coped with from a purely unconscious position, it takes supreme skill to care for children well and creatively. Also, keeping oneself out of the marketplace and in the home, where artistic and contemplative energies may flourish, seems to me to merit applause, not shame. But again, extroverted collective values may claim otherwise.

With the drawbacks of developmental schemes clearly in mind, let us now proceed to look at some.

There are many ways of approaching developmental stages; the fields of psychology, medicine and theology have produced an array of them. Some of the best known are those of Jean Piaget, Abraham Maslow, Arnold Gesell, Eric Erickson, Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein and Lawrence Kohlberg. Little differentiation by sex has characterized these theories, except that of Gesell, who observed significant differences in tested behavior of boys and girls of eighteen months of age. Some have been thought to be insensitive to the process in females. For example, Freudian developmental theory, with its focus on the oedipal stage, has been criticized for describing feminine development negatively, that is, in terms of the absence of valued attributes ascribed to males.⁵⁶ Kohlberg's theory of moral development has been criticized by feminists because it does not recognize a difference between the way women and men approach the thinking through of moral questions. As Carol Gilligan has pointed out, in *In a Different Voice*, women evaluate moral issues in a context of relationships and not as abstract questions of logic.

Except for important differences in emphasis on various factors, such as sexual libido and genetics, Jung accepted Freud's description of developmental stages. Jung focused on the influence of the mother rather than the oedipal conflict, and he spoke of a pre-oedipal libido which could not be identified as specifically sexual. He also identified the tendency of the psyche to split between the innate need to develop and the unconscious pull to regress to earlier stages for strengthening.

Two prominent Jungians in the area of developmental theory are Eric Neumann and Michael Fordham. Their approaches are consider-

ably different. Neumann used mythology as his metaphor while Fordham arrived at his theories through years of observing infant behavior.

Fordham's work illuminates Jung's emphasis on genetic factors and differing archetypal influences on a person from the beginning of life. Fordham has found newborns to be far from formless and passive; he sees them as coming into the world with sophisticated skills for interacting with the environment. Their interactions are unique and call forth responses from the mothering person which vary from personality to personality. Each infant/mother pair is unique. We can't assume that siblings have the same experience of "mother," for each child pulls different energies into its life.

Fordham identifies the following usual ego-functions: perception, memory, organization of mental functioning, control over mobility, reality testing, speech, defenses (seen as necessary for self-preservation and not necessarily pathological), and the capacity to relinquish control.⁵⁷

In *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Neumann describes developmental stages of consciousness not only in individual lives but also in the history of humankind, as reflected in mythology and culture. But he recognized that a male-oriented culture could not adequately envision feminine development. Even though the movement of the ego toward the union of opposites—the final stage of transformation, which Jung called the coniunctio—applied to both men and women, Neumann went on to describe stages in the development of women which contained some unique turns, especially in relationship to the mother.

The first stage, psychic unity, is the same for both sexes. This is the prototype for every situation of unconscious identity, which Jung called *participation mystique*.

In Neumann's view, the psyche, whose center is the Self, initially exists in a state of "immediate identity" with the body, so that the Self bears the attributes of the exterior physical sex, whose hormonal condition is closely connected with psychological processes.⁵⁸ The

⁵⁶ Freudian theory continues to evolve. See below, pp. 63-64.

⁵⁷ *Children As Individuals*, pp. 93-96. These views are discussed in Andrew Samuels, *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, pp. 55-88.

⁵⁸ It was noted here in chapter two that this assumption can be challenged.

male, then, experiences identification with the mother, the feminine other, as a relationship with the non-Self and must achieve a certain detachment and an objective attitude toward this primary relationship in order to preserve his masculine identification.

According to Neumann, a girl's original identity with mother can last throughout life without interfering with her experience of herself as feminine. He held that women's first and natural way of relating is by identification, because the experience with mother has not had to be severed, and that longing for this kind of relatedness accompanies women throughout life and is especially fulfilled in pregnancy.

Neumann called the second stage, arrived at when the feminine ego recognizes its separateness from the unconscious, the Self-conserving stage. Here the focus is on being safe within familiar feminine perimeters. The woman relates to other women and children, whereas men are experienced as alien and strangers whom she will fear or else manipulate as objects.

The third stage is invasion by the Paternal Uroboros, envisioned as a seizure of the woman's consciousness by a transforming, numinous power, which he imagined as feeling like being taken by a male divinity. Through surrender to this power the feminine ego submits to a transformation which pulls her away from her attachment to the exclusively feminine world, but keeps her enthralled to the masculine in a submissive posture.

In the fourth stage, the Patriarchal Partner, there is some movement either from the inner masculine or through an outer man, freeing her from the father's grasp. This is not satisfactory in the long term, however, because the woman is still subservient to the male. While this may be appropriate on a social level, the suppression of her feminine esteem is the basis for conflict and illness.

True Confrontation, the fifth stage, occurs when the woman can meet others, including men, as whole persons, and can sacrifice convention for self-development. There is a recognition of the transpersonal in relationships and an acknowledgment of projection.

The sixth stage, Experience of the Female Self, brings integration, inner renewal, fruitfulness of mind and soul that is uniquely feminine. Self and ego are united, the true coniunctio.

Neumann gives no age range for any of these stages. He recog-

nized that there are great differences in women (and men too) with regard to conscious development.

Emma Jung observed four stages of animus development, with appropriate personifications when they are projected onto men, in terms of physical power, initiative, intellectual power and finally spiritual power. Although I have not found this schema particularly useful clinically, it has generated interest.⁵⁹

In a liberating examination of sociocultural, symbolic and personal dimensions of women's experience of themselves, Polly Young-Eisendrath and Florence Wiedemann use the psychologies of Jung and Jane Loevinger as major theoretical frameworks.⁶⁰ Sensitive to the conflicts inherent in female identity in our society, the authors avoided models of development which relied on "deficit thinking" to describe women. An example of thinking in terms of deficits is the medical model, which focuses on pathology and sees a person as the passive victim of circumstances; one has been attacked by an illness or is insufficient in some way. Recovery is placed in the hands of an authority.

Originally the Freudian model was a deficit model for women, as it assumed penis envy to be the key to female psychological development. The emphasis on caring and relatedness that is so important a part of women's psychological make-up was reduced to masochism. Little or no consideration of sociological factors mitigated Freud's reductive interpretation of feminine psychology. The fact that girls observed their mothers in the role of servants to a patriarchal God, society and husband, was not credited with contributing to their lack of self-esteem and autonomy.

Melanie Klein, Karen Horney, Margaret Mahler and other psychoanalysts contributed significantly to female developmental theory. Their observations, supported by studies of prenatal hormonal environments, newborns and infants, indicate that male/female psychological functions differ from birth and do not arise only during the

⁵⁹ These stages, first presented by Emma Jung in *Anima and Animus*, are amplified by Marie-Louise von Franz in "The Process of Individuation"; by Hilde Binswanger in "Positive Aspects of the Animus"; and by Claire Douglas in *The Woman in the Mirror*, chapters 6 and 7.

⁶⁰ *Female Authority: Empowering Women Through Psychotherapy*.

phallic stage as Freud proposed. Whether in terms of psychosexual drive or object-relations theory, the end of the second year (rapprochement subphase) not only marks the crisis of separation-individuation, but also is critical in the establishment of gender-identity.

Other revisions in Freudian theory regarding women are: 1) child-bearing augments, but is not essential to, female identity (as a resolution to penis envy); 2) penis envy is normally resolved by the end of the oedipal period, not carried into adulthood; 3) a good relationship with mother during the separation-individuation phase of infancy and again in adolescence is crucial to female psychological development; 4) masochism is a factor in the psychodynamics of men and women, not limited to women.⁶¹

Jung's model too has been criticized for simplistically attributing Eros dominance to women and Logos dominance to men, and for its implicit acceptance of a secondary role for women in relationships, both within the family and in society. As we saw in chapter three, Jung's model is in the process of being reinterpreted.

Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann adopted Loevinger's model of ego development in order to understand the assumptions a woman makes about herself. Loevinger's nine stages, arrived at by collecting data from women on a sentence-completion test over a twenty-five-year period, are as follows:

1) Presocial, in which symbiotic fusion with a mothering person constitutes the major form of relationship; in healthy chronological development, between conception and three to nine months;

2) Impulsive, in which a person assumes an external authority to be in control, acts impulsively and ambivalently in relationship through bodily states rather than verbal symbolic communication; approximately nine months to three years;

3) Self-Protective, an experience of individual agency and subjectivity, preoccupied with advantage and control in relationships; roughly three to six years;

4) Conformist, oriented around identity in a group, approval

⁶¹ These are some of the findings reported by Eleanor Galenson for the American Psychoanalytic Association in "Psychology of Women."

seeking and meeting others' needs; ages seven to nineteen;

5) Self-Aware, a recognition of diversity of values and norms, struggling with independence but seeking approval from authority; a classic time to defer their identity crisis by forming an identity relationship with a man, about ages nineteen to twenty-eight;

6) Conscientious, in which personal achievement and responsibility are uppermost, empathy becomes possible, and cooperation and guilt may be prominent; any chronological period after late adolescence;

7) Individualistic stage, marked by an awareness of the essential nature of interdependence in human relating and by conflict between responsibility and creative freedom;

8) and 9) Autonomous and Integrating (combined by Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann because of their relative infrequency), characterized by concerns with responsibilities, commitment to ideals of self-actualization, uniqueness, humor and imagination.

The developmental theories of Neumann and Loevinger lend themselves to a description of corresponding animus figures associated with each stage. Before presenting these, let us think about the significance of the stages in chronological development.

Since the personality is fluid, continually balancing different parts of the psyche called forth by various circumstances, it is possible for a woman to perform adequately in some situations while her undeveloped side remains in the background. Where close relationships with the opposite sex are concerned, we are all, men and women, particularly vulnerable. This is because of the numinous nature of archetypal energies when anima meets animus, and also because there are so few models of equal partner relationships. As we see in the Loevinger model, the achievement of an equal partnership is hard won. We may think of ourselves as quite adequate in our functioning, but still be relating at the earliest level in some situations. In other cases we may be ready for an equal partnership long before our mates are.

In analysis women learn to observe these movements in the psyche through attention to unconscious images and behavior, and to dialogue with the unconscious in a way that leads to further differentiation of its contents. The effect of this is the evolution of psychic im-

ages, such as a movement from alien animus figures to more positive animus figures, the expansion of possibilities in relatedness, and greater flexibility of ego. For example, in one woman's dream series we saw the progression of relationship to the animus from his appearance as alien intruder—fearful dreams of rapists and robbers, etc.—to bad little boy, to questionable politician, to philanthropist.

Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann, observing in their patients' dreams and behavior the symbolic transformation of inner images which followed their progress through stages of development, describe typical animus images of each stage.

In the presocial stage the implicit animus figure is the Alien Outsider. He also characterizes the next four stages, but with a potential for violence at stage two, and with the beginnings of the patriarchal complex of Father, God or King at stage three. At the fourth stage of Conformist, there is still a strong unconscious identification of power with the mother archetype, but male authority may dominate action as the patriarchal complex is strengthened. The animus at the Self-Aware stage is typically patriarchal; there may be a preoccupation with power struggles in relationships but the notion of equality enters the picture as an ideal.

Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann see the Hero animus emerging only with the fifth stage, the Conscientious. The ideal of mutuality in true partnership becomes possible, for the woman does not depend on a man to validate her own self-worth. The animus complex at the Individualistic stage is the Partner Within, the creative cooperation of animus and Self. In the last two stages the animus is fully integrated; the male-female polarity is united to form the androgyne with its full human potential.

Although Neumann does not specify animus figures to accompany his stages, implied are the complexes of Alien Outsider in the stages of Psychic Unity and Self-Conserving; Father, God or King at the stage of Self-Surrender; Hero at the stage of Patriarchal Partner, who rescues the feminine ego from the paternal uroboros; Partner Within during the stage of True Confrontation; and Androgyne at the final stage of the Experience of the Female Self.

To flesh out these animus types we may amplify as follows: the Alien Outsider includes stranger, rapist, abuser, abandoner, dwarf,

monster, foreigner, animal; Father includes God, king, judge, president, corporate leader, professor, doctor, therapist, clergyman; Hero includes lover, leading man, sportsman, brother, guardian angel, rescuer, rock star, artist; Partner Within includes any equal partner, creative man, healer, magus, hierophant and transpersonal figure, but at a dimension of relatedness other than authoritarian; Androgyne presents itself in harmony with all living things.

The following section will present some different approaches to the classification of male figures in a woman's psyche.

Animus Types

One approach to knowing the animus, other than the developmental, is to look at archetypal patterns. Bearing in mind that archetypes cannot be known in themselves, but are reflected in movements of energy, we can examine these energy patterns in ourselves. Since they are neutral, and can be used for ill or good, archetypal figures have both positive and negative aspects.

Two writers who have expanded on archetypal patterns in men are Linda Leonard and Jean Shinoda Bolen. Leonard describes her encounters with inner figures, many of them male, on her journey of recovery from addiction.⁶² Bolen personifies eight archetypal patterns, or "gods," which shape men's personalities and relationships.⁶³ Neither resorts to concepts of anima-animus, but both assert that men and women can experience these figures within.

Leonard tells us about the Demon Lover, who holds a woman hostage through denials that she is addicted and enthralled by him, and no longer makes decisions from her own center of survival, the Self. A woman who contains such an animus figure within may be attractive to, or attracted by, men who lead her into self-destructive behavior—physical, emotional or criminal.

The Moneylender offers ecstasy, but at such a high price that a person can never get out of debt to him, and so he controls the woman's life through her pursuit of the pleasure he offers and her feeling of guilt that she cannot repay him. Such an animus figure

⁶² *Witness to the Fire: Creativity and the Veil of Addiction.*

⁶³ *Gods in Everyman: A New Psychology of Men's Lives and Loves.*

would have us bound by compulsive or guilt-ridden fixations.

The Gambler in us risks everything in the hope of an easy wind-fall; the stakes get higher as greater excitement is desired, until one is risking all. This can apply literally to actual gambling, or symbolically, a willingness to eschew reasonable priorities in order to chance it all for some elusive possibility.

The Romantic yearns for union with the beloved; while he carries the potential for the divine fire of creativity, untransformed he pulls us into death by suicide or addiction. We see the romantic animus prodding a woman to unrealistic behavior for the sake of an ideal, which in the perspective of a lifetime may be only a fleeting fancy.

The Underground Man, withholding and full of unexpressed resentment, kills the creativity in himself and others along with his rage. As an animus figure he provokes a woman to stingy, envious attitudes which greatly constrict possibilities of happiness, for both herself and those around her. But his narcissistic aura of importance can be magnetic.

The Outlaw, nursing a feeling of being different, must transform his rebelliousness through solidarity and creativity, or sink into what he resists, dependence on society. It is easy for women to project this antigroup attitude onto a man, and then become victimized by him and by society.

The Trickster, unpredictable wounder/healer, can open us to the divine or lead us to death through denial. Potentially creative, he must be acknowledged as a source of mischief in the psyche; otherwise his desire for turbulence damages everything a woman touches.

The Judge, in his role of patriarchal divider of dark and light, severs our connections with the instinctual life. The rational types, strong thinkers or feelers, are prone to this kind of animus and to ignoring important data from the body.

The Killer, driven by power and greed, loses all connection with the inner child and the nurturing feminine. Not content with winning the point, he wants to utterly demolish the other, and sadly, that other can be one's closest loved ones.

Leonard also describes one unambiguously female character, the Madwoman, who, enraged by neglect, accompanies the Judge in his repressed feminine underside. We will come again to the Madwoman

in the discussion of anger and creativity. Here Leonard is differentiating animus types that figure in addiction in negative ways. A more positive relationship to the animus may flourish once the addiction is confronted.

Bolen classifies her animus figures according to their counterparts in the Greek pantheon, in two categories, fathers and sons. Aspects of the father archetype are Zeus, representing the realm of will and power; Poseidon, the realm of emotion and instinct; and Hades, the realm of souls and the unconscious. Aspects of the son are Apollo, the Sun God (who can also be considered a father type); Hermes, messenger and guide of souls, the Trickster archetype; Ares, God of War, the Warrior/Lover archetype; Hephaestus, craftsman and inventor, also an aspect of the father archetype or the Divine Child in its rejected, underground state; Dionysus, God of Ecstasy, a reflection of the Divine Child archetype.

Bolen writes:

When the Great Goddess in her several aspects was the Mother God, fatherhood was not important, possibly not even recognized. When the Sky Father gods established patriarchal supremacy, the pendulum swung the other way: goddess and women were subjugated, which has been the historical and theological condition for several thousand years now. Male Gods have had dominion, and none of them either in Greek mythology or Judeo-Christianity has had both a strong and wise mother and a powerful and loving father. Few humans have, either.⁶⁴

The Sky Father is in thrall to power; he is distant and jealous of his children and unrelated to the feelings of his wife. But the effect of the father archetype is slowly changing as individual men become more related to their women and children. Bolen anticipates the emergence of "the missing god"—a father god who is wise and loving, not power driven—in response to the growing presence in the world of the wisdom of the Goddess. The loving sons, Jesus in the West and Krishna in the East, have not changed the basic structure of the patriarchy, but they have provided a direction.

Archetypes do not change. But clearly their manifestations change

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 295.

as human consciousness evolves. The emanation of the father archetype which Bolen calls the missing god has yet to have his day in the sun. Quoting Bolen again:

It's been my impression that we all come into the world as children who want love, and if we can't get love, we settle for power. When we remember Metis (Goddess of Wisdom), we remember that love is what we really wanted all along.⁶⁵

It is with the arrival of the missing god in mind that I explore the animus in women. It may be that we do not have to struggle till old age to be able to form deeply satisfying relationships with men, and to provide loving parenting to the children we bear in the world, as well as to the Divine Child inside.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 304.

6

Animus in the Body

They told me
I smile prettier with my mouth closed.
They said—
better cut your hair—
long, it's all frizzy,
looks Jewish.
—Jean Tepperman, from "Witch."

The tendency to view various parts of the body as masculine or feminine is ancient, as is obvious in those languages which require a gender-article before the noun: *le nez, la bouche, die hand, der finger*. Jungian analyst C.A. Meier has traced the history of dream interpretation, including ideas of the second-century Greek philosopher Artemidorus, who interpreted the head as "father," the right hand as masculine, and the left hand and pudendum as feminine.⁶⁶ Other systems see whole areas of the body in terms of gender; most frequently the left side is associated with the feminine.

All interpretations are subject to individual differences, so it is important to know a person's associations to dream images and other unconscious material. Still, sometimes generalizations can be useful as guidelines, or ways of amplifying personal associations. NB

In working with the body as an expression of psyche, I have found it useful to think of it in terms of four quadrants. I am grateful to Malcolm Brown for this concept,⁶⁷ which he adapted from D.H. Lawrence's *Phantasia of the Unconscious*. Brown writes: NB

There are four regions of the body which mediate distinct modes of feeling-cognitive subject-world contact. The four regions are: the chest, the belly, the upper back, and the lower back. The chest re- NB

⁶⁶ *The Meaning and Significance of Dreams*, p. 166.

⁶⁷ *The Healing Touch*, p. 43.

7

Anger and Creativity

There's in my mind a woman
of innocence, unadorned but
fair-featured, and smelling of
apples or grass. She wears
a utopian smock or shift, her hair
is light brown and smooth, and she
is kind and very clean without
ostentation—

but she has
no imagination.

And there's a
turbulent moon-ridden girl
or old woman, or both,
dressed in opals and rags, feathers
and torn taffeta,
who knows strange songs—

but she is not kind.

—Denise Levertov, "In Mind."

A woman had been struggling for over a year with physiological problems in her upper respiratory system and ears, and at times they were life threatening. Medical treatment would seem to bring the problems under control but they would return. The failure of medicine to cure her led to confusion and disagreements among her physicians. Asthma, sinus infections, yeast infections and auto-immune system illnesses were treated but nothing helped.

In the meantime she and I worked at clearing out psychological debris, which was considerable: fear and hatred stemming from childhood abuse and years of failing to establish secure intimate rela-

tionships. Copious tears were released by the attention to these years of courageous survival.

One night she had this dream:

A charming man is wrestling with my illness, which is in the form of a dragon. The man, in his early twenties, is beautiful. He has a gorgeous tan, bronze, and his body is strong without being muscle-bound. He has blond curls and he glistens. He is enjoying the battle, matching his strength against an opponent of this significance. The opponent, a dragon, is blue, scaly with an iridescent quality, almost like the sky. The young warrior is very confident and assured; he is laughing as he subdues the dragon. He is not killing it, but stuffing it into a huge container, making sure it has enough room. The dragon didn't need to be killed, but it needed to be contained, and he was putting it into this big round container, like a large cardboard commercial container.

This woman had not been aware of the controversy in feminist thought and literature about the nature of the tension between ego and unconscious. For years the only image we had of the emergence of the ego from the unconscious was a violent one. Whether in terms described by Eric Neumann (the slaying of the dragon) or by psychoanalytic writers (repression of unconscious contents by the superego), the process of ego emergence had been consistently pictured as the battle of masculine ego against feminine underworld. NB

Then the voices of women began to be heard in theoretical circles. These images did not reflect their experience of ego-formation. The development of ego could be imaged as a gradual process of differentiation, the result of trial and error, or shifts, occasionally leaps, to new territory. Nothing had to be killed; a previous state could be abandoned or outgrown. Though ego development was often the result of overcoming frustration, that was not the whole story. Even the overcoming of frustration did not necessarily imply the repression or killing off of unconscious contents. It might just as well derive from conscious choices made gradually and steadily over a period of time. The "diffuse" thinking stereotypically attributed to women began to seem more acceptable, even reasonable. NB

But most distressing to women was that what was being killed in order to attain wholeness was the feminine. While this is portrayed in

Neumann's theory as a temporary stage in the development of the psyche, until the hero (ego) can return to the scene of battle with greater awareness to recapture the now acceptable feminine which has been separated out from "Mother" (unconscious), it is still grating to the female viewpoint. Too often women, as partners of men embedded in the mother complex, have had to carry negative projections that led to abuse or abandonment. If their men were supposed to have knocked off the mother complex—slain the dragon—and come to them staunch, heroic and ready for mature relationship, something had gone awry. The process looked more like a continual hacking away at anything female.

Naturally this metaphor refers to an internal process and not necessarily to the actual mother-child relationship. What the hero must conquer is his own fear of separation, death and regression. Nevertheless, the drama is often expressed directly with the mother or partner carrying the heavy burden of the archetypal mother. Woman knows instinctively that she cannot kill any aspect of the feminine without doing damage to herself. She also recognizes that the longer metaphors like this are used with her consent, the longer she is likely to remain oppressed and devalued, and the more difficult it is for men to come to wholeness.

Neumann recognized that women's psychology required a different metaphor and wrote another version of the developmental process to explain ego development from the feminine vantagepoint. In that schema, described above in chapter five, woman remains connected to the Great Mother and experiences her development in terms of more and more differentiation of her relationship to the masculine. First, according to Neumann, she learns self-conserving attitudes which replace fusion with mother; then she allows herself to surrender to the patriarchal numinosum. Following this ecstatic surrender, which can be seen in the worshipful attitudes of three-year-old girls to their fathers, comes the transference of that positive attitude onto a peer. Ideally this partnership evolves from a patriarchal relationship to one of equality, and finally to realization of the female Self.

The problem is that no amount of development on the part of the woman will lead to true equality in a relationship unless the man is also willing to be open and intimate. For most men it is a very long

journey from the killing of the dragon to the rescue of the captive princess—and even farther to their wedding. *Yes*

Now, what was noteworthy in my patient's dream was her unconscious understanding of the need to keep the dragon alive and her appreciation of its beauty. This reflects the uniquely feminine capacity to view the enemy as valuable. This ability of women, so long denigrated by patriarchal attitudes as "fuzzy thinking" or "bleeding-heart mentality," is exactly what will be needed to insure survival of life in many forms, and, possibly, of the planet. *Yes*

In the patient, this attitude colored her approach toward her illness in several ways. For example, although she accepted the use of antibiotics in the early stages of treatment, she soon rejected their continual use, out of an intuitive belief that what had not worked should not be continued. She believed that she was somehow damaging her capacity to recuperate by prolonged attempts to wipe out the problem with chemicals.

Some physicians saw her as uncooperative and self-destructive. Others saw her as understandably discouraged by a mode of therapy which did not appear to be having any lasting positive effect. They supported her investigation into alternative methods, and, in the course of "trying everything," my patient changed her lifestyle. Gradually she altered her workaholic schedule, her relationships, diet and habitual use of cigarettes, caffeine, alcohol and other substances to which she was found to have an allergic reaction. As the dream shows, she changed her inner world by facing the unpleasant facts that had been her history and shaped her choices.

It is interesting to note that her dragon-illness appeared in the dream as a sky-blue creature. I have seen this image in the dreams of other women, for example a blue lioness dug up from the ground, or a blue sphinx-like creature which terrifies and attracts at the same time. One interpretation of such an image is the union of earthiness and heavenliness; the creature comes from below but wears the colors of the sky, as does the Christian Madonna in most Western depictions (the Virgin Goddess in her blue cloak).

Why is the hero of this dream a young man? I believe this reflects the woman's stage of animus development. She has dealt with many mother issues, shadow issues and father issues, and is now in the

process of finding her inner partner. In Neumann's schema, she was developing a relationship with the patriarchal partner. The dream hero, the golden man, is an emanation of Apollo, so to speak. They are not likely to make a permanently compatible couple, but he is an important ally on the way. At another stage of life the heroic animus might appear as a fairy godmother, a helpful animal, a father or Self figure. This hero in fact represents both animus and Self, because at present she becomes aware of the Self primarily in terms of animus projections. It is her work in relating to her animus which will bring her into relationship with her feminine Self.

While the dream hero is masculine, the opponent is neuter. Although men may project femininity onto the dragon, women are likely to see it as masculine. As the Great Unconscious (not only Great Mother but also Great Father), it is both all and nothing. The woman is reluctant to destroy it; her reaction is to contain it, to preserve its life, to live with it and, presumably, continue some relationship with it.

Why should she want to preserve her illness? That is a question I will not try to answer; I trust and respect it as an unsolved mystery. We know that the "force that drives the illness"⁷⁸ contains great energy. How that energy will be transformed is yet to unfold, but the dream was a turning point in that process and a turning point in her regaining her health.

Now, having presented this picture of the feminine tendency to sustain and preserve, where is there room for the destructive side? Self-acceptance implies containing all that one is capable of being, including the survivor's emotions of rage and murderousness. The following poem by Marge Piercy supports the life-giving effect on the body of acknowledging rage.

Anger shines through me.
Anger shines through me.
I am a burning bush.
My rage is a cloud of flame.
My rage is a cloud of flame
in which I walk

⁷⁸ This refers to Dylan Thomas's phrase, above, p. 36.

seeking justice
like a precipice.
How the streets
of the iron city
flicker, flicker,
and the dirty air
fumes.

Anger storms
between me and things,
transfiguring,
transfiguring.

A good anger acted upon
is beautiful as lightning
and swift with power.

A good anger swallowed,
a good anger swallowed
clots the blood
to slime.⁷⁹

Paula Bennett, in her illuminating study of the psychological development of Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich, as reflected in their poetry, follows these women in their tasks of self-definition and self-empowerment.

Their womanhood enables their verse and gives them their poetic power just as, traditionally, manhood and the masculine point of view have provided the focus, themes, and substance of the male poet's verse.⁸⁰

Bennett points out that Emily Dickinson, in the following poem, presents herself "as everything 'woman' is not: cruel, not pleasant, hard not soft, emphatic not weak, one who kills, not one who nurtures. Just as significant, she is proud of it."⁸¹

My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—
In Corners—till a Day
The Owner passed—identified—
And carried Me away—

⁷⁹ "A Just Anger," *Circles on the Water*, p. 88.

⁸⁰ *My Life a Loaded Gun*, p. 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods—
 And now We hunt the Doe—
 And every time I speak for Him—
 The Mountains straight reply—

And do I smile, such cordial light
 Upon the Valley glow—
 It is as a Vesuvius face
 Had let its pleasure through—

And when at Night—Our good Day done—
 I guard My Master's Head—
 'Tis better than the Eider-Duck's
 Deep Pillow—to have shared—

To foe of His—I'm deadly foe—
 None stir the second time—
 On whom I lay a Yellow Eye—
 Or an emphatic Thumb—

Though I than He—may longer live
 He longer must—than I—
 For I have but the power to kill,
 Without—the power to die—⁸²

Despite the ambivalence that comes through here, despite the conflict, writes Bennett,

In the poem's terms, she is murderous. She is a gun. Her rage is part of her being. Indeed, insofar as it permits her to explode and hence to speak, rage defines her, unwomanly and inhuman though it is. Whatever constraints existed in her daily life . . . inwardly it would seem Emily Dickinson was not to be denied. In her art she was master of herself, whatever that self was, however aggressive, unwomanly, or even inhuman society might judge it to be.⁸³

Although Dickinson's metaphor holds her "owner" to be male, we don't have to attribute rage to the animus. There is enough evidence that women are capable of rage entirely on their own; we would not claim Hecate, Medusa, Kali, Morrighu, Hera, Sekmet, Artemis or

⁸² *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, no. 754.

⁸³ *My Life a Loaded Gun*, p. 7.

Seboulisa to be animus-possessed. All human infants are born with this survival mechanism, but not necessarily with a love of combat and competition for its own sake. In the rage of each of these goddesses one finds the fundamental motive to be preservative, a "just anger," not a narcissistic exhibition of strength.

The rage of women expressed in modern poetry is mainly a colossal explosion which breaks through centuries of oppression, oppression that has stifled our individual creative energy and our natural compassion for the earth and all its creatures.

No matter what the target—Patriarchy, Man, Society; mothers who left us a legacy of masochism; fathers who denigrated them and all too often abandoned or cheated on them, husbands who disappointed us; gods, muses or some other abstract force—the rage must be seen and felt and heard before life can go on. In expressing themselves, women are speaking as well for generations of men whose creative urges were suppressed by the collective demand that they "pay the bills." They too have often had to deny their true needs.

It seems to be necessary for women to find their boiling-point, to know the limits of their patience and generosity and to feel beyond that limit, before they can fully experience their own right to be. Rather than seeing the capacity for rage as a masculine quality, I find the constraints on righteous rage by the negative animus—he who tells us to be good and quiet—to be behind more subtle forms of destruction of self and others. It is he whom Sylvia Plath addresses as "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" in her suicidal poem, "Lady Lazarus."

It is noteworthy, as we saw in chapter four, that so little has been written about the feminine aspects of the Divine. I find it no coincidence that so many modern women have written about the image of the Medusa, a figure personifying destructive rage. Bennett, in a collection of poetry which takes Medusa as its muse, describes how women, in reclaiming their "unladylike" capacity for passionate rage, also reclaim their full creativity and love.

By 1973 women poets came from virtually every walk of life and from every heretofore silenced minority: not just women of color, but lesbians, older women, working-class women, country women, prisoners, the poor, and, not without irony, mothers. No longer seeking "pardon for [their] literary pretensions," they saw in poetry a

direct means by which to express and change their lives.⁸⁴

The capacity for rage is necessary for women to proceed from a *participation mystique* with the mother-world to a more individualized stage of development. This by no means requires them to give up their capacity for empathy and compassion. This is rage expressed in the interest of extending life, not subjugating it. In this case the opposite of rage is cold indifference, a characteristic of Plath's "moon-mother-muse";⁸⁵ rage and compassion are allies. In establishing sovereignty over herself, woman gains the capacity to choose. Where once co-dependency was a compulsion, now dependency can become a creative choice.

It has been said of Sylvia Plath, "It needed not only great intelligence and insight to handle the material; it also took a kind of bravery. Poetry of this order is a murderous art."⁸⁶ She herself wrote, "What inner decision, what inner murder or prison break must I commit if I want to speak from my true deep voice?"⁸⁷

I don't know if Plath thought of herself as brave. Her poetry expressed a pivotal point in women's development, poignantly portraying the polarity between affiliation and autonomy, and raising questions about the place of narcissism. Because her mother, Aurelia Plath, and her husband, Ted Hughes, have published her letters and journals, we have more material than is usually available to understand a writer.

Volumes have been written analyzing Plath's life and work. I would like to focus on one view of her poetry that seems to illustrate the dilemma facing modern women, which has been succinctly called the conflict between relation and creation. To state it as simply as possible, the stereotypical masculine is seen as assertive in the struggle for separation and autonomy, while the feminine is deemed to be nurturing, longing for attachment and caring. Feminists are not in

agreement as to what the main thrust of their message should be. On one hand, there seems to be some evidence that the stereotype is at least partly true; women should recognize that their need for affiliation is not a weakness, but a tremendous strength whose time has come, perhaps not too late to save the world. On the other hand, creativity, other than that involved in caring for children, requires separateness and autonomy, and, if a woman's worth is not to depend solely on caretaking, she has a right to her necessary separateness, as do men. NB

To understand the part played by these dynamics in Plath's work it is helpful to contrast her tortured and unacceptable self-image with her need to present herself, socially and in her letters to her family, in the most pleasant and optimistic light. The disparity between her sugar-coated letters (about seven hundred in all) and her obsidian poetry is astounding. Bennett says that she was in conflict "between the needs of her gender and the requirements of her genre."⁸⁸

The reaction of some critics to Plath's poetry illustrates the core problem. Because of the raw intensity of her emotion, and because her message flows through very personal, often domestic images—body parts, kitchen knives, food, babies, etc.—she has been taken less than seriously by some, who imply that her writing was not transcendent, only a self-serving form of confessional therapy. However, some critics see Plath's domestic and mythical images in terms of historical and social issues, suggesting that her femininity and her suicide prevent some men from being able to see their full meaning.⁸⁹

Both Emily Dickinson and Sylvia Plath came from conservative backgrounds with selflessly caring mothers and distinguished fathers. Bennett feels that Dickinson was able to break the bond with mother, as illustrated in "My Life a Loaded Gun," but that Plath was never able to sacrifice the goal of normalcy that mother and society held up for her. Trying to be the perfect student, as well as popular and successful, she achieved them all for a while. Her mother, an in-

⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 242-243. Medusa-inspired poems have been penned by May Sarton, Louise Bogan, Karen Lindsey, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Audre Lorde, Colleen J. McElroy and Chrystos, to name a few.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 160.

⁸⁶ A. Alvarez, *The Review* (quoted on the back cover of *Ariel*).

⁸⁷ *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, p. 297.

⁸⁸ *My Life a Loaded Gun*, p. 99.

⁸⁹ See, for instance, Lynda Bundtzen, *Plath's Incarnations: Woman and the Creative Process*, and Judith Kroll, *Chapters in Mythology: The Poetry of Sylvia Plath*, pp. 1-13.

telligent, ambitious woman, attained masters degrees in English and German, then married her professor, Otto Plath, and devoted herself to supporting his writing and caring for their two children. Sylvia's first recorded disappointment occurred when she was two and a half, and her brother was born:

Sometimes I nursed starfish alive in jam jars of seawater and watched them grow back lost arms. On this day, this awful birthday of otherness, my rival, somebody else, I flung the starfish against a stone. Let it perish.⁹⁰

In 1940, when Sylvia was eight, Otto Plath died of willfully neglected diabetes.

Sylvia was brilliant and conscientious. In spite of outstanding early success, she suffered several severe depressions, one being during the summer after her junior year at Smith College. She had experienced disappointments and was back home with her mother. Surviving a suicide attempt, she returned to and graduated from Smith in 1955 with highest honors. Her mother, recovering from surgery for ulcers developed while nursing her husband through his fatal illness, managed to attend the graduation in her semi-invalid state. Sylvia went to Cambridge as a Fullbright scholar where she competed fiercely for approval as a poet and as a woman. In one of her journals she distinguishes between approval and love. Writing about her mother, she said: "Why is telling her of a success so unsatisfying: because one success is never enough. When you love you have an indefinite lease of it. When you approve you only approve single acts."⁹¹

Her preoccupation with marrying an attractive, successful husband led to her idealized marriage to poet Ted Hughes. Plath's sense of accomplishment at this event, and her blatant delight at having pleased her mother, is obvious in her journals. "My life work is to make Ted into the best man the world has seen."⁹² That she perceived a split between being intellectual and being a woman is also

obvious, and not at all unusual for her time. Here we see the importance she had come to place on marriage in terms of self-affirmation:

Two girls there are: within the house
One sits; the other, without.
Daylong a duet of shade and light
Plays between these.

In her dark wainscoted room
The first works problems on
A mathematical machine.
Dry ticks mark time

As she calculates each sum.
At this barren enterprise
Rat-shrewd go her squint eyes,
Root-pale her meager frame.

Bronzed as earth, the second lies,
Hearing ticks blown gold
Like pollen on bright air. Lulled
Near a bed of poppies,

She sees how their red silk flare
Of petalled blood
Burns open to sun's blade.
On that green altar

Freely become sun's bride, the latter
Grows quick with seed.
Grass-couched in her labor's pride,
She bears a king. Turned bitter

And sallow as any lemon,
The other, wry virgin to the last,
Goes graveward with flesh laid waste,
Worm-husbanded, yet no woman.⁹³

Marriage to Hughes was heady, but the idealizations began to fade with the birth of her two children. Living in England, Plath was isolated and duty-bound while Hughes pursued his career and enjoyed the spotlight as well as the attention of bright younger women. Two

⁹³ "Two Sisters of Persephone," *Collected Poems*, pp. 31-32.

⁹⁰ "Ocean 1212W," *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, p. 23.

⁹¹ *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, p. 281.

⁹² Paula Bennett, *My Life a Loaded Gun*, p. 162.

months after the birth of her first child, Frieda, she wrote:

By the roots of my hair some god got hold of me.
I sizzled in his blue volts like a desert prophet.

The nights snapped out of sight like a lizard's eyelid:
A world of bald white days in a shadeless socket.

A vulturous boredom pinned me in this tree.
If he were I, he would do what I did.⁹⁴

Plath's poetry at that time shows that she felt stultified and confined, both by the physical constraints typical for a new mother and by her perception of herself as nonproductive artistically. Some of her images suggest the mental constraints were the more burdensome. The conflict between the masculine carriers of Logos and her feminine, concrete tasks is apparent still in "Magi":

The abstracts hover like dull angels:
Nothing so vulgar as a nose or an eye
Bossing the ethereal blanks of their face-ovals.

Their whiteness bears no relation to laundry,
Snow, chalk, or such-like. They're
The real thing, all right: The Good, the True—

Salutary and pure as boiled water,
Loveless as the multiplication table.
While the child smiles into thin air.

Six months in the world, and she is able
To rock on all fours like a padded hammock.
For her, the heavy notion of Evil

Attending her cot is less than a belly ache,
And Love, the mother of milk, no theory.
They mistake their star, these papery godfolk.

They want the crib of some lamp-headed Plato.
Let them astound his heart with their merit.
What girl ever flourished in such company?⁹⁵

⁹⁴ "The Hanging Man," *ibid.*, p.141.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

In 1960 her poetry began to reveal more of her true feelings; images of the dark mother-moon-muse were coming through and the split between the good girl and the angry victim was narrowing.

Mother, mother, what illbred aunt
Or what disfigured and unsightly
Cousin did you so unwisely keep
Unasked to my christening, that she
Sent these ladies in her stead
With heads like darning-eggs to nod
And nod and nod at foot and head
And at the left side of my crib?
.....

Day now, night now, at head, side, feet,
They stand their vigil in gowns of stone,
Faces blank as the day I was born,
Their shadows long in the setting sun
That never brightens or goes down.
And this is the kingdom you bore me to,
Mother, mother. But no frown of mine
Will betray the company I keep.⁹⁶

In "Medusa," we feel the cloying persistence of the clutching mother, determined to hold on, even with an ocean between them. Although aspects of her mother seem to have invited this projection, the responsibility for understanding it lay ultimately with Plath.

Off that landspit of stony mouth-plugs,
Eyes rolled by white sticks,
Ears cupping the sea's incoherences,
You house your unnerving head—God-ball,
Lens of mercies,
.....

Who do you think you are?
A Communion wafer? Blubbery Mary?
I shall take no bite of your body,
Bottle in which I live,

⁹⁶ "The Disquieting Muses," *ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

Ghastly Vatican.
 I am sick to death of hot salt.
 Green as eunuchs, your wishes
 Hiss at my sins.
 Off, off, eely tentacle!

There is nothing between us.⁹⁷

According to Judith Kroll, Plath was influenced by Jung's theory that parents, while attempting to do their best for their children, usually thrust onto them what they have neglected in themselves.⁹⁸ To put it another way, children unconsciously live out their parents' shadows, and often, through resentment, repeat their failures.

In her analysis of "Medusa," Bundtzen notes that Plath's mother's name, Aurelia, is synonymous with *medusa*, the adult stage in the life of a jellyfish. Bundtzen speculates that Aurelia's visit during Plath's marital crisis, and her witnessing of Hughes' infidelity, impressed Plath with the image of the gaze that turns one to stone, prompting the irrational but psychologically seductive notion that mother saw, and caused, the failure of the marriage.⁹⁹

The dual images, jellyfish and Gorgon, underline the devouring and paralyzing nature of any symbiotic relationship. Separated from Hughes, Plath is flung back into the world of mother where she must relive the complex set of conflicts attending the mother-daughter bond and all its frightening ramifications—dependency, envy and fear of annihilation. Concurrently, she includes religious themes as well, amplifying her ambivalence and reflecting her failure to find a spiritual solution to her feeling of entrapment.

At this point, the unrealistically optimistic mother of the earlier poems seems to have less and less weight, and the disquieting muses take on more and more power. In "The Moon and the Yew Tree," for instance, the moon is reminiscent of the muses referred to in "The Disquieting Muses"—stony, bald, wild, inimical and indifferent to her earthy needs:

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 225-226.

⁹⁸ *Chapters in Mythology: The Poetry of Sylvia Plath*, pp. 74-76.

⁹⁹ *Plath's Incarnations: Woman and the Creative Process*, pp. 89-109.

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary.
 The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.

.....
 It drags the sea after it like a dark crime; it is quiet
 with the O-gape of complete despair. I live here.¹⁰⁰

About this time Plath wrote her mother in glowing terms about her new hairdo and clothes, her plan to paint the bedrooms, Frieda's blossoming in the company of other children, her son Nick's happiness: "How lucky I am to have two beautiful babies and work!"¹⁰¹ Meanwhile she was devastated about Hughes' affair with another woman. Within a month, she killed herself by putting her head in the gas oven of her kitchen. Here is her last poem:

The woman is perfected.

Her dead

Body wears the smile of accomplishment,
 The illusion of a Greek necessity

Flows in the scrolls of her toga,
 Her bare

Feet seem to be saying:
 We have come so far, it is over.

Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,
 One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.
 She has folded

Them back into her body as petals
 Of a rose close when the garden
 Stiffens and odours bleed
 From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower.

The moon has nothing to be sad about,
 Staring from her hood of bone.

She is used to this sort of thing.
 Her blacks crackle and drag.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ *Collected Poems*, p. 173.

¹⁰¹ *Letters Home: Correspondence 1950-63*, p. 580.

¹⁰² "Edge," *Collected Poems*, p. 273.

Here, and in several of her other last poems—"Ariel" and "Stings," for example¹⁰³—Plath seems to have determined to entomb the feminine, tolerated by the moon-muse only in its most negative aspects, sexual sterility and death. Bennett writes:

For Plath to achieve autonomy meant that she had to destroy the dependent, attachment-prone side of herself. Once that self was destroyed, however, all that remained was a woman too wicked to live.¹⁰⁴

Caught in a culture that devalued and disempowered her as a woman and bound to a mother who was never able to achieve the sense of separation and autonomy needed to help herself, let alone her daughter, Sylvia Plath burnt herself out in rage.¹⁰⁵

Bennett discusses the conflict women writers experience in having to expose themselves and points out that though few have committed suicide, many have destroyed their poetic voices.¹⁰⁶ Sylvia Plath, through her genius and her struggle, has contributed much to our night vision, and it is tragic that she felt she had to destroy the dependent part of herself rather than help it grow up. Her fate underlines the challenge to women of finding enough support—inner and outer—through love, not approval, to be able to hold the tension between the need for affiliation and the need for creative expression. That, after all, is what we are asking of men.

Suicidal fantasies and attempts plague every profession. Writers have tended to chronicle their suicidal images, making us aware that creativity is no guarantee against death-wishes. Nor can we assume that an audience for self-destructive feelings is a life-support. Death has been portrayed as a seductive Demon Lover throughout history.

Mary Oliver and Marge Piercy have written about the legacy of suicide left them by other writers. Here Piercy exhorts her fellow women writers to resist him:

He is not pretty, that boy, only well

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 239, 215.

¹⁰⁴ *My Life a Loaded Gun*, p. 159.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

advertised. Give your enemies nothing.
Let our tears freeze to stones
we can throw from catapults.
Death is their mercenary, their agent.
He seduces you for hire.
After your death he will pander
your books and explain you.

I know we can't make promises.
Every work pushed out through the jagged
bottleneck sewer of the industry
is a defeat, mutilated before it's born.
My faucets drip at night too. I wake
tired. From the ceiling over my bed
troubles spin down on growing threads.
Only promise if you do get too weary,
take a bank president to lunch,
take a Rockefeller with you. Write
your own epitaph and say it loud.
This life is a war we are not yet
winning for our daughter's children.
Don't do your enemies' work for them.
Finish your own.¹⁰⁷

In "Members of the Tribe," Mary Oliver refers to suicidal writers who influenced her:

I forgive them
their unhappiness,
I forgive them
for walking out of the world.

But I don't forgive them
for turning their faces away,
for taking off their veils
and dancing for death—

for hurtling
toward oblivion
on the sharp blades
of their exquisite poems, saying:

¹⁰⁷ From "Memo," *The Moon Is Always Female*, pp. 86-88.

this is the way.

.....
I was, of course, all that time
coming along
behind them, and listening
for advice.
.....

And the man who merely
washed Michelangelo's brushes, kneeling
on the damp bricks, staring
every day at the colors pouring out of them,
lived to be a hundred years old.¹⁰⁸

Adrienne Rich, commenting on the work of Sylvia Plath and Diane Wakoski, finds that in both, "man" appears as a fascination and a terror, qualities found in the relationship to the animus at the stage of mother-domination.

The charisma of Man seems to come purely from his power over her and his control of the world by force, not from anything fertile or life-giving in him. And in the work of both these poets, it is finally the woman's sense of *herself*—embattled, possessed—that gives the poetry its dynamic charge, its rhythms of struggle, need, will, and female energy. Until recently this female anger and this furious awareness of the Man's power over her were not available materials to the female poet, who tended to write of Love as the source of her suffering, and to view that victimization by Love as an almost inevitable fate.¹⁰⁹

While the wheels of time move slowly to change outer relationships, women can change their relationship to the inner man. He can be a death-dealing demon or fertile and life-giving.

¹⁰⁸ *Dream Work*, pp. 32-34.

¹⁰⁹ "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p. 36.

8

In the Mother-World

Don't think
because her petal thighs
leap and her slight
breasts flatten
against your chest
that you warm her
alligator mind.
In August
her hand of snow
rests on your back.
Follow her through the mirror.
My wan sister.
Love is a trap
that would tear her
like a rabbit.

—Marge Piercy, "Girl in White."

Piercy writes not of the animus himself but of the effect on a woman of having a mother-bound animus. Think of the state of the "spirit," or "mind" or "drive," in the woman pictured here. We get a sense of something weak and colorless. Yet we also sense a great store of hidden energy that may erupt in unusually determined, possibly devious, action . . . like an alligator.

In this "girl" stage of animus development are found mother's daughters, Kores and Persephones, girls of sweet innocence, vulnerable and unpredictable. They lack strong convictions and are, symbolically, ripe for rape. The girl in the poem is "in white," meaning that she is not aware of her shadow and will project it onto others. She is not yet able to step back and look into herself; she sees only her mirror image, distorted by her own unconsciousness.

At this stage a woman may be very intelligent, but her mentality has a passive, unconscious quality, which makes her appear lazy and