

The Serpent and the Cross

Healing the Split through Active Imagination



Paintings and Commentary by Katherine M. Sanford

Photography by Dean Collins

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Introduction

Many years ago, over a period of approximately thirty years, my mother, Katie Sanford, produced sixty-two archetypal paintings and recorded the active imagination and dreams associated with many of them. The paintings were the product of her slow and steady psychological work on the early loss of her mother and the subsequent defensive compensatory psychic responses to that loss.

The paintings represent a visual and literary dialogue with the soul, addressing and expressing the deepest complexes of the archetypal Great Mother and Animus. Understood as a series, these paintings reveal the transformative power of intrapsychic work on what might be called the motherwound, a developmental theme that has social value insofar as it speaks to the emerging feminine spirit of our time. Katie's work is an inspirational model for those individuals who are struggling with inner and outer demonic forces, who are trying to establish a secure footing in such uncertain times, and who are striving to come into consciousness of their place in the world.

While the colors and images of the paintings alone are stunning, they are not self-explanatory. Because of her advancing years and knowing that the responsibility for these paintings at her death would fall to me, I strongly urged my mother to go to work on this material and explain what

it was all about before its meaning was completely lost. While visiting her in the summer of 2001, my daughter, Heather, and I gathered my mother's paintings out of storage where they had languished for over a decade. We catalogued and photographed them. We arranged the photos in an album and then set up a computer document for Katie to work with. Over a period of eighteen months, she diligently researched her earlier notes, dreams, and written commentaries. Together she and I worked and reworked the writing for clarity, accuracy, and literary style. The paintings were subsequently rephotographed and greatly refined by Dean Collins, an internationally recognized photographer and technical wizard who dedicated himself to the visual presentation of Katie's work in video and book formats.

Katie has intentionally chosen to omit an index and a table of contents as this material, representing a psychological process, is not well served by those conventions. She is more interested in preserving the sense of flow and unity reflecting the psychic reality of the inner world.

At the end of this book, Katie has provided an important and excellent discussion on the meaning and value of *active imagination* for her readers.

Lynette Walker 2006

Acknowledgements

The production of this book has come about through the collaborative efforts of Dean Collins, Gary Burns, and my daughter, Lynette Walker.

Dean has passed away, but I remain ever grateful for his creative vision, his technical expertise and his labor of love in preparing my material for book format.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Dean's longtime business partner, Gary Burns, who completed the work on Dean's behalf.

Lynette's sensitivity to the aesthetic and practical details in language composition, her sensitivity to my psychological experience and intention has been invaluable. She has been a trustworthy collaborator and agent from start to finish.

And finally, my thanks go out to Lore Zeller and Pamela Edwards for their editorial contributions.

Dedication



I dedicate this work to my late husband, Sandy, who valued my struggles and granted me the space to pursue what I had to do, and to my daughter, Lynette Walker, whose demand for a conscious relationship has enriched my life immeasurably.

The Inner Journey

In my early thirties, I was struck with a debilitating illness for which neither medical science nor years of depth analysis provided an answer. As a last resort, I went to the Jung Institute in Zürich, hoping to make some meaning of my life before I died. In the midst of my despair, I had a dream stating that the cause of my illness was that the threshold of my unconscious was exceptionally low. This dream was most helpful. I gave up seeking outer solutions and committed myself to exploring the archetypal energies assaulting my psyche. For me, individuation, the process of bringing the unconscious shadow qualities to consciousness and integrating them into the personality, was a lifesaving necessity. To be responsible for my own wholeness, I had to integrate my inherent shadow qualities that I had forgotten, repressed, or never known.

Through temperament or circumstances, the struggles faced within the individuation process are uniquely personal. This rather obvious fact hit me when, after years of analysis striving to plumb the depths of the inner world, I suddenly realized that I did not need to go deeper into the unconscious: I was already there. My task was to find my way out of the archetypal realm and into the world of outer reality; however, I needed to validate the psyche's underworld domain in order to launch my journey into the mundane world. To function in the outer world, I first had to make sense of the somewhat strange inner landscape of my particular psychic orientation. My experience in this regard has been most valuable as I work with others who find themselves struggling to find the way out of the depths and into life.

The paintings and commentaries I share here are pictorial interactions through which I attempted to relate my fragile ego to the archetypal forces that flooded in on me. The paintings, with their related dialogues, helped contain the chaotic incursions from the unconscious and provided symbolic images that I could meditate upon and, over time, integrate.

From childhood, the adaptation to my environment was tenuous. As an adult, when I struggled to find a more conscious relationship to the outer collective, I found an early childhood experience prophetic. At seven years of age, I was living on a farm in northern Wisconsin and going to a one-room school about a mile away. Near the school house was a fast flowing stream spanned by a rickety

bridge. I had been told in no uncertain terms to stay off this bridge, but despite the warning, I joined others playing there. Amidst the rough and tumble, one boy fell into the water, pulling me in with him. The others fished him out, but I sank to the bottom. With absolute clarity, I knew that to save myself, I had to grasp onto the reeds along the bottom and sides of the stream and pull myself to the surface. Safely out, I trudged home, cold, wet, and terrified of the consequences awaiting me. But there was nothing. My mother had been taken to the hospital where, soon after, she died.

I had never experienced my mother as kind or nurturing, and her early death provided no opportunity for the negative mother complex to be tempered in an ongoing relationship with her. As a consequence, the witch mother archetype became enthroned in my psyche. The necessity of a positive matriarchal identification for female ego development is well recognized. For me, such a positive identification was missing. As a result, a defensive patriarchal animus, the masculine counterpart within my psyche, filled the void created by the truncated ego. Lacking conscious discrimination of my masculine function, my self-awareness invariably remained limited to the imposed values of the collective, where true individuality and original thinking were impossible. Such a brittle animus possession along with my marked introversion provided me little support in relating to either myself or to others around me. Without validation from my environment, I was tempted to take refuge in the unconscious and to miss living my life. The isolation of the inner world seemed far more reliable and secure than the impoverished, conventional setting in which I was called upon to function. Fortunately, early in my adulthood, I stumbled into Jungian therapy where, for the first time, I found tools to validate this inner reality and make sense of the challenges confronting me.

These paintings, like the weeds in the stream, have helped me pull myself from the grip of an unconscious archetypal identification into life. As a lifesaving undertaking, these images and related commentaries demonstrate the transformative power of active imagination and illustrate how I experienced this conscious interaction between ego and archetype within my own individuation process.

I am grateful for this opportunity to share my journey through the archetypal underworld with you. By sharing this accumulated material, I honor the creative psychic potential actualized in the interaction between my conscious personality and the unconscious realm of archetypal reality. I am neither an artist nor a poet, which, for me, has helped quiet the voice of the judgmental animus, clearing the way for the unconscious to speak.

The first twenty or so paintings focus primarily on a developing relationship with the animus, the unconscious masculine energies and potentials behind the female personality. Many of the subsequent symbolic images have to do with the archetype of the Mother, the feminine foundation of a woman's personality. I believe the sequence of these paintings supports the notion that developing a more differentiated animus function is the very hub of the feminine individuation process. The repetitious archetypal themes that appear in my paintings and dialogues are almost inevitable when working through any deep psychic issues. As Jung reminds us:

The serious problems of life are never fully solved. If ever they should appear to be so it is a sure sign that something has been lost. The meaning and purpose of a problem seems to lie not in its solution but in our working at it incessantly. This alone preserves us from stultification and petrification.¹

My comments on the individual paintings are brief as my intent is to demonstrate the evolving relationship between ego and archetype that occurred within my individuation process. I trust the symbolic imagery will speak mostly for itself.

¹This quote by Carl Jung appeared on the cover of the program brochure for a conference presented by the C.G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles, May 1977. Brochure designed by Corita Kent.

JUNE 1959

This first painting portrays potential wholeness with both dark and light elements contained in images emerging from the head of the unconscious archetypal Mother figure. Neither witch nor nurturer, she encompasses the opposites, holding the chthonic serpent, the amoral spirit of Nature in one hand and the Christian cross in the other. A subhuman animus figure reaches toward the emerging light of the sun.

This central figure is an image of the primordial feminine. She carries the attributes of cosmic nature. Jung refers to her as "the feminine Anthropos, the counterpart of the masculine principle...She adds the dark to the light, symbolizes the hierogamy of opposites and reconciles nature with spirit."² Inasmuch as she completes the masculine principle, she prepares the way for a new birth of God.

The magnitude of this split between Spirit and Nature, represented here by the instinctual serpent and the Christian cross, was brought home to me in the early days of my analysis with

Max Zeller. I was in the depths of despair and called him, berating him for stripping away the little protection I had against the darkness engulfing me. He gave me no quarter, but responded, "You are so split, if you don't do this work you will become either a religious fanatic or a whore." Now that was shock therapy, and I am forever grateful to Max for confronting me with the seriousness of my task.



1. 1959 Oil on Canvas 22" x 28"

JUNE 1959

Later in the same month, I completed a second painting in which archetypal energy flows toward the center from four sources. The lower corners contain the very dark primitive mother figure (left) and the primitive animus (right). Note that the animus is no longer as black as in the previous painting; here, he is green and bears a halo of light. The upper corners contain more positive symbols: the pregnant woman with sheaves of wheat (left) and a blue lotus with a phallic center (right). The energy from these outer figures is directed toward the center, and from the center point, energy is directed out into the bounded space of the four directions.



2. 1959 Oil on Canvas 16" x 20"

JUNE 1959

The figure of the human woman portrayed in these paintings represents the ego's role within the drama. Here, with eyes closed, she holds between her hands the fire and light emanating from the unconscious, self-renewing uroboros, or ring-shaped symbol of wholeness, below. This was a time of incubation.



3. 1959 Oil on Canvas 16" x 20"

JULY 1959

The serpent approaches and is received by the archetypal feminine. The cross within her body bridges the opposites of sun and moon, the masculine and feminine principles. The instinctual life, represented by the serpent, is included within the implied suffering of the cross.



4. 1959 Oil on Canvas 16" x 20"

SEPTEMBER 1959

The human woman takes the serpent to her breast and, by accepting and feeding it, opens the way for further development. The hand emerging from the cloud is a benediction of the ongoing process.



5. 1959 Oil on Canvas 16" x 20"

NOVEMBER 1959

Now with eyes open, the human woman is actively involved with the uroboros, the symbol of wholeness. She holds it aloft as sun and moon approximate each other. The upper portion of the moon appears as ocean waves, as if that portion of feminine light is still immersed in the collective unconscious. From these ocean waves, the woman emerges, carrying the symbol of the undifferentiated Self.



6. 1959 Oil on Canvas 24" x 30"

MID 1960

The woman dances away from three crosses. Does she proceed from the patriarchal trinity toward a more inclusive quaternity?



7. 1960 Oil on Canvas 22" x 28"

JANUARY 1961

This evolving process is now contained within a bowl, a feminine vessel that provides protection from the swirling affects surrounding it. The ego-woman leads her more earthy sister, her instinctual shadow, to the four crosses from which animus figures are emerging. There is the definite sense that these masculine figures are being created within the crosses and emerging from them. These animus figures being born from their crosses indicated a hopeful shift from the conventional, tyrannical, judging animus that had dominated my relationship to life.



8. 1961 Oil on Canvas 40" x 30"

OCTOBER 1961

The human woman and the dark animus, who now appears in human form, cooperate in holding aloft a defined sphere of fiery numinous energy in which a faintly discernible cross can be seen. Superimposed upon the cross is a bowl of fire, a symbol of libido or psychic energy whose relationship to the chthonic spirit is indicated by the two serpents that entwine the container. For the first time, a verdant landscape appears, and the green within the bowl of painting #8 now appears as solid ground supporting the drama. A partially obscured glowing mountain can be seen in the background.



9. 1961 Oil on Canvas 34" x 40"

FEBRUARY 1962

Put to work, the animus tills the soil between the huge thighs of the Great Earth Mother. The numinous peak indicated in painting #9 reappears. I almost despaired completing this canvas: I couldn't get it to work. Then I received news that my father had died. I experienced an almost miraculous sense of release. Only with the actual death of my paternal authority figure and the values for which he stood did I have the confidence to validate my own feminine position. I returned to my easel, and the images fell into place with no trouble at all.



10. 1962 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

APRIL 1962

In amazement, Mother Earth awakens. She had not anticipated the intrusion of consciousness to rouse her from her autonomous eternal cycle. The animus salutes the glowing mountain and the rising sun. With his efforts employed in the service of the feminine Self, he celebrates the Mother's awakening. Activation of the archetypal Mother provided validation and support for my individuation process.



11. 1962 Oil on Canvas 30" x 40"

MAY 1962

One month later, this huge Earth Mother becomes more humanly differentiated, while the mountain in the background of earlier paintings #9, #10, and #11 appears now as her hair, as energy unleashed. The storm clouds above are evidence of the chaos resulting from such an archetypal shift. Is the intrusion of consciousness a sin against nature?



12. 1962 Oil on Canvas 36" x 30"

JULY 1962

A couple of months later, the human woman finds herself on solid ground, contemplating the mystery of the tree of life. She holds out her hands in supplication. What is the mystery held within this tree?



13. 1962 Oil on Canvas 40" x 30"

NOVEMBER 1962

This is her answer. I entitled this painting *Protect Thy Light from the Shadow of the World*. Here, the human woman contains her bowl of fire as she faces the womb within the tree of life, turning from the forces of dismemberment and horror of the outer world. At the time, I experienced this turning away as my personal defense. In retrospect, I understand this image as representing the defense against the shadow of collective consciousness.

In his book *Kali: The Feminine Force*, Ajit Mookerjee writes: "In the present Kali Age, Kali is the answer, and she will have to annihilate again in order to reveal the truth of things, which is her mission, and to restore to our natures that divine spirituality which we have lost."³



14. 1962 Oil on Canvas 40" x 30"

FEBRUARY 1963

I titled this painting *The Valley of Gehenna*. The human woman stands between the creation of a new day (left) and the dismemberment and destruction of human life (right) that was portrayed in painting #14. The ego is situated squarely between the light and dark poles of the mother archetype. The vulture, perched on the denuded branches of the tree, surveys Kali's domain below. The woman, with her lamp held aloft, searches to see what will emerge from the depths below.



15. 1963 Oil on Canvas 16" x 20"

APRIL 1963

The horned serpent rises from a watery realm that previously was a fiery hell. Again the animus serves as helper in this ongoing inner development. The human woman offers her light of consciousness and welcomes this interaction with the reptile. It is as if the Christian myth has gone full circle, and here, the woman is offering the light of consciousness, or the apple, if you will, to the serpent. The golden horns and stripe on the serpent's back indicate that this chthonic creature is also a carrier of light. New leaves appear on the previously denuded branches of the tree. The title of this painting is *Leviathan Revealed*.



16. 1963 Oil on Canvas 31" x 37"

SEPTEMBER 1963

Now the serpent is transformed into a somewhat human form, neither totally reptilian nor altogether human. Once the process of individuation has begun, we have no way of knowing where it will take us. The human woman stands awkwardly confronted with the consequences of her interaction with the serpent.



17. 1963 Oil on Canvas 36" x 36"

NOVEMBER 1963

By accepting and nourishing this chthonic creature, further evolution occurs with still more differentiated human characteristics. This creature's spiritual potential is indicated by the dark wings. As it now has a mouth, communication might be possible, so I address this figure:

I greet you, oh wondrous creature.
I stand trembling before each changing feature.
I turn not, for where is escape?
You encompass the world in Mercurous shape.
I face you. Oh show me your grace,
For you in living must be given a place.
Too long lost in your dark realm are we.
The time of acceptance may at last set us free.



18. 1963 Oil on Canvas 30" x 30"

JANUARY 1964

I entitled this painting *Home Is the Heart*, for here, the ego-woman is held in a loving embrace, and the dialogue with the transforming serpent continues:

Tell me thy name, oh powerful one.

Come you out of the moon or art thou of the sun?

You hold me securely, I cannot escape.

Your mystery enralls me, your will is my fate.

How came I here to this company of gods?

How can I serve 'gainst the terrible odds?

And the creature answers:

Oh earthling, I hear you and move to your plea.

From centuries of darkness you now set me free.

Through time beyond measure I am and shall be,

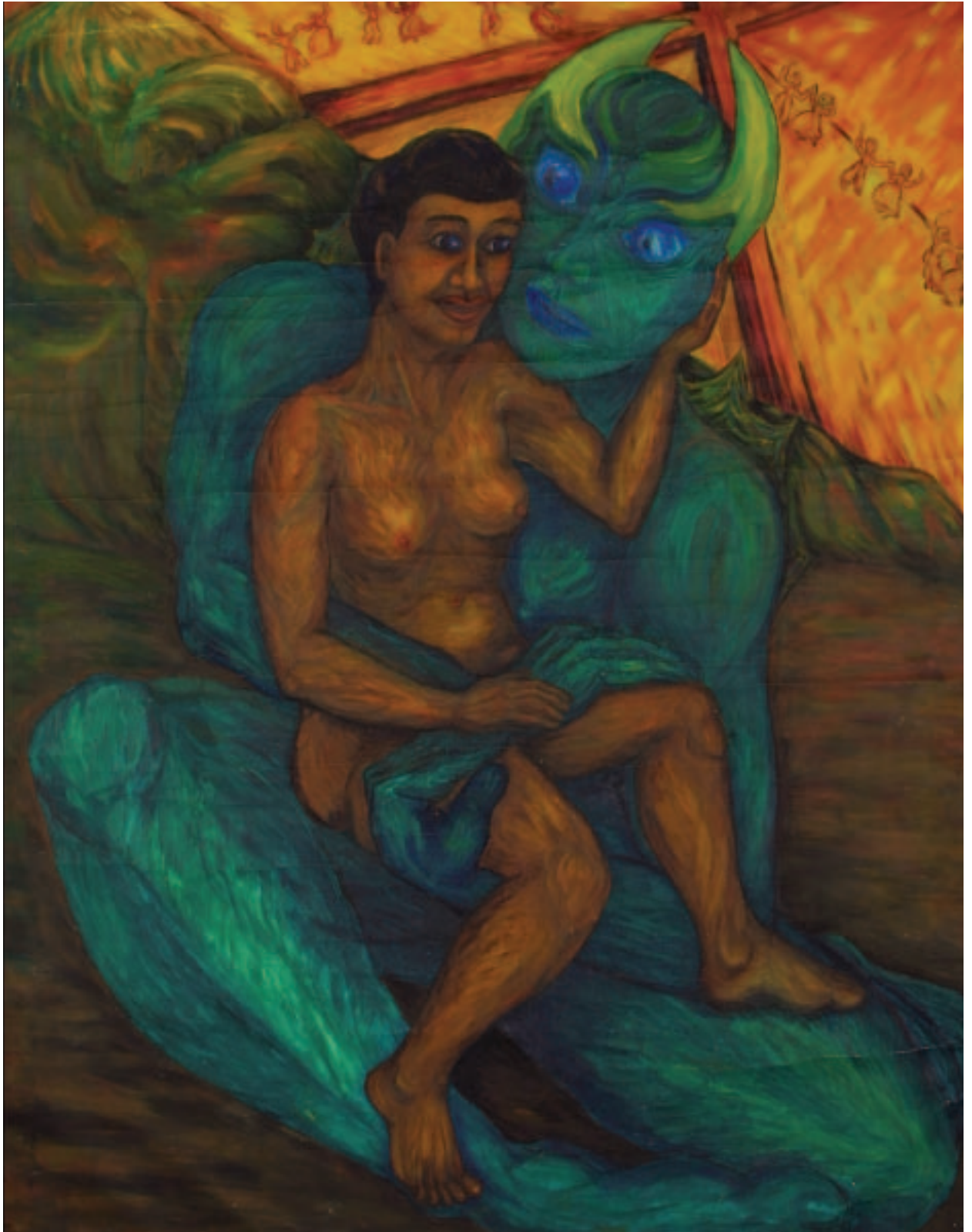
A curse to the blind; a boon to the free.



19. 1964 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

JUNE 1964

Now this Green Goddess, who has evolved from her former serpent-form, assumes an even more human face, and the interaction takes place on solid ground. The figures dancing around the cross in the sky came from a dream and reflect the possibility of a more human interaction between archetype and ego.



20. 1964 Oil on Canvas 30" x 38"

AUGUST 1964

From my more grounded relationship with this transformed Earth Mother, I am again plunged into the watery depths, here contained within an elaborate energy field. Positioned within the opposites of fire and water, the ego-woman stands within the flames and accepts the transformative process. That this process involves the feminine archetype as well as of the personal ego is indicated by the crescent moon that hovers over the woman.

While painting this canvas, I found that the spots in the water appeared as "eyes of God." When I completed the painting, I found that these eyes in the water had the appearance of a peacock's tail. In alchemy, the peacock's tail was called the *cauda pavonis*, and according to the alchemist, the *cauda pavonis* represented the first sign of the resurrection of the *prima materia*, the primal matter. Light from the cross (upper left corner) penetrates the heart of the woman. For me, this painting represents both a sacrifice and a rebirth. I dialogue with this new development to find a proper

relationship to this transition:

Across the green meadows into depths I descend.
 Where life is eternal, no beginning, no end.
 I enter most humbly this dark fearsome clime.
 Caught between realms I serve human time.
 Held in this vice, forged in Life's fire,
 In Heaven's hell I serve God's desire.
 In this timeless abode the sages abound.
 To my anchored position they gather around.
 Give me the strength to meet and converse.
 Life must travel forward or mankind is cursed.
 Tell me oh Gods what secrets you hold.
 Dare man's eyes detect your stygian gold?

And I get this beneficent reply:

Listen, oh child, we bid your attendance.
 Our greatest expression is the human presence.
 Forces are we, energies untamed.
 Bring human forbearance that we may be named.
 We are but eyes that look back and beyond.
 Man holds the key for the forms which we long.
 Neither evil nor good we merely subsist.
 Only in life can we really exist.
 Enslaved in our darkness our force mills about.
 Seeking expression we will be lived out.
 Oh man among men we enjoin you to see
 Our enslaved necessity, the need to be free.

I entitled this painting and dialogue
Thy Will Be Done.



21. 1964 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

FEBRUARY 1965

Here, the ego-woman encounters the collective darkness of her feminine nature. It is a confrontation with the Devil within. In Barbara Hannah's lecture "The Problem of Contact with the Animus," she says,

"There has been a *consensus gentium* in almost every form of human society which has believed in some kind of personification of evil *per se*. And it is inevitable that we shall either project collective forces onto our neighbors or introject them into ourselves, if we do not allow for the reality of the figures of the collective unconscious."⁴

Confronting this dark figure was truly frightening and somewhat shocking, especially because it replaced the positive transformative statement of the preceding image (Painting #21). The human woman brings an offering of food to this fearsome creature as, in fairy tales, one throws a sop to the dragon who guards the treasure. For protection against becoming lost in this darkness, she carries an Ariadne thread to help find her way back from this underworld encounter. Such a confrontation with the collective shadow can

be very disorienting, and the ego needs a human connection to avoid being overwhelmed. The crown emanating from this creature's head indicates that, for all his dark power, he is also a bearer of light, relating him to the feminine individuation process. While in his presence, I plead with him:

Oh powerful dark one I enter your realm.
In my driven necessity fate stands at the helm.

Your presence is awesome. My heart trembles in fright

But I dare this encounter to glimpse your dark light.

Deal with me gently, being human I break.

Permit my intrusion, my offering please take.

And he answers:

What manner of man approaches me here?

Do you value life lightly that you dare to draw near?

Despised by men the whole world o'er

They deny me admittance save in lust or war.

To gain recognition I plunder and rape.

Since no man will love me I rule him through hate.

And I respond:

Listen, I beg you, your wrath turn aside.

I seek your acquaintance without malice or pride.

I challenge no combat but mainly desire

To show man's dilemma, lest we perish in fire.

⁴Barbara Hannah, lecture transcript, "The Problem of Contact with the Animus," p.15.



22. 1965 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

AUGUST 1965

In the last painting (#22), the gold within the shadow supports the development of this image, entitled *Madonna and Child*. Again the primordial feminine figure of the first painting appears. But now the Great Mother, awakened and transformed from her lowly serpent form, emerges from the fertile earth to accept and nourish the human woman and her child, the new birth of conscious feminine potential. Before the rising sun, this nurturing figure bears within her head the cross, a symbol of potential individuation. With the help of a more differentiated animus developed within the ongoing process, a positive relationship to the archetypal Great Mother becomes possible, and the mother-wound can begin to heal.



23. 1965 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

FEBRUARY 1966

The title of this painting is *My Father's House*. The formerly dark devilish figure now reappears within a human landscape. He comes as a bearer of light, and the woman and child place themselves in his hand. In discussing the practical application of a relationship to the animus, Barbara Hannah says, "When we give him libido and love, we consciously and intentionally place our faculties at his disposal in order that he may have the means of expressing the values of his reality in our reality."⁵ I dialogue with this figure:

From the depths of the soul you rise to my side.

With your gaze upon me there is no place to hide.

The scope of my life is dependent on thee.

Who dares to serve you earns the chance to be free.

Impart to us wisdom, serve mankind this way.

Within human limits take what we can pay.

And he answers:

Show me the one who will serve me with fear,

Yet come to my arms and hold me most dear.

I'm bound by my fury, my strength is a cage.

As prisoner I'm chained to this blind stumbling age.

Where is there one to unlock this despair,
Lead me out of my darkness into sunlight and air?

Oh arrogant ones who strive to rule life

Give heed to my worth or you'll perish in strife.

And I respond:

My eyes have beheld you, and now stand or fall,

As most humble servant, I answer your call.

Your embrace of darkness is multi-hued.

In your fertile touch, life flows renewed.



24. 1966 Oil on Canvas 36" x 30"

FEBRUARY 1966

This image was triggered by a heart-pounding nightmare:

I go out my kitchen door and find a large rattlesnake. Someone tells me to put the snake in a bottle of water to keep it contained and harmless. I do this, but when I pick up the bottle, I feel the snake moving about within. I am terrified.

In giving form to the dream, I found that the numinosity of the symbol that appeared on my canvas dispelled the horror of the initial experience. A more positive relationship to the serpent power thus became possible. I explore this image through dialogue:

In exotic splendor your form does appear.

Held in my arms your message I'd hear.

And the serpent answers:

Your keen attention calls me now to your side.

As you bid me "welcome," no longer I'd hide.

I come from a world much broader than here.

From watery realms to you I appear.

And I respond:

And what can I give you, what talents have I,

In my humble position to serve spirits on high?

I wish for a voice with beauty and scope
To honor this meeting that brings
challenge and hope.

I wish for the art that would fairly portray
Your radiant wonder as you merge into
day.

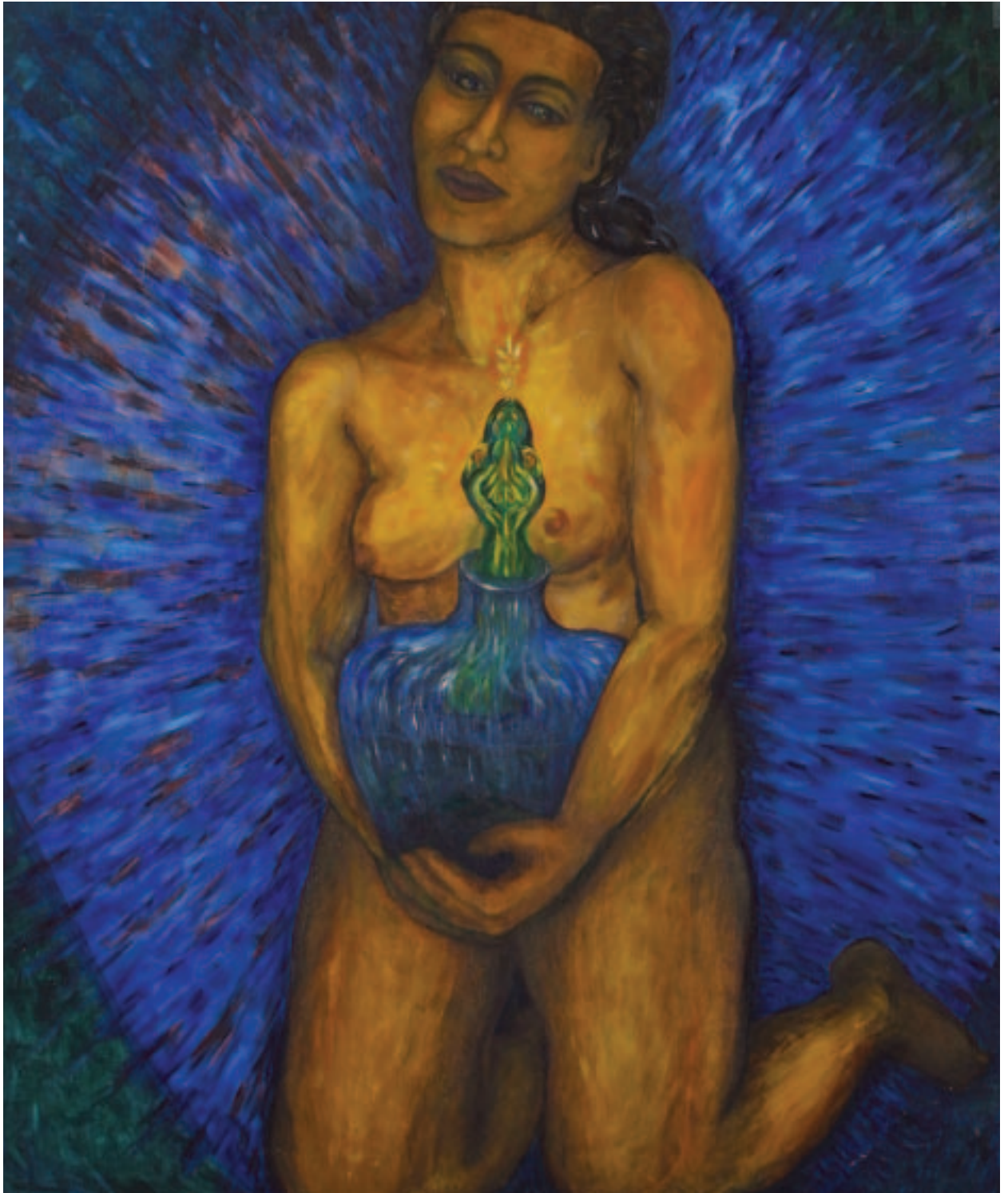
I get this reply:

Cry not, dear one, for you open your
heart.

It's a beggar's boon to know only art.

We are alive and in hearts we would live.

To grant us this room is the most one can
give



25. 1966 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

SEPTEMBER 1966

Still emerging from its containment in the bottle, the serpent again assumes a more human form. The creature's wings indicate a higher spiritual connection. The fullness of the moon that frames a Hopi Indian village represents the archetypal feminine setting. Sacrificial eagles tethered to the rooftops let us know that preparations are under way for the Home Dance, where the Kachinas, the personified spirit representatives, will complete their six-month cycle with the Hopi people and return to their sacred mountain, the San Francisco Peaks. My husband and I have had a close personal relationship with the Hopi Indians for many years, and the archetypal symbolism portrayed in their religious ceremonies has been deeply soul satisfying for me.

I speak to the serpent in a poem, welcoming him into life after years of obscurity and acknowledging the loneliness of my task:

The doors now are open wherein people abide.

I'm held by the spirit. There is no place to hide.

In the houses nearby other humans await
Their manifest Gods, those purveyors of Fate.

Mighty eagles keep watch from the houses nearby.

Carrying spirits from earth, soon to heaven they'll fly.



26. 1966 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

JANUARY 1967

This painting, *In the Eye of God*, reflects a time of almost unbearable tension. Here, the ego-woman is bowed down under the relentless gaze of the Self. Accepting and holding the light of consciousness, the archetypal earth energy flows through, piercing the woman's heart with the cross. The challenge of individuation is not to be taken lightly, for the triumph of the Self is a defeat to the ego.

In a dialogue with this image, I lament the pain of this encounter and plead for my salvation. And I get this response:

Child of my heart you serve me most well.

Attend open eared and my secrets I'll tell.

I offer a refuge beyond time and space

Where mankind is touched by a sense of God's grace.

You tread the dark path that leads to my door.

Life's riches are there for you to explore.



27. 1967 Oil on canvas 36" x 30"

MAY 1967

Four months later, this painting was prompted by a dream:

I am with many others located in the setting of H. Rider Haggard's novel, *She*.⁶ I withdraw from the group and gather up the bones from a roast laid about on the floor. I pick the meat from these bones and put it in a pile when "She," the ruling woman, comes by. I tell her I am getting this meat for the dogs, and I have gathered quite a bit.

"She" then takes me to a temple entrance and unlocks the door so I may enter. "She" says this was the abode of her father and I may go through it. "She" shows me his carriage with the horsemen still mounted, as if embalmed in this position. We go on through this apartment, and I see a small girl lying in bed. I assume she is also dead. "She" intimates that the girl really is living. I am told very subtly that this area is not of the dead but of the living. As I prepare to leave, I comment on the strange odor here. [end of dream]

My analyst remarked that this cool, clean, sweet odor that I experienced in the dream was the smell of the underworld.

The image that emerged in response to this dream appears as a rebirth of the feminine principle in which the human woman is centered. I addressed this underworld encounter in a

lengthy poem, striving to grasp the experience. I share here a portion of that dialogue:

How deeply felt, this dark locale.

A timeless torment of demonic strife

Wherein man's frantic searching soul

With awesome fear, counters shadow life.

Archaic chambers exposed to sight.

Destroyed complacency by spirits rent.

Shimmering treasures now are viewed

Into light reclaimed through horrors spent.



28. 1967 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

OCTOBER 1967

In a mandala-like circle containing the opposites of fire and water and penetrated by serpent and fire below and by the personal star and the Tree of Life above, the human woman is contained within the cross. The light-bearing serpent approaches (lower right) to explore the all-seeing eye of painting #27 that is now being held in the woman's hand. Another long dialogue ensues in which I explore the human soul's bondage and the need to find a relationship to God.

And I vow:

For serve you I will to the end of my days
And I pray for strength in exploring your ways.

This is the response:

Men act as my voice, we are joined as one.

For I am the power, you are my sun.



29. 1967 Oil on Canvas 30" x 30"

MAY 1968

The spirit of the serpent shines forth. This numinous creature that appeared in oil on my canvas embodies the transpersonal gaze of all-seeing eyes that appeared in preceding paintings.

I find it difficult to recall what was going on in my outer life at this time. I do know that I had a desperate need to find some avenue of expression for this inner psychic reality that seemed so alien to the collective world about me, yet hammered on me so relentlessly. To explore the enigma of the painting, I converse with this image:

Oh wondrous one what riches you hoard.

Come you as savior or bear you the sword?

Hearing your call, insistent and clear,
I face the unknown and stifle my fear.

The passage is narrow—as dark as the grave.

Into uncharted realms your way does pave.

And a voice comes forth:

“Enter here,” the gods command.

“Let he who serves now bear the brand.

So heed this now—there’s no escape.

The chosen one has Life at stake.”

And I respond, acknowledging this unseen power:

The blood in the streets, the furor and hate,

Give proof of your presence that man must placate.

Viewed in the light, how altered your guise.

My heart swells with joy as I gaze in your eyes.



30. 1968 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

JULY 1968

Several months later, I painted this image of a seed, its shell opened to reveal the human woman holding her individual star and radiating light within her hitherto enclosed container. The kernel of feminine consciousness has matured, uniting the woman's soul with heaven and earth. The serpent remains an active participant in this feminine ripening that opens the way for a *coniunctio* of ego and Self. I dialogue with the painting:

Awake, arise, the gods appear.
 The great encounter now is here.
 As heartfelt yearnings fill the soul,
 The unknown enters to make me whole.
 On perilous pathways with wonders
 sown
 I grope through darkness to claim my
 own.
 Tumultuous soul, your call I heed.
 My body opens to your seed.
 You challenge my love on this lonely way
 Of deep involvement in Divinity's play.
 Mysterious star that hovers here
 Protect this child as you draw near.

And the answer comes:

Oh join with me on celestial heights.
 Seek out your place within my might.
 Come closely now in triumph sweet.
 The heavenly marriage we'll complete.
 A feast prepared for the wedding day
 With light and song to pave the way.
 When in the living I'm granted space
 My furies transformed shall shine as
 grace.



31. 1968 Oil on Canvas 30" x 30"

NOVEMBER 1968

The development of a more individuated feminine position grounded in the spirit of nature required the crucifixion of autonomous animus values. Four months after completing painting #31, the image reflecting this transition came into being. The landscape comes alive while in the foreground, the water-filled Hopi bowl contains a trinity of crucified animus figures. The eyes of the numinous creature in former paintings peer from the background. This was a time of great internal change.

To integrate this symbolic transformation, I dialogue with the painting:

A trumpet sounds; now hear the cry.
To know of Life man first must die.
Muted heart with torment stilled,
Baptize with tears what must be killed.
The great unknown approach with fear.
Take up your cross, the hour is here.
Encounter death, wed dark to light
On bridal bed of mystic rite.
Contain this growth—endure the birth
As cosmic splendor lights the earth.
Before God's gaze, to rise or fall,
Alone, man heeds the Hero's call.



32. 1968 Oil on Canvas 30" x 36"

JANUARY 1969

I completed this next painting a brief two months later. Here, this androgynous figure with the Egyptian headdress erupts from the underworld. The full moon shines forth from the night sky, framing this great archetypal human drama. The archetypal figure holds an egg in one hand and, with the other, points to the kneeling submissive woman. The crucifixion of the animus figures within the previous painting (#32) allows the vegetative spirit of nature to flourish at the base of the crosses. I address the image:

From ruptured earth strange phantoms
rise.

Celestial extensions of mortal lives.

Unearthly seeds seek human earth

For Life's renewal and man's rebirth.

Accept this darkness unreveiled.

Let heaven and earth be reconciled.

Burdened I bow down, tense with pain.

A cry rings out! I hear my name.

A crown of wonder now is worn.

Upon His cross, man wears the thorn.

Here God and man in great surprise

Observe great changes actualized.



33. 1969 Oil on Canvas 22" x 30"

MARCH 1969

Barely two months later, a
new image emerged in which the
woman labors to deliver a new
birth descending from the womb.
I address this new development:

The ghostly spirit lusts for life.
With carnal earth it mates in strife.
Oh horny gods I know you well,
Your chthonic paths through fury's hell.
Engorged and taut your phallic greed,
Assaults man's soul to fill God's need.
The rape is done; your brutal power,
Transformed, endures to let love flower.
In finite flesh, our erstwhile tomb,
The seed finds soil, Life is the womb.
Stirred by the netherworld embrace,
The body swells with heaven's grace.
Now mighty spasms the darkness rends.
In mystic birth the child descends.
Heroic labor the veil has torn.
In pristine light man stands reborn.



34. 1969 Oil on Canvas 28" x 28"

SEPTEMBER 1969

After years of prolonged labor and the ultimate delivery of a new birth, this painting was a more playful enterprise. The human woman, rooted in the moon, indicates her receptive submission to the symbolic process.



35. 1969 Oil on canvas 36" x 30"

DECEMBER 1969

The developing emergence of a conscious feminine center validated by a more differentiated animus allowed me to focus my energy on relationship to the outer world. In this painting, the winged figure emphasizes the spiritual aspect of the archetypal feminine who embraces her masculine counterpart, the animus. Both masculine and feminine archetypal figures are white, which in alchemy indicates the *albedo*, or the dawn. The archetypal male figure serves as mediator between the human woman with her cross of individuation (left) and the boy child, the woman's newly evolving masculine function (right).



36. 1969 Oil on canvas 20" x 28"

APRIL 1970

Here, by the tree of life, the subservient archetypal masculine kneels and embraces the light-bearing archetypal feminine. Near by, the human woman (right) cradles the child, the newborn Self. The mouse (lower left) hints at further activity gnawing away in the unconscious. One might say this painting reflects a moment of grace for which I was most grateful.

I speak to this light-bearing feminine figure:

Oh wondrous goddess, womb of the world,

You emerge from the depths and are reborn, crowned with light.

Stirred by your splendor the sheltering tree spreads its boughs

And blooms anew with latent life of the living cross.

Man's erstwhile gods kneel before their source, the Mother of all

Who now at last turns a loving face upon this numinous embrace.



37. 1970 Oil on canvas 20" x 30"

NOVEMBER 1970

Within a fourfold containment of light, the *coniunctio* of masculine god and feminine goddess is centered. The human woman (lower left) pays homage to this divine embrace. The crosses and the four-pointed star in the remaining corners reflect the ongoing individuation process.



38. 1970 Oil on canvas 30" x 28"

DECEMBER 1970

Following a few months' respite, the mouse of painting #37 had chewed away at the ego's defense, exposing a pervasive narcissistic wound that came crashing in on me. This complex broke through while I was attending a celebratory dinner with friends and colleagues. At the party, I found myself emotionally paralyzed and unable to participate. The situation was so horrible, yet subliminally so familiar, I knew some critical issue had surfaced, and I would have to deal with that hellishly wounded corner of my psyche. After the party, I returned home and attempted to discover what powerful force had possessed me. In active imagination, I returned to the party and searched through the house. There, in the living room, I found this miserable, soiled, barely human, mute child huddled in a corner. I knew beyond a doubt that this child belonged to me and that it would be my responsibility to care for her. Through active imagination with this abandoned creature, I tried to educate her and bring her into the reality of my conscious world.

I come from a family affiliated with the Dunkards, an agrarian religious sect related to the Amish. Such an environment allowed little room for creative expression. My need for self-expression, repressed and to a considerable degree maligned, was left behind, arrested and trapped within the family system. By consciously opening the door into this child's subterranean prison and throwing light onto this pervasive narcissistic complex, I opened the way to reconstructing this repressed, maligned dimension of my personality.

I expanded the attempt to rescue this inner wounded child by honoring her reality through form and color within this painting.



39. 1970 Oil on canvas 30" x 30"

FEBRUARY 1971

This painting symbolized a continuing attempt to salvage and validate a creative dimension of my ego personality. Tied to the regressive pull of the unconscious, this poor emaciated animus would perpetuate the defensive, crippled complex within the psyche. The star and the cross penetrate the human woman from above, supporting her endeavor.

I accompany the painting with this commentary:

Deep in the maze of Life I wander,
seeking the treasure, the inscrutable
mystery held in the vastness. No helpless
pawn these humans who travel here,
for the ego of man is a mirror to God,
a solid form in an endless dream, an
anchor point in the unconscious stream.
Observe! A star is drawing nigh. God's
grace responds to the mortal's cry.



40. 1971 Oil on canvas 20" x 28"

JUNE 1971

The ego–woman is nailed to her cross of individuation within the elephant’s head. This symbolic image came from a dream:

Some of us have been captured by outlaws. I am terrified. We are in a caravan on the way to be sold into slavery. Our captors are going to make us walk day and night through the desert, and we know they will kill many of us. An innovative member of our group speaks to our peasant captor telling him of the “Great” or “Large One” within the peasant’s mythology who has admonished or challenged the captors. I can see this mythological giant with the thongs of his sandals wrapped around his great legs and wearing a tunic. (I can’t see the upper half of his body.) Our peasant captor is impressed by this warning, and we know we now have a chance to survive.

Then I am in a confined area, like the interior cavity of an elephant’s skull. Our captor has been affected by the giant’s warning, and I am given a chance to get out of here. I grope through this flesh-colored membrane to find the pole down which I can descend to my group.

Then we prisoners are taken to our captor’s home base. Our ransom, in the form of thick gravy with a large amount of dark liquid separated out, has been arranged by another group. They meet with the captors, who drink this liquid. A small portion is poured as a libation onto the ground, and there is great rejoicing and much activity. I have remained on the sidelines, and my husband, who has not been part of this enslavement, comes rollicking in, drinking beer. As everyone

prepares to go off on this celebration, I am ignored. I weep bitterly while sitting on wide curving steps that are like steps of a monument. I cry out, “What about me? I have been a non-person for so long.” This calls attention to my needs. [end of dream.]

As I understand it, this dream marked a shift from my archetypal enmeshment to a more grounded position in relationship to my own authentic reality. Escaping from the head of the elephant, the great Earth Mother allows the inner child acceptance into the mundane world, reinforcing a broader, more secure base for my ego personality.



41. 1971 Oil on canvas 28" x 28"

AUGUST 1971

Against the background of the cross, the ego-woman introduces the rescued feminine child to a symbol of wholeness, the squared circle with the star superimposed within the square. The reclamation of this inner child coincided with my acceptance into the training program at the Jung Institute.

I address this newly reclaimed child:

Born through despair from the agony of a lifetime:

Rejected, neglected one.

Fingers of light seek you out.

Huddled in rags with festering scars,

Raw wounds unhealed by the passage of time.

Creep forth from your darkness:

Leave the vermin and slime.

Come into my arms,

Battered child you are mine.

The dream that gave rise to this painting shows the perils of such a basic psychological shift in ego orientation:

In my living room, a long couch in front of a big window faces onto the beach.

It is evening and I look out the window, which seems to be underwater. A huge shadowy shape appears and we see that it is a submarine. One man says he is going to assist this submarine. I go to the sliding glass door on the other side of the room and open it. I wonder if the water

will pour in, but the edge of the surf is at my doorstep. The pressure of the moist, foggy air is heavy, making breathing difficult, as if underwater. I close the door against this pressure and return to the window. I see that this submarine is now broadside the window and only inches away. I fear it will break the window and we will drown. Someone suggests going for help, but I say we cannot open the door because the pressure is terrible.

A girl and I are on the couch watching this huge submarine, its bow extending far to the right of where we sit. Just as it is to strike the window, it flips its stern and, like a whale, darts off at right angles to us into the murky water. The girl and I collapse on the couch showing each other our clammy palms saying, "Anyone who says he was not frightened doesn't tell the truth." [end of dream]

This dream exposes the danger of wresting consciousness from the grip of Nature's cyclic pattern of eternal return.



42. 1971 Oil on canvas 30" x 22"

AUGUST 1971

Having survived the encounter with the whale, the human woman is poised within a four-pointed sunlit star superimposed upon a four-pointed moonlit star. In the corners of the moonlit star are instinctual nature symbols of serpent, eagle, and elephant. An animus figure (upper right) descends from the cross. The two stars are superimposed on the tree of life. I address the image:

Complete and in wholeness, suspended
in time,
Man and gods meet in a moment divine.
Twice fourfold, in balance, experienced
then gone;
The harmony shattered by the siren's
song.
From boundless realms their voices are
heard,
Calling us back to the netherworld.
I turn to this mystery, with wonder and
awe,
To enter dark pathways into Kali's maw.
Great goddess eternal, enthroned in
night,
Within human form you are granted
light.

The search for relationship to the Bedrock Mother is amplified by my daughter, Lynette Walker, in her book *Mothering, Breast Cancer and Selfhood*.⁷ The Bedrock Mother leads to the depths as well as to the heights; she encompasses both dark and light poles of the human psyche.



43. 1971 Oil on canvas 30" x 30"

FEBRUARY 1972

Now within the circle, the eagle perches on the star. Eagle and star appear as the central symbol based on the roots of the flowering tree. The human woman observes from below. Coiled amidst the roots of the tree, the horned serpent encircles a jewel (lower right).

This painting was inspired by a dream:

I am in a field at our ranch with other people around. We see an eagle in flight and gradually discern the figure of a man riding on the back of this great bird. While in the field next to a truck, I find that the sun looks strange. A pattern of radiating shades of brown creates a mandala. I call attention to this and see that this radiating pattern has been created by the impact of a young woman who mounted the eagle after being launched from our area. She now stands erect with her feet planted solidly in the hollow of the wings—this is wonderful to see.

Then the young woman returns to earth, and I remark on this phenomenal happening, telling her I have something to say to her. She responds, "I know, the man asked me if the eagle didn't have a terrible odor." I say, "No, what I saw was a corona." She is pleased. [end of dream]

I dialogue with the dream image:

Descend from heaven, oh kingly power.
In the human soul lies your rebirth.
Bestow your grace upon mankind.
Acknowledge as queen your sister earth.

At this time, I was in the training program at the Jung Institute, and I was particularly challenged by the educational demands. The eagle, with its ability to soar to great heights, is an ideal animus symbol.



44. 1972 Oil on canvas 30" x 30"

JUNE 1972

Within the flourishing mandala-like tree, the human woman, securely positioned on the roots of the tree, places a feminine Buddha-like figure in the center of the star while eagle and serpent attend. This commentary accompanies the painting:

Softly, softly, on the breath of a song,
A symphony of joy heard through the land.

In fourfold wholeness, the gods draw near.

A harmonious blending as they gather here.

Bathed in splendor comes the Mother of all.

Hearing man's plea she answers the call.

Love and renewal shines forth from her face

As she mounts heaven's throne and claims her place.

No longer imprisoned in deathly cold,

Life offers its bounty, take all you can hold.

Sing a song of thanksgiving for this touch of grace

That unites me at last with the human race.



45. 1972 Oil on canvas 30" x 30"

JANUARY 1973

Now a totally new development appears. I can only surmise that this Great Mother figure, anticipated in the preceding dialogue and painting #45, has emerged from the central orb within the star. Here, the Great Mother accepts the offered help of the discriminating animus. The human woman bathed in green (left), pulls aside the curtain to observe what has transpired. At the top of the painting, a rising sun appears, while below, the whirlpool of chaos exerts its pull back to the underworld. In this painting, the ego steps aside to make way for the Self. I comment on the painting:

The humbled ego with worn-out pride
From its cross descends and steps aside.
With awe it views the eternal bride.
Holy Mother of all, prepare the way.
Unite with your son. In your arms let him
stay.
With creative splendor light the day.
A miracle of wholeness: Life reborn can
grow.
The ice has melted and rivers flow.



46. 1973 Oil on canvas 30" x 30"

APRIL 1973

Three animus figures are put to work in service of the Great Mother. This painting was preceded by a dream:

I am with "Two" who have now accepted me and with another "One" to whom I have been deeply and passionately attached. We are at a crucial place. These Two have grown to love and value me but still maintain a gruff and indifferent pose. I am to leave this One and go with these Two, who are a bit to my left. I can hardly bear to separate from the One and cry out in pain. The One, a green, round-faced, round-eyed woman comes to embrace me and kiss me passionately once more. She encourages me to join these Two and blesses me with all her love and riches. I feel I am being wrenched from my identification with the archetypal Self and drawn into the more conscious duality of human totality. [end of dream]

After I completed the canvas, the image continued to evolve:

I gazed into the crystal ball and saw a great, contained expanse of water. All the energy crystallized in the very center and formed a bright blue flame, a cross, with the brilliance concentrated on the vertical plane. An intense point of fire was at the intersection of the planes. I knew I had to alter my painting to make the cross within the star more dynamic.



47. 1973 Oil on canvas 30" x 30"

NOVEMBER 1973

The impulse to paint this strange dragon-like figure also came from a dream. The dream was quite extensive, but the initial image of a small dragon whose tongue hinged at the front of its mouth and folded inward prompted me to give it form. This hinged tongue directs the fire into the belly of the dragon, where presumably the heat will transform the masculine figures within. The dragon's fire now serves an inner process rather than being projected onto the outer environment.

The little church (lower right) and the scorpion (lower left) also came from a dream:

I am with a seminar group that is attending a ceremony in a familiar church. A lecturer from a foreign country and I leave the group and walk over the rise of the hill, where we see a little shrine-like church in the valley below. This church is partly underground, made of rock, and has a slightly pitched roof over which honeysuckle vines bloom, a living floral tribute. We are awed and go to this church together.

I am late returning to the seminar, and my task of washing the dishes has already been done. I am in the kitchen emptying a small container of refuse into a waste basket and see a dead scorpion in the dirt I empty. [end of dream]

Life and death are incorporated within the shrine we visited, reflecting the nature of the Great

Mother, who is both creator and destroyer. In Greek antiquity, the honeysuckle was an object of religious worship, paralleling the lotus bud.⁸

The scorpion within the heart has been pierced with a sword. In the dictionary of *Myth, Folklore, and Symbol*, in astrological reference, Scorpio indicates, "...a period of conflict and treachery; a season of death."⁹ The scorpion is paired with the moon (left). Discrimination of the dark, scorpion aspects of the feminine could point to a transformation of the dragon aspect of the Great Mother.

In this painting, a *coniunctio* of opposites occurs: sun and moon, tomb and honeysuckle, and scorpion and heart. Once these animus figures are freed from the dragon's belly, a new dimension of creative self-expression might be possible. That my encounter with this dynamic man in the dream makes me late for my usual role as dishwasher indicated a shift from my limited feminine role of conventional domesticity. I might add that I was deeply involved in the analyst's training program at the time of this painting.

⁸ Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols, part I, p. 784.

⁹ Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols, part II, p. 1408.



48. 1973 Oil on canvas 30" x 30"

MARCH 1974

As the well-known saying goes, “the unconscious wants to become conscious, but not quite.” Our unconscious dragons are not easily subdued. Here, the dragon returns and is on top of the situation. The woman kneels before this onslaught, humbly contained within her star, supported by the conjunction of sun and moon. During this time, I was challenged, struggling to conform to the training program requirements that often conflicted with my own sense of inner values.



49. 1974 Oil on canvas 22" x 18"

MARCH 1974

Some resolution of the conflict occurs. The woman, star, and sun are centered, one within another, and as a unit, rest on the moon. Beneath this configuration, the dragon is contained in its own fiery element.

Around the time of this painting, I had the following dream:

I have gone somewhere with several people, including one man who is lame. I am paralyzed, have lost the use of my legs, and am in a wheelchair. We come to a secondhand store, and the lame man is shown a crutch. The salesman says that perhaps I can use the crutch. I ask to try it and attempt to stand. I grasp the crutch and pull myself up. I thought that I would have needed two crutches, but before I know it, I have taken several steps. I then try walking without the crutch, and even though it is painful, I find that I can do it. I think it will be great to go home with the news that I can walk. Maybe I can even dance again. [end of dream]



50. 1974 Oil on canvas 20" x 16"

AUGUST 1974

The theme portrayed in this painting came from a dream in which

a fierce red figure had been run over. I was on the road observing it and wondering what this flattened creature could be.

Here, the great bucolic feminine holds the small ego-woman in her right hand and cradles the head of a fierce devouring beast in her left. The feminine opposites of nurturer and destroyer are contained within the uroboric symbol of nature's eternal return. The jewel that formerly appeared encircled by the serpent in painting #44 is in the lower right.

The dream of this fierce flattened figure was followed by another long, relevant dream within a dream.

Dreaming a dream within a dream implies a deep level of psychic activation. As in the Grail legend, the wounded spirit of the feminine yearns for redemption. I enlarge upon these dreams and

this painting with a poem:

Your wound, Amfortas, may soon be healed.

Behold! The question stands revealed.

Torn from the spell of a dark embrace

The Self shines forth as the chosen place.

Amfortas now at last you rest.

The hero challenged, passed the test.



51. 1974 Oil on canvas 30" x 24"

MARCH 1975

The symbol of uroboric wholeness again appears, but here the serpent creates a feminine *temenos* in which the humanized Great Mother cradles the woman within the bowl of fire. The fierce demon of painting #51 has been transformed to fire contained within the bowl. The sun and star occupy the upper corners, while the new moon rests on a fertile field. The figure of the frog (lower right) is a symbol of glory, inquisitiveness, inspiration, and renewed birth.¹⁰



52. 1975 Oil on canvas 19" x 14"

NOVEMBER 1975

In this mandala-like painting, the archetypal mother and the divine child are centrally positioned, supported by the animus who assumes his creative role within the feminine psyche. As a more conscious, discriminating function, the animus supports the woman in validating her own unique feminine individuality. A monkey, stork, elephant, and frog—all creatures of nature—are in the corners of the painting. This is the first painting in which two trees, as in the Garden of Eden, appear. These trees frame either side of the canvas.



53. 1975 Oil on canvas 27" x 26"

NOVEMBER 1975

Beneath a faintly discernible new moon and star, the King and Queen, contained within the triangle of heaven, embrace the child of their union. Rooted in the underlying triangle of earth, the child reaches up to embrace both King and Queen. The Egyptian goddess figure of an earlier painting (#33) reappears, supporting this divine drama. Within its watery realm, the light-bearing serpent participates, while from her human abode, the woman brings an offering. Within the sun, the Phoenix is transformed in fire.



54. 1975 Oil on canvas 24" x 20"

SEPTEMBER 1976

Following the brief moment of balance reflected in paintings #53 and #54, I am again drawn back into the underground domain. This painting was an attempt to relate to a dream in which I discovered the serpents and the square containers in a cave. Elaborating on that symbolic dream imagery, the sunlight penetrates the cave from above, illuminating a central altar of fire toward which the entwined serpents advance. The human woman shines her light of consciousness upon the serpents and brings an offering of milk. The Great Mother also contributes her light to the drama. Spectral figures emerge from the walls of the cave. Who knows what they will bring?

I dedicated the next three years to fulfilling a bachelor's equivalency while earning a master's degree, completing my training as a Jungian analyst, and becoming licensed as a marriage family therapist (M.F.T.). I did no paintings during this time.



55. 1976 Oil on canvas 26" x 23"

FEBRUARY 1979

After a three-year respite, the psychic drama continued. From the unconscious, a rocky core thrusts up amidst ocean waves. Serpents emerge and reach out to participate in the fiery encounter between the supplicating woman and an assaulting animus with his lacerating talons and explosive ideas. This “divine comedy” continues, observed by barely discernible ghostly eyes in the sky. I completed this painting soon after the death of Hilde Kirsch, who had been my analyst for many years. Hilde validated my journey into the outer world against seemingly insurmountable odds. With her death, my previously projected support for Self-validation had to be won from within.



56. 1979 Oil on canvas 22" x 20"

SEPTEMBER 1979

Seven months later, this painting emerged. The serpent power of the preceding three paintings (#54, #55, and #56) is now portrayed as this green woman who is cradled in the moon, her exposed genitalia sparkling with jewels. The Animus leans down to embrace the archetypal feminine who, with his help, is trying to explore her own mystery. Phallic peaks that had appeared in a painting a decade earlier (#36) reappear to crown this challenging endeavor. In the background, the sun shines over all. I was now exploring and integrating the experience of the archetypal feminine, formerly constellated in my relationship to Hilde.



57. 1979 Oil on canvas 20" x 19"

OCTOBER 1979

This next image emerged one month after I completed painting #57. Here, against the background of sun and moon, the feminine figure stands, crowned with light. She reaches toward the masculine figure who holds the keys to the enlightenment of her spiritual feminine nature. The spider is a meaningful reminder of the dark dimension of feminine totality. In the upper right, a blue bird approaches, while below, the little ego-woman pays homage.



58. 1979 Oil on canvas 21" x 17"

JUNE 1981

The winged, light-bearing archetypal feminine appears holding the foursquare serpent power within the orb of the sun. The helpful animus saves the human woman from drowning within the watery womb of the Great Mother. In her lecture "Queen of Sheba in Bible Legends," Rivkah Schärf Kluger makes a comment that seems relevant to this painting:

"In our day, because of the obvious shadow side of patriarchal thinking, there is a tendency to depreciate patriarchy and idealize matriarchy. But it should not be forgotten that the shadow side of matriarchal origins is chaos, an undifferentiated swamp which yearns for redemption . . . out of which no development would have come without the new principle of Spirit breaking through. The desirable goal . . . is not a 'motherworld' in contrast to a 'fatherworld,' but the *coniunctio* of masculine and feminine."¹¹

¹¹ "Queen of Sheba in Bible Legends," p. 130.



59. 1981 Oil on canvas 18" x 25"

AUGUST 1982

This painting, one of my favorites, was prompted by a dream that I will share in detail:

I am with my Friday afternoon seminar group. In an adjoining room, an unknown woman is working on very meaningful ceremonial clothing for the seminar participants. I am surprised when she calls me into the room to show me what she is making for me: I hadn't asked for anything. Her sketch shows an elongated African woman holding a spear resting on the ground. This composed, regal figure is centered in the universe, standing on the apex of the multifaceted upthrust from the unconscious depths. This sketch is made up of four two-foot squares with the African woman in the upper squares, while the bottom squares contain shafts of shaded orange light rising from the base and emanating upward. It is as if spiritual energy flows from below into the feminine figure above.

I am not sure what the woman intends to do with this ceremonial pattern, but she fits it on my back and tells me she is weaving a jacket for me that carries this design. The jacket will fit over my shoulders and down my back and will give me warmth. I understand that the jacket will be woven of natural fibers, following the colors in the sketch.

Then I am back with the others, and a man in the group tells me that several articles (not people) have been shot. The loss of these articles seems like a sacrifice, but the shots have created round openings that allow information to flow through. Now it will be possible for Henry Pollingyawma, our life-long Hopi friend, to get us the message announcing the Hopi religious ceremony. [end of dream]

In the painting, this elongated woman stands on a glowing pyramid that reflects the differentiated feminine typology formulated by the Jungian analyst Toni Wolff.¹² In Navajo sand paintings, the elongated, stylized human figure, the *yei*, symbolizes a transpersonal life force. Here, validated by the animus, the feminine figure holds her staff of female empowerment. With this dream, a secure sense of Self clicked into place.

¹² "Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche," 1956.



60. 1982 Oil on canvas 30" x 40"

OCTOBER 1986

Four years later, a powerful dream sent me back to my easel:

A four-inch sphere of energy of blue and white streaks is whirling counterclockwise. Another similar sphere, slightly smaller, is whirling clockwise beside it. I observe this and wonder.

Then I am having a session with Hilde Kirsch, who is ill and in bed. Still, there is a wonderful sense of vitality without depressing overtones. Children are playing in the room, and Hilde's black cat is in the kitchen with her kittens nearby. Hilde asks me about these whirling discs and says something about these discs being poison to Sandy, my husband. I say that I do not think they are poison.

I prepare to leave and Hilde gets up. We embrace, and I kiss her cheek, saying how much I love her. I feel her swollen abdomen and assume this is the tumor growing within her. I awake with a wonderful sense of vitality and relatedness. [end of dream]

In this painting, a star is centered within the smaller disc, while the central image within the larger disc is a dreaming Buddha. The exchange of energy between these unequal spheres represents for me a reconstruction of the ego–Self axis. Both the light-carrying serpent and the animus emerge, genie-like, from the fire contained within the Hopi pot (lower right). The discriminating

animus function bridges the two whirling spheres, the personal and the transpersonal dimensions of the psyche. The winged serpent and the cat converge (lower left).

I was in analysis for many years with both Hilde Kirsch and her husband, Dr. James Kirsch. Whereas James served to awaken me intellectually, Hilde grounded me as a woman. She was a stern but reliable mother figure who, as the dream indicates, was going to pass on. While I was relinquishing my emotional dependency on Hilde, this dream supported the enduring constellated Self.



61. 1986 Oil on canvas 36" x 36"

AUGUST 1987

This is my final painting. Now the life-nurturing Great Mother emerges from a well of water, offering nourishment to all. This great, winged maternal figure is situated between the two trees. The laborious journey following eviction from the Garden of Eden has, on a more conscious level, come full circle to the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil and the Tree of Life. No longer naively innocent, the human woman kneels with her small contribution of nourishing consciousness as an offering to the gods. Here, the exchange of personal and transpersonal energy that was symbolized in painting #61 finds a more humanized depiction in which ego and Self exchange offerings.



62. 1987 Oil on canvas 24" x 24"

Active imagination: Bridge to the Inner World

Mother Nature, both creative and destructive, is, in our present age, erupting into chaos. The powerful, dogmatic patriarchal culture, having relegated instinctual nature to the shadow lands of the unconscious, is now challenged to forge a more conscious attitude to this dark, split-off feminine dimension of life. Mankind must establish a conscious relationship to the emerging archetypal force or perish. Consciousness alone will determine how this chthonic, amoral instinctual spirit becomes manifest in life, but how?

Our dreams serve a compensatory function, providing information beyond the limits of ego awareness. Listening to our dreams and respecting them bring insight into this split-off dimension of psychic wholeness. As an even more powerful tool, active imagination provides a bridge between our inner and outer worlds. Marie-Louise von Franz maintains, "Active imagination is . . . *the* most powerful tool in Jungian psychology for achieving wholeness—far more efficient than dream interpretation alone."¹³

When I first considered using my paintings to demonstrate the transformative power of active imagination, I had the good fortune to discover a valuable transcript of a lecture on active imagination given by Barbara Hannah in 1967.¹⁴ In the following remarks, I share with you a brief overview of that important lecture:

The term *active imagination* implies an active and conscious dialogue between the ego and the unconscious images or affects that become activated in the psyche, breaking into and disturbing ego consciousness. This dialogue provides a give and take between inner and outer realms of reality that can round out the awareness of the individual's total personality.

Active imagination is nothing new. Since time immemorial, mankind has naturally turned to some greater power for help or guidance when overcome with disorientation or doubt. Today, however, the rationality of science and technology has usurped the trust in divine intervention, and without some relationship to the transpersonal dimensions of the psyche, we are left trying to control our world through will alone while the unconscious shadow side of our reality assaults us from within.

Jung confronted this wasteland of the soul by allowing himself to venture into the depths of the collective unconscious, and through consciously interacting with the images encountered there, he explored the mystery of those powerful transpersonal forces that operate within the human psyche. Jung's mapping of his journey into the unconscious depths provides a guideline for today's individuals who find themselves fated to take up the task of individuation, the bringing of the unconscious shadow qualities to consciousness and integrating them into the personality in order to be

¹³ From Introduction to Barbara Hannah, *Encounters with the Soul: Active Imagination as Developed by C. J. Jung*, p. 2.

¹⁴ "Active Imagination," 1967.

responsible for one's own wholeness. In contrast to Freud's reductive approach to psychic imagery, Jung viewed the unconscious as a wealth of information that, with conscious integration, provides access to the wholeness of the personality.

According to Hannah, active imagination is an effective way to relate one's limited ego consciousness to that storehouse of unconscious information, making it accessible to the ego's domain. The technique for active imagination, whether visual or auditory, is being able to let things happen . . . and then after taking just enough note of what happened or what was said—entering the scene or conversation actively oneself. If this is not done, phantasizing [*sic*] never becomes active imagination but remains a sort of passive cinema, or one listens, as it were, to a voice on the radio. [Active imagination] is a having-it-out with the unconscious . . . and, for that, it is as necessary to have one's own firm standpoint as to be able to realise [*sic*] that of the unconscious.¹⁵

Both Hannah and Jung stress that active imagination is not for everyone, for such a direct confrontation with the unconscious is not without its perils. Without some acquaintance with the personal unconscious and the shadow side of the personality, the ego is not really on secure ground, and one needs a strong ego in order to confront the amoral forces within the collective unconscious. Hannah warns further, "active imagination should never be undertaken without a firm relationship to someone who will understand, or at least sympathise [*sic*], for it sometimes leads into such cold and inhuman depths that human companionship is absolutely necessary to prevent us from getting entirely frozen and lost."¹⁶

Like Dante, who found that his path led into hell, purgatory, and beyond, those who find themselves drawn into their own divine comedy need a guide to accompany them along the way. If we enter into this underworld encounter, there are no guarantees as to where it will take us. Still, in spite of this need for human support, active imagination is a solitary undertaking: One has to be alone to hear the inner voice of the unconscious.

Having such warnings clearly in mind, Hannah lists six particular conditions¹⁷ where the use of active imagination would seem particularly beneficial:

1) *"When the unconscious is obviously overflowing with phantasies [*sic*], which is particularly often the case with people who are very rational or intellectual."*

For such individuals, active imagination can facilitate contact with the repressed unconscious. The danger is that once they set aside intellectual prejudice, they might be flooded with fantasies that overtake them and rob them of their ability to participate in ordinary life.

¹⁵ "Active Imagination," p. 13.

¹⁶ "Active Imagination," p. 4.

¹⁷ Six conditions are direct quotes from Hannah's transcript, "Active Imagination," pp. 14–24.

2) *“To reduce the number of dreams when there are too many.”*

When we are flooded by the unconscious, we might surmise that something is hammering on our door, wanting to be made conscious.

3) *“...when there were [sic] too few dreams.”*

When there is no dream image upon which to focus, we can use our own mood or emotional disturbance as a starting point. Instead of fighting the discomfort, we can go into it, listen to it, and let it express itself. The response from the unconscious might provide the thread to help disentangle the blockage.

4) *“If someone feels, or if he seems to be under indefinable influences, under a sort of spell, or feels or seems to be behind a sort of glass screen.”*

When losing touch or being cut off from one's own authentic reality, getting to the core of the problem takes humility and digging. The temptation is to explain the discomfort away by labeling it: “It's my anima or animus that's got me.” But it might well be that some unrecognized corner of the psyche is stirred up and patient listening may allow it its voice.

5) *“When the adaptation to life has been injured.”*

When trying to meet the situation that defeats us in the outer world, we often compensate for this injured sense of self with fantasy. The kinds of fantasies in which we behave utterly unlike our ordinary selves are open to suspicion. Genuine active imagination aims at total acceptance of what we are, with all our disabilities and faults, but also aims at enlarging the personality by finding out the many other things we are, but do not know.

6) *“When one falls in the same hole again and again.”*

What unconscious archetypal identification draws one like a magnet to play out some self-defeating role over and over?

In dealing with these areas of psychic distress, active imagination might be helpful. However, this undertaking is serious business, not to be taken lightly, for the archetypal forces underlying the distress are many times more powerful than our

puny ego defenses. For example, in the 1960s, when I shared my paintings at the Jung Institute in Zürich, exposing the general public to such archetypal material was considered a bit risky by some analysts who feared that images of this nature might trigger an incursion of the unconscious for the uninitiated and disrupt the security of their conventional adaptation.

Much has changed since then. Society's conventional, established, secular and religious containers are breaking down, and the hitherto repressed shadow of our patriarchal culture has been unleashed. Mother Nature's dark unconscious forces are ravaging the land, being lived out through senseless violence, sex, drugs, and war. In our present age, it is no longer possible to kill our dragons: they are alive and stirring within the collective psyche. Because collectively, we have not found a more conscious way to relate to them, we are being devoured by them. The collective unconscious has burst its bounds, and for growing numbers, the challenge is to individuate or perish.

As I review the transformation of symbolic imagery that appeared on my canvases, I find, as is so often observed in the inner work, "the unconscious reflects the attitude we turn toward it." By relating to the archetypal forces that formerly had enslaved me, the terrible split between Spirit and Nature, conscious and unconscious, could be reconciled. In forging a relationship to the transpersonal phantoms that haunted the underworld of my psyche, those god-like forces have brought meaning to my life. They support and nourish me as I pursue my own unique journey here on earth.

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