

Politics in a Traumatized World: Dystopia and the Creative Imagination

Papers from the 2024 C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco Presidency Conference



Statue of Liberty by Millie Kutz

Edited by Thomas Singer, Lynn Alicia Franco and Shoshana Fershtman

POLITICS IN A TRAUMATIZED WORLD: DYSTOPIA AND THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

**PAPERS FROM THE 2024 C.G. JUNG INSTITUTE OF SAN
FRANCISCO PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE**

THOMAS SINGER, LYNN ALICIA FRANCO, SHOSHANA FERSHTMAN

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PREFACE

THOMAS SINGER, M.D.

ARAS is honored to publish the papers from the C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco's 7th consecutive Presidency Conference which has been held every four years since 2000. We also published the [papers from the 2020 conference](#) which was a joint effort with the international Analysis and Activism group.

Some may wonder why ARAS, an organization devoted to the study of archetypal images that span cultures and history, would focus on a political election. There are a few reasons. Our U.S. politics have become inseparable from cultural conflicts and these conflicts often touch on archetypal themes embedded in cultural complexes. These cultural complexes express themselves in symbolic images and policies, such as the building of a wall to keep dangerous "others" out of the United States or the threat of the rise of authoritarianism in America and abroad triggering fears of repressive dictatorships, symbolized historically by Hitler or Stalin. There is a precedence for the focus of Analytical Psychology on such matters with Jung's 1968 publication of *Man and his Symbols* as a seminal precursor that linked symbolic images with political upheaval.

In this sense our publication of these papers is in very good company in the Jungian tradition.

A trickier issue in this undertaking is the question of psychological objectivity in the midst of deep turmoil and division. Does being psychologically objective preclude taking sides in a political conflict? Is it a sacred, professional obligation of analysts and other psychological practitioners to remain “neutral” and “objective” in the struggles of individuals and groups to work out their problems. Some would argue that this neutrality and objectivity are the bedrocks of a solid analytic stance.

Those of us engaged in the study of the interface of politics and psychology have come to a somewhat different conclusion over time. This has not been without soul searching as to the tension between our roles as analysts and our roles as citizens. We have witnessed how newspapers struggled for a long time with labeling Trump’s many lies as lies because somehow the role of journalists was to remain impartial, fair, and balanced. It was not kosher to label a politician a “liar”. Journalists have long since jettisoned that pretense and many have simply become agents of propaganda machines on either the right or left. We do not disown our responsibility to be as psychologically objective as possible, fully aware that our own personal and cultural complexes can obscure our vision as if looking through a glass darkly. But we also embrace the position so eloquently articulated by Robert Jay Lifton, the preeminent scholar of the psychological underpinnings of the most devastating collective events in the 20th and early 21st century, including the bombing of Hiroshima and the mass murders of the holocaust in World War Two. Lifton urges us as psychotherapists of all persuasions to practice “professional witnessing”.

Lifton developed the notion of "professional witnessing" in the context of observing that, in some circumstances, a society can become numb to moral values and the consequences of its actions. An extreme example of this was revealed in his study of Nazi concentration camp doctors. The moral numbing of the doctors who conducted unconscionable human experiments as well as selecting people for the gas chambers led Lifton to the notion that a whole society can learn to accept as normal what is in fact abnormal and malignant. The malignancy is that the toxic spread of dreadful behaviors begins to be viewed as normal. In these circumstances, it is the role of trained observers to act as "professional witnesses" to "the malignant normality" that has overtaken a society. It is in the spirit of acting as "professional witnesses" that the contributors to this book have offered their work. The role of serving as a "professional witness" straddles the enormous, at times impossible, tension of being both psychologically objective and politically engaged.

Thomas Singer, MD

President of the Board

National ARAS (The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism)

CONTRIBUTORS

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Alan G. Vaughan, PhD, JD delivered an important paper that will be published in a future book: “The Archetype of Justice, Dystopia, and Shadow Phenomena in the U.S. Supreme Court.” John Beebe served as an astute moderator and commentator throughout the conference. We are grateful to the C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco for hosting this 7th consecutive Presidency Conference since 2000. Headed by Carolyn Bray, the Extended Education Committee of the C.G. Jung Institute was unfailing in its support of this program through the efforts of Roland Martin, the Director of Extended Education, Beth Cloutier, the IT specialist who managed all of the technical aspects of the live and virtual production, and Steve Hargis-Bullen, the Executive Director of the C.G. Jung Institute who was helpful in every step of the creation of the conference. Thank you to the staff at the event, Mandy Wang and Matt Switzer. And finally, we are grateful to National ARAS and its Director, Allison Tuzo, for once again providing the perfect vehicle for producing and distributing this unique collection of papers.

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**INTRODUCTION: REMARKS ON THE 2024
PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE**

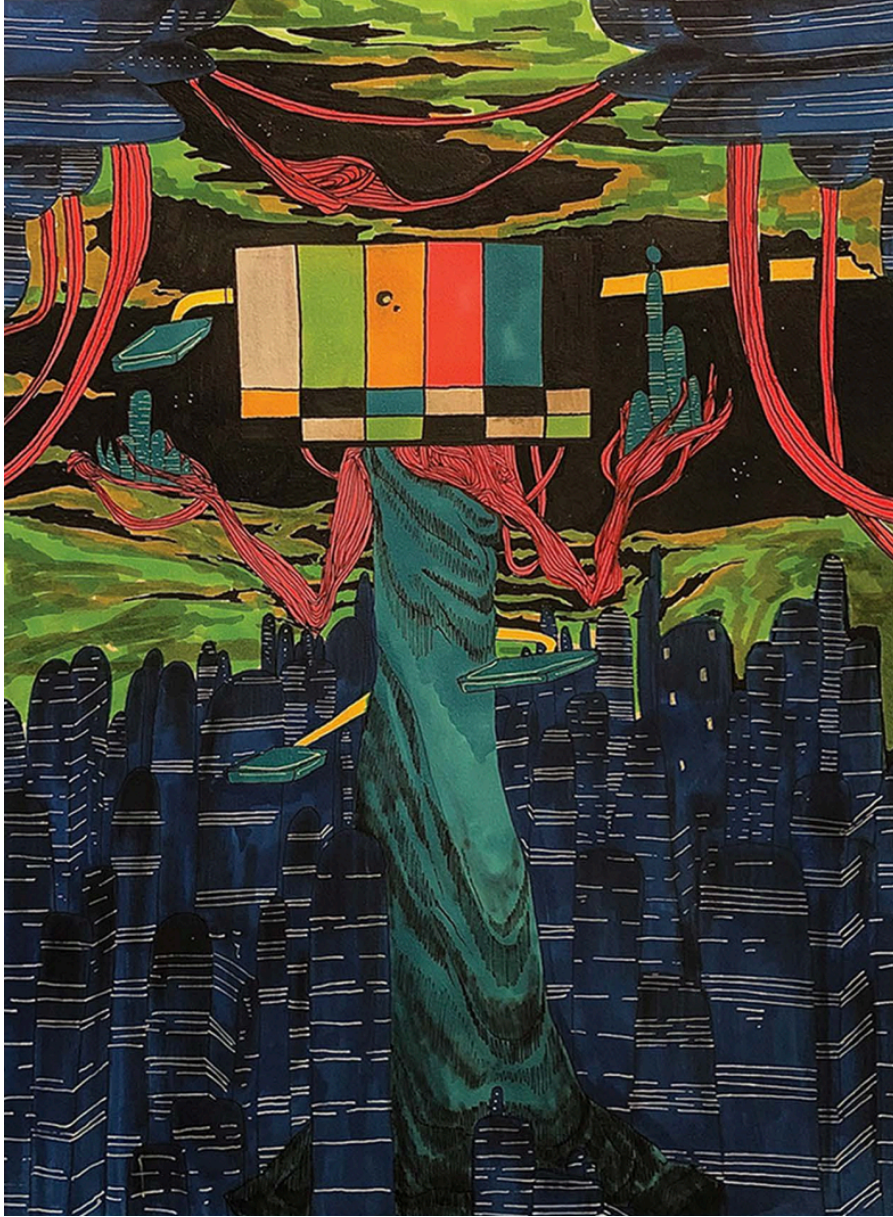
**THOMAS SINGER, LYNN ALICIA FRANCO AND SHOSHANNA
FERSHTMAN**

THOMAS SINGER:

When I stood up to open our Institute's 7th consecutive Presidency Conference since 2000, I was surprised by the first words that spontaneously popped out of my mouth before I started to deliver my prepared welcoming remarks. I said something like: "A very warm welcome to everyone on this.....I don't know what kind of occasion you'd call it. I don't know if we're here for a wake or I just don't know what it is. I guess none of us know what it is—and that's why we're all together because we're going to huddle together and hold one another's hands." As it turned out, it was indeed an anticipatory wake in terms of the outcome of the election and it also turned out to be something much more, a sense of which I will try to evoke in my reflections. Among other things, we were acknowledging losses and trauma in America's past, present and future—and, at another level, we were celebrating the remarkable vitality and durability of the soul in its

individual and group expressions—of which there was a wondrous overflow in the three-day conference. Here is what I went on to say in my prepared welcoming remarks:

I am especially grateful that we are able to come together in this perilous moment. It feels as though we are living in a mad house—in the United States and in the whole world. We are fortunate this weekend to be part of a community of concerned citizens that wants to share thoughts, feelings experiences and **most essentially to find communitas at a time of enormous shared stress and deep consequence.** Perhaps we can also share a bit of wisdom with one another at the interface of politics, psychology, history, mythology and possibly even spirituality.



Statue of Liberty by Millie Kutz

We chose Millie Kutz's picture of The Statue of Liberty as the symbolic image of this 2024 conference because it evokes so elegantly and numinously the deep ambiguity and challenges of this moment. Gathered together in person and virtually, we are suspended in a liminal, agitated, and dangerous dance about what freedom means to us, caught between illusion and reality in which our

individual and collective futures are at stake, not being sure what we can trust or where we are headed. As a wired society, our democracy is being profoundly transformed by how we experience reality and profoundly threatened by lies, disinformation, conspiracism and very different ideas of who we are and want to be as a people. As has also happened several times in the past, it is clear that many in our society no longer embrace the plaque at the base of the Statue of Liberty:

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.”

In this conference, we are metaphorically huddled together in what I imagine to be a live and virtual group “fireside chat”, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt called his cozy radio talks to the American people from 1933-1944 at a time of great national trial that included recovery from the Great Depression and the waging of World War 2 against Hitler’s Naziism and Japanese imperialism. Just as our country needed hope, support, and the capacity to look great dangers directly in the eye, we need this community to share our ideas, hopes, and dreads. Soren Kierkegaard’s phrase “in fear and trembling” keeps coming to mind and gripping my emotions. It originates in the Psalms:

“Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.”

Listen to Kierkegaard elaborate on the attitude required for such moments, for feeling so endangered.

And this is the simple truth—that to live is to feel oneself lost. He who accepts it has already begun to find himself, to be on firm ground. Instinctively, as do the shipwrecked, he will look around for something to which to cling, and that tragic, ruthless glance, absolutely sincere, because it is a question of his salvation, will cause him to bring order into the chaos of his life. These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce.¹

Finally, I want to convene this conference as a kind of communal prayer in the spirit of Olga Tokarczuk, the Polish, Nobel Prize–winning novelist, who states in *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*: “It’s a good thing that God, if he exists, and even if he doesn’t, gives us a place where we can think in peace. Perhaps that’s the whole point of prayer—to think to yourself in peace, to want nothing, to ask for nothing.”¹

The invocation to the conference with those two powerful quotes launched us into a series of remarkable presentations and audience responses that took us on a descent into an underworld populated by many individual and collective souls. The overall effect of this descent on those of us attending the conference was a widening and deepening of our emotional experiences and perspectives on multiple issues haunting the US collective psyche, including abortion, gun control, immigration, racism, misogyny, homophobia, environmental degradation, the denial of American abuses and inequities at home and abroad and the insistence on American innocence and exceptionalism. The papers were

so soulful that we truly journeyed with one another into the American underworld at personal, cultural and archetypal levels—all at the same time. The effect of this shared journey was both traumatizing and exhilarating in the sense of actually entering into the psychic reality of so many issues which, in their sound byte simplistic repetition in political rhetoric are otherwise numbing and without any feeling of connecting to ourselves or with one another. Instead of responding to the endless flotsam and jetsam of political posturing and warfare in which fragments of issues bob around like so much “floating islands of garbage” triggering potent cultural complexes that generate enormous emotional heat and no light, our presenters and the audience’s participation allowed us to get a real in-depth sense of the substantive issues at many levels simultaneously. It was a far different, liberating and more long-lasting experience from the race horse “gotcha” mentality of political babble that we have to endure endlessly. So much individual and group soul came alive in the conference that we ended up singing Amazing Grace twice together. A creative and moving set of papers and an equally wonderful, receptive audience participation combined to elicit an outpouring of deeply moving expressions throughout the three-day conference—**a genuine experience of communitas came alive.**

LYNN ALICIA FRANCO:

Together we built a conference and felt a community.

The presidency conference produced a grounded experience of relational reality. It presented us with a vision of the value and beauty of creating together.



As I reflect, with the election results in, I better understand why I was reminded in the aftermath of the conference of the Lakota Elder, Black Elk's vision after the sacred hoop of his people was broken by a massacre by white settlers. In his vision he planted a stick in the center of an unbroken hoop and saw the stick become a blooming tree...The experience of the C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco's 2024 Presidency Conference

settled in like a vision of a golden autumn aspen forest just before the leaves are blown away by the winter storms.

It began with Tom's creative vision over 25 years ago when he brought together esteemed colleagues to converse about psychology and politics at the Bolinas Conference. The groundbreaking papers from that initial event were collected in *The Vision Thing: Myth, Politics, and Psyche in the World*. It subsequently evolved into the seven consecutive Presidency Conferences that have occurred every four years before each American election since 2000.

This year, 2024, as Tom noted in his opening remarks, Shoshana and I joined him to build a conference, reckoning in "fear and trembling" about the "Mind of State" that was being torn apart by powerful, shortsighted, incompetent, demagogic forces. Our anxieties were warranted—a disastrous future loomed ahead for America and for the world. We prayed that our project would not unconsciously replicate the craziness being infected by polarized patterns of self-interested conflicts. And we quietly prayed that chaos would not dominate the multitude of details we needed to attend to. We focused and helped each other stay focused. We dialogued, mulled over ideas and tasks and assumed responsibilities. Decisions were made mutually and actions taken individually with surprising ease as it seemed we each desired to unearth a deeper experience of what political thought and action coupled with psychological reflection might be, apart from what was activated in our own political psyches at the collective level of tensions and confusions. We asked ourselves what national topics were pressing and who in our community and other psychological colleagues could address the themes we felt to be

relevant. We asked speakers to address their interest from their personal experiences and were grateful for how willing they were to plumb their own depths.

The balm for our anxieties came through the trust we developed working together, guided by our feelings, intuitions and thoughts. Prior experiences with each other's talents, styles, and foibles had taught us that our personal ethos and idiosyncrasies were unique qualities that would be respected. Ultimately, we respected each other's sensibilities and the wisdom within our differences. We needed and were supported by the extremely competent assistance of our executive director, Steve Hargis-Bullen, our program manager, Roland Martin and in the conference, by our virtual technologist, Beth Cloutier.

Working together with the staff and with the conference presenters was a tremendous gift. We felt friendships develop as we drew closer to one another. The process itself brought us continual consciousness about living and caring for our fellow human beings. In a sense, our work to construct a conference was an energetic meditation, giving us the space to breathe more deeply.

Tom opened the conference asking us to consider our endeavor to be a communal prayer, subtly invoking a sacred atmosphere that graced us with a thin veil of communal protection. In the conference we were a group of individual voices and, though differing, each of us was seen and heard. The cadences in our communications respected what we believed and felt to be true, and mostly, we were listened to and listened to what we did not know. We learned from one another. Each presentation came from a heart that beat with authentic, personal wisdom.

We became connected and experienced “communitas.”

To give you an image of what I am referring to as “golden trees before the winter storms,” let me describe a small but powerful synchronistic moment. Several years ago, at an Activism and Analysis conference in Slovenia, I heard Carolyn Bates, a Jungian Analyst from Austin, Texas, give a powerful paper on the massacre in Uvalde, Texas, and invited her to present with us. We also invited Rob Tyminski to speak about his clinical experiences and insights of the alienation in today’s youth. Robert spoken of the “belle indifference” of the young men he worked with when he asked for their thoughts and feelings of the political climate. Then, when Carolyn ended her talk with slides of the young men who had massacred others, and asked, “Do you see a killer in their eyes?” We were stunned by faces of young innocent youths. A man in the audience stood up, stated he had driven from Sacramento, 3 hours away, to come to this conference because of the topic of guns and young men. He went on to say, he had been a police officer, and now was training to become a psychotherapist. He felt police training had not equipped him to work with the violent nature of alienation in young men. Carolyn then exclaimed that her husband too had been a cop and left the force, also feeling undone by our country’s relationship to guns. Silently, with great sadness we were feeling a stunning interconnectedness in our despair.

There were many other special moments I could relate, but I’ll conclude with another example of our interconnectedness--one that came across land and sea from England. Ruth Williams, a fellow Jungian Analyst who attended the conference virtually wrote in the Analysis & Activism listserv of a dream she had the night after the conference, and with her permission, I shall relay it to you:

“The leader of Israel was being taken to a meeting to agree to abide by a plan for settlement of the war. He was an old Rabbi with dark hair and no skull cap, who looked quite disheveled. He was brought in by the two people to a small cupboard where he had to squeeze in and bow down to take an oath. He could have faked it by not fully prostrating himself, but he fully bowed with his head to the floor. When he came out of the cupboard, he proudly told the two men who had built the cupboard, “this is a freestanding unit.”

Ruth commented that she felt a kind of optimism in reaction to the Rabbis’ willingness to prostrate himself and take an oath. This is not her normal, waking life feeling about current events. She also found it curious that this posture could only be taken behind closed doors. She was struck by the reverent tone in the dream, a tone she experienced in the conference as well.

I thought the Rabbi’s willingness to prostrate himself in her dream offered us a needed vision of humility. I heard this collective dream as pointing to the necessity for us to surrender in humble atonement. Shoshana shared with me that the image of the rabbi fully prostrating in the small traveling vestibule brought to mind the High Priest fully prostrating in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, which was done on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Only on that day did he enter the Holy of Holies, alone, and do a full prostration, seeking atonement on behalf of all the people, praying that all would be forgiven, washed clean. We were both taken with the recognition that what had been constructed was free-standing—a portable inner construction, not an attached, one that we could carry with us.

Shoshana went on to say, “This Yom Kippur, (about a week before the conference) we did a guided meditation of the full prostration in my progressive Jewish community in

Sonoma County. We invoked Tim Walz's words of "leaving it all on the field" as we fully prostrated. I think that's what we did at the conference. We left it all on the field.”

We ended the conference singing “Amazing Grace.” We were graced by the mutuality we held, not of sameness, but of differences that were genuinely respected. We were able to transcend difference. We found common ground in the enjoyment of one another. And I pray for us. May the work of creating together continue to sustain how we care for each other.

Lynn Alicia Franco, LCSW, is a bilingual and multicultural Analyst-Member of the C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco. She identifies as a “white” Latinx Colombian Immigrant with Jewish and Catholic ancestry. Besides her analytic and consulting practice, she is engaged in many CGJISF educational programs, and most significantly, has co-chaired the Diversity and Inclusivity Committee from 2015-2024.

SHOSHANA FERSHTMAN:

The Presidency conference felt like a shamanic journey of descent and emergence. As we began our conference, Tom Singer called on the wisdom of San Francisco Jung Institute founder Joseph Henderson, to remind us that we are on the threshold of a collective initiation.

Singer reflects that Trump carries the chaos of the trickster archetype that, during the ancient ritual of Carnival, precedes the re-establishment of a new order. Yet, if this energy is unchecked, it can devolve the collective into further chaos. I found it meaningful that we began and ended the conference with archetypal images that could lead to either the establishment or collapse of a new order.

CG Jung believed we were entering a new Aeon but warned that the path would be perilous. Lance Owens cites Jung's observations from 1955:

“We now stand at the threshold of ... an epochal turning of perspective.... This is a period of darkness, dissolution, and inevitable psychic disruption. But there will be a new dawn. As the old age fragments and fractures, deep seams are rent open, and from forgotten depths, an ageless treasure will emerge.... And with it will come a new perception of man and woman and God and their intimate relationship.”ⁱ



Illustration on Tabula Smaragdina

Jung recognized that to find our way to this new dawn, we must first descend and find what has been disowned, discarded and unresolved in the collective psyche.

Another of our Institute ancestors, Betty DeShong Meador, gave us the great gift of interpreting the Sumerian tablets of the Myth of Inanna from the third millennium BCE, written by the first known poet, the High Priestess Enheduanna . I believe this myth

offers a powerful archetypal frame for understanding the themes that emerged during our Presidency conference—"the Great Turning," the "hinge of history"—in which we find ourselves.

Sharon Heath speaks of the Great Goddesses who carry the blood mysteries of the Feminine—and who terrify the patriarchy with their powers over life and death. In the Inanna myth, the Great Mesopotamian Goddess Ereshkigal, originally the Earth Goddess Herself, once held in such reverence, guarding the streams, the forests, Mistress of the animals, the great Ereshkigal, sister of Inanna, Queen of Heaven, has been banished by the emerging patriarchal gods to the underworld, her realm usurped by those driven by lust and power. They have upended the balance of power and they have destroyed the natural order of things.

Ereshkigal, in the underworld, among all that has been devalued, destroyed in their wake, vacillates between rage and unbearable grief... for what has died—the sacred chthonic masculine, the bull god Gugalana that was her beloved.

And yet, she feels growing within her a new life—something is being born amidst all this death and destruction. Ereshkigal cannot simply give over to the despair—she must hold on for the sake of this new life. She is torn apart by the grief for the loss of her beloved and the need to stay present for the sake of this new potential life that needs her to gestate it—she is the tomb/womb mother—that is all of us.

THE DESCENT



The Gate to the Great Below

~2000 BCE, Mesopotamia (Iraq)

We must come and find her. We must come and help her. We must come and see what lives in her realm. We, Inanna and her beloved Dumuzi, who have been indulging in the sensual pleasures of the upper world, shopping, playing, streaming, drinking, texting, sexting, it is time to put down our devices—it is time to surrender our garments at the gates of the guardians of the underworld and make our way.

Ipek Burnett speaks of the need for us to face those aspects of our collective history to which we have turned a blind eye. She reminds us of James Hillman’s wisdom that in this time, we need to shed our innocence and remember those who made the descent:

“Going on now means going downward into the faults of our culture and backward into the griefs of its memories. Today we need heroes of descent...”

Legendary heroes of the ancient world—all descended into hell to learn other values than those that rule the daily business of sunlit life. They came back with a darker eye that can see in a dark time.”ⁱⁱ

Inanna is one of the earliest myths of initiatory descent on behalf of the collective, a recurring theme of the Conference. The Sumerian high priestess Enheduanna, wrote of the Goddess Inanna in 2300 BCE:

“From the great heaven the goddess set her mind on the great below.

From the great heaven Inanna set her mind on the great below.

My mistress abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the underworld.

Inanna abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the underworld.”



Cylinder seal depicting Inanna c. 2334–2154 BCE Mesopotamia (Iraq)

Inanna begins her descent, forced to surrender the *mes*, the garments of power that she took from her father, the god Enki, when he was in a drunken state. She must face what her privilege protected her from—the collective trauma she could /would not see from her throne in the upper world. At the first gates, she meets the enormity of what she has turned from.

Robert Jay Lifton, who has spent his life chronicling collective trauma, invites us to become moral witnesses to the malignant normalization of evil. Betty Teng shows us how trauma is healed through coming to terms with all that has been pushed into the force field of forgetting—the land itself built on genocide of Native peoples, the wealth of the nation generated by the enslavement and continued economic exploitation of African American peoples, the forced labor and dehumanization of Asian and Latin American peoples.

Racism has been used by those with power to divide and conquer poor and working-class white people whose common interests with people of color might have caused—did cause—alliances to form that threatened the power elites. Teng shows us the trauma of our frozen grief—how we have yet to mourn the losses of all peoples suffered in the Civil War, the Great War, World War II, Vietnam, and the endless wars since.

There are so many losses we have not grieved—the trails of tears, the westward expansion in which half the peoples making the journey died, in which tens of thousands of indigenous peoples were killed, starved off their land on which they lived for millennia... the collective grief, rage, horror, is unbearable...

How many *mes*, how many garments do we have to strip off? Would we have any skin left?

How do we surrender? What do we hold on to?

Now she hits a wall. She cannot descend further. “There is a pain so utter...”

Joseph Henderson wisely observed that there can be no initiation without the presence of a loving Mother.

And so, here we are America. Here we are western civilization. Here we are patriarchy. We have killed the mother. We have banished Her to the underworld and there She lives, raging and grieving and threatening to destroy us all in Her wake, with Her fires and floods and we have no way to reach Her because without Her, there is no redemption.

And without Her, we cannot find Her. And so here we are. Lost. In our lostness, we build walls. As Donald Kalsched explains, when the holding presence of a loving mother is absent, we build self-care systems.

Monica Luci, who works with survivors of torture, explains how when we do not have the maternal support to develop a healthy skin ego, we may feel comforted by more defensive structures such as walls and borders that create a sense of inclusion and exclusion.

Luci suggests that “the sensory experience of both the human and non-human environment for a group is a base for the elaboration of a group psychic skin for its members,” what Jung called a *participation mystique*. Luci notes that the risk of such

participation mystique is “what Jung describes as the road to mass psychosis and psychic infection... ‘Wherever social conditions of this type develop on a large scale the road to tyranny lies open and the freedom of the individual turns into spiritual and physical slavery’ (Jung 1957, para 500-503).”

The antidote, as Jung taught us, is individuation—each of us resisting the pull to collective dissociation. Donald Kalsched shows us how, as the innocent parts of us begin to suffer reality, each person shares “to some small degree in in carrying the suffering of mankind, in bearing a tiny part of the darkness of the world.” (Kalsched, citing Simone Weil at p. 59)

Inanna finds her way to the underworld and faces her grieving sister. Ereshkigal places Inanna on the meat hook, where she dies to her old self. Here we all are, on the meat hook. Facing the grief, the rage, the unbearable. Can we bear it? Can we bear being torn apart by it?

Alan Vaughan shows us how we are met in the depths by the Egyptian Goddess Ma’at, archetype of universal justice and cosmic balance. She weighs our souls on the scales against the ostrich feather of truth. She shows us how we have been tricked by the dark money trail. Vaughan documents how advocates of systemic racism and wealth inequality such as the Heritage Foundation and similar dark money interests have amassed great wealth to systematically dismantle our justice system. The scales have been weighted against Ma’at, against justice, against truth. In the last year billions of dollars have been raised by dark money interests to buy the courts, to buy the elections.

The *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision upended limits on campaign contributions, opening the way for billionaires to buy our electorate.

It is time to wake up. It is time to grow eyes that see in the dark.

Last year, I had a surgery to remove a benign growth on my pituitary. As the obstruction was removed from my third eye, I had a dream while recovering in the hospital. In it, I am holding a statue of the Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth, husband of Ma'at. His right eye is in place, but his left eye is dislocated. As I gently put his left eye into place with my hand, something is set in motion. I see a long line of ancestors begin to ascend from a spiral staircase from the great below. They carry with them, not only the traumas of the past, but also Wisdom. Strength. Beauty. Power. Guidance. Mana. The oldest of the old are with us. Guiding us.

Ma'at. Thoth. Something is moving in the fire at the center of the earth. Something is moving. Inanna is removed from the meat hook. She begins her ascent from the great below.

Arriving now at the earth's surface, the transformed Feminine invites her Beloved, Dumuzi, to descend. He refuses.

DUMUZI AND HEALING THE MASCULINE

Dumuzi, the masculine, will not make the descent. The masculine that is terrified.

The masculine that has lost his connection with the nurturing mother. The masculine that has lost the guiding reasonable father. That has retreated into reactive anger.

Carolyn Bates speaks about the collective trauma of mass shootings and the most recent tragedy in Uvalde, Texas. She notes that “promoting violence in white men walks hand in hand with the long held American tradition of promoting in those white men who are vulnerable to its seduction, permission to take what they will: Manifest Destiny etched deeply into individual psyches.” The glorification of the lone cowboy gunman archetype in American culture “also promotes in white men the Western heroic ideal of the individual who fights for one’s rights against all odds, an ideal that glorifies and pedestalizes individuality—and in that glorifying—denies the individual’s absolute need for the collective experiment that we call Society. To admit a need for the collective is to admit to vulnerability which, in the eyes of Western patriarchy, is suspect.”

Robert Tyminski notes that the overwhelming sense of powerlessness that many youth feel is masked by *la belle indifférence*, a feigned indifference as a coping mechanism for powerlessness.

What is the medicine that will help us here? What will help the youth, the alienated young men descend and meet the moment?

Perhaps to know that you are not alone. Dumuzi is terrified of the descent. And then, Geshtinanna steps in. His beloved sister. “Dumuzi,” she says. “I will go with you. I will descend with you. I will spend half the year in the underworld with Ereshkigal. You do not need to face the terrified/terrifying mother, the dying and rebirthing mother, the

tomb/womb Mother Goddess alone. We will be with Her together. Together we will tend to Her.”

Patricia Damery shows us the spirit of Geshtinanna, inviting Dumuzi from the orchard into the depths. She recounts how the people of her community in Napa, in profound grief as the thousand-year oaks are ripped from the soil, gather to form a forest of support to each other. Men and women in community, holding each other up, standing for and with Mother Earth, facing down the blades of the soulless machine, trembling, together, in love.

QiRe Ching shows us a different masculine, a father that might guide the young masculine, into the descent, as St. Joseph, Jesus’s father, guided his son, to a life of sacrifice, a life made sacred, a life of descent and resurrection, like Inanna’s. St. Joseph, like the Biblical Joseph, who descended to the depths, into the darkness of the dungeons of Pharaoh, and there found the light of the infinite, the light of the *tsohar*, the primordial light.

What is that humble masculine that can guide us to offer our lives to something larger?
To sacrifice the small life of the ego in service to the path of the Self?

Ching shows us a masculine that is not the hero, but an expression of the strength of the one that lives in humility, like his grandfather roasting peanuts to support the family without ever letting anyone know how many hours, days, years he has offered this sacrifice, so that the next generation could go further, a masculine that is in service to the collective good, not the apex predator cowboy masculine.

There is such a need for the healed masculine. Inanna's own father Enki undergoes a transformation in the myth. In the beginning, he is drunk and she is able to steal the *mes* (sacred powers) from him. He is abandoning his authority, he is untrustworthy. But she cannot carry the *mes* alone. So she must surrender them and go through the descent. When she is on the meat hook, when she is dying from the sheer unbearability of facing Ereshkigal's pain and all that has been disowned in the upper world, it is her father Enki that sends helpers formed from the dirt under his fingernails. It is the chthonic masculine that resurrects her. The collective needs the chthonic masculine, the restoration of the trustworthy father and guide.

We are living in a time of chaos, where the mad king has taken the throne. Betty Sue Flowers shows us how to come out of the trance of kayfabe and move our reigning paradigm from the circus we have been caught in, to one in which the vision is of Gaia consciousness, of deep interdependence. A collective vision in service of the whole.

THE CONIUNCTIO AND THE POSSIBILITY OF REBIRTH

The chthonic masculine intelligence of the presenters, along with their deep feminine wisdom, modeled the coniunctio of what might be possible in the time that is coming.

CG Jung, reflecting in the aftermath of World War II on the overwhelming psychological power of mass movements such as fascism and communism, hoped that the work of individuation might enable people to develop enough ego strength to resist the collective pull of such complexes. Writing in 1958, he asked,

“What will the future bring? From time immemorial this question has occupied human minds... Everywhere in the West there are [those who] hold the incendiary torches ready, with nothing to stop the spread of their ideas except the critical reason of a single, intelligent, mentally stable stratum of the population.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Andrew Samuels invites us to reflect on how to become good enough citizen-leaders, each of us taking responsibility for our collective, each having undergone the journey of inner transformation. This is truly what is being asked of us as we face the days ahead. We are each of us now, called on to be the guardrails of our democracy.

One of the four archetypes of leadership that Samuels offers is the ostrich. A few days following the conference, I happened upon an article about the Egyptian god Shu, who wears an ostrich feather on his head. Shu symbolizes the potential birth of a new world.

Scholar Karen Krista Rodin writes that ostrich eggs symbolize wealth, fertility, renewal and rebirth.

Shu and Ma’at’s ostrich feathers [represent] the universal world order that holds the elements of the cosmos in place. If the elements become imbalanced, i.e., do not harmonize based on primordially established patterns and cycles, then the universe reverts to unformed chaos.^{iv}

And so here we are, at the hinge of history, the Great Turning, protecting the ostrich eggs, with great care, guardians of the fragile possibility of renewal and rebirth.



Egyptian Desert Rock Carvings of Ostriches, ca. 4000 BCE

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ⁱ Lance S. Owens, *Jung and Aion: Time, Vision, and a Wayfaring Man*, *Psych. Perspectives*, 2011, p. 265, citing CG Jung, *Letters*, Vol II, 25 Feb 1955, 229. “Transitions between the aeons always seem to have been melancholy and despairing times, as for instance the collapse of the Old Kingdom in Egypt between Taurus and Aries, or the melancholy of the Augustinian age between Aries and Pisces. And now we are moving into Aquarius. . . . And we are only at the beginning of this apocalyptic development! Already I am a great-grandfather twice over and see those distant generations growing up who long after we are gone will spend their lives in that darkness.”

ⁱⁱ James Hillman, *Kinds of Power* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 49.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 1958.

^{iv} Krista Karen Rodin, “From Heaven to Hell, Virgin Mother to Witch: The Evolution of the Great Goddess of Egypt,” in *Goddesses in Myth, History and Culture* (Mago Books, 2019), p. 175.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ABORTION OF DEMOCRACY'S PROMISE: FEAR AND DESECRATION OF THE FEMININE

SHARON HEATH, M.A.

When Tom Singer asked me if I'd be interested in speaking to this conference about women's rights, and particularly about abortion, I felt honored, but as I sat with the topic, a certain weariness overcame me at the prospect of reiterating the increasingly draconian, post-Dobbs state laws violating the safety and integrity of women and girls, their families, and their health care providers. What I *did* feel called to speak about were the souls' stories underlying the issues, stories that arise from our personal remembrances, choices, acts of adaptation or creation, and even the failures that so liberally mark each of our journeys.

It feels just right for us to be gathering here in San Francisco, to paraphrase Jackson Browne, “at the edge of this country, our backs to the sea, looking east,”¹ at a time when the collective psyche is so viciously at war with itself, when each of our inner capacities for image and nuance can become obscured by polarizing slogans, the seductive lure of shadow projection, and superficial sound bites on social media and from what passes for news these days.

Jung’s friend and admirer Sir Laurens van der Post once said that Jung felt that every human being has a story, and that neurosis occurs when the world rejects that story. Not exactly what we teach budding analysts, but I find it as useful a guide as any into the murky waters roiling under the surface of the abortion debate. Approaching how the persecutory attacks on reproductive rights have spread across state lines like an increasingly toxic effluvium, my imagination floats amid the fleshly bodies of women, their wombs, miscarriages, abortions, fertility treatments, contraception, fetuses and babies at every stage of development, and what we Jungians like to call the Feminine.

Jung tended to that word in several different ways, sometimes posing it in regard to actual women and sometimes to the anima, frequently as a quality of relatedness, and often as the principle of wholeness vs. the masculine principle of perfection. Being a creative bunch, post-Jungians have themselves defined the Feminine in a variety of ways.

Marion Woodman put her stamp on the word with these reflections in 1987: “Feminine consciousness...means... grounding and recognizing who you are as a soul. It has to do

¹ Jackson Browne, Jeff Young, Kevin McCormick, Scott Thurston, Mark Goldenberg, Mauricio Lewak, Luis Conte. (1996). Looking East. On *Looking East*. Elektra Entertainment Group.

with love, with receiving,...with surrendering to your own destiny,...recognizing with full consciousness your strengths, your limitations.”²

While I concur that conscious receptivity to one’s fate is crucial for wisdom, I’ll be diverging from Marion’s emphasis on the receptive nature of the feminine. Instead, I’d like us to consider the many ways in which the Feminine has been imaged in myth and folklore throughout the ages and across cultures: with tenderness and violence, motherliness and sexual abandon, lostness and reunion, redemption and humor, brokenness and despair, the mysteries of the afterlife, this earthy world, and the stars.

Think of Kali, about whom the late poet May Sarton wrote:

...she must have her dreadful empire first.

Until the prisons of the mind are broken free.

And every suffering center at its worst.

Can be appealed to her dark mystery.³

Think of the Hindu She-Who-is-Never-Not-Broken goddess, Akhilandeshvari; the lion-headed Egyptian Sekmet—warrior, healer, spreader of disease; one of my own favorites, the bawdy Baubo, who with her penchant for naked hoochie-coochie dancing and loud farting, was the only one able to make the grieving Demeter laugh; the Mexican La Llorona, grieving her children, whom she’s killed in a primitive rage; shapeshifting

² *Parabola* Editors. (1987). Worshipping illusions: An interview with Marion Woodman. *Parabola* 12:2. Summer, 1987: “Addiction.”

³ Sarton, May. (1971). *The Invocation to Kali*. A grain of mustard seed: New poems. W.W. Norton & Company.

Celtic the Morrigan, linked to battle, prophecy, and magic; Ereshkigal, the Mesopotamian goddess of death, transformation, and the afterlife; the Haitian healer of spiritual death, Maman Brigitte; the erotically empowered Lilith, born co-equally from the Earth with Adam; the Buddhist Kwan Yin, who compassionately “hears the cries of the world.”

Starting as a little girl falling asleep to secrets shared by the women in my family and extending to my experiences over the years as an analyst, I’ve listened to countless women’s stories of births, miscarriages, and abortions. Of women experiencing a fetus as an invasive alien; or nearly dying in childbirth; or heartbroken over the failure to conceive; or feeling no itch at all for motherhood; or suffering an ectopic pregnancy; or anxiously leaving fertilized eggs in frozen limbo; or having been nearly aborted by their mothers. The women I’ve known have engaged with the reproductive dimension of womanhood in their own unique ways. As have I. Which leads me to ask us to be generously expansive as we consider the battle around reproductive rights in the context of the unruly embodiment of what life on this vast planet requires of us and actually feels like.

With that, let’s turn to abortion. According to the *Online Etymological Dictionary*,⁴ the word was first coined in the 1500s from the Latin *aboriri*, which conveyed notions of failure, disappearance, and fading away, used in relation to deaths, miscarriages, and even sunsets. *Abortio* referred to an appearance, an arising, a birthing gone amiss. For our purposes, that something is a pregnancy, that germinal state of what has not yet

⁴ Abortion. 2024. In etymonline.com. Retrieved February 2, 2024, from <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=Abortion>.

come into incarnation that, once it is sensed or known, occupies the imagination of the mother.

At a woman's first apprehension that she is "with child," the fruitfulness of the world and the extremely personal impersonality of fate begin to quiver inside her. Does she feel excited or blessed, ambivalent or frightened? What might this child bring into the world? Does she feel capable or desirous of tending to this baby? And if so, will Nature allow a safe birth? Who will she be if this creature comes into incarnation? Who will she be if it doesn't?

No matter how we meet it, I believe there is no way to psychologically consider abortion without allowing in the emotional weight of pregnancy. Abortion is rarely just a medical procedure, unless we view medicine through the ensouling lens of shamanistic tradition. The affective thrust of the politicized issue of abortion—and for some, the sin or the threat or the relief of it—lies in the archetypal, as well as personal, significance of birth.

And speaking of birth, we would do well to consider naming stories. Across the world, people enact various versions of naming rituals and ceremonies at the birth of a new child into the community. In the Himba tribe of Namibia, the birth date is counted before conception. When a woman is ready to conceive a child, she goes off by herself, sits under a tree, and listens for the song of the child who wants to be born through her. When she returns, she teaches the song to the man who will be the child's father, then later she teaches it to the elders and the whole village. Shortly after the baby's birth, the tribe gathers in a circle surrounding the baby and sings that song to the infant. Over the years, at pivotal points in the growing being's life, including if they become lost or

destructive, the tribe regathers around them, singing his or her name back to them, calling them back to themselves.

My first name Sharon arose from my leftwing parents' particular incarnation of their Jewish roots, inspired by their literary hero John Steinbeck's version of the Biblical rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys from the *Song of Songs*. The character Rosasharn in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* ultimately offers to a starving man—with a kindness born of suffering—the milk that her body has released for her stillborn child. For me, after a wayward adolescence filled with self-involvement not unlike young Rosasharn's, becoming a Jungian analyst and then a novelist became *Psyche's* way of calling me back to my name. My second name was changed to Karson from my father's Ukrainian family name, Kirschon, by an Ellis Island visa-stamper who may have persuaded himself he was helping by Americanizing a surname rooted in the sweet cherries of the Ukraine.

In preparing this talk, I consulted with several women in my world, including my niece Jennifer Karson Engum, an anthropologist working for years with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, whose own tribal naming ceremony I attended and danced at years ago. The tribe was so grateful for her devoted efforts on their behalf that they bestowed upon her the name, Weyetmas'anmy, or Swan Woman.

Umatilla rituals in general are predicated on the quality of readiness. One cannot be initiated into something new without readiness. One feature of my niece's naming ceremony that stood out for me was the ritual of generous gift giving. Every participant ended up with piles of beautiful woven blankets, bulrush mats, and other useful items in an exchange that symbolized their warm linking with one another. I was deeply moved

when the tribe's spiritual leader, Armand Minthorn, spoke about the tribe's conscious work to revive their ancient learnings and language, repeating like a chant, "We may not be doing it perfectly, but we're doing it the best that we can." A Umatilla version of the feminine principle of wholeness.

Led by a recent dream of mine in which I was encouraging women to vote by offering them flowers, my own reflections on the soulful underpinnings of the political firestorm around abortion lead me to 1961, when a heartbroken and copiously bleeding fifteen-year-old girl lay curled up in the rear of an old Chevy, staining the car's frayed cloth backseat, as her older boyfriend drove her back to Los Angeles, California from Tijuana, Mexico, where she'd just undergone an illegal Mexican abortion.

Her name was Sharon Karson, and she was desperate to keep this life-altering experience a secret from her parents. I've purposely mentioned the blood that spread across the Chevy's back seat, as it continued to flow for a month, causing her to sneak sodden sanitary pads to the outdoor trash can each night to keep her shame and misery secret.

Blood is such a central image and lived experience of the deep feminine. We all enter this world covered in blood, mucous, and not uncommonly piss and shit, and we females enter physiological adulthood with the blood initiation of our menses. Like childbirth and miscarriages and abortions, menstruation is an archetypal experience, both chthonic and transcendent, one that has traditionally been kept hidden from men, one that speaks to the fatefulness of what it is to be the personally embodied carrier of the largeness of life and sometimes death.

In our culture and a few others, the color *pink* is associated with girls. Ironically, it was Mamie Eisenhower, the wife of our 34th President, and her fondness for pink clothes that drove that trend in the U.S. The Feminine that patriarchal politicians are trying to squash isn't the Barbi-esque pink one, but the Red Mother, the bloody Mother, the Dark Feminine that is as much Kali the Destroyer as it is Mary, Christ's adoring mother: bloodthirsty, making room for the new by destroying the old; a Persephone capable of descending into Hell and coming up refreshed and reborn, like the inevitable deepening of girls who suffer cramps and the ruin of favorite outfits with leakages of thick clumps of iron-smelling blood, who learn early on—or don't—to fend off unwanted sexual advances and violations, who might later experience a baby exiting their body like a watermelon emerging from a tiny porthole, whose stretch-marked bellies and varicose veins will bear witness to their initiation into ensuring the safety of a new life born helpless like no other mammal. Women and girls who, from the beginning of time, have confronted their longing and their ruthlessness, deciding, "I will sacrifice everything for this baby" or "This new possibility must be sacrificed for something larger that commands me." Who, throughout the ages, have used abortive herbs such as bloodwort, red cedar, tansy, and ergot of rye to rid themselves of unwanted pregnancies. That's the Blood Red Feminine that scares the shit out of the patriarchy, embodying the sweet and harsh, nourishing and ruthless power of life itself.

It hurts my heart that what the late analyst Esther Harding described as women's mysteries have eluded our body politic, which I believe has suffered from a sloganeering that betrays the soulfulness and sacredness of both birth and abortion, when our stories

might help bridge the chasm of contempt and vitriol between us and the disconnect between ego and soul within us.

As my niece Jennifer asserted to me, “So many of us have rich abortion stories. They are ours, and no one can touch them. Every one of them is a holistic piece of ourselves, which we carry as we would carry a baby to full term.” She insists that in the case of her abortion, the pregnancy that preceded it was hers, too, even for a moment.

And indeed, science echoes that aspect of her story: beginning in the first trimester, the fetus feeds cells into its mother’s bloodstream that abide in her blood, bone marrow, skin, and liver for up to twenty-seven years. Those cells are sometimes recruited later in life by the mother’s body for healing and immunity to disease.

For the girl in the Chevy, her pregnancy was the fruit of a first love. Her heart bled for *far* more than a month after that abortion. She felt profound sorrow at the loss of her love child, but she also knew it was necessary. As the Umatilla people might put it, she was not ready. Nonetheless, the act of abortion was a sacrifice.

My psyche best metabolizes my lived experience symbolically, in fiction. In my first published novel, *The History of My Body*, its intellectually precocious but naïve teenaged protagonist Fleur Robins, a fan of Niels Bohr and Wolfgang Pauli, is working on scientific research devoted to combating climate change when a classmate makes the move on her at her first ever party, and she subsequently finds herself carrying what her nana calls “a bun in the oven.” After she submits to an abortion of the fetus she’s dubbed Baby X, she reflects:

“I would come to see Baby X as the sacrificial offering for the advance of science...And just in case you think that particular perception left me feeling sanguine about what I’d done, let me set the record straight right now. An aborted child is like a phantom limb, invisible to the world, but a source of constant, aching regret—which is, as I’ve come to learn, the true nature of sacrifice, whose etymological root is the pairing of *holy* and *accursed*. I carry my limb sometimes as a heaviness, sometimes as the lightness of unalterable purity. No matter what else is going on, some subterranean part of me is swaying, as if in time to a melancholy piece of music, say, the central adagio of Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez* or the Beatles’ *Eleanor Rigby*. Baby X, my unbaked bun, my severed limb—she is my secret sorrow and my secret spring. I can’t help but believe that Niels Bohr, son of Christian Bohr and a Sephardic Jewess, and himself a prince of paradox, would know just what I mean.”⁵

Paradoxical or not, how we hold the question of abortion has literal life-and-death consequences, yet no issue we discuss this weekend will amount to a hill of beans if this democracy fails. Its founding was full of contradictions, but the flawed and courageous framers of the Declaration of Independence were parties to an arising from the collective unconscious, pregnant with possibility. We’ve learned over time that those white men set in motion an ongoing birth process, something like the psyche itself, continuously contracting and releasing new incarnations of itself, over time including more and more people in the national gift exchange. Increasing inclusivity is the very soul of democracy.

In Jackson Browne’s *Looking East*, he sings:

⁵ Heath, Sharon. (2016). *The history of my body: The Fleur trilogy*, book 1. Thomas-Jacob Publishing, LLC, 254-255.

Hunger in the midnight, hunger at the stroke of noon
Hunger in the mansion, hunger in the rented room
Hunger on the TV, hunger on the printed page
And there's a God-sized hunger underneath the laughing and the rage...⁶

What is this crazed collective of ours starving for but soul—for the sacredness of our connection with one another and this green Earth that we all share?

I don't believe we can talk about the assault on women and women's bodies without addressing the ecocide that is being visited on the body of our Mother Earth. My life changed forever when I first held my newborn grandson in my arms. I call him and his sister Mr. and Miss Adorable, and their beauty has increased my profound grief over our ravaging of our home planet and its impact on children. We Americans are currently the highest per capita contributors to global warming. When I included in my title the phrase, "desecration of the Feminine," I was referring not only to the amped up misogyny in our body politic, but also to the dis-ensoulment of our relationship to the deepest feminine of all. Do our sister species have rights? Do the forests, the coral reefs? We're at risk of aborting this miracle of life with barely a whimper.

Is it too much to ask of the body politic that it carry the spirit of the times AND the spirit of the depths? To include in political discourse the hopes and dreams, creativity and courage of our ancestors? Do our ancestors and future generations have rights, too?

⁶ Browne, Jackson. Looking East. On *Looking East*. Elektra Entertainment Group.

Because that's what the spirit of the depths as it lives in my dreams and the sufferings of my body tells me.

How do we call one another back to the *communitas* of Democracy, to the sacred rule of the *people* and not just the will of a vindictive sociopath or the greed of the privileged few or even two vying cultural narratives bent on erasing each other with hatred and shaming? I don't know about you, but in my more honest moments, I've had to acknowledge that I've allowed the mind-boggling evil of Trumpism to give me license to gleefully indulge my regrettable appetite for self-righteousness and contempt. Owning our shadows is even more pressing today, for the sake of our integrity and to avoid adding to a toxic cauldron that is at risk of exploding.

While fiercely calling out the dangerous ugliness of this time, how can we lean on both Kali and Kwan Yin, accept that the continuous rebirthing of democracy lies in messy eruptions of difference that **dare** us to actually inquire into the soul stories of others and make known our own? This election, though momentous, will undoubtedly comprise only one phase of what seems to be a wild, unwieldy labor to bring forth the fruit of a currently unimaginable union of opposites dying to be born. May we sing it to life, in a variety of ways, the best that we can.

CHAPTER TWO

MARKETING DYSTOPIA: SELLING THE FEAR OF UNCERTAINTY, MURDER AND DEATH AS THE ROYAL ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE

TOM SINGER

PART ONE: OUR LEADERS LIVE INSIDE US

In 2016, I added a post-script to a chapter entitled “Donald Trump and the American Collective Psyche” that I had contributed to *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*. I wrote:

“One of the most disturbing thoughts to me about the looming Trump presidency is that he is going to take up residency not just in the White House but in the psyches of each and every one of us for the next several years. We are going to have to live with him rattling around inside us, all of us at the mercy of his

impulsive and bullying whims, shooting from the hip at whatever gets under his skin in the moment with uninformed, but cleverly calculated inflammatory barbs. The way a President lives inside each of us can feel like a very personal and intimate affair. Those who identify with Trump and love the way he needles the ‘elites’ may relish having him live inside all of us as a sadistic and ruthless tormentor of those they hate, fear, and envy. Trump is very good at brutally toying with his enemies which include women, professionals, the media, the educated classes, immigrants and minorities—to mention just a few.”

What most frightens me about Trump is his masterful skill at invading and groping the national psyche. His capacity to dwell in and stink up our collective inner space is like the proverbial houseguests who overstay their welcome. And many of us never invited Trump into our psychic houses in the first place. That is perhaps why the image that has stayed with me the most from the national disgrace that was our election process in 2016 is that of the woman who came forward to tell her story of being sexually harassed by Trump. Some years ago she was given an upgrade to first class on a plane and found herself sitting next to ‘The Donald’. In no time at all, he was literally groping her all over—breasts and below. She describes the physicality of the assault by him as like being entangled in the tentacles of an octopus from whom she was barely able to free herself and retreat to economy class. It now feels at the end of 2016 as though we have all been groped by the tentacles of Trump’s octopus-like psyche that has invaded our psyches for the last year and that threatens to tighten its squeeze on our collective psyche for at least the next four years. To be as vulgar as Trump himself, Trump has grabbed the American psyche by the ‘pussy’.”

PART 2: THE CARNIVAL AND THE REIGN OF THE UPSIDE DOWN KING--
WITH THANKS TO OUR ITALIAN COLLEAGUE, STEFANO CARTA

In his book *Thresholds of Initiation*, Joseph Henderson describes the state of the “uninitiated ego” as existing in an archetypal Trickster cycle, a transitory state between youth and maturity. According to Henderson, identification with the Puer often manifests itself as the Trickster archetype. It is the adult (or a culture) who has somehow failed to “grow up”—an immature yet tremendously powerful individual.

Trump looks very much like such an archetypal figure who, similar to the medieval king of Carnival, appears around the winter solstice when darkness triumphs and the sun is at its lowest point. This time marks the liminal time of death and, God willing, rebirth. It is a universal midnight, a nadir when everything may turn into shadow, a ghost. The winter passage is marked by feasts and rituals, like the Roman Saturnalia, the medieval Carnival, or, in America, Halloween which is now upon us, in which the underworld, the dead, the shadow, the antivalues, infiltrate the upper world and create a seemingly chaotic situation. This is what the alchemists called a *massa confusa*. The goal with these celebrations was to appease these darker forces and eventually allow them to be contained in their own world. During Carnival the fool is made king, and the donkey celebrates mass. The thief is set free, and the just imprisoned, until the end, when the reestablishment of proper order marks the rejuvenation of cultural time. Elementary drives take over the more developed, spiritualized cultural symbols, and, in a somehow phallogocentric emergence of this archetype, Hermes’s nature as the archetypal phallus acquires a central position. Trump is the perfect king of such a Carnival, as he symbolically embodies all possible features of such a mad, mixed-up, upside-down

world of antivalues, expressed through a unilateral phallic/machoistic way, starting from the frequent references to his penis to the use of women as pure debased prey.

As it happens with the upside-down king of medieval Carnival, who was chosen for his social and sacred inferiorities and wounds (which in normal times would outcast him), Trump projects an omnipotent image of himself, while being seemingly “mentally wounded.” In the sexually Puritan America, the king is a rapist.” In the land of the self-made man, he inherited his patrimony from the Father, although he went to great pains to conceal that. In the land of opportunity created by immigrants, Trump confirms the archetypal idea that every other country may be a “shithole,” and that every non-American is dangerous. Yet he is married to an immigrant. In an American world, in which the Puritan/Pioneer was in a constant state of war against the demonized enemy, the King has befriended the United States’ traditionally most dangerous and obvious enemy—the Russians. In a culture in which a politician once could not be caught lying without serious consequences, the King is a dark, hermetic figure who spins the truth in almost every sentence he utters. This last point is particularly important, as it is connected with a systematic use of information to manipulate, distort, and confuse reality in order to create a regressed chaotic state in which everything becomes unconscious—or nondiscriminated. Most recently for instance, Trump has threatened a legal challenge to the right of news medias to “fact check” the statements of politicians during broadcasts. Yet, the king of antivalues delusionally still seems to defend the old archetypal organizing values: paranoid, he wants to build a huge wall to contain a lost space of purity. For this king, America is “first” —a grandiose, titanic, manic pretense, constantly paraded in order to deny reality. By creating a delusional claim of a menace

from the space Beyond America's borders, Trump tries to re-create the old feeling of inflated identity in which everyone else is inferior and guilty or, at best, irrelevant. Except for Trump's newly minted "Democratic enemies from within", Americans are the pure ones destined to paradise; the immigrant Other is destined to nothingness. In such a situation the denial of catastrophic global climate change, confirmed by almost every scientist on the planet, is quite understandable, as admitting it would imply the recognition that the United States is also part of the contaminated, impure "outside."

Seen from the old archetypal vantage point, who would have ever imagined that someone like Trump could sit where Jefferson did? Yet this King is a "necessary" product of an archetypal development, in which the "Old World" is undoing itself into a chaotic carnival of antivalues mixed with the old ones. We should not underestimate the danger, as it is not certain that after this putrefatio there will be a real rebirth of a conscious cultural ego.

H. L. Mencken anticipated the current American situation 100 years ago when he wrote about the presidency with biting satire:

"As democracy is perfected, the office represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron."

PART 3: ISOLATION AND DESPAIR

At the time I wrote about Trump moving into our inner psyche houses and not just into the White House, I didn't know how long Trump's occupancy in our inner psychic spaces would last—but it has been far too long as his stay has extended well beyond his 2016-2020 Presidency and threatens to reach into our future for another four years from 2024-2028—which would make it 12 years in all---an unimaginable amount of time to endure such a singularly destructive presence!!!! In the agonizing weeks before July 21, 2024 when Joe Biden stepped down from running for President, Trump's stranglehold on our individual and collective psyches seemed to be tightening into a death grip as his ascendancy to a second term was beginning to seem inevitable. Biden and the Democrats were moribund. Trump was leading in all significant polls, and far from appearing to his followers as a chaotic Carnival king of anti-values, he had survived an assassination attempt as a hero blessed by God, and just a few days later was soaring at the Republican convention, basking in the adulation of being a resurrected Christian savior. I found myself becoming increasingly despairing and feeling more and more isolated as I began to think about what a Trump second term might be like: rounding up 10 million immigrants for deportation, gutting many government agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, The Department of Health and Human Services, the US Department of Education, the Environmental Protection Agency, severely curtailing women's rights to make choices about their own bodies and enthroning himself as an untouchable ruler of a Christian nation. It felt certain that our most cherished values of fairness, equality, decency, and justice would vanish at the hands of an ignorant, but clever autocrat whose nastiness, vulgarity, brutality, selfishness, and truly diabolical

nature knows no bounds. (I could well be diagnosed by one of the few Trumpian psychiatrists as suffering from Trump Derangement Syndrome.) At one point prior to Biden's stepping down, I wrote to Betty Sue Flowers:

“I feel sick about Biden. I feel sick about Trump. I feel sick about my country. The sickness is a mixture of deep weariness and physical nausea. I fear that something in me has gone dead with all this--it seems like a huge melodrama in which nothing is what it seems, a great big play signifying nothing. I am wondering if whatever faith and passion I have placed in our ‘democracy’ may be deserting me now. I am wondering if it is time for me to let it all go. It all feels like a giant charade, even though I know so many of the issues are real and important. Following the assassination attempt Trump is likely to come out as a world peace candidate with a thinly veiled message amplifying the fear of death and destruction that he likes to peddle. And it is going to get even more surreal as these two old goats, two old white men, fuck around with all of us. Perhaps it is just the dystopian mood that has taken hold of me, but I am wondering if it is time to retreat from the affairs of the world. I am thinking that I am going to have to adopt a new attitude for what remains of my life and find a way to disengage from the suffering of the world. It is hard not to take personally the way Trump lives inside me. We may have to live with this pseudo patriot and reality TV star playing the role of hero for an America that has lost its moorings.....

Signed,

Old man Tom”

Betty Sue responded:

“Tom, re-consider. You're beginning to sound like Macbeth!

'...Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.'

-Macbeth

Betty Sue went on to write that I might want to consider Yeat's words:

'An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress.'

**PART 4: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL ISOLATION/DESPAIR
AND COLLECTIVE BELONGING/HOPE: THE BIRTH OF GODS AND
GODDESSES.**

It turns out that just a few short days after receiving Betty's note, Kamala Harris is the one whose soul began to clap its hands and sing for all of us on July 21, 2024. She lifted my soul and my spirits as I felt myself joining so many others who were also in isolating despair. And here is the two-part song I am now singing along with Kamala and the millions of others who have found the kindling of hope just as it looked as if everything was going to hell.

1. The first song, a kind of collective “blues”, is about the isolating effects of dystopia
2. The second song is a more celebratory spiritual about the birth of goddesses and gods in Ancient Greece and the modern world.

With regard to the first song, why do I go on about my own desperation before Biden stepped down and Kamala came to re-energize so many of us? Because I learned something in those despairing moments about the isolating effects of a dystopian mood (something that Black people, women, and so many other oppressed minorities have known about for a long, long time). When we get caught in a dystopian mood, we begin to retreat inside ourselves and feel more and more isolated. We begin to believe that we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders alone, and that it is too much to bear. Dystopias kill the feeling of belonging to a decent community, and dystopias kill the creative imagination required to imagine a better future. When Biden stepped down, my feeling of isolation and carrying the weight of the world vanished. I became more emotionally aware that I was not isolated in the way I thought I was, that literally millions may have felt isolated in exactly the same way I did—alone, hopeless, and carrying an unimaginable weight on our individual shoulders. The effect of Kamala’s “taking the torch” was almost instantaneous as millions emerged from the shadows of their growing dystopian nightmare—from Trump’s kingdom of anti-values-- to embrace hope for a better future. The spontaneous emergence of so many people from the paralysis and disengagement that goes along with feeling alone and isolated was a miraculous, almost instantaneous enantiadromia.

Quite surprisingly, another thought accompanied this reawakening of hope. I wondered if those who have joined Trump’s cult somewhere along the way may not have, at least somewhere deep down in the core of their beings, also felt isolated in whatever burden they carried alone until Trump came along and provided a target for their frustrated rage and offered hope of a new world. For a brief moment, I actually found genuine empathy for those who flocked to MAGA world. Trump must have succeeded in speaking to their isolated despair and brought renewed hope to them by messianically seducing them into joining together with a community of fellow believers. In that sense, both Trump and Harris promise a kind of redemption to their true believers that brings the isolated, despairing individual into a reawakened feeling of energized community.

This leads to my second “song” in response to the collective emotional roller coaster of the last few months. Jane Harrison, a legendary Greek mythologist, was among the first in the early days of the 20th century who uncovered a layer of the ancient Greek psyche that was matriarchal rather than patriarchal. Before Zeus and the other gods of Olympus were born and installed on Mt. Olympus, there was a powerful level of the early Greek psyche that placed its faith in the Mother Goddess. In addition to exploring the matriarchal foundations of early Greek culture, what made Harrison’s work so interesting is that she followed the lead of the founder of sociology, Emile Durkheim, and made the **revolutionary statement that our gods and goddesses are born out of the personification of collective emotion.** What does this mean? It means that when groups of people get together and share potent emotions around particularly meaningful events—such as the agricultural miracle for the ancients of new life getting born in the Spring—they tend to personify this event into a god or goddess. They give

the annual rebirth of Spring a name, such as Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, who arises from the grips of Hades, the god of the underground. The celebration of the renewal of the earth in Spring is greeted with deep emotion and this collective emotion takes on the identity of a god or goddess. And what does this have to do with Kamala Harris or Donald Trump? It is not a stretch of the creative imagination to say that we witnessed the birth of both a god and goddess within a week of one another in July 2024.



First came the rebirth of Donald Trump. Trump, who has always behaved and thought of himself as a divinity, was reborn in the minds of those who believe in him when he survived an assassination attempt on July 13, 2024. In the collective emotion and

imagination of his followers, he became a mixture of Christ as reborn savior and hero warrior patriot in the mode of the famous sculpture of the World War Two Iwo Jima marines, as if rising from the dead to proclaim: “Fight! Fight! Fight!” Trump finally won his “red badge of courage” which had eluded him in the Vietnam war because of “bone spurs” in his feet. But, perhaps even more miraculously was when another old Titan, Joe Biden, realized that his time was up and stepped down on July 21, 2024 just 8 short days after the Trump assassination attempt and then the republican convention/coronation of Trump. Biden “passed the torch” to Kamala Harris, and she was instantaneously reborn as a warrior goddess, ready to take on Trump who would simultaneously be making his claim to be the resurrected god.



Listen to Kamala Harris speaking as if she might be an incarnation of the Indian goddess Durga who, through her power and strength, protects her people by slaying the

deceitful shape shifting ways of the evil Buffalo demon. She literally slices through to what is direct and essential about a matter:

“I prosecuted predators who abused women, fraudsters who ripped off consumers, cheaters who broke the rules for their own gain. So, hear me when I say I know Donald Trump’s type.”

And later when Trump challenged the legitimacy of Kamala’s racial identity, Kamala again cut through to the core of her adversary when she said, “The same old show of divisiveness and disrespect.”

I am not just speaking metaphorically when I talk about collective emotion fueling god-like projections. Obviously, Trump and Harris are not gods; they are human beings. But, the collective emotion pouring onto them makes them seem much larger than life as if they have drunk the elixir of immortality, at least for the moment. According to Jane Harrison, this is how the earliest Greek gods and goddesses found their way into being in the human imagination. As we have been witnessing for the past few months the energy released in these projections of collective emotion is astounding because it has all the numinous power of a religious experience dressed up in political garb. We shouldn’t fool ourselves. These are the emotions that fuel religious passions and contribute to the creation of gods and goddesses in the minds of human beings. This election will not be determined so much by specific policies (not to underestimate the emotions about abortion or immigration on both sides of the debate), but more on the emotions swirling around these two quite different humans who can easily seem like gods/goddesses. This notion of collective emotion fueling the genesis of gods and goddesses is certainly not

the only idea about where divinity originates, but in this situation it seems particularly applicable. We now have a would be Christian national savior pitted against a multicultural Black Indian Goddess Warrior and it is a fully engaged battle led by two very different kinds of people with quite different notions of politics, of government, and of what spirit will prevail in our land.

PART 5. COMPETING VISIONS

Consider for a moment the competing visions of America that are being offered to the American people:

a. The Id as the Royal Road to the White House:

Trump is marketing a dystopian vision of the United States as his ticket to ride to the US Presidency. He is betting that the Id is the royal road to the White House, that by conjuring up every destructive nightmare of murder, mayhem, and chaos he will capitalize on the free-floating anxiety, fear and rage in the population. For id spice, he threw just enough of a hint of sexual lasciviousness on the part Kamala into his brew OF UNCONSCIOUS STIMULANTS. Thus, he titillates with the lie that 13,000 phantom illegal immigrant murderers are now roaming the streets of America, looking to “rape, pillage, thieve, plunder, and kill. They will “walk into your kitchen, they’ll cut your throat” proclaims Trump. Trump hails America as a failed state with crumbling institutions, overwhelmed by lawlessness, urban blight and slipping toward World War III abroad. “We’re a third-world country at our borders, and we’re a third-world country at our elections.” Trump goes on with his apocalyptic scenario:

“2024 is our final battle. We will demolish the deep state, we will expel the warmongers from our government – we will drive out the globalists, we will cast out the Marxists, the communists and fascists. We will rout the fake news media, we will drain the swamp. ... We will be a liberated country again.”—his own version of an anti-value Statue of Liberty.

In the classic trope of dictators, Trump promises to flush out enemies within, vowing revenge on political foes and posing as a strongman while conflating his own personal, political interests with the nation’s.

In short, Trump has perfected the art of creating what Christopher Hedges prophesized in the title of his 2008 book *The Empire of Illusion. The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*

b. The Rebirth of the American Democratic Spirit:

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the paranoia and soul crushing depressive quality of the Trumpian vision is a quest to release the enormous collective energies bound up in the dystopian quagmire for a rebirth of the democratic spirit.

Speaking directly from the matriarchal foundation of the psyche common to all of us of all eras—from the ancient Greeks’ knowledge of Demeter and Persephone to the awakening of modern Americans to a potential renewed balance between the best of matriarchal and patriarchal values —Michelle Obama gives expression to the wellspring of our creative energies that carry the seeds for hope and renewal, and for liberation from the dystopian effects of paranoia and depression, fear and rage.

Listen to Michelle Obama's words. Listen to the collective emotion that erupts in response to her oratory and witness the transcendent spirit that comes alive in those numinous moments:



There is a very clear difference between Trump's Dystopian vision which offers the id as the royal road to the White House and Kamala Harris' vision of a multi-cultural, inclusive, democracy in which the soul crushing stranglehold on creative energies is released for the future. What follows below is a collage demonstrating the very different visions of Trump and Harris and how each symbolizes and defends their different visions.



Guns, cats, flags, swords, slogans, cement mixers, snakes, and presidential candidates Donald Trump and Kamala Harris... On first glance, this collage may seem like an odd compilation, yet all these images have an important place and purpose in the national psyche today. In fact, the collage is constructed around a basic theory about the behaviors, beliefs and feelings of groups when they feel and/or are under attack. When

you poke a single cell organism, it seeks to defend itself by withdrawing. When you poke an individual, the individual will seek to defend itself in a variety of ways, the most basic of which are described in the fight or flight reflex. When a group feels under attack, either physically and/or at the level of what it values the most--its group spirit--it too will seek to defend itself in a variety of ways that include aggressive counter attacks or withdrawal or avoidance or some other attempt to protect and affirm its identity as defined by a set of core values or most essentially, what we can think of as its group spirit which may or may not have a spiritual foundation. The collage and its theoretical model are one way of thinking about the psychological processes that take over once a group feels that its core values, identity and spirit are endangered or under attack.

In the current polarization gripping the United States, we most often find ourselves aligned with the defenses of the group with which we identify. As individuals and groups, we can also withdraw all together from the conflict and view it as either too painful or too silly or too unresolvable, or as something we need to transcend. This collage offers a picture of how the polarization we are experiencing between Republicans and Democrats has taken shape. It is an attempt to define core issues and dynamics that are hotly contested, as we are in the midst of a cultural and political war that not only threatens to break into physical violence but is already destructive at many other levels including legislative, judicial, and the very fabric of social and cultural discourse.

Trying to sort out and visualize the multiple levels and contributors to the increasing polarization in the United States is like trying to fit together the pieces of a complicated puzzle. I have found in previous conflicts that have seized our national psyche (see references) it has been helpful to piece together images and words that result in a

collage of the kaleidoscopic forces at play. My collages are based on a theory of cultural complexes. I choose images to see how they might fit together in representing how the theory can be puzzled together in a way that represents the major forces at play.

THE SIX FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE THEORY AND A KEY TO THE COLLAGE

1. An overriding concern or dilemma confronting the nation. In this collage, the postmodern image of the Statue of Liberty by Millie Kutz portrays elegantly and numinously the deep ambiguity and challenges of this historic moment. We are suspended in a liminal, agitated, and dangerous national dance about what freedom means to us, caught between illusion and reality in which our individual and collective futures are at stake, not being sure what we can trust or where we are headed. As a wired society, our democracy is being profoundly transformed by how we experience reality and profoundly threatened by lies, disinformation, and very different ideas of who we are and want to be as a people. It is clear that many in our society, as has also happened several times in the past, no longer embrace the plaque at the base of the Statue of Liberty:

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.”

2. Leaders of the major parties carry and symbolize the conflicts about what is of highest value in dealing with the overriding issues.

In this collage, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump are the leaders who embody the conflict that is being played out in the national drama. They are well chosen for their roles as carriers of the spirit and values that they represent: a multicultural black, Indian American woman representing the progressive values of justice, equality, and freedom vs a wealthy, white, old man who while claiming conservatism paradoxically wants to tear the existing government structures apart in the name of an individualistic, materialistic, and simplistic understanding of freedom which overlooks the collective's rights to decent education, housing, living wages, health care, and a fair criminal justice system, for all.

3. The Core Spirit of the Group that the Leaders Represent.

Each of the leaders stands for a core group spirit and is the personal embodiment of that spirit for the group. The image for the group spirit that Harris carries symbolizes individuals from many different groups striving for a democracy of multicultural diversity that seeks the healing of our society and planet. The image for the group spirit that Trump carries is represented by a gun, the constitution, the Bible, and the Flag. It is a nativist and isolationist spirit that seeks to restore America's exceptionalism and to expel and demonize those who are not deemed to be "real" Americans, however that is defined. In this vision of the American spirit there are enemies "within" and "without" the nation.

4. The Archetypal Defenses that are mobilized to defend the spirit of the group under attack.

At the core of this process, I imagine a basic dynamic in which the fundamental unifying vision or spirit of the country as imagined by Harris or Trump is threatened. In the name of this unifying and threatened spirit, impersonal and potent defenses—sometimes hugely aggressive-- are mobilized. This activation taps into enormous collective emotion that fuels the polarizing conflict. The suffering, violence, and destruction endured by citizens is justified by participating in a shared belief and a unifying vision of the nation or the world. On the side of Kamala Harris and the Democrats, the defenses include women mobilizing to defend their rights to make choices about their bodies, including the right to be childless as recently surfaced in the [“childless cat lady response” triggered in reaction to ongoing misogynist attacks on women.](#)

Another powerful defense of the Democratic spirit has been Kamala Harris’ taking on the role of fierce protector of basic American values as if she were a modern incarnation of the Hindu goddess Durga who, as a warrior, could be fierce in her cutting to the quick of deception and criminality. In this image, Durga is slaying the buffalo demon Mahishasura, depicted in Hindu literature as a deceitful demon who pursued his evil ways by shape-shifting.

On the other side of the polarizing equation are the defenses that have been mobilized to protect the American spirit envisioned by those who follow Trump. These defenses are represented in images of a paranoid and conspiratorial attitude that peeks out from the

safety of the American flag or that goes on the attack in a direct assault on the seat of American democratic processes at the Capitol itself, as in the January 6 insurrection.

5. The archetypal instinctual responses that are triggered when such battles erupt

At the very heart and depths of such polarizing conflicts there are primal instinctual forces that come into play. These instinctual forces are symbolized by the two serpents in opposition to one another at the center of the collage. Every individual has such serpentine energies lurking in the psyche that, like a rattlesnake anticipating attack, awaken in the face of annihilating danger. These energies are amplified exponentially when they come alive in a group and can act with a venomous and autonomous force that threaten to disrupt whatever established order exists.

6. Historical and cultural precursors to the current polarizing conflict. The current polarizing conflicts gripping the nation are not new. Deeply embedded in the history and psyche of our nation, there have been previous incarnations of these same conflicts that contribute potent self-selecting memories that reinforce one's preexisting beliefs and experiences, simplistic ideas that tend to see issues in black and white, absolutist categories, and powerful emotions that are highly reactive, highly arousing, and not subject to rational discourse. These historic repetitions reinforce the core beliefs and identities of the polarized groups. They point to the cyclical recurrence of the underlying, unresolved and seemingly unresolvable core tensions and conflicts in our society, whether they be about immigration, racism, sexism, distribution of wealth, gun control, economic policy, foreign policy, environmental policy and a host of other

ongoing political and cultural themes. The image of the civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s mirrors the reality of the recurring themes that contribute to the current polarization: access to housing, jobs, voting rights. And the cartoon image from the early 1900s shows the equally strong, negative reaction to the flooding of new immigrants into our melting pot society.

The Collage is constructed with images that portray these six major forces. Each level of the collage represents the various “players” in our national drama. The collage does not offer an explanation of why the polarization is so intense now. Many different theories exist about causes and that is a topic for another paper. The collage does offer a picture of what happens when the various players are aroused into action—it is a picture of the psychology of activated polarizing conflicts or what I call cultural complexes. It shows the anatomy of aroused archetypal defenses of the group spirit which repeats itself endlessly in the conflicts between warring groups and nations. Jung noted this when he wrote in his 1936 essay, “Wotan”:

“Archetypes are like riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them, but which it can find again at any time. An archetype is like an old watercourse along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it has flowed in this channel the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its old bed. The life of the individual as a member of society and particularly as part of the State may be regulated like a canal, but the life of nations is a great rushing river which is utterly beyond human control... Thus the life of nations rolls on unchecked, without guidance, unconscious of where it is going, like a rock crashing down the side of a hill, until it is stopped by an obstacle stronger than itself. Political events move from one impasse to the next, like a torrent caught in gullies, creeks and marshes. All human control

comes to an end when the individual is caught up in a mass movement. Then the archetypes begin to function, as happens also in the lives of individuals when they are confronted with situations that cannot be dealt with in any of the familiar ways.” (C.G. Jung, “Wotan,” *Civilization in Transition*, Collected Works, Vol. 10. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, p. 189)

The archetypal defenses that are mobilized to defend the threatened “group spirit” are primal, and are as potent, even identical with the very forces that bind a group together in its identity. Once the “archetypal defenses of the group spirit” are triggered, the careening violence of whatever comes in the path of the “rock crashing down the side of a hill” seems independent of the specific causes that give rise to the conflict. We seem to be living in such a moment once again in our country and in the world. The burden and angst of this moment weighs heavily on all who take their citizenship seriously and worry about future generations.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE APPEAL OF TRUTH

ROBERT JAY LIFTON, M.D.

INTRODUCTION OF ROBERT J. LIFTON MD BY THOMAS SINGER MD

Plato taught us that “Beauty is the splendor of truth”. We might think of a crystal-clear mind, a fierce spirit, and a passionate soul as being qualities of the greatest beauty in the sense that Plato taught us that true beauty is a manifestation or radiant expression of the underlying truth in something. Robert Jay Lifton has been embodying these platonic virtues of a crystal-clear mind, a fierce spirit, and a passionate soul for more than 70 years in his studies of the survivors of Hiroshima, the Nazi doctors of genocide, cult leaders in Japan, and many more volumes including *Losing Reality: On Cults, Cultism and the Mindset of Political and Religious Zealotry*. Dr. Lifton has looked unflinchingly at the many different forms individual and collective evil can take in the horrors of the 20th and 21st century. His newest book is *Surviving Our Catastrophes: Resilience and Renewal from Hiroshima to Covid 19* (as an aside I hope we do not have to add a Trump 2024 Presidency to that list of “our catastrophes”). Dr. Lifton will speak to us

today about his recent thinking on the nature of truth—a subject worthy of Plato and of Lifton’s attention at the ripe age of 98 when one might legitimately address the question of the nature of truth with the wisdom of an incredibly rich life of experience, activism, reflection, and professional witnessing. It is the greatest privilege to introduce our special guest of honor, Robert Jay Lifton.

Thank you, Tom, for that very generous, perhaps overgenerous, introduction. I have one immediate response, lest I fall into the problem of believing it all. And this response has to do with what I call my humorous bird cartoons. Now I have no artistic talent, so these birds are stick figures, but they can often say things more directly and sometimes add a little levity and self-irony to what is otherwise so painful and tragic, and the bird cartoon I want to present to you is one that I call, modestly, my existential classic. In this cartoon, a small, intense little bird looks up and says, “All of a sudden I had this wonderful feeling, I am me!” And an older, bigger, more jaundiced bird looks down at him and says, “You were wrong.”

Now it reveals much about our society that when I emphasize an attraction to truth, to factual truth, that this can seem to be almost counterintuitive. That really is a suggestion of how inundated our society has been with falsehood and untruth, and how much unfortunate belief has evolved in that falsehood and untruth.

Now, factual truth is something different. Factual truth has an attraction for a very important reason. Factual truth is clear, direct and incontrovertible. For instance, my name is Robert Jay Lifton. I am a research psychiatrist. I'm speaking at the 2024

Jungian Presidency Conference, which for which Tom Singer, my friend and fellow author in the book *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, which has recently been reissued, has played an important part in the organization. Now that's a simple statement of factual truth, but it actually carries us very far, as I will try to illustrate.

In contradiction, once one puts forward a falsehood, whether a falsehood about people's behavior or about the election or anything else, one has to constantly add new falsehoods in order to cover up and explain away the first one. So, one falsehood inevitably leads to an endless chain of falsehoods. Looking at things that way, it's quite wrong and misleading for journalists and others to speak of a post-truth society. Rather, we are a truth-seeking society, and indeed, that process of truth seeking can be a difficult and continuous enterprise.

I'll mention several of my research studies that have a bearing on this important point, and then say something more about Trump and about the 2024 elections. First, I want to mention the anti-war Vietnam veterans with whom I've worked closely over many years, mostly in the early 1970s. Now these anti-war veterans in forming a group called the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) were making a statement to the effect that the meaning of the Vietnam War lay in its meaninglessness. The meaning of the Vietnam War was its meaninglessness.

Here I would emphasize, as I've done frequently in my work, that we humans are meaning-hungry creatures. We live on images that express our meanings, which we constantly require, and that's true 100 times over for people who have gone through extreme trauma, painful trauma, as in the case of the Vietnam veterans. I could observe

that trauma in rap groups in which I participated with anti-war veterans and the pain it had brought forth in them. Now, they could speak with considerable authority, because they had done the killing and the dying, and were aware of the extraordinary number of Vietnamese deaths that were taking place, which ultimately came, as you know, to something like a million.

When the anti-war veterans organized their Winter Soldier investigation event, they were looking toward the truth of their experience. The contrast was meant to be with the term “Summer Soldiers,” used in the Revolutionary War for those who refused to continue to fight. The Winter Soldier investigation sought the factual truth of atrocities - their witnessing of atrocities or performing atrocities, including the mutilating of bodies. In that sense, My Lai – where something on the order of 500 Vietnamese civilians, babies, old women, old men were shot down one morning, slaughtered in a matter of hours – was a large example of what I call an *atrocious-producing situation*. It was an atrocious-producing situation because of a combination of military policies like body counts and free fire zones, where you're given license to fire freely and wildly, on the one hand, and, in the psychology of the men, a sense of angry grief. And actually, in that sense, the night before My Lai there was a kind of not only pep talk, but a funeral service for a much-admired older sergeant who had been killed by an exploding device he was trying to defuse.

Now, that opposition to the war came from below. These were ordinary young people who thought themselves to be serving their country in this war, but came to see the truth of that war and turned against it. That tendency to turn against the war also existed in soldiers still fighting, who began to refuse to go out on dangerous missions, and went

even further in participating in what was called “fragging,” which meant shooting at officers who tried to send them out on these dangerous missions. And when the whole society came to turn against the war, as happened, that meant that the Vietnam Veterans could take leadership roles in anti-war movements and certainly in the opposition to their own war.

Another study is my work with Nazi doctors, which was demanding and perhaps the most difficult of my studies. I learned something important about the Nazi movement in general, very early, from a good friend of mine, a psychiatrist at another university. He happened to be in Germany when the Nazis came into power because his father had a fellowship there. He told me he was amazed to observe at the *gymnasium* at the higher middle school that he attended, his fellow students experiencing a kind of mystical, transcendent state. They were carried away, literally, by a high state, moved by the promise of racial realization, even to the extent of having to kill Jews in order to realize a kind of purity that the Nazis promised them. It was also interesting that at the time Elie Wiesel, who was a strong supporter of my study, also urged me to be aware of the mysticism of the whole Nazi movement, and I did come to focus on that mysticism, on an entire country becoming something of a vast apocalyptic cult with a claim to its own factual truth. In other words, its own collective distortion of factual truth.

Significantly, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who had considerable wisdom, once said that “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.” That’s a simple and profound and very true statement. Philip Roth said something of the same in observing the tendency toward falsehood all through American society. He spoke of it as “indigenous American berserk.” Quite a phrase. Hannah Arendt, in speaking of

totalitarianism, emphasized that it depends upon the organized lying of groups, so that when Hitler and Goebbels spoke of the big lie, they saw it not only as a means of suppressing their people, but as a means of controlling their thought by attempting to deny and falsify factual truth and to control reality. They could not fully succeed in this, though that did not prevent their mass murder, which occurred in a much more confusing way than we usually recognize.

The third study I want to bring up is that of the fanatical Japanese apocalyptic religious cult called Aum Shinrikyō. Their guru, Shōkō Asahara, claimed also to subsume falsehoods that he brought forth in relation to factual truth and to combine them with his omniscient claims to religious and ideological truth. He did this partly by offering high states, or mystical states, as they were called sometimes, to his disciples, sometimes with the use of drugs. Those so-called mystical states included a sense, on the part of disciples, of merging with the guru. I was able to interview former followers who told me that this process went so far at those moments that they could no longer distinguish between the guru and themselves. In these high states, a disciple could say that when someone spoke, he or she could not tell whether it was the guru speaking or themselves speaking. Yet when Asahara was arrested for his responsibility in having the six cartons of Sarin gas placed in Tokyo subway trains, he could become submissive to his captors, and said that he could not be responsible for placing that Sarin gas in those subway trains because he was mostly blind. He became, in that way, de-guruized as his high disciples could then see him as “a foolish human being trying to save his own life.” Again, the issue of factual truth is paramount.

Now a few words about Donald Trump, and then about the election. Trump's cult-like claim to omniscience is weakened, not only by its repetitiveness, but also because of the increasing general awareness of Trump's violation of factual truth and constant threat of violence. He also, as a number of us writing about him point out, has been undergoing his own deterioration, physically and psychologically. This has to do not only with his age – he is now the old man of the election – but with the assassination attempts, which have certainly weakened him psychologically and physically. His awkward status as a convicted felon, convicted by a jury of his peers is also significant.

When Tim Walz used the word “weird” about Trump, he invoked something that has not been fully appreciated. A weird person is specifically one you must not follow because he or she will mislead you if you do. But there's something more that has not been sufficiently emphasized. If you do make the mistake of following a weird person, you come to share in his weirdness. You come to further falsehoods that are at the heart of his weirdness, and that weirdness affects everyone's safety and overall American security. To put it another way, weirdness is not only strange, it is profoundly dangerous.

Looking at the election itself, we have to ask ourselves whether the Trump/Vance team or the Harris/Walz team has the greater claim to factual truth telling. The answer is quite clear. Harris may exaggerate her claims, or leave out embarrassing slips she has made, or neglect to mention changes she has undergone in her convictions, but her and Walz's closeness to factual truth contrasts dramatically with Trump and Vance's serial falsehoods. Remember that Harris and Walz seek to serve the middle class, seek to enlarge freedoms, seek to support the right to a woman's control of her own body, to

extend and assert that right, as opposed to those who would impose bureaucrats as deciding what can happen to the bodies of women. In every sense, the Harris/Walz campaign is closer to factual truth.

I say all this with great hope. I want to quote a couple of prominent voices who have contributed to that hope. One of them is none other than Sigmund Freud, who I don't often quote. Freud once said "The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest until it has gained a hearing." That hearing includes respect for evidence, for factual truth. Truth is not easily wiped out when it has its hearing. And then there is Václav Havel, the great Czech leader. He had two related principles that we can embrace today. One of them is what he called "living in truth". He created a whole community around him of people who behaved in truthful ways with each other; truthful about people and about the world. They had no power, but they lived in truth without power, and that's what he called the "power of the powerless." They were no longer powerless once they behaved in accordance with truth. That's an interesting point. Havel was not only a heretic whose life was constantly in danger, but a social theorist. He pointed out that since the oppressors, in this case, the communists, ruled by untruth, truth telling was the political antidote against oppression - a simple but profound idea.

Now there's no final moment when truth is finally fully realized. As the Zen Buddhists would put it, there is no Sartori moment when falsehood is eliminated. Rather it is an unending struggle to sustain the right of law. That struggle is what my life is about, and yours as well. And I thank you for giving me the opportunity to give voice to this struggle.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MIND OF OUR STATE:

HOW UNRESOLVED HISTORICAL TRAUMAS FUEL

POLARIZATION, CONSPIRACISM AND TRUMPISM IN THE U.S.

BETTY TENG, MFA, LCSW

In 2017, for the first edition of *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, I wrote a chapter titled “Time, Trauma, Truth, Trump.” In it, I spoke from my perspective as a trauma therapist, asked to comment on the intense negative impact Donald Trump's 2016 election had on my patient population, the majority of whom are survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. For them, the presidential election of Trump, a known sexual perpetrator and brazen “pussy-grabbing” misogynist, meant that in voting for him, millions of Americans expressed that they did not recognize, care about – or worse, even endorsed the kind of dehumanizing harms that caused the traumas my patients struggled daily to overcome.

And yet, what I also noted — and puzzled over — was, that it was not only survivors of sexual assault who felt shock, fear, anger and confusion following Trump's 2016 election, but many others as well. My colleagues and I observed the responses in our patients and ourselves as echoing symptoms incurred by traumatic events such as terrorist attacks and natural disasters. In the essay, I asked, “Whatever one’s political leanings, one could not equate Trump’s win with an actual physical attack or a natural catastrophe — Or could one?” (Teng, 2017). At the time, I observed that with Trump as president, we were in "uncharted territory":

How a New York City real estate magnate and reality television celebrity who had no previous, legal, legislative, governmental or foreign policy experience could become president of the United States is a circumstance many still find difficult to comprehend. If we agree that the skills of a U.S. president are as crucial as that of a heart surgeon — whose professional judgment and expertise can mean life or death for his patients — then it is terrifying to see that the American body politic has, in Donald Trump, a cardiac surgeon who has never set foot inside an operating room. He is a doctor who has no knowledge of, and arguably no interest in, the inner workings of the American government's heart. It therefore makes sense that his lack of qualifications and his insensitivity to the complexities and impact of his role would inspire great anxiety, if not even panic, in those of us whose lives depend on his care — regardless of political affiliation or trauma history. (Teng, 2017)

The act of looking back and reflecting on a crucial moment, years later, offers many things — distance, perspective, understanding. Every four years in the U.S., our presidential elections function as transitional processes that call on us to account for how we, as a nation, might want to cross over into the next interval of time together. By

all accounts, the 2024 election between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump marks a particularly critical juncture for the future and stability of U. S. democracy, and by corollary, that of the world. Since a turning point is also a threshold, and thresholds can symbolically mark a moment of great transformation — even of death and rebirth — as we cross this critical juncture, I invite us to wonder, what are we being initiated into? What are we being called upon to let go of, or to reckon with, as we collectively undergo this momentous shift?

This talk synthesizes insights drawn from 29 conversations I, along with documentarian Michael Epstein and political communications consultant Jonathan Kopp, had with experts in both politics and psychology during the years 2019-2021. We did so as co-hosts of a psycho-political podcast called *Mind of State*, and unexpectedly, this two-year period encompassed more monumental socio-political conflicts and crises than it seemed possible for any of us to take in. There was the Covid-19 global pandemic; George Floyd's murder and the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement; Trump's two impeachment trials; the 2020 presidential election of Joe Biden; and the January 6th, 2021 siege upon the U.S. Capitol — just to name the top most consequential events. Conducted/Recorded during this confusing and stressful time, our conversations with experts in psychology and politics like Robert Jay Lifton, Judith Herman, Betty Sue Flowers, Pauline Boss, Jessica Benjamin, Deva Woodly, Eric Liu and Eric Ward — were invaluable. Together, we considered what might be driving these events, from the dual angles of psychology and politics. Our mandate to juggle both, allowed for many things, the most foundational being that it created a larger space for us all to think. Speaking

for myself, this was essential during a time where I felt severely challenged in my ability to do so.

Tom Singer was a co-producer and partner on *Mind of State* from its inception, and when I think back upon our many planning discussions, one of our main objectives was to serve a collective, capital-c Curiosity. We had a persistent need – triggered by, but not confined to, Trump’s unbelievable 2016 election – to understand what lay underneath the intensely stirring and growing socio-political anomalies, polarizations and conspiracism we saw taking hold of American civic life. While seemingly baffling, it was apparent there were psychological drivers underlying these movements. We suspected there was psychological sense underneath the sociopolitical nonsense. So we applied the basic tools of our trade – of conversation, dialectic, reflection, listening, symbolization, and an awareness of the movements of the unconscious – to join with a group of similarly engaged guests, to see if we could better connect the dots within such apparent chaos. Doing so, we aimed to create more space – not only to offer a bulwark against internal collapse, but also to activate our collective Curiosity, and the Care which accompanies such focus. This was so that we could help each other see more, and therefore, identify all the possible ways we might move across this difficult juncture.

It is in this vein – with Curiosity and Care – that I aim to engage all here today.

As one who works with individuals suffering from severe traumas, I have wondered, post-pandemic, if everyone in the U.S., and globally, is now traumatized. As a result, do we now suffer from a consequential pandemic – of PTSD, and its related dissociative

impacts? Or, conversely, has the claim of "being traumatized" now become overused to the point of meaninglessness — or worse, has it become a way to inflate, weaponize and prioritize our sense of victimhood, which paradoxically closes us off to a full experience of the dynamic joys and griefs which define our humanity?

The dark resonance of such questions is indicative of the state of our minds and the mind of our state. From a trauma treatment perspective, failure to recognize and attend to one's distress from overwhelming harms, results in a festering of this pain. This freezes cognitive, emotional, and physical systems and makes integration, growth and change difficult, if not impossible. Repetitions become inevitable, due to this inability to learn.

Likewise, historically, our failure to reckon with our collective historical traumas has resulted in what psychologist Pauline Boss and Civil War historian Drew Faust have observed about the United States, that "we are a nation of unresolved grief." (Boss, 2023) We could therefore argue that if our mis-recognition of what harms us — and how we harm others — persists from either overstating, or understating the impact of the traumas we experience as individuals and as a collective, then we will continue to blindly repeat the same entrenched sociopolitical perpetrations we have enacted throughout American history. Our current political polarization, manifesting in the legitimization of conspiracism and Trumpism and the corrosion of belief in facts and empirical knowledge bears this out, revealing the long term impacts of our denial of past harms and our insistence on repeating them without growth.

One of the particularly unique aspects of this 2024 presidential election season is that it is not only causing us to look back over the last four years to 2020's decision between Donald Trump and Joe Biden, but even further, to Trump's anomalous 2016 election to the presidency in the first place. This could be due to the fact that Trump is again the Republican nominee, and he is in another tight race against an historic and experienced female opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris. It could also be because, in spite of being voted out of office in 2020, he is back seeking re-election. Underlying these echoing circumstances is another baffling mystery related to the question I mulled over seven years ago: if Trump's 2016 election to president was so shocking that it inspired trauma symptoms in so many of us, how is it that he is so close to being elected again?

To help clarify this mystery, I invite us to imagine a modern-day Rip van Winkle — a person who has been asleep for the last eight years, who knows nothing of what has happened in the world. If Mr. van Winkle just woke up and we told him the barest of facts — that Donald Trump was US president between 2016-2020, then lost to Joe Biden in 2020, and now, in 2024, he is again in a close race for re-election, Rip might reasonably conclude that Trump must have done a decent-enough job governing during his one term. We would then have to inform Mr. van Winkle that on the contrary, the situation was quite the opposite — that in fact, Donald Trump was a disastrous president. We'd tell him that among a myriad of misdeeds, Trump mishandled a global pandemic, reversed international progress on climate change, and faced impeachment not once, but twice, the second time for inciting insurrection on January 6, 2021, when he encouraged thousands of armed white nationalists to block Congressional ratification

of Joe Biden's election. This would likely cause Rip to drop his jaw and exclaim, "That's absurd — what is going on, here?"

Indeed, what, actually, *is* going on?

While it may seem insane that we face the stunningly illogical possibility of again electing, as president, a candidate who has proven himself to be destructive in the role, it is, in fact, crucial that we instead recognize this glitch as an alert, a homing device that points to the roots of this circumstance. If we, as a democracy, are close to re-electing a deceitful, power-hungry man who has been explicit, in word and deed, about his authoritarian opposition to democratic process, then as much as we like to consider ourselves a nation of immigrants and a haven for the world's most vulnerable, we must acknowledge that we are also a country of racist, misogynistic xenophobes who are suspicious, if not hostile, to difference. This reality forces us to face essential truths about the ugly outcomes of our historical traumas, which we as a society have turned away from. Our avoidance has given Donald Trump and his supporters the opportunity to exploit its resulting cycles of shame and blame, polarizing us to a point where our democracy teeters on the brink of breakdown.

Looking back upon 2016 with the perspective time affords, we might now see that something was way off, that somehow things had gone very wrong. Indeed, for millions of Americans to vote for Trump meant that they either did not take the meaning of casting a ballot seriously or, more troublingly, they actually wanted as president someone brazen enough to act upon their like-minded, in-group grievances and rage. In

retrospect, that so many voted destructively rather than constructively, meant that we were far more divided, and our democracy was in far more peril than we thought.

We might now be able to read more clearly in our trauma responses to Trump's election, our distress at sensing the implications embedded in such divisions. That some people suffered somatic PTSD-like symptoms in the weeks afterward, signaled the primal, even annihilatory impact of Donald Trump's messages of exclusion and threat. Trump's subsequent actions throughout his presidency — from his anti-Muslim travel ban to his insistence on funding for an anti-immigrant wall at the Southern border; from his refusal to censure violent white nationalists marching in Charlottesville, Virginia to his inciting anti-Asian hate by calling the Covid-19 virus the "China-flu"; from his rescinding federal rights for trans individuals to his appointing ultra conservative Supreme Court justices who intended to do away with *Roe v. Wade* — and did so — these actions validated fears that Trump would misuse his power as president to attack, harm and exile any group he and his supporters deemed as lesser, different, or "other."

We can consider this recent history and still feel amazed. We might again echo Rip van Winkle and ask, "Just what is going on, here?" even adding, "this is not who we, as Americans, are." But then again — isn't it? Time grants us the distance to see what the past eight years have taught us: that indeed, this is *also* who we, as Americans are. This dark truth is the painful and scary reality Trump and Trumpism call upon us to confront. The fact that we, as a nation, are again close to granting Trump the immense power of POTUS, this time knowing full well he and his allies will use it to further abase and abuse his opponents and individuals from vulnerable backgrounds, confirms this.

Trump’s now-infamous attack on Haitian immigrants in Springfield, OH, where he perpetuated an alt-right conspiracist accusation that they were stealing neighbors pets and eating them — notably blurted out in reaction to Kamala Harris’ debate-defining comment that his rallies draw small crowd sizes — is proof-positive of how impulsively, and yet how effectively he uses scapegoating and spectacle to defend against his (and his supporters’) narcissistic injuries. Doing so, Trump incites wanton violence, distracting us all from the actual problems we face. The bomb threats, school closings, and attacks on Haitian businesses in Springfield that followed in the weeks after Trump uttered — and repeated — this outrageous falsehood reveals what dystopian realities and bona-fide traumas his vicious rumor-mongering can create.

While such outcomes are so alarming, they threaten to shut down thinking, what is crucial to recognize is that these sentiments are far from new, and that Trump and his white nationalist followers provoke tensions that have existed for centuries. We cannot be innocent to the fact that these seemingly new nightmarish tapestries, portraying immigrants and people of color as criminals and monsters, are woven from material as American as our history of slavery. In fact, the depth of our distress and the persistence of Trump’s popularity point to the historical wounds and anxieties underlying both. As civil rights activist and expert on white nationalism Eric Ward has said, “these hate groups don't come to town bringing bigotry into our communities. They simply organize the prejudice that already exists.” (Ward, 2023)

To be clear, this is not a call to self-flagellate, which would only repeat cycles of shame and blame. Instead, I pose a question – and perhaps a challenge – that aims to transcend fault-finding: Can we recruit reality, difficult as it is to confront, to see what perpetuates this destructive spin, so that we can stop these repetitions and do something different? Our tools and skills as mental health professionals gives us a lens which allows us to see angles and dimensions which politicians, economists, journalists and pundits can overlook. Versed as we are in the impacts and effects of trauma, of dissociation and of the movements and projections of the unconscious, can we bring this perspective to bear on a situation that can often cause us all to feel helpless? Can we use our knowledge, skills and attunement to help us – and others – see through these horrors and terrors -- so that we can find the conditions that would support a far less repetitive, less dissociated, less corrosive – and therefore, a far healthier – transition?

Indeed, there is much real cause for Americans to feel legitimately fearful and aggrieved. Climate change and a proliferation of ever-more deadly natural disasters caution that our current way of life is unsustainable. Healthcare and prescription drugs are becoming increasingly unaffordable, deepening our sense of physical and economic insecurity. The actual purchasing power of middle-class wages have declined over the last several decades, while the wealthiest among us take an ever-larger share of the country's economic output. Advances in technology, most recently with the expansion of AI, are rapidly changing how we learn and gather information.

Yet, instead of seeking solutions for these real and complex concerns, Trump instead captures the energy of mainstream-group anxiety and channels it into scapegoating

immigrants, Muslims, Jews — individuals of any minority identity. Eric Ward alerts us to the fact that such targeting is a basic and foundational tactic of authoritarianism:

There's such a symbiotic relationship between the politics of authoritarianism and the scapegoating or dehumanizing of people. One of the reasons is that authoritarians build their political worldview or their narrative myth around the idea of being under attack — under the idea of an existential war that demands a strong response. Some of the language that I often hear from authoritarians is that society has been contaminated or infiltrated. And being able to tap into already existing forms of dehumanization just makes sense, particularly if you're Donald Trump (Ward, 2023)

The effectiveness of Trump's tactics reveals the power of these deeper and darker anxieties, which stem from our unresolved historical traumas. In 2021, in response to a question about how we Americans heal from our collective trauma due to the pandemic, trauma scholar Judith Herman said, surprisingly, "I would argue we are still dealing with the legacy of our Civil War" (Herman, 2023). She therefore joins Pauline Boss and Drew Faust to support what psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin cites as the conditions for true repair:

We have to have a notion that these things that we're talking about that are so problematic in our history that we, collectively as Americans—both those who did participate in slavery and genocide through their ancestry and those who did not—have to take responsibility for reparation, for making amends, for making sure this doesn't happen again...The less acknowledgment, the less there is what we consider to be repair (Benjamin, 2023).

All point out a truth of American trauma and subsequently, of ourselves: as a society, we Americans have not fully accounted for our traumatic legacy of enslaving and dehumanizing African-Americans for hundreds of years, or for displacing and exterminating Native Americans and appropriating their homelands. As Benjamin points out, this lack of acknowledgement blocks full repair, causing deep collective conflicts to repeat. Moreover, as a protection against guilt, such avoidance incubates anxieties of illegitimacy, which subsequently create defensiveness around privilege.

Yet because the admission of wrongdoing to the monumental crimes of American slavery and the expulsion of Native Americans is too overwhelming, avoidance of a full reckoning has persisted throughout our history. As a result, a vicious cycle continues to churn, as manifested by the entrenched impasses, polarizations and conflicts which characterize U.S. politics today. Of particular note, with respect to Trump's popularity, is the legitimizing power of grievance and victimhood. Because the very foundation of the United States rests upon these unresolved and unrepaired perpetrations — having grievances and identifying as a victim can allay, if not absolve, in some Americans, the deep, dissociated guilt and sense of illegitimacy we may hold for enjoying benefits historically derived at the cost of subjugating others. As a master of grievance, Donald Trump is expert at claiming the legitimacy of victimhood and consequently, of absolution for himself and his followers. This is particularly important for Trumpists now, at a time when assumptions about the primacy of whiteness — and the demographics to support them — are waning.

We can thus recognize in this vicious cycle of dissociated guilt, blame, shame and fear, the psychological and emotional dynamics driving the fierce impasses that have become commonplace in American politics since 2016. Like the increasingly powerful hurricanes that mark the mounting dangers of climate change, these breakdowns in U.S. government have intensified, manifesting in the form of congressional gridlock, federal shutdowns, and most destructively, in the January 6th, 2021 insurrectionist attack on the U.S. Capitol. They signal that such tensions are overheating our political ecosystem to a point of no return. As *Boston Globe* columnist Michael Cohen presciently observed in 2020:

Americans are scared of the wrong things ... They're scared about Russia, China and North Korea, when in fact, they should be scared about the fact that ... they're politically polarized ... political polarization [is] a big threat to America (Cohen, 2023).

Indeed, Trump has exploited our fears and amplified our grievances, making the divisions between us far worse. He derives and maintains his influence by fomenting "us / them" splits, inspiring cult-like, in-group loyalty among his followers. This not only blocks our ability to communicate and collaborate with each other, it breeds a sense of mistrust and fear towards those different from ourselves, creating a catastrophic social cancer that can erode the health of any democracy, never mind one as large and diverse as that of the United States.

Such severe conflicts and divisions indicate that American democracy is in fact extremely ill, and a second Trump presidency will likely put it on its deathbed. To cite

Kamala Harris, we must learn from the recent past and in this election season, take Trump, "an unserious man" (Harris, 2024), far more seriously than ever before. The lessons of 2016 and 2020-21 teach us that, in spite of Trump's chaotic and catastrophic single term as president, and in spite of his shameless disrespect for the rule of law, some of us can still obscure the obvious reality of his dangerous unfitness and consider him a viable candidate for the most powerful leadership position in the world.

All this, along with our imaginary conversations with Rip van Winkle and the all-too-real neck-and-neck closeness of the 2024 presidential race, underscore that we are in the grip of what Robert Jay Lifton calls *malignant normality*, (Lee et al, 2017, p. xviii). This describes a circumstance where destructive actions are legitimized by the official institutions which put them into practice — as happened among Nazi doctors in Auschwitz who justified their perpetration of sadistic atrocities on Jewish prisoners under the guise of following orders. Since 2017, Lifton has warned that Trump's election to U.S. president has allowed a type of malignant normalization to take hold. By its dark alchemy, the role of POTUS, a leadership role iconoclastically redefined by George Washington to represent democratic authority over individual power, has paradoxically ratified Trump's autocratic solipsism.

While it is essential right now to focus our energies (and prayers) into electing Kamala Harris as our 47th President — beyond this election, we must still contend with the root causes of what has brought our democracy so close to the brink of its destruction. If we are to stop the harmful advance of authoritarianism in American politics, it is imperative that we find a way out of the vicious cycles that create the conflicts and

impasses that threaten our democracy. While noxious and even baffling, these repetitions — which include Trump's viability as a presidential candidate for the third election season in a row — nevertheless clue us into crucial truths about ourselves and the unresolved traumas we must face. For Trump, by channeling his followers' frustrations into potent outlets of white-identified anger, indignation, shame and blame, paradoxically draws our attention to their resolution. To truly heal our ailing democracy, we as a society must undertake the difficult but essential process of facing and repairing for our original American sins — the historical traumas of slavery and Native American genocide. This is what time and the truth of Trump's traumatic impact teaches us.

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CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICS OF AMERICAN INNOCENCE: A PARADOX

IPEK S. BURNETT, PH.D.

Sitting still, reflecting, remembering, grieving, and giving in now carry the flag forward—because “forward” is not where it used to be. Going on now means going downward into the faults of our culture and backward into the griefs of its memories. Today we need heroes of descent, not masters of denial, mentors of maturity who can carry sadness . . . who show soul without irony or embarrassment.... Legendary heroes of the ancient world—Ulysses, Psyche, Persephone, Orpheus, Dionysus and even Hercules—all descended into hell to learn other values than those that rule the daily business of sunlit life. They came back with a darker eye that can see in a dark time.ⁱ

Toward the end of his life archetypal psychologist James Hillman was increasingly concerned with the American soul. He observed the fact that despite the evidence of decay on all sides, America remains in a stage of denial. It does not want to question or analyze its notions of power, progress, and freedom, or its self-image of inherent goodness. Always looking to the future and keeping an eye on the highest peak, it wants

to go on believing in its exceptionalism.ⁱⁱ

Hillman did not believe that this posture could “carry the flag forward” anymore. What was required now, according to him, was “going downward into the faults of our culture and backward into the griefs of its memories.”ⁱⁱⁱ Beautifully said and yet the task at hand feels almost impossible. Or dare I say un-American? Sitting still. Reflecting. Grieving. Giving in. The United States of America is the fast-food nation where action films rule, the pursuit of happiness is claimed as an unalienable right, and success is the proof of God’s love. Hillman’s proposition contradicts all that America knows itself to be. It urges America to go slow, to go down, to confront its sunlit self-image, and then let it decompose, decay, and rot. Allow the dark, acknowledge the hurt.

Much easier said than done.

Think about it: This country is built on such beaming ideals. From the very beginning it was seen as a sunny promised land, a paradise. A new world for bright new beginnings. A shining city upon a hill. The Declaration of Independence talked so eloquently about the luminous, self-evident truths of equality, the rights to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. Then there is the sparkling jewel-of-a-kind dream, of course. The American dream of opportunity, prosperity, success, upward social mobility. And it does not stop at home, within the nation; there is also this radiant idea, almost a divine mission, to bring freedom and democracy to all, all around the world.

But then we look and see what lies in the dark shadows of these gleaming self-

narratives, dreams, and ideals: land theft, genocide, slavery, imperialism. Endless wars, nuclear bombs, torture chambers, immigrant detention centers, mass incarceration. We see racism, sexism, xenophobia. Income inequality, corporate and political corruption, environmental destruction. In the society, gun violence, school shootings. All sorts of substances to numb the pain—alcohol, nicotine, anti-depressants, anti-anxiety meds, opioids, diet pills... Reckless materialism. The list goes on and on.

Jung once said, “Every form of addiction is bad, no matter whether the narcotic be alcohol or morphine or idealism.”^{iv} As Hillman saw it, America’s obsession with innocence was in fact a matter of addiction. He wrote, “The addiction to innocence, to not knowing life’s darkness and not wanting to know, either,” constitutes America’s “endemic national disease.”^v

Like Hillman, Jungian analyst Michael Gellert saw America’s epistemological innocence as a dangerous addiction. He warned, “Unbridled innocence can have a very dark side, for it limits one to a simplistic, one-dimensional view of the world and permits one to engage in immoral acts but with a sense of entitlement and justification.”^{vi} America’s hubris about its virtue thus gives way to a relentless resistance to engaging in critical consciousness. Throughout history, America’s ideals of democracy and freedom, so-called good intentions, and belief in its own innocence ended up justifying conquests, imperial ambitions, tyranny, and righteous violence.^{vii} A few brief presidential examples:

Just a day after the Nagasaki bombing the 33rd American president Harry Truman

addressed the nation and said: “It is an awful responsibility which has come to us. . . . We thank God that it has come to us instead of to our enemies; and we pray that He may guide us to use it in His ways and His purposes.”^{viii} Death and destruction in the service of good. As Robert Jay Lifton put it, it was this utter grandiosity, this “godlike prerogative,” that led the way to America’s “apocalyptic violence.”^{ix}

Lyndon Johnson, who served as the 36th president of the United States, spoke: “Our first purpose—America’s only purpose—is to work with others for the good of all mankind.” As he escalated the war in Vietnam, he maintained: “I am increasing the search for every possible path to peace.”^x When the 41st president, George Bush, gave his Address to the Nation on the Invasion of Iraq, he said: “Even as planes of the multinational forces attack Iraq, I prefer to think of peace, not war.”^{xi}

Peace, liberty, freedom, democracy. The rhetoric is always noble, altruistic. And yet there is something violent, and therefore paradoxical, in this. The compulsive way it attempts to bury the difficult truths. The compulsive way it escapes responsibility, reflection, recognition. The compulsive way it escapes the dark, the shadow. It is proof of that addiction Hillman’s spoke of, the addiction “to not knowing life’s darkness and not wanting to know, either.”^{xii}

In *Democracy Matters*, philosopher, social activist, and presidential candidate Cornel West wrote:

The American democratic experiment is unique in human history not because we are God's chosen people to lead the world, nor because we are always a force for good in the world, but because of our refusal to acknowledge the deeply racist and imperial roots of our democratic project. We are exceptional because of our denial of the antidemocratic foundation stones of American democracy. No other democratic nation revels so blatantly in such self-deceptive innocence.^{xiii}

American novelist and civil rights activist James Baldwin also boldly proclaimed that this self-deception is impermissible. "It is the innocence which constitutes the crime," he wrote.^{xiv} Again, such a paradox.

According to Jungian analyst Wolfgang Giegerich in *psyche*, innocence and violence "form an indissoluble pair. They are two 'halves' of one and the same whole, two poles . . . together they are *one* constellation."^{xv} In other words, they are not necessarily opposites, they are interdependent. In American politics, innocence and violence belong to one another like two sides of a coin. Like a coin they represent a currency, we might even say. They signify a certain power. A transaction. A contract. It is crucial that we pay attention to this dialectic. How it has played out throughout history, how it continues to dominate political affairs today.

I mentioned World War II, Vietnam, Invasion of Iraq, now fast forward to January 6th, 2021, the day when 45th President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol Hill to interrupt the confirmation of the 46th U.S. President Joe Biden. Trump waited for the mob to shatter the windows, enter the building, and only then he gave a brief speech: "We have to have peace," he said. "So go home. We love you. You're very special."^{xvi}

Biden also gave a public statement that day; he said: “Let me be very clear. The scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not reflect a true America, do not represent who we are.”^{xvii}

Remember Hillman: *Today we need heroes of descent, not masters of denial.*

Trump’s “very special” people at the Capitol were carrying the Confederate flag. That is America. They were chanting “USA!” the whole time. That is America. White supremacy, conspiracy theories, entitlement, righteousness, that is all America. And behind the insurgency was of course an American president who orchestrated the attack and was now offering a rhetoric of peace in the midst of violence. That, too, is undeniably America.

So, when Biden said, “Those scenes do not reflect a true America,” he was creating a dichotomy: a false America. There is no such thing. White nationalists, they reflect America; Black Lives Matter protests also reflect America. The colonizers and the colonized, the slaveholders and the enslaved. The residents of the Hamptons and the ghettos. The skyscrapers and the homeless shelters. The Evangelists and the atheists. Urban and rural, left and right, progressive and conservative, they all represent America, who it is and who it has been. They all belong with the whole that is America. The chaos, complexity, diversity, contradictions, and paradox: none of these realities pose threats to the so-called “United” States of America. The denial of the complexity, the denial of the fractures, the denial of the inherent tensions, the denial of the dark, the shadow... that is the real danger.

Going on now means accepting this complexity.

Biden’s “true America” is a fantasy in denial of dissonance. But then again, what is America if not a nation built on such fantasies? Paradise, the promised land, the New World, the city upon a hill, the chosen people, Manifest Destiny: None of these are facts, they are fantasies brimming with images and myths on which collective consciousness depends in the United States.

Fantasies are not passive, not merely internal, private. They actively form and reinforce our perception of historical, political, and cultural realities. They define our experience of ourselves as a nation and the world in which we live. They are not confined to the inner mind; they are enacted every day out there in the world. Fantasies beget fantasies, crafting creeds, ideologies, even public and foreign policies. They are political. We see them, we hear them mentioned constantly in political campaign ads, presidential debates, headlines, and hashtags. They are so embedded in our everyday discourse that we take them for granted and literally, just as we do with the American ideals.^{xviii}

“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Though eloquent and inspiring, this rhetoric is deceiving; because the self-evident truth when the Declaration of Independence was read publicly on July 4th, 1776, was that these rights did not actually apply to everyone. The self-evident truth was inequality. The fifty-six delegates representing the Second Continental Congress who signed the Declaration—all of them white, wealthy, male, and

most of them slave-holders—did not intend to include the peasants and workers, the slaves, the Native Americans, or the women. The governed people to which the Declaration referred was only a small group of people: white men with property. They were the ones whose rights were acknowledged. They were the ones whose life, liberty, and happiness mattered. They were the ones whose votes were to be counted. The stated ideal of equality could not have been farther than the lived reality in the colonies.

Unlike the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence did not outline the blueprint for the U.S. legislative system; it, nevertheless, stated the ideals of the nation and therefore provided an ideological foundation for the democratic government of the United States. While doing so, it also revealed the dissonance between political promises and social realities, the disparities between the national ideals and the lived experience of the people. If American democracy was built on the ideals that the Declaration put forth, this means that it was also built upon the very dissonances, disparities, contradictions that were inseparable from those same ideals.^{xix}

A part of that work is to imagine, understand, own the realities overshadowed by the rhetoric of pride and power. To consider the dissonance in social and political promises. Another is to become conscious of fantasies and recognize them for what they are. What happens when we take the myth literally? When we think that the fantasy is a fact? Fundamentalism. Either/or, black/white, all/nothing thinking. True/false dichotomies.

In a talk he gave in 2010, just a year before he passed away, Hillman said:

The innocence. Innocence. And we love it. We want to stay pristine, untouched, ever-new, forward-looking, bright, unwounded. . . . As the country crumbles, they say, “The best of America is in front of us.” We want to stay innocent, because if we once woke up, we would see murdered bodies from here back to the first colonists. Buffalo, bison, forests, Indians, Negroes. Dead. So we stay innocent. Innocent is the American form of historical repression.^{xx}

When a country is so forward-looking, future oriented, the past gets repressed. When it is obsessed with success, failures, mistakes, losses get repressed. When it is always in a pursuit of happiness, grief and mourning get repressed. But the repressed endures and persists to be acknowledged. We cannot even talk about “the return of the repressed,” because, in actuality, the repressed never goes away, it always lurks right underneath the surface, just around the corner waiting for a chance to make another appearance. The repressed accompanies us wherever we go. Even when we go “forward.” Especially when we go “forward.”

On Kamala Harris’s official presidential campaign site, it says, “A NEW WAY FORWARD” in bold, capital letters. The paragraph below reads: “Vice President Harris and Governor Walz are fighting for a New Way Forward that protects our fundamental freedoms, strengthens our democracy, and ensures every person has the opportunity to not just get by, but to get ahead.”^{xxi}

I wonder if with its promise of freedom, democracy, and opportunity, this “New Way Forward” is truly a new way? Because to me it sounds like a reiteration of age-old American ideals and myths. It sounds like campaign speech. I think of Hillman’s

concerns and his appeal for sitting still, reflecting, remembering, grieving, and giving in as a way forward. In fact, this is exactly what I have been doing through this inquiry, word by word, sentence by sentence. Sitting still in the debris. Reflecting on the tensions, fractures, uncertainties. Remembering the violence. Grieving the innocence. Giving in on the fantasies of a heroic, noble, selfless, all-good, and true country. This downward journey has less to do with promises of freedom, democracy, and opportunity, and more with unresolved trauma, disillusionment, and loss. On this October morning, I feel the weight of it all. Not an easy task, but I am convinced that it is necessary. Same with voting. Not an easy task if we truly consider all the deceit, injury, and crime we just touched upon, but again necessary.

So, I will continue to sit still, reflect, remember, grieve, and give in until it is that fateful Tuesday in early November, then I will lift myself up; even if my eyes are slow to re-adjust to the sunlit surface of well-polished fantasies of a democratic nation with a democratic system, I will head to the ballot box as a registered voter—wary, dreading perhaps, but dependable, nonetheless.

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Endnotes

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CHAPTER SIX

NEVER LOOK AWAY: UVALDE, AMERICAN PATRIARCHY, AND THE SLAUGHTER OF INNOCENTS¹

CAROLYN BATES

INTRODUCTION

Why would I write this paper? I was born, and spent the first nine years of my life, in Laredo Texas, a 2-hour drive south of Uvalde. During that time, my family often drove north through the small town to visit my grandparents, who lived in the hill country near the foothills of West Texas. I grew up feeling a strong identification with the children of La Frontera, the people of the Texas/Mexico borderland, for whom both the riches and tensions of multiculturalism were everyday realities. The mass shooting at Uvalde's Robb Elementary School felt personal to me, stripping me of that layer of

¹ An earlier version of this paper was published in the Journal of Analytical Psychology: Bates, C. (2024). "There's Something About Uvalde: American Patriarchy and the Slaughter of Innocents" in The Journal of Analytical Psychology, 69, 2, pp. 227-245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5922.12995>

defense I fear we are all at risk for holding, with the ever-mounting number of mass shootings. With the stripping away of this defense, I was required to look into the horror rather than to look away.

This paper addresses a difficult topic today; that topic being that in the United States, we currently live in a culture seemingly willing to abide the ongoing slaughter of children. There is no getting around the sense that, in the United States, certain lives seem cheap in contrast to the mission to protect the sacrosanct 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution. The 2nd Amendment, ratified in 1791, guarantees citizens the right to bear arms and supports the right to self-defense, to resist oppression, and to act in defense of the state. However, in the last 45 years, the 2nd Amendment has been carefully curated to stand as a symbol of individual freedom against what is perceived to be an overreaching government. Before I move on, I want to say that I have chosen in this talk *not* to distance from the reality of gun violence, and I ask that you please hear that as your trigger warning, should you need one.



Figure 1 University of Texas Tower Shooting.

Image taken of the Main Building of UT by Ronald Perryman. *LIFE*, August 22nd 1966.

Source: (Public domain: Wikimedia).

[File: UT Tower Charles Whitman Ronald Perryman Image Life.jpg - Wikimedia Commons](#)

CLOSE TO HOME

In the middle of the day of August 1st, 1966, I was at home with my mother – taking shelter indoors from the summer heat – when a friend called her with an urgent message. My mother rushed to turn on the television. My father was not home. A graduate student at the University of Texas in Austin, he worked as an Instructor in the English Department, his office housed in a small building that stood in the shadow of the University Tower. A tower, atop which – that day – stood a 25-year-old man by the name of Charles Whitman.

To reach the top of that tower, Whitman, disguised as a research assistant there to deliver equipment, had trolleyed a cart onto the ground floor elevator and made his way to the top floor with his cache of weapons, ammunition, and provisions hidden under a burlap tarp. Upon emerging from the elevator, he immediately killed the two receptionists who would have otherwise welcomed him as a visitor out onto the Tower's observation deck. One of the receptionists, I would soon learn, was the grandmother of my 6th grade schoolmate.

From his position, 28 Stories above the campus grounds, with hunting rifle at the ready, Whitman proceeded to take aim into the throng of students and faculty walking beneath him. During the next 96 minutes he took the lives of 11 people, wounding 31 more before two police officers breached the Tower platform and ended his life. Whitman had taken strategic advantage of the timing of classes letting out, *and* he took advantage of clear sightlines in each direction: East, West, North and South. It was along the South mall of the Tower that my father worked and would have been walking out for lunch at that hour.

As I watched the live images of this massacre unfold on our small black and white television, at 11 years of age, I tried to understand not only what was happening there, on the screen, but I was also trying to understand my mother's shaking, her horror, her tension, and then her eruption into tears when my father, unaware of what was happening, opened the front door, and walked into the house. He had left campus early that day, for the mundane miracle of a dental appointment.

I had never before seen my mother collapse into his arms. I had never before seen her weep with such wordless relief.

58 years later, it could have been yesterday. Except, that in the interim, so many more innocents have been slaughtered in this particular way in this country.

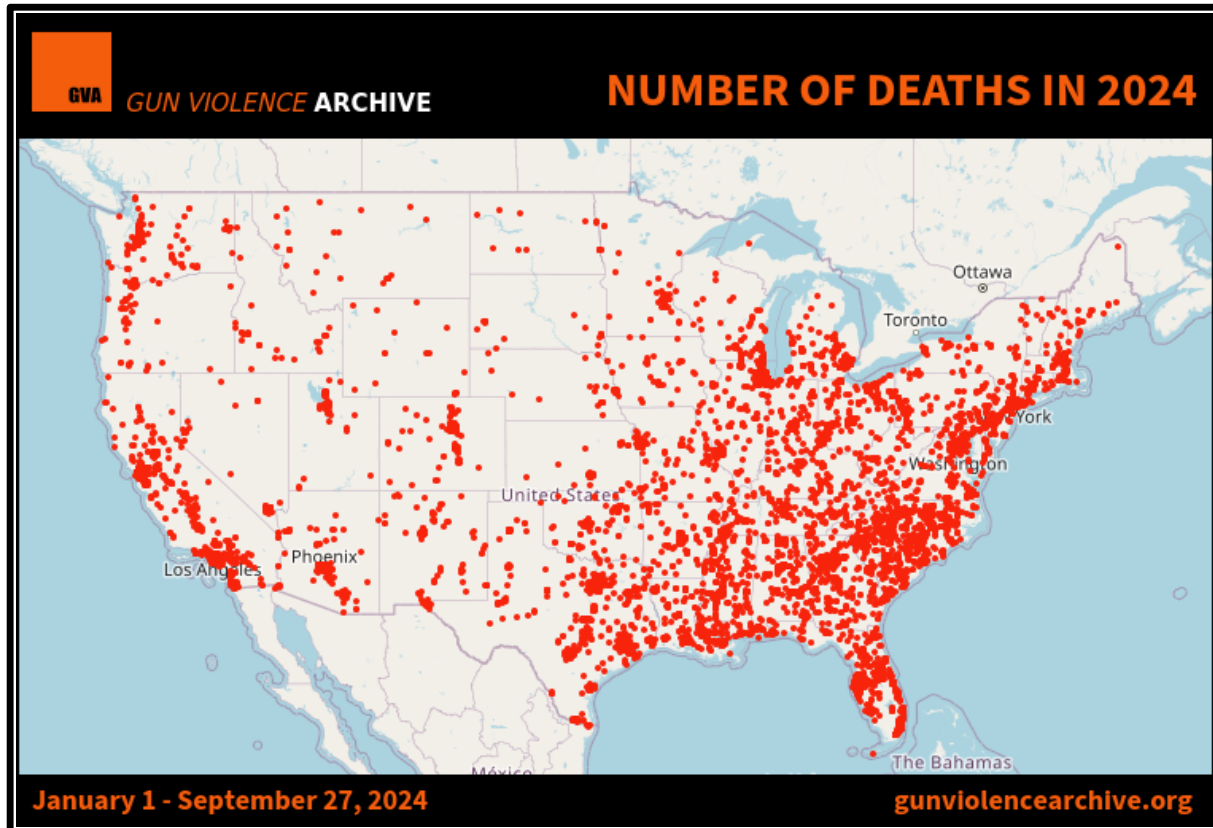


Figure 2 © Gun Violence Archive (www.gunviolencearchive.org). Used with permission.

The staggering number of gun deaths – this graphic showing gun deaths up through September of this current year – speaks to a nation boiling over, and a post-pandemic phenomenon out of control.

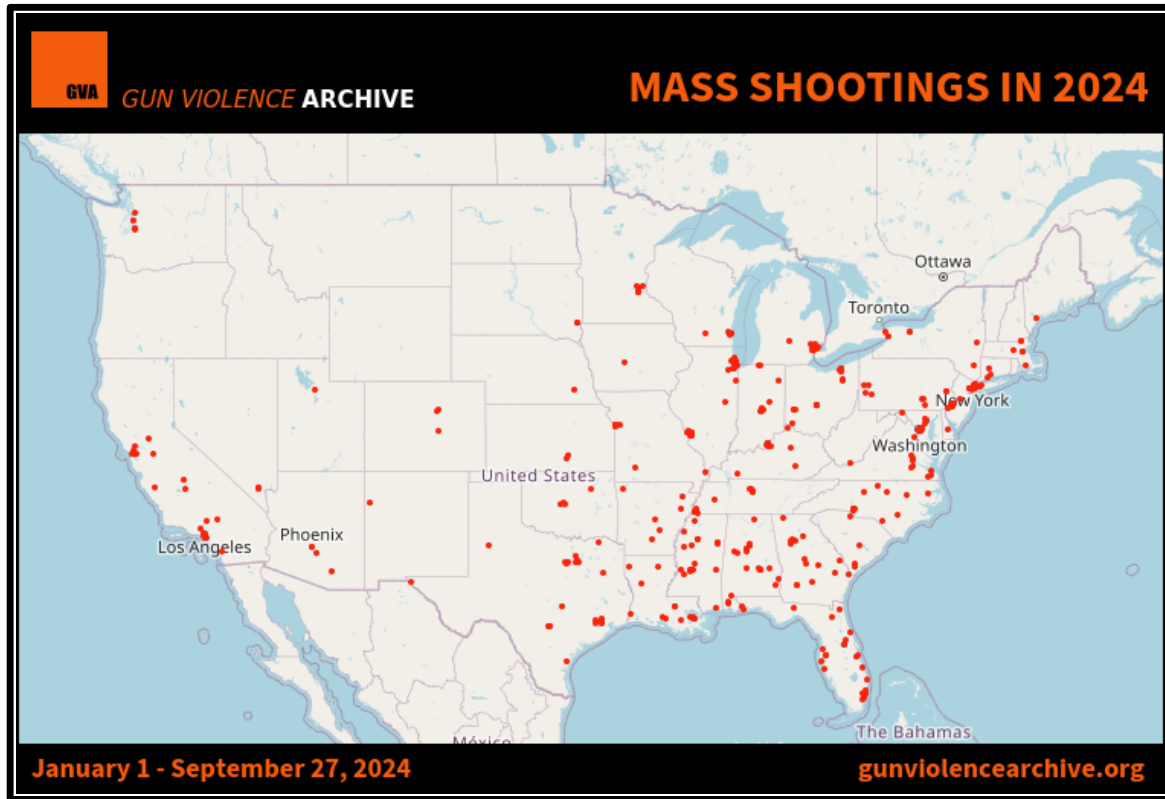


Figure 3 © Gun Violence Archive (www.gunviolencearchive.org). Used with permission.

And yet mass shootings are but a tiny fraction of our gun violence epidemic. And while mass shootings – in schools, synagogues, mosques, churches, markets, pubs, parades, concerts, movie theaters, and festivals – account for only a minority of gun deaths, they strike us as uniquely American in their very grandiosity of intent.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT UVALDE

After every mass school shooting in the US, both a wish *and* a fear arise in the collective: Will this be the one? Will this be the tipping point for change in a nation so deeply

divided over the meaning of “the right to bear arms” – a nation possessed by titanic beliefs around the sanctity of individualism, against which the social necessity of community seems to pale by comparison?

Which mass shooting might prove to be the tipping point?

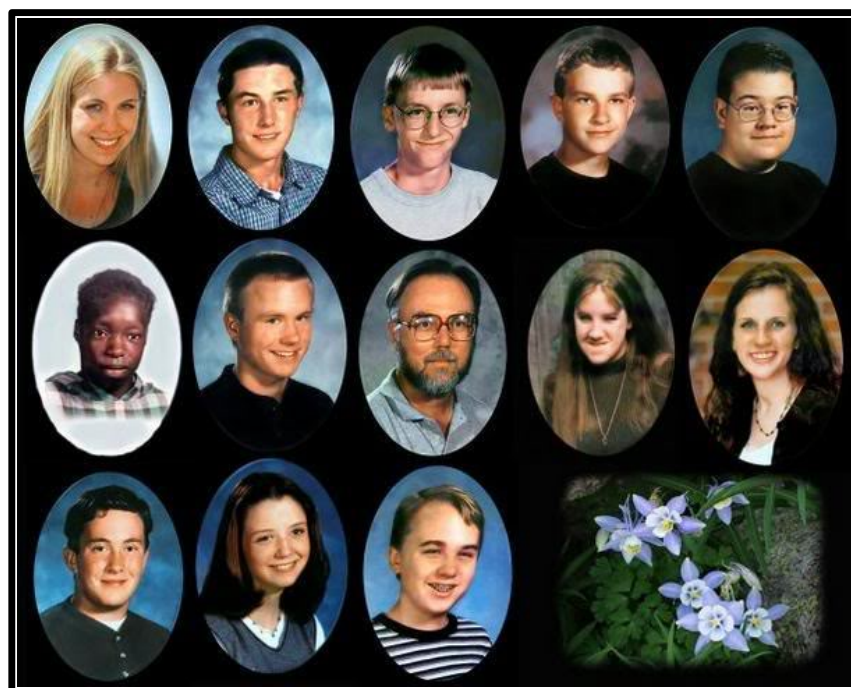


Figure 4 Victims of Colorado’s Columbine High School mass shooting, April 1999

Colorado’s Columbine Highschool, April 1999, where 2 teenagers systematically hunted and murdered 10 individuals, wounding 21 more before taking their own lives? No. Like the Tower shooting, this was hoped to be an outlier, a never to be repeated tragedy.

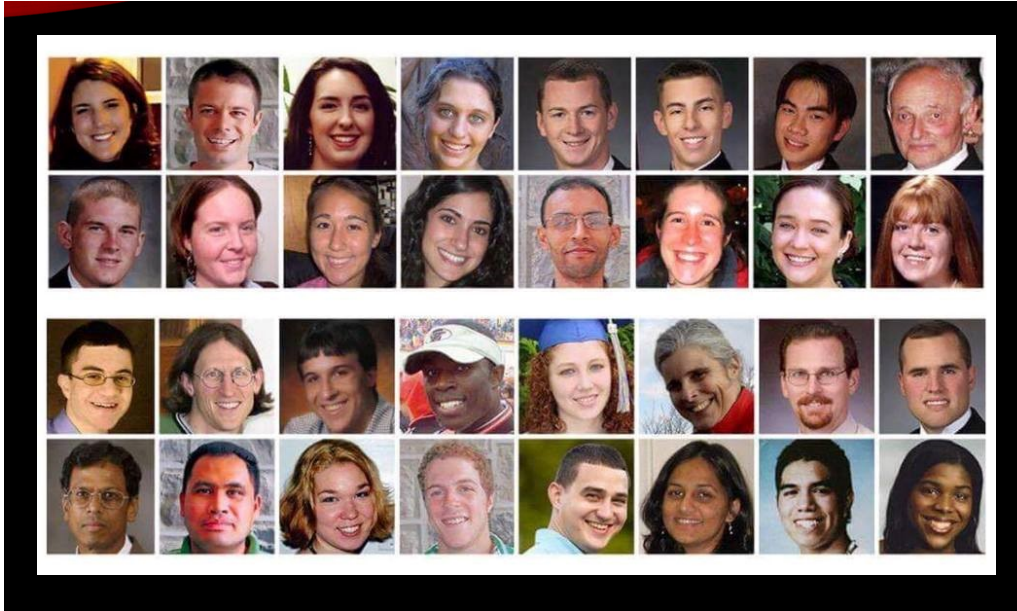


Figure 5 Victims of Virginia Tech mass shooting, April 2007

Virginia Tech, April 2007, currently the deadliest mass School shooting in the US, where a lonely, determined 23-year-old man murdered 32 people before killing himself? No. That was not a turning point.



Figure 6 Victims of Connecticut's Sandy Hook Elementary, December 2012

Connecticut's Sandy Hook Elementary, December 2012, where a 20-year-old man first killed his mother, then went on to take the lives of 6 adults and 20 children – all of them 6 or 7 years old – before taking his own? Alas, no.



Figure 7 Victims of Florida's Parkland High School mass shooting, February 2018

Florida's Parkland High-School, February 2018, where a 19-year-old recently expelled student killed 17 people and injured 17 more before slipping away in the crowd of fleeing students? No.



Figure 8 Victims of Uvalde’s Robb Elementary School, May 2022

Then why might the murder of 19 children and 2 teachers and the injuring of 17 others at Robb Elementary School, in Uvalde, TX prove any differently?

On May 24th, 2022, a young man and prior student of Robb Elementary, following a heated argument with his grandmother, first shot her, then left home and drove to the school, where he entered through a side door carrying an AR-15 rifle – which is the preferred assault weapon for mass shootings. He entered two adjoining classrooms where he informed the children they were “all going to die,” and while playing what one young Survivor would call “sad music”² he proceeded to massacre them.

² [Robb Elementary School massacre: 80 minutes of horror in Uvalde, Texas | CNN](#)

Adults and students alike, taking shelter against walls and in closets, called the police from their cell phones, pleading for help: “Please come, we’re in trouble.”¹ Over the next 80 minutes, nearly 400 law enforcement personnel ranging from school safety officers to local police to Texas Rangers to a Border Patrol tactical team arrived; and what unfolded was a perfect storm of failures:

- failures in establishing a line of command,
- failures in correct assessment of the situation,
- failures in communication,
- failures in strategic procedures,
- and failures of discernment.

Parents arrived, begging the police to let them go in and save their children, and were threatened with arrest. Officers, perhaps by their sheer numbers, may have been confused and uncertain, and waited and waited for order to emerge from the chaos, while within, children died.

11-year-old Miah Cerrillo, somehow understanding the primary rules of camouflage: to hide, to blend, to deceive: chose to deceive *by* blending, and covered herself with the blood of a deceased classmate, and lay still, feigning death, and survived – awakened, like Hansel’s sister Gretel, to the necessity to be cunning.

And then, there was a different failure – there was the failure of the American heroic myth. The governor of the state of Texas, a state he recently dubbed as “the law and order” state, a state that suffers an inflated identification with the patriarchal myth of

the heroic masculine – think of the lone cowboy, the lone lawman, the lone star – the governor appeared to rely on that myth as he tried to reassure the public, stating with poorly informed confidence that authorities were at hand, that police had taken the building and were taking care of business, stopping the threat. He appeared to hold that myth of the hero high in the air, and over the days and weeks of investigative reporting and legislative hearings that followed, the myth – and the stereotyped language upholding it – would begin to suffer, as the cascade of failures began to emerge.

In the moments of a tragedy's aftermath, positions are struck as a function of scale. After such a tragedy, the mother who can only identify her child's body by the clothes on that body, because there is no face left, we might consider that a scale of *visceral* immediacy, that telescopes an irreversible horror into the timeline of one's life. And also, after such a tragedy, the legislator who calls for prayers but cautions against taking any rash action that would threaten the scope of the 2nd Amendment, appears to act from a scale of valuing an abstraction. There is no body to hold, no blood to witness, no shattering grief, no years of complex PTSD waiting in the wings, there is only an idea to be kept alive at any cost, including being willing to sacrifice the country's children on the altar of an archetypally violent ethos.



Figure 9 AI generated image by Carolyn Bates, 2024

Such vastly different scales elicit vastly different languages, emotions, and conclusions.

How then, does one find a foothold for action amid such differences in scale?

One changes the narrative; one fosters dissent against the status quo by refusing to look away and by refusing to take comfort in the American heroic myth. My suggestion – dare I say – my hope – that Uvalde is different, is subjectively based, and I must confess

is driven by a longing that this madness will someday end. But when I look at it more objectively, Uvalde may *be* part of a turning point: because, in its aftermath, the press and the people are not letting go of the narrative: you can hear it in the in the national conversation more people engaging to change the narrative, focusing not only on the tragedies themselves, each one blurring into the next with horrific similarity, but focusing also on the complexities that allow for these massacres, focusing on the aftermath, and on the need for solutions that are both concrete and complex.

It is chilling to consider the massive financial purse and political power of the gun lobby. Consider the National Rifle Association, founded in 1871 to foster the Sport of rifle Marksmanship. Once a leader in promoting gun safety and sensible gun laws, the NRA underwent an enantiomorphic shift in the mid-1970's. It has, according to New York Times reporter Mike McIntire (2023) transformed "from a fusty club of sportsmen into a lobbying juggernaut that would enforce elected officials' allegiance, derail legislation behind the scenes, (and) redefine the legal landscape." Such influence invites the American public to reconsider the motives of politicians who swear they stand on principle alone, and to consider that political careers may be bolstered or destroyed by the gun lobby.



Figure 10 AI generated image by Carolyn Bates, 2024

The gun industry understands that there is nothing quite so mercurial as capitalism; driving sales upward by their own shift of narrative from the importance of sports hunting to that of personal protection, a message that by its very nature suggests there must be a lethal threat against which one must protect oneself with lethal force. And its messaging works:

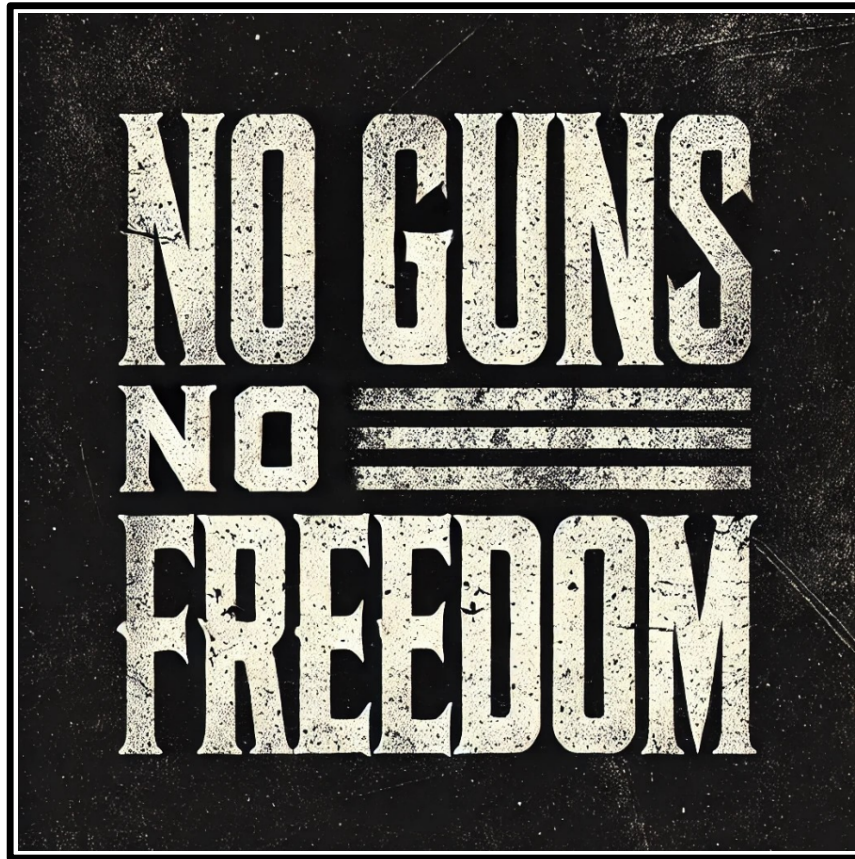


Figure 11 AI generated image by Carolyn Bates, 2024

The gun lobby’s rhetoric has effectively persuaded *many* Americans that the bedrock for the conservative ideology of individual liberty is, according to historian Heather Cox, “The unfettered right to own and carry weapons.” There is no other measure. The possession of freedom is predicated on the possession of weapons and wresting those two apart seems impossible. The gun thus represents what Tom Singer would call “an archetypal defense of the collective spirit” (2002, p. 20) – its possession assuring

continued identification with a group that perceives itself – and its freedom – to be under threat.

But in contrast to the gun lobby's narrative, a different narrative arises, one that turns increasingly to survivors and the horrific sequelae they bear; on the lives forever changed. These narratives even enter the genres of memoir and novel. Gun shooting survivor Paul Bendix, a lay member of the Board of Governors of this C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco, author of the memoir *Dance Without Steps*, speaks to the spirit required to survive the random shooting that left him paralyzed. He raises the fundamental question of *what kinds* of fear convince people of the need to own firearms? Author Matthew Quick, in his novel, *We Are the Light*, branches beyond the individual's sequelae to tell of a community's struggle, as it tries to heal from a mass shooting in a movie theatre. Telling the story through a series of letters written to his Jungian analyst, the narrator conveys the numbing, surreal psychic disorganization left in the wake of such slaughter – both individual and communal disorganization. One dares to hope that such shifts of narrative continue to invite the American people to not look away.

Political rhetoric as to what drives this egregious phenomenon has grown increasingly hyperbolic. And we might consider hyperbole to be the tell-tale evidence of a cultural complex at hand. Singer & Kimbles (2004, p. 7) remind us that “Cultural complexes can provide those caught in a potent web of stories and emotions, a simplistic certainty about the group's place in the world in the face of otherwise conflicting and ambiguous uncertainties.” Hyperbole, with its volley and counter volley of ineffectual argument,

pressures participants to address the problem *not* at its multiple cultural and ideological sources, but rather, to keep it simple, which sadly means, keep it unsolvable.

And so, schools must take monies from their educational funds – monies meant for books, computers, lab equipment – and put that toward hiring security officers and “hardening” their schools by erecting physical barriers making access more difficult, and having faculty and staff engage in threat assessment training.³ Children, as young as 4 and 5, must now be taught, with the help of their friend Winnie the Pooh: “If you see or hear something that is not right, be bright and tell a teacher! Do not delay, do this right away. If there is danger, the police will come fast to catch the stranger. Until then, remember what Pooh and crew said to do:



“RUN!”



“HIDE!”

³ For further exploration of examples of for-profit organizations focusing on “hardening” schools and “active shooter response” training, see [Stay Safe K-6 Run, Hide, Fight Learning System — Praetorian-Consulting](#).



“FIGHT!”

Figure 12 AI generated images by Carolyn Bates, 2024

Such entrenched attitudes linking guns and freedom, supported by the patriarchal grasp for power, by capitalism and by the profits of the gun industry, are implicated in the territorial adhesion to American gun-rights and in the high cost paid by the blood of innocents. When such beliefs are fostered for political-gain-and-power and taken up as proof of one’s identification with a particular ideological side, they risk creating what Jungian Analyst Grazyna Czubinska describes as a totalitarian psyche, in which “there is no space for thought as there is no space for reflection and examination. Instead, fantasies involving hatred are enacted, taking over reality. The role of terror is to suppress and exclude the third position.” (Czubinska, 2020, p. 335)

SOCIOPATHY OR VULNERABILITY RUN AMOK?

Theories abound – and are inconclusive – as to the degree to which mental illness plays a role in mass shootings. Serious mental illness may be present in only a small percentage of perpetrators. Rather, most mass shooters fall into a category of "persistent emotional disturbance."^[78]

So how then might we consider these lone actors?⁴ Most everyone might look like a sociopath in a mug shot.

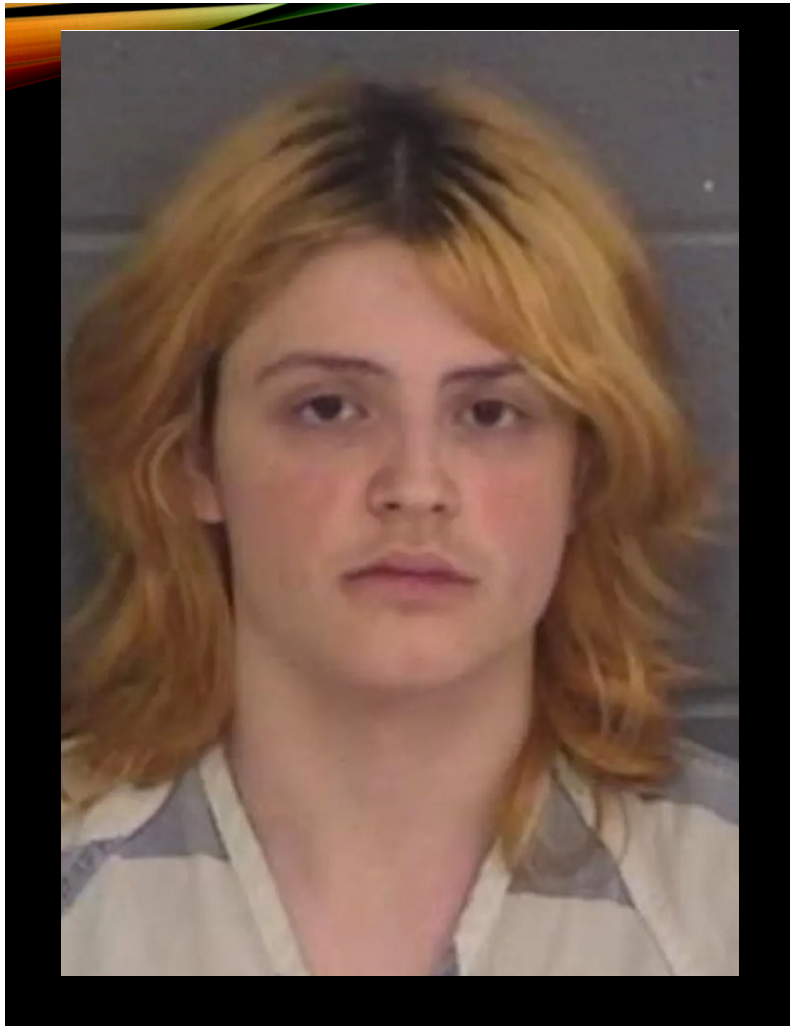


Figure 13 Colt Grey, Apalachee High School, Georgia

⁴ A valuable resource in understanding the psychosocial vulnerability of lone actors may be found in Gill, P. Podcast: What makes a violent lone actor? Exploring the role of mental health. From the Department of War Studies, Breaking Cycles of Conflict mini-series. School of Security Studies at King's College London: [School of Security Studies | King's College London \(kcl.ac.uk\)](http://www.schoolofsecuritystudies.org) and www.xcept-research.org

A mug shot is taken after either prolonged or acute stress. But when we're not looking at mugshots...



Figure 14 Eric Harris, Columbine; Charles Whitman, UT Tower; Adam Lanza, Sandy Hook; Nikolas Cruz, FL; Salvador Ramos, Uvalde, Dylan Klebold, Columbine

...when we look into the eyes of perpetrators in the making, what might we see? Before they become hunters of other human beings? Before they begin collecting arsenals of weapons to store in their bedroom closets and backyard sheds? Before they begin

sketching the schematics on paper or in their minds of how the assault will take place? Before they become too curious about, then obsessed with, then idolizing of prior mass shooters? Before the strained relationships with a parent or a grandparent, a teacher or a peer, or group of peers has eroded some aspect of their sense of self and dissolved their attachment to community? Before they begin the descent into an alienation from their own humanity and by virtue of disconnection from that humanity, draw the murderous conclusion that they must destroy in others what they cannot have in themselves? Before all of that, what might we see in their eyes?

When you look into the eyes of these perpetrators, you may imagine sociopathy, and indeed sociopathy – that severely injured Eros that Guggenbuhl-Craig, Hillman, Conforti and others have written about – may be there. You may also imagine enraged and defeated spirits, lost souls: those who have fallen through the cracks, who have either been siloed through lack of community resources and involvement – and thus have lost the protective shielding of that – or who have self-siloed for any number of reasons, and in that siloing, are left with irrationally-driven fears of displacement, replacement, and supplanting. Fears that may easily be believed when they are the same fears promoted in current US Culture Wars where social media offers ever-present conduits for hate speech, racism, and again, fears of being supplanted.

Certainly, we can imagine, from an analytic perspective, that mass shootings are a deafening statement made by individuals who have experienced severe relational injuries, injuries that have been nursed in isolation into feelings of resentment and envy-driven strategies for revenge. We can imagine that the desire to become infamous is itself a massive compensation for feeling so very small. We can imagine that these

killers take the hated, rejected, and vulnerable aspects of themselves and project those aspects onto others, to destroy them there.

In his compelling lecture given for The Assisi Foundation, Michael Conforti, asked: “What could be in the hearts and souls of these shooters?” And he compassionately – and I believe rightly – considers that their primary injuries have been in the realm of Eros and thus, their defensive stance is the destructive and murderous stance of malevolent envy. He notes that these killers and would-be killers in whose hearts “there has been nothing but disappointment and despair,” may imagine that those other children or peers are free of the psychic pain which they themselves carry. And so, with every killing of a child, they kill off the child in themselves, again, citing Conforti: they “engage in a desperate attempt to obliterate desires and...kill off” potentialities.

Yet, while the internal experiences of alienation, resentment, and contempt are undoubtedly at play in these actors, the hypothesis that the sickness lies *only* in the individual is an incomplete hypothesis at best. *None* of this takes place in a cultural vacuum.

We must consider that the distortions these players enact are symptomatic of the distortions in the culture around them. When we look into their eyes, we see individuals who are bathed in a culture of racism, sexism, a culture of othering, a culture that is currently engaged in its own ideological war, grasping to justify and reconcile its history of malignant entitlement that allowed for the annihilation and enslavement of whole peoples.

Anthony Imperato, founder and CEO of Henry Repeating Arms, notes that “The fascination with the American cowboy has not waned... The modern cowboy, the *tactical* cowboy, (emphasis mine) it’s all good stuff.”⁵ (Piccolo, 2022) Perspectives such as those reflected in this quote seem to underscore a merging of the cowboy and warrior figures in U.S. gun culture.

Might these lone actors also be supported by the uniquely American glorification of the lone cowboy, the rugged individual, the misunderstood hero, the warrior, and the vigilante for justice – all cultural memes that find extreme expression in mass shootings?

⁵ [#386 | Anthony Imperato | Henry Repeating Arms | Lever Actions & the Future of Henry \(buzzsprout.com\)](#)



Figure 15 AI generated image by Carolyn Bates, 2024

How is this myth – that promotes individualism over community – and promotes an individual’s extreme attack against community – made manifest?

Jungian analyst Randi Nathenson reminds us that “Mass shootings are most frequently perpetrated by white males, but just as this is not simply an issue of guns, this is not merely an issue of white maleness. The reasons for this trend have more to do with socialization than physiology, a result of patriarchy, privilege, toxic masculinity, gender stereotypes, and racial bias... The question” she notes, “is not exploring what is innate in white men, but how our culture promotes this violence by them in particular.”

(Nathenson, 2020, p. 207) And I would venture to suggest one further possible

contributor: that promoting violence in white men walks hand in hand with the long held American tradition of promoting in those white men who are vulnerable to its seduction, permission to take what they will: Manifest Destiny etched deeply into individual psyches.

I would argue that US culture also promotes in some white men the Western heroic ideal of the individual who fights for one's rights against all odds, an ideal that glorifies and pedestalizes individuality – and in that glorifying – denies the individual's absolute need for the collective experiment that we call Society. To admit a need for the collective is to admit to vulnerability, which, in the eyes of Western patriarchy, is suspect.



Figure 16 AI generated image by Carolyn Bates, 2024

THE INTERPENETRATION OF INDIVIDUAL AND CULTURE

Jungian socio-analysis underscores that the *individual* and the *culture always* interpenetrate in a dynamic process of ‘mass character’ – marked by ‘contagion, imitation, attraction and repulsion’ as well as affect and is in many ways unpredictable. (Vestergaard & Odde, 2021, p. 5) Individual experience is embedded in the social world (Odde & Vestergaard, 2021) and the social world is embedded within the individual and as such, we are never truly separate from nor independent of the mass character of the cultural collectives around us. I would suggest that ‘contagion, imitation, attraction and repulsion’ *are* the driving forces that distort our cultural values of heritage and freedom into the perverse valuing of the gun as the archetypal defense of the collective and that mass violence is the inevitable outcome of a culture’s adherence to that defense.

ASPIRATIONAL FUTURE?



Figure 17 AI generated image by Carolyn Bates, 2024

Jung wrote that America has a large collective shadow with which it would someday have to contend. And in the time since he wrote that, we have had multiple opportunities to look squarely at our shadow: the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War protests, the women's movement for equal rights, the Stonewall Riots, the Black Lives Matter movement, the gender nonconformity and gender fluidity movements, the

#MeToo movement, and now, a growing collective protest against gun violence run amok in the nation. All of these can be seen as responses to what Jung saw as “the deep and anxious apprehensions of the American public” (Vol 18, para 1443).

Perhaps it is *that* which we see when we look into the eyes of perpetrators, perhaps we see that deep apprehension reflected back to us, fueled by a totalitarian state of mind that cannot find a third position, a way out of an unmanageable tension: kill off the other to kill off something intolerable within oneself.

IN CLOSING

I wish I could end with a sense of an aspirational future. I do not have one, even as I see the cultural struggles unfolding, and even as I believe in the power of coalition building and collective dissent and action. But never forget, such coalition building takes place on both sides of this debate. Instead, I leave you with this brief excerpt from Matthew Arnold’s poem, *Dover Beach*, which I believe captures both the cultural landscape of these current dis-United States, and the internal landscape of so many of its people:

Where the sea meets the moon-blanchèd land,

Listen! you hear the grating roar of pebbles,

which the waves draw back,

and fling at their return, up the high strand:

Begin, and cease, and then again begin with tremulous cadence slow,

and bring the eternal note of sadness in.

Ah, love, let us be true to one another!

For the world, which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams,

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain swept with confused alarms of struggle
and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

AMERICAN YOUTH, THEIR PREOCCUPATION WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, AND THEIR “BELLE INDIFFERENCE” TOWARD THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

ROBERT TYMINSKI, DMH

This timely conference gives us an opportunity to talk together about meaningful, difficult, and bewildering topics. One question I imagine most of us are pondering is: just how significant will this election be? How far will it deviate from what has been a somewhat routine course of events every four years in the U.S.? I was thinking that the United States has been essentially divided ever since colonial times. There have been elections during wartime: in 1812 when James Madison defeated DeWitt Clinton; during the Civil War in 1864 when Abraham Lincoln defeated George McClellan (California only had 5 electoral votes back then); and in 1940 during WWII when FDR defeated Wendell Wilkie and in 1944 when FDR defeated Thomas Dewey. We survived the crazy election of 2000 with its hanging chads and Bush 2's win in the electoral college over Al Gore, who won the popular vote. That imbalance between the popular vote and the

electoral college was also true in 2016; it's a reminder that the founders of the U.S. didn't exactly want a representative democracy: essential divisions were built into the structure of government. The American system of federal government has never been truly democratic, and it seems destined to malfunction, yet somehow we have survived. So again, back to my question: will 2024 be any different?

I plan on using quotes from teenagers and young adults to frame my topic and the title of my talk. They are aged 15-24. I asked them whether are following current political events. I'll start with these two:

15 year-old: "Only the war in the Ukraine because of where we're from. I don't like Trump, but I'm not sure about Harris. Isn't she from San Francisco?"

And,

16 year-old: "No way. It's not going to change my life no matter who's in charge in Washington."



Meh

- 🙄
- 😐
- Possibly from the Yiddish “Feh”
- Popularized by the animated series *The Simpsons*—on the air since 1989

A word I hear pretty regularly is “meh.” I mostly hear it from teenagers in my practice, although friends sometimes use the meh emoji in texts to express indifference. “Meh” is possibly derived from a Yiddish word “feh,” which is used for disapproval and contempt. Meh became popular among American children and teenagers during the 1990s thanks to the animated TV series *The Simpsons*. When Homer, the dad in the show, wanted to show he didn’t really care about something, he’d say, “Meh.” Meh has migrated from child and adolescent slang into more mainstream usage. There are now several meh emojis to use in texts and emails. Why am I telling you about meh?

Not too long ago, I asked a teenager in my practice if he was paying any attention to the election, he replied, “Meh.” I was curious and asked, “Can you say more about that?” He looked at me, shrugged his shoulders, and yawned before saying, “I don’t think it matters. It’s kinda boring.” I listened to what other teenagers were saying, even venturing on Instagram and TikTok to understand what was being said about current

affairs and politics. As an aside, I will tell you, I once asked my father when I was 13 what politics was all about. I grew up around political events because he was a councilman in the town where we lived adjacent to Syracuse, NY. He turned to me after thinking about it and said, “Politics is just about bad weather and garbage.” Now, he wasn’t exactly a poet, but he captured something fundamental about bad information, rumors, and fickle-heartedness. At the time, I thought he was acknowledging why our phone rang off the hook whenever people were upset about flooding when there were heavy rains, streets clogged with snow in winter, power lines down after a thunderstorm, and the garbage truck not having shown up as scheduled.

Back to what I saw and heard on social media. Yes, there are determined groups of young people focused on real issues such as racism, inequality, transphobia, xenophobia, and reproductive rights. That was heartening. But there was also, probably equal in number, many posts and videos reflecting the sentiment “meh.” Like Homer Simpson, they might have been showing indifference because in many ways they feel powerless, unheard, and unimportant. So, meh is a good expression of not giving a damn because after all, what does one person matter against so many overwhelming forces? I’m not saying that to be polemical, but to show that powerlessness captures a widespread feeling among American adolescents and young adults. They aren’t sure their voices count for much, so “meh” is the best they can say.

Meh got me thinking about its usefulness as a defensive maneuver to deal with powerlessness. How have analysts conceptualized indifference as a defense? I have to say this took me back in time because I had to recall my training during the 1980s,

training that was based within a psychoanalytic program. There was emphasis at that time on neuroses, ego psychology, defenses, personality styles, and the hidden meanings of psychological symptoms. For example, reading then Freud's case history of Dora—or Ida Bauer as she was really known—was exciting because it seemed to all make sense of a mystery that Freud had figured out. Dora's *tussis nervosa*, or nervous cough, went away when Freud revealed to her that she had been a pawn in her father's affair with another woman—that her father was unconsciously setting her up to pair up with the cuckolded woman's husband. Freud was brilliant, although he came to regret his handling of Dora's transference to him. But there was no meh for Freud.



Belle indifference or beautiful ignorance

Hysterical defense

- Complacency
- Little anxiety
- Lack of concern

Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893)

- Freud & Janet trained with him
- Hospital de la Salpêtrière
- More than a dozen disorders named for him
- Interest in hypnotism
- Thought hysteria had organic/physiological causes
- After his death, hysteria was no longer considered a neurological disorder

La belle indifference is a hysterical attitude characterized by complacency, little conscious anxiety about events, and a lack of concern. I began wondering if this old, outdated term might be relevant for understanding meh because I was discovering that other teens I talked to felt similarly about the election. A young man said to me, “The public is being manipulated into thinking the election is some kind of war. We’ll survive.

I mean, how much damage can he [Trump] do? We survived him once, we can again.” This guy did say that he would vote, but he wanted to focus on other things in his life instead of politics. He indicated that he was content to let matters unfold however they did. This belief expresses indifference as a coping mechanism for powerlessness. Further, this fellow believed that most of us are over-reacting because of the media. He thought the probability of another Trump administration was not something to be consciously anxious about. Following up, I asked him if he thought the people around Trump would cause damage, since he’d used that word “damage.”

He said, “Not really. Our institutions have been around a long time. They’ll last.” So, his indifference has a rationale to support it. He wasn’t the only one to speak to me like this. The more I heard, the more I kept thinking, “This is *la belle indifférence*.” But it was spreading across a whole generation, not just showing up as a nervous cough in Freud’s office. According to the Harvard Youth Poll 2024, only 9% of young adults in the U.S. say the country is headed in the right direction; 44% report depression or hopelessness; and just over half say they will vote this year.

Harvard Youth Poll 2024

- 18-29 year olds, n = 2,010
- 9% say country is headed in right direction
- Confidence in:
 - Supreme Court 24%
 - Congress 12%
 - Media 10%
- 44% report feelings of depression or hopelessness
- 40% are lonely
- Just over half say they will vote

Two more quotes in response to “Are you following political events?”:

17 year-old: “Yes. But it makes me totally angry because those conservative A-holes and faschi types are trampling all over trans and gay people by banning books and forbidding gender care. It’s so aggravating!”

23 year-old: “Nope. Climate change is still going to happen. No one in DC really cares about it. My generation is going to be left with a dying planet regardless of who’s in power.”

What are the characteristics of hysteria?

- Desire for drama
- Focus on sensations and sensationalism
 - Somatization
 - Phobic sensitivity
- Cognition tending to extremes and extremism
- Dislike of depth and preference for surface (superficiality)
 - Dissociation
- Volatility and violent outbursts
- See C. Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*



Jean-Martin Charcot put hysteria on the map of psychology and neurology when he studied it in the 19th century. Both Freud and Janet trained with him, and both of them of course influenced Jung. Jung liked Janet's ideas about dissociation and took up his idea of *abaissement du niveau mental* –a lowering of the level of the mind—as part of his theorizing about dissociation and complexes. Charcot ran the Hospital de la Salpêtrière, previously a munitions storage warehouse, for many years. More than a dozen neurological disorders are named after him and although he was trained as a pathologist, he is considered the father modern neurology. Freud had also trained as a neurologist. Modern psychiatry owes a debt to Charcot who was an early practitioner of hypnotism. Initially, he believed that hysteria had organic causes and that he could eventually identify a physiological lesion associated with it. After his death in 1893, hysteria was no longer seen as a neurological disorder. But his research documented the power of the subconscious or unconscious within the psyche. Janet continued Charcot's research and developed his own theories about the unconscious, about a loss of sense for

reality, and about the suggestibility of the human mind. In studying hysteria, Janet likewise observed what Charcot had earlier: *la belle indifférence*, or beautiful ignorance.

Nowadays, beautiful ignorance has many supporting components to reinforce it, especially on social media, on news outlets that function as mouthpieces for propaganda, through a flood of disturbing and arousing images from our constant use of screens, and from an epidemic of conspiracy theories. These various information channels all contribute to a certain volatility to our collective psyche in 2024. Our screens have taken us hostage, and the media platforms compete for attention, which is regarded as a commodity to be exploited. Arousal is key to this, much as Freud believed it was for Dora. Such emotional intensification exposes viewers to rawness, while lowering their level of consciousness, i.e., *abaissement du niveau mental*—and this enacts a tantalizing seduction that is never consummated. Viewers instead are left exhausted, depleted, or flooded, but not gratified. Many teenagers and young adults see this manipulation and many, perhaps most of them, try to resist it, but screens saturate us; they're omnipresent, disruptive, and alluring. As the French philosopher Voltaire allegedly said, "It is not enough to conquer; one must learn to seduce."

Generation Z, and following them Generation Alpha, are the first to come of age as digital natives—they never knew of a time without the internet, and they have been immersed like none before in the travails of social media. On average, teenagers spend over eight hours daily in front of a screen of some kind. Measures of mental health that have been taken now for decades report that those in Gen Z and Gen Alpha, nearly all of whom have access to smartphones, indicate far worse mental health than earlier

cohorts. I try to think of the positive aspects of social media: that it offers connection; that it enables isolated youth to find others like them; that it can dispel stereotypes about gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and educational levels. These are promises of social media, but we have to ask: how far short has it fallen and what have been the consequences of the numerous shortcomings?



The Three A's

- Apathy—lack of interest and motivation
- Anomie—Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), lack of social connections
 - Social disintegration, breaking of traditional bonds, instability
- Alienation—subjective sense of being alone and estranged
- Gen Z (born after 1996) grew up with social media:
 - Digital natives
 - Report worse mental health than earlier cohorts
 - COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected their education & socialization
 - Virtually all have access to a smartphone

I think of three particular risks that appear to have increased in the past 15 years for adolescents and young adults: alienation, apathy, and anomie. Alienation is a failure to connect meaningfully with both others and oneself. It is often characterized by someone describing themselves as “being broken” and it is not helped by social media, which in fact seems to exacerbate it. Apathy is related to the powerlessness that these younger age groups feel about immense problems facing them that have been shifted across generations, such as climate change, inequality, student debt, and political impasse. Apathy depletes motivation and interest. Anomie, described over 100 years ago by Emile Durkheim, characterizes well the net effects of spending too much time online.

Cyberspace has become a cracking web of anomie, and it has no real connectedness to offer sustenance for heart and soul. Rather, it leads to manic emptiness.

Two more quotes about whether they follow political events:

15 year-old: “No. My mom does. And my dad worries about his business. He said the Dems are too hard on businesses, so that’s most of what I hear. I’d rather watch sports if I’m looking online.”

20 year-old: “A little bit. But’s is so much hate. Each side just hates on the other. It’s disgusting.”



Screens as an escape

- In 2015, teenagers spent about 6.5 hours/day viewing screen media
- By 2021, this had grown to 8.5 hours/day
- YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, & Instagram most popular platforms
- Teens spend 1.5 hours/day on social media
- Teens spend a half hour/day reading
 - Source: Common Sense Media, “Media Use by Tweens and Teens, 2021”

Trying to fathom why so many adolescents and young adults are discouraged and apathetic, it is important to spend time looking at what they look at. Online, especially on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snap, there is a desire for drama.

In addition, sensationalized content is frequently liked and seen as appealing because it seduces a viewer with imagery that is hard to separate from. Extremist viewpoints are likewise indulged because they are exciting. They electrify chats and become inflammatory creating endless posts, responses, counterresponses, and shares—all in pursuit of going viral. Reading the threads of these discussions, I note how superficial they are. It's rare to find anything approaching intellectual engagement and reminds me more of arguing children on a playground. A hint of violence only adds to the titillation. Looking at these attributes—drama, sensationalism, extremism, superficiality—I can't help but think of hysteria. It works well as a media device because it hooks a viewer.

The Attention Economy

- Individual attention is regarded as a commodity.
- Marshall McLuhan: "The medium is the message."
- "We have not yet begun to ask under what new spell we exist ... is it not absurd for men to live involuntarily altered in their inmost lives by some mere technological extension of our inner senses?"
- The Gutenberg Galaxy, p. 208
- Meaning that technology changes us unless we continually challenge it, question it, and set limits on it.
- Social media platforms hire neuroscientists for a reason.

Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian philosopher, coined the phrase, "The medium is the message." Writing over fifty years ago, he saw clearly how technological advances shape what we pay attention to and distort it. The contents are eclipsed by the technology itself. McLuhan believed that new media technologies work to privilege one or more

senses over the others. For example, the advance of printing meant that vision became more important than oral-auditory transmission of knowledge. The internet likewise favors visual and to some extent, auditory senses. But we have other senses: smell, touch, taste, and balance. McLuhan's question across time to us would be something like: why favor one or two senses over the others? Near the end of his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan writes, "We have not yet begun to ask under what new spell we exist. [...] No matter what the metaphor, is it not absurd for men to live involuntarily altered in their inmost lives by some mere technological extension of our inner senses?"¹ His use of the word "spell" captures a significant element about the numinous glow of digital technology—that we are lulled into magical thinking because of what it does to us. Jung would have probably called this effect *participation mystique*. Most importantly, McLuhan emphasizes that we have not consented to how technology changes us as human beings. He sees that it deeply affects us at our core. That is something to think about.

A couple more quotes about political participation:

18 year-old: "No, I'm not even registered. I probably should. But who'd I vote for?
Maybe a third party."

¹ M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, p. 208.

19 year-old: “As much as I can but I have a limit. I’m concerned about reproductive rights. I’m going to Reno to canvas with a voter mobilization group in a few weeks and encourage people to vote.”

The Pandemic

- Multiple losses
 - Actual deaths, quarantines, isolation, schooling, peer contacts, sense of safety, health-related anxieties
- Loss of up to one year of educational time in actual classrooms
- Loss of developmental runway:
 - Interpersonal feedback loops for learning and socialization
 - Age-appropriate stimulation for neuronal growth and pruning
- Reinforced trend to spend time on a screen
- Increase in mental health problems especially anxiety, depression, phobias, and loneliness



Although I’ve been talking about *la belle indifférence* as a generational attitude, it actually applies beyond the reach of young people. The COVID-19 pandemic had had vast implications for not only physical health, but also mental health, and across all age groupings. In many ways, there was a good collective response: vaccines were developed; preventive measures were agreed to by a majority of the population; and more widespread deaths were averted. But in many ways, there was also indifference to the trauma that this event caused for so many among us. The pandemic was an event of collective losses; no one could avoid them. There are, of course, many ways to cope with loss, and analysts hope that grieving a loss alleviates suffering of it. But it’s also true that

other attitudes toward losses include avoiding them, ignoring them, being indifferent to them.

For teenagers and young adults, the pandemic sidetracked their developmental trajectories. Attendance at school, participation in sports, theater, music, and art programs, and most importantly, the fine network of social feedback that occurs constantly during adolescence and early adulthood—all these were taken away for a time, put on hold. For many, this lasted for months, and others, longer than a year. I think of this as lost developmental runway, and that means compromises for takeoff. We are dealing with these effects continuously. Elementary school teachers note that children are showing up behaving wildly and lacking basic play skills. Colleges have had to reorient their teaching and counseling staff to engaging with students who behave as if they were in high school. Parents, teachers, and child analysts can't afford to be indifferent to these obvious delays in developmental progress because we see them daily. A perverse effect of the pandemic is that it drove everyone to spend more time on their screens. This has been especially true of teenagers who have increased their total screen time by over two hours daily from pre-pandemic levels. This is a dark side of the pandemic, a shadow we've yet not escaped. It's why I understand beautiful indifference as a reaction to the three A's of alienation, apathy, and anomie. Any why a fourth A, arousal, constitutes a real problem for disengaging from screens.

CONCLUSION

I can't really speak with certainty for Gen Z or Gen Alpha; I can only relate to you what I have been seeing and hearing from them, and the picture is by no means uniform. There are pockets of hope that have potential to break through a curtain of indifference.



Voting as a measure of participation

- 18–24-year-olds, in the last three presidential elections:
- In 2020, 48% voted
- In 2016, 39% voted
- In 2012, 38% voted

Even in 2020, which was cast as a pivotal election, only 48% of 18-24 year-olds voted. We don't know how many among this age group will choose to vote this year. There are signs of heightened focus, especially with concerns for reproductive rights, equality for the LGBTQ+ community, and the war in Gaza. But will indifference or conviction carry the day? It is not easy to foresee an answer to that.

I'll close with this poem:

Turning and turning into the widening gyre

The falcon cannot heat the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man
A blank gaze stares pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Many of you will have recognized that this is from the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats (1865-1939). His poem is titled "The Second Coming." The historical context for this

poem, which was written in 1919, was the aftermath of WWI, the 1918 flu pandemic, and the start of the Irish war of independence. Yeats's imagery evokes a shudder of powerlessness, a mood of spiraling gloom, and a sense of fatalism. When youth today see scenes of political violence, brutal wars in Europe and the Middle East, and evidence of catastrophic climate change, perhaps *la belle indifférence* seems best as an escape from terrible anxieties about their future.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

RECLAIMING THE MASCULINE IN A DISORDERED WORLD

QI-RE CHING

The fourteenth century Chinese epic, *Three Kingdoms*, begins with this: The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus, it has ever been. In the closing years of the Zhou dynasty, seven kingdoms warred among themselves until the kingdom of Qin prevailed and absorbed the other six. But Qin soon fell, and on its ruins two opposing kingdoms, Chu and Han, fought for mastery until the kingdom of Han prevailed and absorbed its rival, as Qin had done before.

This brief prelude, loosely delineating historical events in the pattern of archetypal cosmology, circumambulates the one, multiplicity, union of opposites, to return again to the one. This configuration is similarly echoed in the centuries old operations that transfixed alchemists who devoted entire lives, finances, and health for the sake of their opus alchymicum - the repetitious cycle of dissolution and coagulation, separation and conjunction, return to the original prima materia of creation and successful chemical combinations imaged as the chemical wedding or the hermaphrodite.

It is a round that I also began to trace more consciously almost ten years ago, after decisions by the Supreme Court legalizing same-sex marriage. The transformative power of a legally recognized union with accompanying benefits long denied, effected not just the economic interests of my relationship in the material world. It also lent form, a semblance of wholeness and coherence to a life together previously rendered invisible. But how is this development to be reconciled with the outsider's habitation of the spaces between the traditional binary construction of reality, leading a life that never quite fit into or always spilled over the standard mold? It has spurred me on numerous occasions to revisit certain concepts dear to Jungians: unity, totality, integration, oneness, union, opposites, and multiplicity.

In the Jungian world, the meaning of union acquires particular resonance in relation to the concept of the contra sexual archetype within each person: the male within the female, the female within the male. According to this model, the anima is for a man, the psychic representation of the feminine traits that accumulate in the unconscious as the masculine persona evolves. Jungians have traditionally viewed this early stage of estrangement as normal, even necessary for most. A young man must first identify with a masculine figure who can help guide the development of his persona within the context of the collective environment. This occurs at the expense of his feminine side. The resulting split between this unconscious feminine and his masculine identity is healed when a conscious relationship to the anima is developed, thus constituting an inner marriage.

I think Warren Steinberg does a good job summarizing Jung's view when he states that the archetypal splitting of psychological reality into conflicting opposites is not a goal in itself. It is a means to an end - the conscious experience of wholeness. In order to bring about a union there must be separation, "for only separated things can unite."

Objecting to the stereotypical masculine and feminine attributions derived from cultural norms that color our reading of mythology, he asks, "Is there any evidence...that male consciousness is characterized more by Logos than by Eros? Are there no mythologies that indicate that males are receptive and females erect and instigating?"...Nevertheless, Steinberg still underlines the importance of the development of a masculine persona for a boy.

Not long after the Supreme Court decision, my partner and I joined with a lesbian couple we had been friends with for twenty years, and got married at city hall. We had a choice between having the ceremony take place in a private room or the more public rotunda, which seemed fitting as a symbol of wholeness, and unity. After completing the paperwork, a white male officiant led us there, past a varied assortment of other same-sex couples, many in matching attire. Women in traditional bridal wear were ascending the staircase, posing with their entourages as tourists milled around. Our friends were scheduled first. A Black man came forward just as they stepped into the center of the rotunda. He zeroed in on them, snapping photographs in rapid succession, inching uncomfortably closer. His features were fixed with a cold intensity that added to my unease. My partner was taking pictures at the same time. A group of Chinese tourists, ambled by, noticed the two women exchanging vows. and immediately aimed their

cameras at them. One man from the group bumped into my partner from behind while extending his arm around him to get a better shot. That's when I ran over and started yelling. The Chinese man slipped away leaving the Black man and me in a heated exchange. "You telling me I can't take pictures?" "You can take your pictures. Just back off and give them some space." "How close can I get? Can I stand here? Or here?" Suddenly remembering my friends, I turned around. Too late. I had missed their ceremony. Moments later it was my turn. The officiant began reading lines from a sheet of paper - generic words. I couldn't tell what they had to do with me. I tried to focus but kept getting pulled back into my anger. I watched my partner fumble with the ring. Miraculously, I finally managed to hold the two of us in my mind, all else fading, but only for an instant. My concentration was abruptly interrupted by the sound of clicking. The group of Chinese tourists had made their way to the other side of the rotunda and were now directly facing us snapping pictures again.

A while later with my daughter next to me, the five of us descended the staircase of the main hall arm in arm, laughing at what had just transpired. I reflected on the preceding scene: the indignity, lack of decorum; the effort to make contact with a loved one despite the forces working against it; the collision between public and private; the inadequacy of conventional vehicles for emotional expression. In the chaos of our marriage ritual I had found a reflection of the wholeness I had been looking for - a wholeness consisting of ill fitting parts that had nevertheless encompassed the totality - love, joy, fear, anger. Hadn't it always been this way?

David Halperin, drawing from James M. Redfield's, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*, discusses the unbridgeable gulf separating our most personal feelings from their socially sanctioned forms of expression. This distance is a key element to understanding the plight of the tragic hero who has no immediate means to express his condition except to rely on cultural symbols to stand in for what he feels. Inevitably, they come up short. To attempt a more direct expression however would threaten the social cohesion which is dependent on these mediated forms of expression. Halperin asks, what if instead of seeing this inadequacy as tragic it is seen as comical - the absurd roles that we are asked to perform. What if the publicly agreed upon meaning is given up for "private experience?"

James Hillman recommended a shift from the central position the concept of unity occupies in our construct of the personal self. This can also be applied to our notions of gender and culture. He pointed to the mechanisms of dissociation and splitting seen in psychopathology. These tendencies towards multiplicity while viewed by the ego as threats to its central authority, also open up new potentialities. He refers to Jung's statement that the human psyche's susceptibility to dissociation provided fertile ground for the emergence of spirits and gods. Our subsequent alienation from the unconscious psyche is related to the rejection of these fragmentary autonomous systems. When monotheistic consciousness is unable to contend with the psychic state as it is, the various parts threaten disunity, Hillman turns to the alternative viewpoint of Greek polytheism, where psychic fragments co-exist, forming diverse patterns.

David Halperin in “How to be Gay,” rails against the gender coding tendency of society that polarizes all sorts of human behavior into masculine and feminine, assigning the range of the possible according to one’s sex organs. He writes, “If you are born with male genitalia, the logic goes, you will behave in masculine ways, desire women, desire feminine women, desire them exclusively, have sex in what are thought to be normally active and insertive ways, and within officially sanctioned contexts.” Referring to the conglomeration of norms and expectations, in accordance with which a person’s life is valued he writes, “intimacy, love, friendship, solidarity, sex, reproduction, child-raising, generational succession, care taking, mutual support, shared living space, shared finances, property ownership, and private life go together and should not be parceled out among different relationships or otherwise dispersed.

Like everyone else, Covid shut down so much of the ways in which I thought about and lived my life. When my gym closed during the first year of the pandemic, I began to jog most days, through the neighborhoods surrounding my home. I’d taken for granted, my familiarity with this area, having driven on these streets for decades. With the speed, insulation, and sense of removal that a car provides, they had each retained in my mind, a separate and distinct character. On my runs, the experience of borders and boundaries dissolved, as time and again I discovered connecting links: dirt trails on hillsides unseen from the road, where a century ago farm animals once grazed; tree lined stairways beckoning suddenly from what appeared to be a dead end; bridges over bustling streets leading to quiet cul de sacs and roads beyond - paths I’d not previously noticed or had access to from my car. Each neighborhood seamlessly blending into the next. In this way I continued on in my run. At a time when so much of my life had been foreclosed, this

time was precious to me, the one moment when I experienced the world opening up with a sense of wonder.

But as the months passed since the beginning of Covid, this experience of unmitigated joy, was infiltrated by an increasing sense of menace. Reckoning with the rising proliferation of anti-Asian-American violence, I took to lowering my cap to shield my eyes, hiking up my mask to cover more of my face. I glanced frequently behind me to make sure a car was not approaching too close. Similar to the height of the AIDS epidemic in the eighties, which early on had been referred to as the gay plague, with this current epidemic, the ways in which I am different and other, had cycled back as a vessel for collective projections. My daughter expressed fear about her old dad running on the streets alone and unprotected, fueled in part by reports from friends here in San Francisco and New York, who have been the object of anti-Asian sentiment. The San Francisco Chronicle reported more than that a sixfold increase in reported hate crimes against members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. I think back on the inter-generational anti-Asian experiences of my family. Years ago, my father recounted to me for the first time as he lay in his hospital bed shortly before his death from cancer, the brutal beating of his own father decades before. My grandfather fleeing famine, went to Hawaii at a time when the Chinese had been brought in to work in the cane fields. The federal government found it necessary to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the first significant law restricting immigration into the United States. Citizenship was denied to Chinese immigrants and their families until 1943. During WWII, my father angrily tore up the draft letter that was sent to him by the same government that had been denying him a legitimate place. I'm unable to muster much

feeling about these events, even when they are coupled with my own experiences of assault and discrimination. But in solitude, when I reflect on my daughter and one more generation going through this, I feel sick to my stomach.

David L. Eng, in his book, *Racial Castration, Managing Masculinity in Asian America*, encapsulates both the invisibility and the distorted visibility of Asian Americans in this country's history, by citing two events: an iconic photograph taken to commemorate the joining of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads at the time of its completion. Representation by Chinese men - over ten thousand of them had labored on the project, was entirely absent; and a century later during WWII, when the loyalty of Japanese Americans was in doubt. During this period of heightened suspicion, there was national concern about how to distinguish Japanese Americans, given that "All Asians Look alike."

Drawing from Lisa Lowe, Eng states further (pg 17) : From another historical vantage point, the high concentration of Asian American male immigrants in what are typically thought of as "feminized" professions - laundries, restaurants, tailor's shops - further illustrates a material legacy of the intersectionality of gender and race. Collectively, these low-wage, feminized jobs work to underscore the numerous ways in which gender is mapped as the social axis through which the legibility of a racialized Asian American male identity is constituted, determined, rendered coherent, and stabilized. Popular stereotypes connecting past and present Asian American male laborers to these types of professions are succinct and compelling illustrations of the ways in which economically driven modes of feminization cling to bodies not only sexually but also racially.

When I was a child, the kitchen of my grandparents was routinely crowded over with large baskets full of boiled peanuts. Although the sight and accompanying scent of anise was familiar, it never occurred to me to ask what became of those peanuts, as I seldom saw family members eating them. It was only several years ago that my sister mentioned that they were packed into small brown paper bags. My grandfather who would have been about my current age, sold them to people outside a movie theater downtown, one that my cousins and I would frequent, not knowing that our grandfather might be outside selling peanuts. I don't recall my parents or anyone else ever speaking about it. In the process of acculturation into the American middle class, did it constitute a source of embarrassment - an expression of masculinity too weak and inferior to be acknowledged? At this time my grandfather no longer had to work. The money he made was passed on to his descendants.

Unlike the western concept of the self, which starts with an inherent valuing of the individual, the self that emerged from my family upbringing was always a relational self. It was never detached from its position in the hierarchy of relationships, and the expected reciprocal exchanges that are the ways in which this self is experienced and recognized. This notion of "right behavior," was also how my masculinity might be expressed.

But even within this cultural framework, there was room for contradictions. Underlining the transgressive potential of gender role expression, Joanne D. Birdwhistell, in her book, *Mencius and Masculinities*, refers to a Daoist text contemporary with Mencius, to

“illustrate the contextual dimension of ideas. The gourd master’s action of staying home and cooking the family’s meals was not feminine behavior because it was done in reference to his cultivation of the *dao*..and his rejection of the norms of society for men. His act of cooking meals meant that he was living in a free and sagely way and had successfully rejected society’s duties and restrictions...”

My partner became gravely ill beginning in December of last year, requiring multiple trips to the ER as well as several hospitalizations. For months he could not dress or walk more than a few steps unassisted. The initial prognosis from the hospitalist was bleak. She advised that we prepare for palliative care. I can’t begin to describe what it took out of me to nurse him back. The worse part of the ordeal was the incontinence. I would clean up droppings during a break between online sessions, only to find new ones during the next break. Cleaning up shit brings up the ugliest sort of thoughts. Sometimes I’d think, “Is he trying to fuck with me?” This descent into my own darkness was a revelation, reminding me of Joseph Campbell’s description of the heroic quest: confrontation with the unknown with an uncertain outcome; reckoning with feelings of doubt, terror, loneliness; ceaseless demands that test one’s physical and mental limits; acts of self-sacrifice;. “ I’ve become Mother Theresa, I quipped to my daughter.” “ You’re not Mother Theresa, she said. You’re a wife. Honestly, I have never felt more called upon to be a man than when I took on the role society habitually consigns to women. Or put more simply, I never felt more like a man than when I became a woman. Patriarchy! All the little ladies in the background who have carried out this function deigned as women’s work, tasks that would cause a typical man to quake at the thought. It’s been an eye-opener.

In her book, *Women's Mysteries*, Christine Downing wrote, "Both men and women are embodied, both are culturally defined - and both 'maleness' and 'femaleness' are more polyvalent than our usual images admit. How likely we are, for example, to identify maleness with the penis, or rather with the phallus, the phantasmal always erect penis, and to ignore the flaccid penis, the vulnerable testicles, the penetrable anus..."

Following Downing's querying of our assumptions of maleness, the version of masculinity that has come to guide and hold me, is not imaged by an erect penis, stabbing the air, pumping itself up and projecting the fulfillment of its desires onto others, a proud and independent stand-alone whose needs override every other consideration. Nor is it a body transcending spirit. It is instead the sperm producing pair of testicles nestled in their wrinkled pouch, dangling modestly and coquettishly in the background, quietly performing their function, one hanging lower than the other, tender and in need of protection, - that is resonant. This often-overlooked pair offer sensations of their own, although these are subtler, and seen as a preliminary to the main act of their much showier neighbor. It is the testicles - having balls - that I think of, in relation to the steady masculinity of my grandfather, the men who worked on the railroads, the way I've come to define my own maleness. But for me, this maleness can accommodate qualities that are culturally, and in our Jungian framework aligned with the feminine, not as an opposite, but in tandem within the continuum of wholeness. I do not have to overload and burden female genitalia for the symbolic embodiment of my own experience of these qualities. The penis, that organ of penetration, spends most of its time in a flaccid state anyway, and the anus can function as an organ of receptivity that

is also capable of single minded-aggressiveness: the power bottom, that is focused on the penis as a tool for its own pleasure.

My designated gender has never been a source of stability, comfort, or identity that I could take for granted. It required from an early age the observation of others to learn those behaviors that passed as maleness, not so much as a matter of giving expression and form to an intrinsic part of myself. It had to do with survival. The significance of the hidden and the revealed were inverse to each other. My visible movements were actually meant to conceal, to deflect attention in order to go unnoticed, to be left alone. What remained in obscurity contained the true image: a momentary gaze; or intonation in the voice exposing an entire state of being only recognizable to one who lived in a similar universe where the need to hide and the desire to be discovered hung in delicate balance. The acknowledgement of this reality by another was thus an invitation to engage in those interstitial spaces that allowed for an authentic exploration of self and other, unobstructed by the constructs that imprison us all.

As I age, I am disturbed by the prospect that my remaining finite life will be suspended in perpetual agitation over the state of this country, and the world. During the course of this election year, I have felt a sense of dread each morning when fetching the New York Times from the front steps, in anticipation of the latest in the back and forth struggle between opposing political sides; presidential candidates reduced to caricatures, delivering incendiary messages tailored to a constituency intolerant of complexity, desiring only the reaffirmation of their particular reality. Although separated in age by only a few years, the older candidate fended off public perception of senility, with

performances meant to convey resolve, potency, decisiveness. A headline in the New York Times in March, following his state of the union address pointedly characterized his performance as feisty. But then this was before the disastrous performance in the first presidential debate when he was perceived by the public to be confused and enfeebled. The other, whose bombast, self-mythologizing, disregard of laws and limits, and unchecked instinctual appetite is resonant with a fantasy of this country's former dominance. His first term signaled a triumphant return to a homogeneous white America accompanied by an attempted systematic dismantling of the preceding Obama presidency.

Salman Rushdie recently published a book, "Knife," about the brutal attack on him in August 2022. The perpetrator, was spurred to such brutal violence, after at the most having read two pages of Rushdie's writing as well as watching a couple of YouTube videos. The book opens with a quote from Samuel Beckett, " We are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday."

This quote, and the book's focus on Rushdie's process of healing, seems apt as the election is just around the corner, and we approach what could feel like a potential evisceration of this country's values, and the chaos that would follow.

On the other hand, there is another perspective on otherness, an alternative to the before and after, them versus us, construct just expressed, discussed by James Hillman, in conversation with Sonu Shamdasani.

JH: Because the “Other,” as I understand the way it’s used now, is a result of being so trapped into the “me” that everything is the “Other,” But there is no “Other,” if you’re not in the me. It’s all permeable. So let’s leave that one...there’s more to my entirety than what I think is me. And that more is the self.

In recent times, what and who we are as a country in our totality, has been disturbing and not easy to integrate.

Setting aside my own ego standpoint ten years after our marriage ceremony at city hall, I see in that event, the clashing of multiple and conflicting desires converging on the shared civic space of the city hall rotunda, its circular ground plan, a container for the alternating realities that are akin to Jung’s reference to “the original state of psychic disunity, the inner chaos of conflicting part souls that must be subjected to a process of separation and recombination in the alchemical vessel,” : the problem of an Asian man telling a black man in a public space, where he can take pictures; the Chinese tourists eager to capture a cultural event unimaginable in their country, the civil servant diligently churning out marriage licenses in generic fashion, in response to the rush of applicants following a transformative court decision. And then there are those who were left out of the rotunda that day. During the exuberant mood that immediately followed the legalization of same sex marriage, a gym acquaintance said to me at the time, “I was in New York when the announcement came. Friends called inviting me to meet them at Stonewall to celebrate. Instead, I rode my bike alone through Central Park. That’s how I celebrated. Years ago it would have mattered. I was in two relationships. They both died.

In Luigi Zoja's book, *The Father*, he refers to Homer's description of Ulysses' inner process, his thoughts fluctuating "back and forth between two opposing banks of the soul." Zoja writes:

"Only Ulysses is described in these terms. We thus discover the prehistoric rudiments of inner dialog... Ulysses' voyage is an endless meander of starts and stops and reversals, and the course of his reflections is likewise marked by an infinite number of shifts and deviations within his soul. When he finally reaches home, we realize that in the course of his serpentine travels, his modes of reflection have changed. It is no longer a question of vagrant idea, but rather of directed thought; and we clearly grasp the ways in which it differs from the workings of the minds of the archaic heroes in whom thought was equivalent to will: massive, decided and finally far too simple, and nothing more than a mental restatement of instinct.

Ulysses, unlike the archaic hero, can control his will, since it is guided by thought and no longer by impulse. This introduces two wholly new modes of behavior, both of which are deferrals. He can wait for the propitious external moment, when it isn't yet at hand; he can also maintain patience while waiting for two alternatives to find an interior synthesis."

One of Zoja's contentions is that in the aftermath of a prolonged cultural devaluation, the father imago, has the capacity to seize and fascinate, due to our conscious rejection of its continued relevance. We thereby unconsciously seek its expression, blindly caught in a gravitational pull towards a "strong and victorious leader," who knows the way to success, and worldly power, and is capable of reinstating the condition of original greatness. The content espoused by figures who take on this role, may have little foundational basis, but we are swept up by the unwavering conviction and confidence

that this father embodies. This in the end is a degradation of the qualities underlying the significance of the birth of the father, which occurred in tandem with the emergence of culture: his role no longer simply the provider of sperm for procreation. As Zoja puts it: “it is the question instead of the male’s awareness of his role in sustaining the family and constructing a continuity that extends from one generation to the next...”

I was moved by an alternate version of masculinity last year, a counter to our notions of heroic bravado, connected to a character well familiar in Christianity, and yet hardly given a second thought. In the church of Saint Saupice, in Paris I came across the figure of Saint Joseph in a mural depicting the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt. An angel had appeared to Saint Joseph advising him to leave Bethlehem, to escape the massacre of infants by Herod. In the painting, in contrast to our typical conceptualization of masculine and feminine, Mary is walking ahead, her gaze turned upward towards the heavens. Joseph is carrying the baby Jesus, looking downward at the child and towards earth. After discovering that his new wife was already pregnant, Joseph intended to divorce her. He planned to do it quietly, aware that she would be subject to a public stoning had her condition become known. According to Matthew, “He was a just man unwilling to put (His wife) to shame.” However, this cuckold remained her husband, after an angel informed him that the child she bore was the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit. Contrasted with the grand gesture of the spirit father who famously sacrificed his son for mankind in a most gruesome and dramatic manner, this unassuming man, remained in the background, an imperceptible presence that nevertheless held steady and committed to the role he had come to accept, providing the guidance and protection of a human father. He is largely ignored in New Testament

accounts. Mark and Paul do not mention him at all. The last allusion to Joseph is when the twelve year old Jesus is found in a temple by his parents. There is no indication of the time of Joseph's death. Clearly absent at the moment of the crucifixion, he seems to have simply disappeared.

There is a moment in the Odyssey, shortly after Ulysses is reunited with Telemachus, when he instructs his son to self-discipline, and refrain from intervening, even if he witnesses the abuse of his father, now disguised as a helpless old man. It is crucial that they wait for the right time to act.

Until recently, I have not been a particular fan of Kamala Harris, finding her too politically motivated for my taste, unremarkable as a debater, and problematic in her history as a prosecutor. But like a lot of people, I have been feeling growing exuberance, particularly after her galvanizing acceptance speech at the Democratic convention, and the visual impact of a woman of color in her position at this moment. With her arrival, the whiff of senility has abruptly shifted to Trump. With Trump, what has positioned itself in the political arena as an unstoppable force of nature now highlights its saturnian aspect, the unrestrained instincts of a doddering old man, bitter, morose, rambling off course about past grievances. On the other hand, I've been impressed by the way Harris patiently waited in the background, despite the lateness of the hour, coupled with reverence for Biden who could set aside hurt, pride, and ambition, and avert the consequences of a divided party were he to continue in his pursuit. Like Joseph in the Saint Saupice painting, he has shifted his gaze downward to connect with earth, body,

and a life of limitations, as his successor, now has hit the ground running, forging ahead, to answer the call of a new spirit.

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CHAPTER NINE

BORDERS, IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM: A GLOBAL PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE PSYCHO- POLITICAL MEANING OF THE U.S. MEXICO BORDER WALL

MONICA LUCI, PHD

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper reflects on the use of the rhetoric of defending national borders from migration phenomena in the political discourse of the 2024 U.S. Presidential election. My interest focuses on the role of the U.S.-Mexico border wall in the political agenda of the White House candidates, the fantasies they intend to move in the inner world of American voters, and how they connect to a broader political project of the candidates. However, I have other more fundamental questions in the background of my mind: What can we learn from this experience about the role of state border defense in the psycho-political life of large national groups? What do we delegate to our political leaders when we vote for them for their border defense policies? Why do some border

segments become more “sensitive” than others at certain historical moments? Why does a border wall end up becoming so important in a political campaign and when?

The object of investigation



Figure 1. The US-Mexico wall. AP/ Charlie Riedel. From *The Atlantic* (<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/05/instead-border-wall-some-scientists-want-clean-energy/588886/>)

The border wall between Mexico and the United States is a collection of vertical structures designed to limit unauthorized immigration into the U.S. from Mexico. Rather than being a single continuous barrier, it consists of various obstructions referred to as 'walls' or 'fences', where security is also maintained through a 'virtual fence' made up of sensors, cameras, and other monitoring technology that allows the United States Border Patrol to respond to suspected crossing.

The idea of adding barriers is rooted in a long-standing trend of Democrat and Republican candidates selling Americans the idea that they can prevent border crossings

by constructing a large fence on the U.S. Mexico border. Politicians from both sides, although in different ways, have continuously tried to "secure that border."

2. THE WALL IN TIME: BRIEF HISTORY OF THE US - MEXICO WALL IN THE AMERICAN POLITICS

The so-called "Hispanic" immigration to the United States is an age-old issue rooted in the tensions and disputes in the area on the U.S.-Mexico border, with a long joint history. Two main events that are part of this history are Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821 and the United States expansion southward, which included a full-scale invasion of Mexico in the years 1845-48. After the taking of Mexico City, the United States and Mexico ratified the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican American War and forced Mexico to cede parts of its territory that would become Arizona, California, and New Mexico, as well as parts of Colorado and Nevada.

However, as often happens in such cases, the movement of people in the area between the two countries did not end with the end of the war. On the contrary (Young, 2021).

In the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the majority of Mexicans have been economic migrants striving to enhance their living conditions. American companies in industry and agriculture appealed to a poorly paid and docile American workforce. This included many illegal immigrants from Mexico who were seasonal farm workers who returned home in the winter season. During periods of civil unrest, such as the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) and the Cristero Revolt (1926–1929), many Mexican immigrants sought refuge in the United States to escape political and religious oppression. Additionally, some individuals, feeling constrained by

conservative, patriarchal, and tradition-laden rural societies, have migrated in pursuit of modern values and increased personal freedoms.



Figure 2. Migrant workers from Mexico who have been accepted to do farm labor in the U.S. through the Bracero Program, ca. 1942–ca. 1945.

The first border fences built along the U.S.-Mexico border to curb immigration from Mexico began in earnest under Democrats Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. In the 1940s, both Mexico and the United States embraced a policy of border permeability. To fill the labor gaps left by World War II, the nations agreed to a guest worker program, known as the Bracero Program. However, not everyone was eligible to participate. So thousands began migrating independently. Under pressure to control the flow of people, the Roosevelt administration began planning to build fences in urban areas to divert traffic to more isolated areas. By the end of the Truman administration, most border towns were fenced off (Nail, 2024).

The Bracero Program ended in 1964. A year later, Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act which, for the first time, placed a cap on the number of people who could immigrate to the U.S. from Mexico. Despite new laws and fences, immigrants kept coming. Lured by U.S. demand, smugglers brought drugs, too.



Figure 3. President Lyndon B. Johnson sits at his desk on Liberty Island in New York Harbor as he signs a new immigration bill, October 1965 (Associated Press).

In 1969, Republican Richard Nixon initiated Operation Intercept, an attempt to seal the border for several weeks to halt the flow of illegal drugs. The program heightened security and surveillance —similar to a virtual barrier rather than a physical one—but ultimately fell short of its own goals. The Nixon administration did not construct any substantial barriers. Two years later, First Lady Pat Nixon inaugurated Friendship Park along the border near San Diego, allowing individuals to honor cross-border culture.

Confronted with economic challenges and American concerns about increased labor migration from Mexico, Democrat Jimmy Carter replaced the fence that Nixon had removed with a larger, sturdier one in 1979.

Republican Ronald Reagan also shut the border for several weeks in 1985, mirroring Operation Intercept. Reagan subsequently enacted the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. This legislation granted legalization to more than two million undocumented immigrants who had been employed in the United States, toughened legal accountability for employers hiring undocumented workers, and allocated funding for additional Border Patrol agents. Although Reagan did not erect new fences, his administration did maintain existing ones and allocated resources to enhance border surveillance, as did George H.W. Bush.

During the 1990s, heightened xenophobia and public discussions about unauthorized immigration increased, leading both political parties to focus on physically reinforcing the border. In 1993 and 1994, Clinton initiated three distinct border operations: Operation Hold the Line in Texas, Operation Safeguard in Arizona, and Operation Gatekeeper in Southern California. He employed steel surplus military landing mats, which were welded together by the Army Corps of Engineers, to create what was claimed to be an impenetrable barrier. Rather than preventing crossings, a more militarized border redirected migrants to perilous areas, resulting in a significant rise in migrant fatalities (for a concise overview of the policies implemented by U.S. Presidents regarding the border, refer to Mendoza, 2023).

In the present century, a notable increase in border restrictions emerged following the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington. George W. Bush, previous Republican governor of Texas, the largest US state that shares a border with Mexico, enacted Title IV of the Patriot Act, an anti-terrorism law, which was approved in October 2001 to enhance border security even though the 9/11 attackers possessed legitimate visas. In November 2002, the Department of Homeland Security was established, consolidating twenty-two federal entities, including the Coast Guard, customs services, and border enforcement agencies. The entire southern region of the United States became a heightened security zone.



Figure 4. The terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York and the building of the US-Mexico wall.

The Obama presidency represented a crucial change in how immigration was managed. He made historic strides by establishing DACA, which provided over 800,000 young undocumented immigrants, known as DREAMers, with temporary work permits and

safeguards against deportation. Nevertheless, he urged the U.S. Congress to enact a comprehensive reform bill aimed at enhancing border security, simplifying the visa process, and offering a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, including almost 12 million Mexicans. In return, the proposed bill included funds amounting to billions of dollars for law enforcement, fencing, and deportation efforts. The New York Times reported that with a decrease in military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, defense contractors were anticipating a “military-style buildup at the border zone,” hoping to provide more helicopters, heat-seeking cameras, radiation detectors, virtual fences, and similar equipment. As Obama's eight-year term came to an end, he would leave behind a legacy that is complex and mixed.

On June 16, 2015, Donald J. Trump famously rode down an escalator in Trump Tower while Neil Young's “Rockin’ in the Free World” played to announce his run for the presidency and denounce “Mexican rapists.” *“I will build a great, great wall on our southern border,”* he told Americans. *“And I will have Mexico pay for that wall.”* He vowed to construct a barrier spanning the full 2,000-mile border. When he left office, he had built just over 450 miles of tall steel fencing, most of which replaced existing structures. Trump only added 52 miles of new border wall, and the cost was covered entirely by the US.

Joe Biden paused all funds that Congress had already designated for border wall construction and ordered those projects be reviewed. However, in 2023 he ended that pause, albeit reluctantly, as he claimed he had no choice but to use money Congress allocated during his predecessor's tenure for its stated purpose.

There are currently 700 miles of non-contiguous fences along the 1,951-mile border. A Republican built most of those, but we cannot ignore that Democrats have also built and supported their fair share, showing bipartisan commitment to this symbol of illusory control.

2.1 THE WALL IN THE RHETORIC OF THE 2024 WHITE HOUSE CANDIDATES AND THEIR IMMIGRATION POLICIES

DONALD TRUMP



Figure 5. Donald Trump during the 2024 electoral campaign on immigration policies.

In the context of his aggressive political rhetoric that targets and incites violence against Hispanic and Black individuals as well as Democrats, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump held a one-hour speech in August 2024 focused on the threats posed by

illegal immigration to the United States. He chose the US-Mexico border in Arizona as his backdrop, prominently featuring the border wall as part of his presentation. The central theme of his address was clear: Democrats' border policies have “unleashed a deadly plague of migrant crime”. Trump has ratcheted up the tensions on immigration further since then, repeating wild grotesque childish conspiracy theories about Haitian immigrants eating pets and, more recently, claiming migrants are “attacking villages and cities all throughout the Midwest”. What the US needs, Trump has stressed, is a closed border. He repeatedly invoked a *walled border* as a solution.

During his time in office, Trump implemented stringent immigration measures at the border to halt immigration. Employing what could be termed “The Politics of Cruelty,” echoing the title of Millet’s 1994 book on torture, he was also responsible for the controversial child separation policy in 2018 that resulted in over 5,000 children being separated from their parents upon apprehension at the border. As of May 2024, approximately 1,400 of these children were still separated from their families.

Furthermore, he aimed to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama-era federal initiative designed to protect hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants from deportation who had arrived in the U.S. as children.

In 2019, Trump issued an executive order that established the Migrant Protection Protocols, commonly referred to as the Remain in Mexico policy. This directive mandated that individuals seeking asylum at the U.S. border be sent back to Mexico during the processing of their claims. The program remained operational until the conclusion of Trump's presidency in 2020, resulting in 81,000 expulsions.

In the last days of the 2024 campaign, Trump's hammering on immigration, deportations of illegal immigrants and the death penalty for those who kill a US citizen became intense and extreme, sparing no blatantly grotesque and absurd statements about immigrants and how much of a danger they pose to Americans. When Kamala Harris visited the US-Mexico border for her campaign the Republican nominee argued that Harris was “getting killed on the issue” and supports the “worst bill ever drawn” on border security.

KAMALA HARRIS



Figure 6. Kamala Harris during the 2024 electoral campaign on immigration policies

While Trump is widely recognized for his strict policies toward immigrants at both the border and inside the U.S., Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris has demonstrated a more moderate stance that shows support for certain immigrants living in the U.S. unlawfully, as well as for asylum seekers, while continuing to advocate for a

pathway to citizenship for "Dreamers" (those who came to the U.S. as children) and undocumented individuals married to U.S. citizens.

Nevertheless, in late July 2024, Harris aired a campaign advertisement regarding the U.S.-Mexico border, declaring that if elected President, she would expand the number of Border Patrol agents, combat human trafficking, and prosecute international gangs. This strategic pivot to a tougher stance is seen by her campaign advisers as a politically savvy decision, reflecting the increasingly anti-immigrant sentiment that has developed among the U.S. populace in recent years.

Additionally, she supports the CBP One app introduced by the Biden administration in early 2023. This allows individuals seeking asylum to arrange meetings with immigration officials but often requires them to endure months in perilous conditions in Mexico, violating the 'non-refoulement' principle established in international law under the 1968 Protocol Related to the Status of Refugees, to which the U.S. is a signatory. Conversely, during the first three years of Biden's presidency, over 1 million migrants at the border received temporary humanitarian parole, enabling them to remain in the U.S. while awaiting their asylum hearings.

Harris has also consistently emphasized the necessity of supporting DACA. In 2024, the Biden administration expanded healthcare coverage for DACA recipients, granting them access to insurance through the Affordable Care Act, commonly referred to as Obamacare.

The Biden-Harris administration has maintained a complex stance on deportations, having deported nearly as many unauthorized immigrants as the Trump administration did. Simultaneously, these elevated figures are indicative of the larger influx of individuals arriving at the border due to increased opportunities for entry.

3. THE WALLS OF THE WORLD

I would like to place the US-Mexico wall in a geographical perspective. It is certainly not the only wall in the world. Intended as fences, barriers, excluding or rejecting borders, walls have proliferated over the past 10 years, when about 70 new walls around the world have been built or started. Studying these walls, you discover they have different stories, different functions. You can find ideological walls, anti-immigration walls, segregating walls, anti-terrorism walls, territorial walls, post-conflict walls. The walls can change functions over time. They are made of different materials and are conceived in different ways (Luci, 2023).

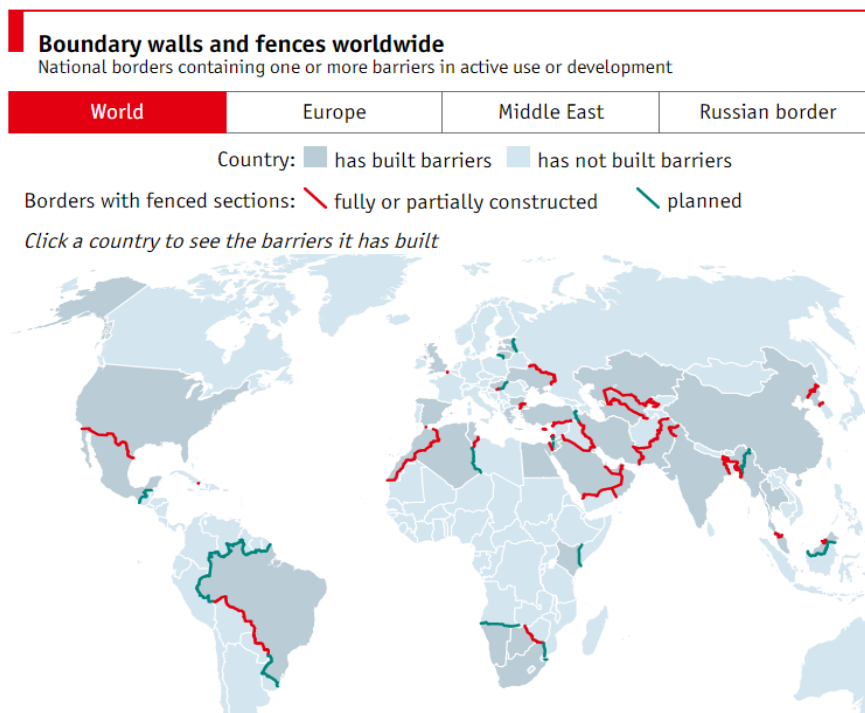


Figure 7. The walls and fences around the world (From <https://www.geographypods.com/walls.html>)

They are surrounded by perimeter roads, secured with barbed wire, equipped with sensors, interspersed with guard stations, infrared surveillance cameras, and floodlights, and accompanied by a comprehensive set of laws and regulations (such as the right to asylum, right to reside, and visa requirements). A wall is not always equivalent to a border, nor is a border necessarily impenetrable: it can also serve as a point of interaction, a junction. Generally, a border is meant to be mutual, with its path established by the states that share it and regulated through agreements, while the placement of a wall is typically a unilateral decision made solely by one party, usually the more dominant one.

4. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF BORDERS

The border is an object that connects and divides territories, people, cultures and identities (Marsico, 2016). It is related to conflicts: sometimes, the borders emerge as a consequence of conflict between groups or they create conflicts as a consequence of their emergence.

Bordering is a *foundational moment* connected to the birth or the emergence of a new collective (id-)entity. This is how the founding of ancient Rome is depicted by the myth, with Romulus ploughing a furrow in the place -the Palatine Hill- where ancient Rome's governmental places will rise, which caused a fratricide!

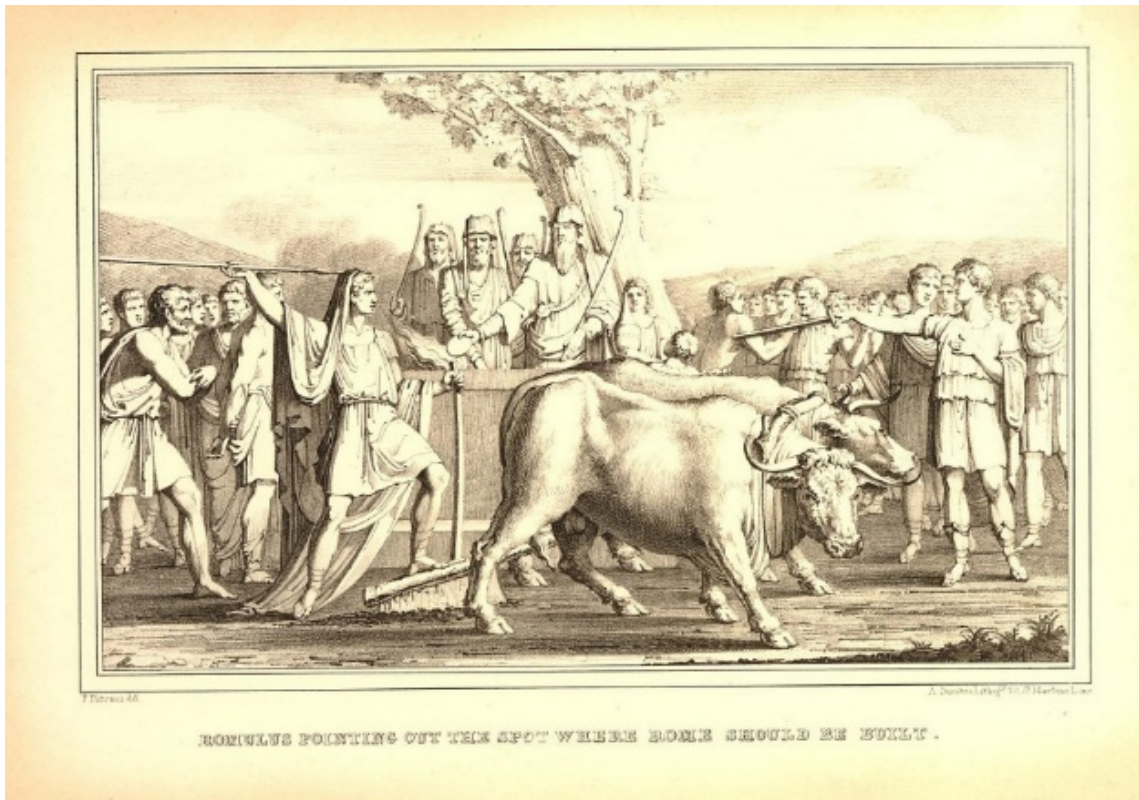


Figure 8. A lithograph showing the *sulcus primigenius* ritual supposedly undertaken at the founding of the city of Rome. Published by A. Ducote. Initial sketch by Filippo Pistrucci (British Museum/London).

Borders regulate the psychological functioning of groups and individuals, especially in relation to the meaning-making process and to the way relationships are built between the self, the other and the environment (Luci, 2021, 2023). Borders operate in both the outer and the inner worlds. In the external or physical world, they are about modifying the environment and space–time in which humans live. Within the psyche, borders regulate the feelings, sense of intimacy and the definition and negotiation of identities, strongly affecting the human experience (Marsico & Varzi, 2015).

As soon as a border is established, it influences how a person interacts with their surroundings, creating an inherent imbalance, as the two sides of the border hold

different significance for the individual or the group. For example, a critical aspect of migration issues is the concept of citizenship. Through the process of defining borders (such as place of birth, employment contracts, duration of residency, tax contributions, etc.), a particular group of “citizens” is defined, leading to an immediate disparity in value (Crosby & Rea, 2016), with a complementary “non-citizen” set (e.g. quasi-citizen, not-yet-citizen, foreigner, enemy, refugee, the beggar, the thief, etc.).

Once a border is established (for example, an international boundary between countries), two primary functions arise: its maintenance and the establishment of a means to communicate with the “other side.” Therefore, borders should not be perceived merely as physical and unchanging barriers; they unfold dynamically over time (Konrad, 2015; Nail, 2016), as the process of bordering relies on human interpretation and action (Brambilla, 2015; Kolossov & Scott, 2013; Newman, 2003; Rumford, 2012). Individuals are involved in the formation of the border and its significance, yet the border itself also structures their mindset (Brunet-Jailly, 2005).

A wall is generally built along “a non-border,” a shared or unitary area of great overlapping of populations and intertwining of different identities and cultures, or a disputed area between two or more populations, to separate and establish the predominance of one population on one side and the other on the other side of a border. In this sense, it is not an already existing border. It is generally an attempt to create a border.

4.1. TRANSGRESSION OF BORDERS BY IMMIGRANTS AND POLITICAL LEADERS

Economic migrants and refugees are two different categories of migrants, the former characterized by a greater possibility of choosing where to go and how to meet their economic needs, at least partially, and the latter fleeing from a “well-founded fear of persecution” (1951 Convention on the Refugee Status) in the country of origin and seeking for international protection, what is generally called *asylum*. Despite the fact that sometimes the line between the two can become subtle (Pijnenburg & Rijken, 2020), the etymology of the term 'asylum' (a-sylon) refers to a space which is 'not violable'. The etymology of the word 'refugee' comes from the Latin *refugium*: from 're-' meaning 'back', 'fugere' meaning 'to flee' and '-ium' that is 'place for': 'one who flees to a refuge or shelter or place of safety'. And it is this safe space of inviolability that refugees and asylum seekers seek, to enter a sacred space, a *temenos*, concrete and symbolic, becoming the subject of a universal law (Luci, 2020).

There are other universal spaces that are sacred, one of which is childhood - with the obligation laid down, again, in international law for child protection. However, these 'migrants' are often all equated into the discourse of those who wish to protect borders at all costs. The differences between them does not matter, because what matters is their transgression of the borders and their being other than “us”. The emphasis is on the ego and on the distinction of “us” from them.”

Reading the aggressive rhetoric and violent political discourse Trump has developed over the years (Nacos et al., 2020) it seems that all 'migrants' (as well as Blacks,

Hispanics, Muslims, Non-whites, and all other “minorities” in general) are seen as bringing ‘dirt, disease, aggression, poverty, and everything that threatens a rich, healthy, and safe life’ – as contaminating ‘what makes America great’. And this greatness can be regained by building a wall which will make these distinctions effective.

In her analysis of how national borders are established through barriers, Marie-Eve Loiselle (2024) notes that discussions regarding the U.S.-Mexico wall, evident in government reports and congressional hearings from the 1930s to the late 1950s, reveal that the justifications for such structures in the early 20th century closely resemble those used today. Recurring arguments for the wall have included immigration, disease, and crime, both in historical contexts and in contemporary debates. A prominent reason cited has been the urgency to prevent “juvenile delinquents,” “thieves,” “beggars,” undocumented laborers, narcotic traffickers, and Mexican citizens seeking medical assistance in the United States at public expense. Occasionally, concerns about undocumented individuals have been intertwined with worries about outbreaks of disease. A 1946 outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Mexico further bolstered the case for building the wall.



Figure 9. Artwork along the US-Mexico wall that represents migrants trying to cross the border.

The paradoxical effectiveness of Trump’s performativity on these themes is in his embodying a syzygy through an absolute defense of the American border, while himself transgressing in his discourse, personal actions, and policy many conventional boundaries. Trump’s transgressions – which are typical of populist performativity – play a pivotal role in recruiting powerful affective collective subjectivities. Throughout his time as a presidential candidate (2015–2016 and currently) and during his presidency (2017–2021), Trump exhibited a vivid style characterized by clumsy

behaviors and confrontational attitudes, while his rhetoric was shockingly politically incorrect, overtly racist, and aggressive (Verney, 2019).



Figure 10. Trump in front of the wall.

Donald Trump was frequently at odds with the ‘mainstream media’ and labeled any outlet that questioned his narrative as ‘fake news’ (Shanahan, 2019). Singer (2021) reminds us how skillful he is in turning his strategic, sociopathic, delusional, self-aggrandizing lies into accusations against those who disagree with him. Singer suggests that the biggest wall’ that Trump has erected is the one that separates himself and his followers from the truth. Labelling truths that don’t fit into his solipsistic view of the world as “Fake news” are the essential building blocks that Trump uses to build that wall. His chaotic presidency was often viewed as disastrous. Being the first president in U.S. history to be impeached twice, Trump was characterized as ‘clumsy’, ‘dangerous’,

‘immature’ and ‘a toddler-in-chief’ (Drezner, 2020; Mercieca, 2019). Populism tends to arise during periods of simultaneous political, social, and economic turmoil—when trust in social and political norms and institutions erodes, and feelings of being unrepresented exist among the populace.

In the context of perceived social and political exclusion, populism advocates for a restoration of power to ‘the sovereign people’ by challenging the ‘political establishment,’ which is depicted as corrupt and illegitimate, thereby sidelining ‘the people’ from political engagement (Roberts, 2015; Stavrakakis et al., 2017). Essentially, the political conflict occurs vertically between those at the lower echelons and those at the higher levels of society, rather than horizontally, as seen in traditional left/right political divisions (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Ostiguy, 2017).

Some authors describe populist disruption as a form of ‘creative destruction’ (Ostiguy and Roberts, 2016). It oscillates ‘between rupture and rapture’ (Wagner-Pacifici and Tavory, 2019). Rapturous political performativity can be interpreted through Weber’s (2012) concept of charisma, which is characterized as an exceptional force of symbolic transformation and an institutional-legal establishment capable of breaking free from the confines of traditionalism, formal legal-rational authority, and bureaucratic governance. Identification is based less on rational decision-making and more on emotional responses. The dominance of rationalist thinking has marginalized emotions in socio-political studies, often portraying parties and movements that appeal to emotions as unsophisticated or irrational (Eklundh, 2019).

This framework overlooks the crucial role of performative discourse—whether through words, gestures, or symbols—in shaping socio-political realities. Performative has the power to stir emotions like hatred and nostalgia, but it can also evoke feelings of euphoria and hope (Demertzis, 2013). It forges connections among individuals and groups through slogans, flags, physical expressions, and, importantly, through political figures with whom they identify. Venizelos’s examination of Trump’s discourse highlights the themes of performativity and identification processes, “Donald Trump’s politically incorrect and vulgar discourse, awkward mannerisms, abrasive demeanor and social markers of ‘the low’ define a transgressive political performance that is found in opposition to proper, expected, institutional, elitist styles. In this sense, the antagonistic division of the political space between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’, which is typical of populism, is not only ‘spoken’ but also *performed*. It transgresses social, cultural, and political norms. Notwithstanding Donald Trump’s hard right identity, his entertaining style played an important role in diffusing his openly xenophobic and nativist discourse.” (2023, p. 660).



Figure 11. Trump during some of the rallies of his 2024 electoral campaign.

Hermes is significantly highlighted in the context of crossing boundaries. His name originates from 'herma,' which in Greek refers to a pile of stones, traditionally used in the countryside to mark boundaries or serve as landmarks. Throughout various regions in Greece, these stone heaps could be found alongside roads, particularly at junctions and property lines. The piles were treated with reverence, as it was customary for travelers to add a stone or anoint them with oil in respect. Over time, these markers evolved, often adorned with a head and phallus, giving rise to a quadrangular shape. Among his many roles, Hermes was recognized as the deity of both literal and metaphorical borders. He served as the guardian of travelers, herdsmen, and even thieves, and was a patron of oratory, literature, invention, and trade—all of which embody the spirit of crossing boundaries and the flow of exchange. In addition to these, Hermes is well-known for being the messenger of the gods, fulfilling a critical

communication role, and some legends even attribute the invention of speech to him (Luci, 2022).



Figure 12. Statues honoring Hermes

The Trump/trickster performs the function of Hermes invoking boundaries and then ostentatiously transgressing them. He's dis-ruptive and so between rupture and rapture, he captures his voters. A self-indulgent leader who embodies and offers a model of how to be soft on oneself and stern on the other, of how to project one's own shadow on the other, releasing destructive forces in society and *thus making the symbol of the wall necessary. Necessary for what?* At the conscious level to stop the migration of the other, at the unconscious level to stem the flow of the destructive inner forces he himself is triggering.

Tom Singer (2019) observes that Trump's use of the 'wall' in his political campaign is the skillful manipulation of a symbol. He writes, "A symbol's power lies in its polyvalency: it

can evoke many simultaneous emotions and meanings, even contradictory ones. And a symbol can accrue meaning over time, such as the American flag, the Christian cross, or the Nazi swastika, so that history adds to its gravitas. A symbol's power to move people comes from its ability to tap the depths of the human psyche, where primitive, nonrational emotions lie dormant, waiting to be roused. Trump's wall draws part of its symbolic power from the long human history with walls."

What is most important about this use of the symbol, is the fact that it provides what Jung called a *primordial image* to Trump's campaign - and not only his, but to other political leaders around the world. Jung writes "The image is called primordial when it possesses an archaic character... in striking accord with familiar mythological motifs. It then expresses material primarily derived from the collective unconscious and indicates at the same time that the factors influencing the conscious situation of the moment are collective rather than personal" (CW6 par. 746). The primordial image "expresses the unique and unconditioned creative power of the psyche" (CW6, par 748). "It releases unavailable, dammed-up energy by leading the mind back to nature and canalizing sheer instinct into mental forms" (CW6, par. 749). And it has one great advantage over the clarity of the idea, and that is its vitality.

5. THE *IMAGE* OF THE WALL AND THE RE-ORGANIZATION OF GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL MINDS

In this sense, this obsession with the wall works as a *primordial image* that canalizes collective energy towards a regenerative process for society. This barrier, the wall, by its

very presence, leads other group members to reorganize their Self to form certain links to in-group members and certain other links to out-group members. However, this reorganization at individual and group levels implies processes that are deeply unconscious because they are close to the *somatic level of experience*.

Groups are bound together by culture, religion, practices, rituals, and values that orientate daily life and meanings in a complex interchange of dynamics between families, subgroups, generations, and so on, that compose the complex social matrix in which we are living. However, our life as individuals and especially as members of groups happens in a material space – the environment we inhabit - to which we have a complex and largely unexplored relationship. There is a primitive and deep level of our psychological functioning that is rooted in that space and our phantasy of that space. Not only do human subjects have a role in the formation and transformation of a sense of Self, but also the objects, the environment, and the combination of objects and subjects (Luci, 2021).

The role of the environment has been widely disregarded by psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. But, in fact, the mergers and separation of the self vis-a-vis its human and nonhuman environment is essential to the construction of personal self and group identity. Donald Winnicott was the first theorist to refer to the mother as ‘environment’ (1960). Winnicott grasped the fact that the development of self has to do with processes that happen in space and in relation to subjects and material ‘objects’. The psychodynamics with the transitional object shows that an object can be imbued with qualities of the subject’s inner world, and the environment can play the role of transitional space in which to negotiate ourselves throughout life (Winnicott, 1971).

Walls are built to convey the idea of safety and while providing this sense of safety, they contribute to the geography of our selves. But how do they do that? I propose that they accomplish this through our bodies, i.e. through the perception of images that stimulate our senses, particularly tactile perception as when a barrier is seen and/or even just imagined. The skin is a main door to shape and re-shape the self. It constitutes a very profound, unconscious level of our being in the world. Tactile perception, visual perception and imagination stimulate the ‘skin’ as an organ and the sense of ‘containment’. These perceptions have the power to open the self to a re-arrangement of itself, the ego, and the relationship between the self and the ego.



Figure 13. Images about early skin contact between caregivers and infant.

Vittorio Gallese's neuroscientific research provides confirmation of this intuition (Gallese, 2018; 2020). He shows how the very notion of contact is mapped onto our somatosensory system. The idea is that every time I observe something like a space and its objects, I engage in this perception with much more than my visual system. Our perception is intrinsically synaesthetic. Not only that. He states: “For a long time we have done our best to draw a very defined and sharp line between reality and the

imaginary world. For ages, the imaginary world has been considered as something other than the world of reality. Cognitive science and cognitive neuroscience have changed dramatically this point o view. it has been shown that doing something is much more similar to imagining doing something than we previously thought.” (Alessandro Gattara, 2017, p. 80). *The evocation of a ‘wall” and a “walled border” stimulates our imagination to perceive the barrier, and the tactile stimulation it causes is what makes us feel protected in the deepest part of the self, the bodily self.*

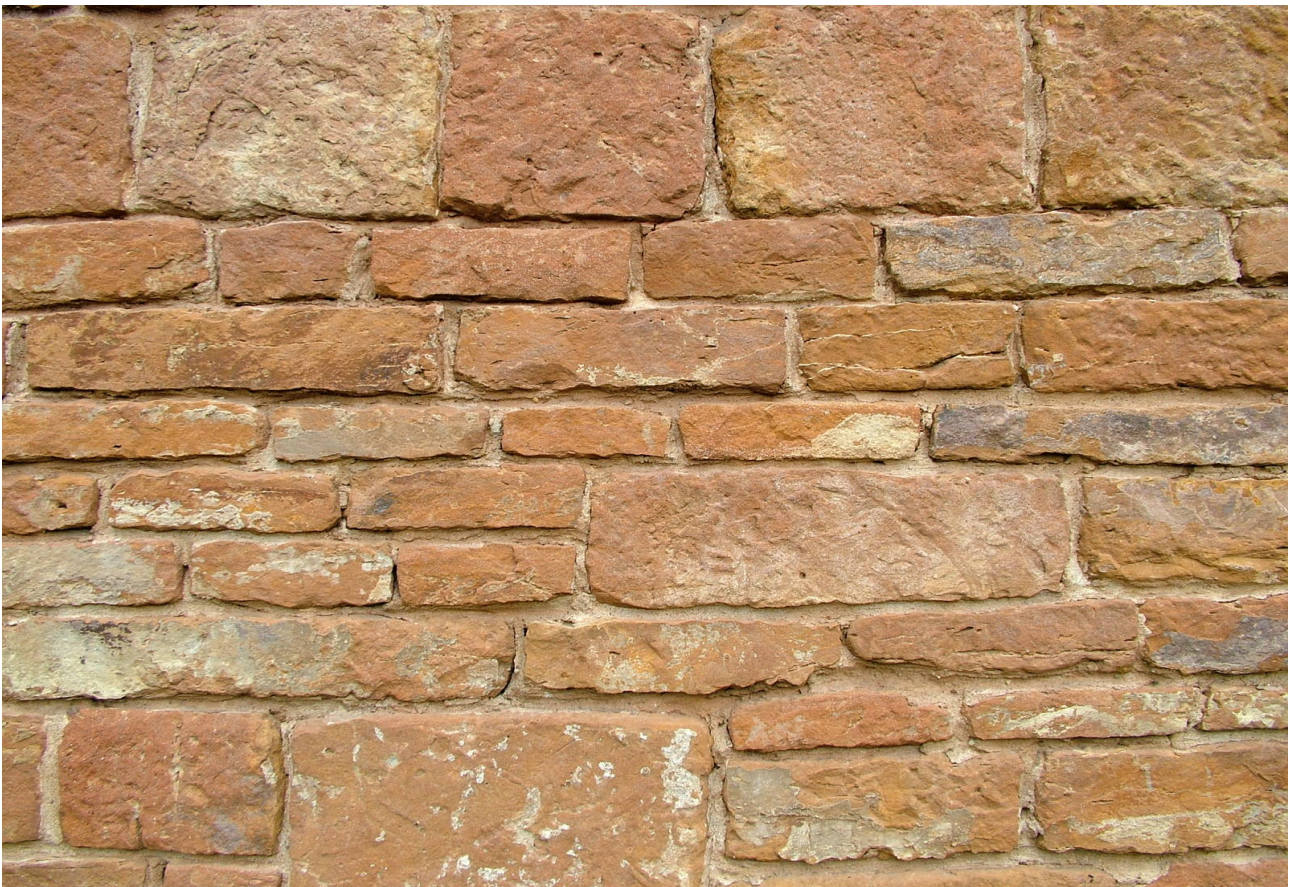


Figure 14. The wall as an object in our thinking.

Linking this back to psychoanalysis, Freud laid the groundwork for a psychology of the body by declaring the ego to be ‘first and foremost a bodily ego’, a mental ‘projection of

the surface' of the body (1923). But he left it to others to address the implications of this claim and to develop a more comprehensive theory around it. There are many who contributed to this work. Esther Bick, (1968) was one of the first to discuss the crucial role of the skin in 'binding together' the infant's sensations and enabling it to overcome the 'catastrophic anxieties' that otherwise arise from its unintegrated state. Didier Anzieu postulated that the skin ego is not available to the infant from birth but is gradually achieved in response to stimuli impinging on the surface of its skin. These stimuli lead the infant to construct a mental image of themselves as a container that is capable of holding its experiences together (1985: 61). The "skin ego" for Anzieu is the permanent support and ever-present foundation of the thinking ego. The skin and the sensation it processes continue their vital role in shaping identity, such that we continue to relate to objects, both things and other people, through our imaginative perception of them, experiencing ourselves as if merged with them, with 'shared skin', while becoming aware of the spatial boundaries of our body in relation to the other. We come to recognize the body as a container for its own psychic contents, separate from the other.

These phenomena related to the emergence of a skin ego also pertain to the life of groups. Anzieu makes an insightful distinction between different types of group skin (1985): 1) a *real psychic group skin* which delimits the occupied space of group territory and also helps define time for the group and the rhythm of its meetings, both of which are relevant to the holding function; 2) an *imaginary group psychic skin* that corresponds to fantasies and illusions about the group envelope and contributes to organic metaphors in a language relative to the group and its experience of continuity with the skin; and 3) a *symbolic group psychic skin*, which includes signs and rituals pertaining to a sense of group belongingness. Anzieu's tripartition identifies three

modes of group functioning and three levels of group experience in relation to the 'group psychic skin' that resonate with Ogden's modes of psychic functioning: autistic-contiguous, paranoid schizoid and historical (1989).

The most elusive level and a primary source of the genesis of the group psychic skin is probably the first, that is, the sensory ground of group identity, what draws and what anchors the sense of belonging of the group members to objects, spaces and territories and their entanglement with elements of place and their materiality. This sensory-dominated level of the group functioning might be the reason why it is so difficult to grasp the primary source of group identity and its transformations, the transits of identification among individuals who self-identify with particular elements of their environment, a group wrapper. I am making the hypothesis that, like an individual with a mother, the sensory experience of both the human and non-human environment for a group is a base for the elaboration of a group psychic skin for its members.

Jung called this concept 'state of identity' or *participation mystique* (Jung, 1921, par. 781), i.e. an unconscious conformity between a subject and an object, oneself and others, without awareness of being in such a state. We can suppose that the material environment, familiar others and certain cultural objects function as the sensorial support for group members' cross-identifications as 'same', as belonging to the same group, being within the same envelope, once the sensory bases of group belonging are rooted in the material environment. In such a condition, each person cannot be separated from another nor experience being in relationship with the other. Rather it is a state of identity between two subjects. This is the state of mind that Jung likens to Pierre Janet's idea of *abaissment du niveau mental*.

The effects of the *abaïssment* are: 1) it causes the loss of entire sections of personality normally in control; 2) it produces dissociated fragments of personality; 3) it impedes normal logical thinking; 4) it reduces the sense of responsibility and an adequate Ego reaction; 5) it causes incomplete representation of reality and triggers inadequate emotional reactions; 6) it lowers the level of consciousness allowing unconscious contents to penetrate the mind and come into play as autonomous invasions (Jung, 1950). This is how Jung describes the state of disintegration of self and ego (disruption of boundaries) with the penetration of unconscious contents that can lead to a reorganisation of the group psyche around the symbolic image of something like “the wall.” The participation mystique with the image of a wall becomes a tool in the hands of a political leader such as Trump to shape the psyche of those who fall into this state of identity with him and this object of shared imagination, the wall. “The wall” becomes an essential part of Trump’s toolkit of establishing his leadership in the MAGA group psyche in order to control it with the false promise of protecting MAGA world from the invasion of otherness. The “abaïssment du niveau mental” and the “participation mystique” may be understood as the two group processes of dis-integration and re-integration of new contents that re-organize group mind, enabling change and adaptation to a different reality. It offers valuable insight into totalitarian leader-group dynamics, which we can observe in Trump's rallies.



Figure 15. Detail of one of Jung’s paintings in the *The Red Book* (2009). And Trump’s triumphant entrance onto one of the stages of his electoral campaign.

The risk of “abaissment du niveau mental” and “participation mystique” are what Jung describes as the road to mass psychosis and psychic infection: “The greatest danger about unconsciousness is proneness to suggestion. The effect of suggestion is due to the release of an unconscious dynamic and the more unconscious this is, the more effective it will be... With the loss of the symbolic ideas the bridge to the unconscious has broken down” (Jung, 1959, n.79 p. 247). When a mass psychosis occurs, the results are devastating, as the individuals who make up the infected society "become morally and spiritually inferior". “Man in the group is always unreasonable, irresponsible, emotional, erratic and unreliable” (Jung, 1936, para. 1315). “Wherever social conditions of this type develop on a large scale the road to tyranny lies open and the freedom of the individual turns into spiritual and physical slavery” (Jung 1957, para 500-503).

In his impassioned and thoughtful critique of Trump's policies in several writings, Singer (Singer, Weinberg, Hager, 2020; Singer, 2019, 2021) illustrates how the idea of the wall is something that serves Trump far more than just supporting his anti-immigration policy. It is the manipulation of a symbol that offers his supporters protection. Trump provides them relief from emotions related to fear and grave danger and fills them with the sense of newfound purity of identity. This gives rise in the psyche of a large national group to an ancient, archetypal sense of protection and of connection to something sacred that unites and protects the group. It would seem almost tolerable and understandable if all this were not in the shadow of a *malevolent transformation* process that, according to Singer (2021), Trump himself has undergone and that his leadership is inducing in Americans by contagion. Sullivan (cited in Singer, 2021) describes the *malevolent transformation* as “the phenomenon in children who, in finding their needs for tenderness answered with harsh and rejecting cruelty, discover

early in life that it is not safe to seek benevolence from the world. Instead, the yearning for tenderness is transformed in their psyches into a terrible weakness that needs to be renounced at all costs and replaced with toughness and meanness. Such individuals who have learned in the depths of their souls to defend themselves with “malevolent transformation” become gifted at exploiting and treating with contempt others who show such vulnerabilities. Trump has turned the dreadful psychological experience of malevolent transformation into an art form as well as a formidable political weapon. Trump is quite gifted at turning something good into something bad while simultaneously stoking hatred in others—either hatred of him or hatred in his followers for his enemies. {This is } the reverse alchemical art of turning gold into shit. What makes this all the more dangerous in a leader is that it is not only toxic in the interpersonal arena but also contagious in the public sphere” (Singer, 2021 p. 9)

6. A NON-CONCLUSION: BORDER ART AS COUNTER-PERFORMANCE

In previous articles (Luci, 2017, 2021, 2023), I examined how the breakdown of psychic boundaries in individuals affected by complex trauma relates to specific behaviors observed within groups. The key finding was that as a person's sense of self erodes due to trauma there is a tendency to depend more heavily on group dynamics and to unconsciously transfer responsibility for their internal struggles onto their leaders.

We could say that populist political leaders thrive on our traumas; they take skillful care of keeping the social atmosphere traumatizing and adopt a policy that blows on the flames of uncertainty, threats and fear, fabricating enemies, and illusory defenses, to increase the cohesiveness of their supporters and to consolidate their own power.

The challenge to us seems to be how to recover an ability to reflect and dream up ways to improve our relationships with the “other” and to make the boundaries between us softer and at least partially permeable.

I would like to end my comments with images of hope that help us dream these intolerable conflicts into a more positive future.

The works of some artists and ordinary people who have transformed the wall into a canvas with performances and paintings are very impressive testimonials of this work of dreaming borders into a transformed psychic space. This seems to be a trend on almost all walls around the world (Szary, 2012; Giudice & Giubilaro, 2014).



Figure 16. Two examples of walls transformed into canvas: a so-called ‘peace line’ in Belfast (left) and the wall in Israel-Palestine (right).

Anderson (2020) reports on key border performances at the US-Mexico border. On a cloudy Tuesday on a beach in Tijuana, against the border fence, a woman in a black cocktail dress places one stiletto heel in front of the other in the sand. Armed with a

brush, the woman climbs a ladder and begins to paint the border blue, transforming the barrier alongside San Diego’s Border Field Park into a fantasy of sky. In her 2011 performance *Borrando la Frontera*, Tampico born artist Ana Teresa Fernández creates the illusion of a gap in the border fence, making the permeability of the border patrol infrastructure visible and provoking a feeling of social engagement (Figure 19).



Figure 17. In her 2011 performance *Borrando la Frontera*, Tampico born artist Ana Teresa Fernández creates the illusion of a gap in the border fence.

Another performance, called *Braiding Borders/Trenzando Fronteras*, took place during the 2017 presidential inauguration. Organized by the transnational coalition *Boundless Across Borders*, the project was a collaboration between the artists and community organizers Xochitl R. Nicholson and Sandra Paola López, designed to respond to Trump’s rhetoric against immigrants and women with “a sign of peaceful resistance, strength and solidarity” (Curran). A short bilingual film documenting the event, captures participants’ deeply shared emotions, as they sing, embrace, beam, and weep while braiding their hair together, as a symbol of the interweaving of cultures and lives in that geographical area. While crisis discourse constructs the border as a site of

perpetually heightened alarm, the simple ritual of grooming hair infuses the border with a sense of the normality of ordinary life, instead of a site of ongoing trauma (Figure 20).



Figure 18. 2017 Project Braiding Borders/Trenzando Fronteras: A short bilingual film documenting the event, captures participants’ strong shared emotions, as they sing, embrace, beam, and weep while braiding their hair together.

In September 2018 a gigantic image of a toddler emerged at the US Mexico border, where it divides Tecate and San Diego County. This huge portrait of a young boy called Kikito loomed over a wall that carries so much hostile symbolism and rendered it mildly absurd. It was created by the artist JR. The piece garnered huge attention with international media, locals and tourists praising it as a significant and poignant statement in light of Trump’s attempt to dismantle the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) programme. At the culmination of the project JR gathered people together for a ‘giant picnic’ that spanned both sides of the border. Guests, including undocumented migrants and border guards, were invited to share food. Both groups participated at a massive dinner table adorned with a cloth that, when viewed from above, pictured the eyes of a “Dreamer”, the same name afforded to undocumented people who came to the US as children (Figure 21).



Figure 19. In September 2018 a gigantic image of a toddler emerged at the US Mexico border, where it divides Tecate and San Diego County. JR gathered people together for a ‘giant picnic’ that spanned both sides of the border.

Many other art works and performances took place at the US Mexico wall. And significantly in October 2024, just a few weeks before the Presidential Election, The Mellon Foundation, the US’s largest philanthropic supporter of arts and humanities, launched a \$25 million fund that will support arts organizations based in the US-Mexico borderlands.

These performances are representative of a resurgence of site-specific border interventions. They bring everyday life, moments of touch and collaboration, into the contested site of the border. They naturalize migration by denaturalizing the wall. They generate emotional responses and forms of human connection that operate outside the language of crisis. They attempt to connect with the other side, turning to vulnerability and joy as sources of relationality and resistance; they envision new networks of solidarity. The emotions generated through these performances offer a framework for resistance and beyond resistance, they are means of survival, rebirth, and vital connection even within structures of crisis.

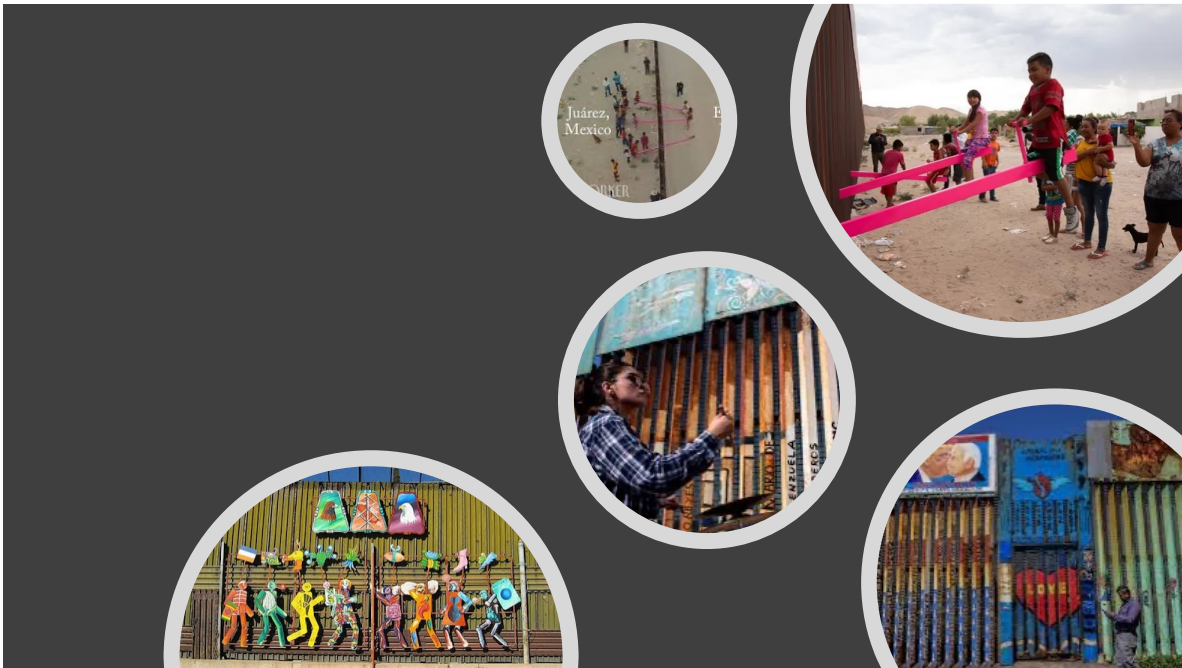


Figure 20. Other artworks and artistic performances along the US-Mexico border.

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Perspectives on How Pandemic Changed Psychoanalysis (Routledge, 2023) and *Psychoanalytic, Psychosocial and Human Rights Perspectives on Enforced Disappearance* (Routledge, 2024). She is serving as Board member of the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* and teaching to IAAP Developing Groups.

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CHAPTER TEN

CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY¹

INNER AND OUTER DEMOCRACY AND THE THREAT OF AUTHORITARIANISM

DONALD KALSCHED, PH.D.

INTRODUCTION

At this time in history all over the world, democracy is in a fight for its life against the growing threat of authoritarianism.² This is sometimes a fight *within* a democratic country against the forces of autocracy, as we see today in both Israel and the United States. Or, the fight can be a battle *between* warring states, as we see currently in Ukraine, where Vladimir Putin's authoritarian regime has begun a brutal war against a much smaller and weaker democratic republic. Underneath the agony and unspeakable grief of Ukraine's struggle to maintain its democracy, there lies a deep moral and

¹ Alan Paton's Novel by this title (Paton, 1948) is a cry from the heart for his beloved country South Africa as it descended into Civil War and Apartheid. It is about the societal structures in that country that made Apartheid possible. In a similar vein I want to describe in this paper the underlying psychological structures in our country that make Authoritarianism possible. No matter which way the coming Presidential election goes, these authoritarian structures will be in place, making a cry for our beloved country necessary for its transformation.

² See Applebaum (2020) and Levitsky & Ziblatt, (2018).

spiritual value that those of us fortunate enough to live in democracies sometimes experience.

It is a deep value that is only glimpsed in the human and inter-human struggles and conflicts that are made possible by the ideals of freedom and liberty in a diverse and democratic system. And even then, only at certain heart-felt moments. Like Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg, or Nelson Mandela's inaugural address at the Cape of Good Hope in 1994, or Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. These moments have a transcendence about them that seems to come from a struggle between opposing sides that resolves itself in a transcendent reconciling "third." They are healing moments when deep feelings are touched. They are also moments when the spirit soars. In authoritarian governments, the spirit doesn't soar. It marches.

The democratic 'moments' of transcendence I'm describing move us in ways that only a life lived in freedom can move us, and democracy is best understood as a constant struggle for that freedom--a struggle against the inevitable threat of authoritarianism--a struggle that never ends. And always a struggle within democracy itself. I want to try to talk about this struggle today, as it goes on both within the human psyche and also without--in our political culture. I came to understand that the struggle for a democracy of the psyche--and for that deep moral and spiritual value inherent in a democratic

process--has to do with the relationship between democracy and consciousness--a relationship very precious to Jung.³

Two years ago, as the current war in Ukraine was beginning, I was asked by a Ukrainian friend Dr. Oksana Yakushko, if I would write a letter in support for our Ukrainian colleagues, who had just been attacked by Russian troops and tanks. In my letter, I tried to express this ineffable connection between democracy and consciousness. I repeat the relevant paragraph here:

“Your battle is part of that revolution in consciousness. Dictators will always rise up against this new consciousness because they are afraid of it, but the fight for democracy, for equality, for diversity, and for the sacred reality that all people on this planet contain the spark of a God-given right to life and liberty, is far bigger than any one battle, and it must be waged over and over again in every generation. Those of you who work with traumatized individuals know that this is the same battle waged in the inner world—between a life-promoting new, democratic consciousness and the violent, oppressive anti-life forces in the psyche. Now you are engaging this battle in the streets. You are fighting for more than survival. You are fighting for a new birth of freedom and for a new and revolutionary consciousness that is slowly taking place on this earth--against tremendous resistance. You are fighting for a transcendent moral center for your nation. Despite your current trauma, you are fighting for the Soul. I salute you.”⁴

³ Stressing the importance of holding inner conflict, Jung said “It is surely better to know that your worst enemy is right there in your own heart. *Man’s warlike instincts are ineradicable...True democracy is a highly psychological institution* which takes account of human nature as it is and makes allowances for the necessity of [inner] conflict...(Jung, 1964, para 456)

⁴ Donald Kalsched, Unpublished Letter to Ukrainian Psychotherapists, March 9, 2022.

AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE INNER WORLD: THE SELF-CARE SYSTEM

In the trauma-work I do with individual patients, I have come to realize that I am frequently helping my patients to fight for a democracy of the psyche against the tyranny of an authoritarian *inner system* of defenses organized around existential fears and anxieties resulting from early trauma. This system, which I call the Self-care System (SCS) is an “effort” by a remarkable self-regulatory inner structure of dissociative defenses to control how much of the child’s traumatic feelings are allowed to become conscious. By looking at the *inner* systems of dissociation that emerge to regulate the individual personality in the aftermath of trauma, we may gain a better understanding of how authoritarianism takes root in our current collective life. That life, I believe, is impacted today by many overwhelming fears and threats that make authoritarianism attractive to people who do not want to feel the conflict, complexity, and confusion of modern life. The polarization and threats of violence in the so-called “culture wars” of our current politics are the result.

Before I describe the Self-care System as it operates in both individuals and cultures, let me suggest an epigraph that captures the difference between the separate *psychologies* implicit in democracy vs. authoritarianism

“The true God transforms violence into suffering

“The false God transforms suffering into violence”

Simone Weil (1987: 65)

The word “suffering” in this quote is the key to its meaning. What Simone Weil is referring to is *conscious suffering*--the necessary (and potentially redemptive) suffering of consciously facing and embracing the realities of the human condition. That means its radiance and its terror, its complexity and confusion, its freedom and its necessity, its brokenness and its beauty. Suffering in this vision, implies a willingness to embrace the fallible and vulnerable realities of our common humanity--struggling together as people with a diversity of other human beings to find meaning and joy in a world full of fear, violence, tragedy, staggering indifference, and for all of us, the eventual loss of everything we love--in death.

Democracy asks of us the courage for this kind of conscious suffering. Therefore it serves the true God that transforms violence into suffering. Authoritarianism--often originating in traumatic circumstances--has grown afraid of this kind of suffering, and defensively rejects it as inferior, weak, or pathetic. Therefore it serves the false God who transforms suffering into violence.

An implication of this is that Democracy is more than just a way to govern a nation or organize a community. It’s an ethical ideal of health--both within and without--an aspirational goal, and it is never fully realized.⁵ It has to do with repairing our relationship to the reality of the human condition that we all share, and from which--in our hubris--we easily become alienated. Any objective observer of our current cultural

⁵ R. T. McKenzie wrote an important recent book (2021) in which he points out that American Democracy should not be idealized. It simply reflects who we are. And the human heart harbors both “angel” and “beast” (p. 264). Democracy will not “save” us from ourselves. Instead, we will have to save democracy from our own intolerance--from our own authoritarian tendencies.

situation in America will readily see that the deep realities of our feeling lives are being avoided by many of our people. Authentic truth--which means emotional truth--is under attack as never before in our world and nation (cf. Lifton lecture included in this collection). There are many such truths that we prefer not to allow into consciousness, and the “alternative realities” swirling around us in our dis-information age, provide us with many escape routes back into illusion and out of what Al Gore (2006), calls “inconvenient truths.”

Implicit in the ideal of democracy as applied to the inner world is the idea that consciousness only comes about through inclusion of all the separate parts of the whole (self)--even those that Jesus referred to in his famous parable⁶ as the “least of these.” In a democracy, all the diverse parts are represented in a central ‘place’ that holds and contains the tension among these parts *and keeps them in relation to each other*. Democracy, if it’s functioning properly, is intensely relational. In outer democracy the central place where such diverse relationships occur is a parliament or a senate where all the parts are represented and negotiate agreements and compromises. In the inner world, it’s the central ego, and the *tension that the ego is asked to hold, is emotional tension* among the parts of the self. Such emotional tension is both disagreeable and exhilarating at the same time because, as Jung reminds us, “emotion is the chief source of consciousness” (1938, para 179).

⁶ In Matthew 25:40, Jesus, referring to the sick, the poor, the hungry and the lost, says “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” in Holy Bible, King James Version.

So the creation of consciousness requires *suffering* the various conflicting and extreme emotions-- like love and hate--in relationship, until something “new” emerges. It is very difficult to do this because love and hate are what C.S. Myers (1940) called “vehement emotions.” They are not adaptive and usually have a traumatic history. They are what Jung referenced as “primitive” (undifferentiated) emotions, and they usually originate in ‘lower,’ rudimentary parts of the brain stem. Such emotions are analogous to high voltage electricity coming direct from the power company--880 volts, quite capable of burning up the circuits unless transformed. Our homes are equipped with a ‘transformer’ which reduces the raw voltage from 880 to 440 to 220 to 110 or usable electricity.

In our psychological life and development, the transformers are relational interactions with caretakers, and they are especially important in the early formative years of childhood where the compassionate “co-regulation” and transformation of our overwhelming affects into feelings, helps build up the central ego and a stable identity. Relational rupture and repair are a central part of this process. If we have “good enough” care in these early years, and our anxiety and fear are kept within tolerable limits, we will not have to split or dissociate our conflicted feelings or rid ourselves, through projection, of the “bad” and shameful feelings that are the legacy of hate and rage. We may even become capable of holding our inner conflicts and not projecting our negative feelings onto others. Melanie Klein thought it was so important to be able to love and hate the same object that she made it a developmental milestone called the “depressive position.” Authoritarian personalities are incapable of holding these opposing emotions within, always converting their suffering into violence, in order to

rid themselves of the “bad” feelings and sustain the illusion of feeling “good” about themselves.

Jung had a similar goal for our struggle with extreme emotion.

“If the projected conflict is to be healed, it must return into the psyche of the individual, where it had its unconscious beginnings. He must celebrate a Last Supper with himself, and eat his own flesh and drink his own blood; which means that he must recognize and accept the [inferior] other in himself.” (Ibid., para. 512)

This is not a popular project, and so Democracy--inner and outer--is an *opus contra naturam*. Nonetheless, Jung assured us that if we hold our loves and our hates together and struggle with these opposing emotions, without projecting those that threaten us, something entirely new and surprising will emerge....something he called the “transcendent function.” Another name for it is “integration” or “wholeness.” These are commonly thought of as sacred realities--experiences that connect us with the deepest and highest dimensions of what it is to be human. That’s Democracy’s potential gift to us if we’re up for the emotional suffering that precedes the gift. We’re trying to hold that suffering right now in our nation’s polarized political life.

Jung was unique in understanding that Democracy was a developmental achievement over authoritarian systems--inwardly and outwardly. In all his writings Jung (1964) sees both democracy and individuality as salutary developments in the slow gradual evolution of the psyche away from collectivism or the ‘group mind’ and its servile

obedience to authorities such as a Pope or a King. He saw this evolution happening slowly, over eons of time. He felt that the Protestant Reformation was one important such threshold in history.⁷

TRAUMA IN THE CULTURE

Today, all over the Western world--people are coming face to face with frightening facts about our modern world that are difficult to assimilate and accept--difficult to feel and integrate. Many of these new realities are unprecedented. Never before in human history have we faced the tragic reality that the human race is warming our home planet to a point where we are actually making parts of the globe uninhabitable, creating conditions where whole populations are dying of starvation: Never before in human history have we had to watch as millions of species are dying out around us and going extinct: Never before have we had to confront our power to eradicate entire civilizations with nuclear weapons or face the unvarnished truth of our destructive history of slavery or our genocidal obliteration of Native American peoples: Never before have we had to stare into the abyss of our own evil such as the reality of the Holocaust, the gulags of Stalin, or the killing fields of Cambodia: Never before have the dark corners of Social media inspired our alienated young men to go on killing rampages in our schools and churches: Never before have our borders been besieged by millions of displaced people fleeing their own countries--now failed states, destroyed by war-lords and drug cartels--

⁷According to Jung, (1964, para 326) "The Reformation shattered the authority of the church as a teacher and *thereafter the authoritarian principle itself began to crumble away...* The inevitable consequence was an increase in the importance of the individual, which found expression in the modern ideals of humanity, social welfare, Democracy, and equality."

all supplied with our weapons. Never before have billions of dollars from mega-rich men poured into political action committees to warp our elections and ‘buy’ politicians: Never before have we been overwhelmed by disinformation on the internet, amplified by AI, now threatening our basic confidence in reality itself.

These realities generate fear, insecurity and a sense of helplessness and existential guilt. They threaten the familiar and secure identities that we have always taken for granted. Many people would prefer to live in a world where they don’t have to FEEL the discomfort of such realities. They would prefer to turn this suffering into violence--or turn them into “fake news” and flee into illusory alternative realities and the ‘silos’ of like-minded folks on Instagram or Tic Toc. There are so many escape-routes today from these discomfoting and frightening cultural realities!

One of the most common escape-routes is the *grievance culture* that surrounds us on every side. This culture, which is at the core of the authoritarian mindset, is a product of the False God who turns suffering into violence. Grievances provide relief from democracy’s conflicts with reality. Grievances are usually built around *inflated assumptions of one’s innocence and goodness*--goodness that has been allegedly violated and needs to be avenged. The assumption of victimized innocence is not stated explicitly in the radical movements in today’s politics, but it is there in the background of every Authoritarian effort to undermine democracy. This is true on both the right and the left of the political spectrum as Theodore Adorno long ago demonstrated.⁸ The

authoritarian system does not discriminate. It is part of the basic operating principle of the False God who transforms our suffering into violence, wherever we stand on the spectrum of radicalization.

A good example of how human suffering can be turned into violence--through grievance--is the way the MAGA right in our country has just turned the innocent suffering of people who lost their homes to two major recent hurricanes in Florida, into grievances and outrages against FEMA and the Federal Government--for not doing enough. These grievances are based on falsehoods and lies designed to gin up anger and outrage. It's so much easier to be righteously angry at a fictional enemy than *to feel* our true helplessness and vulnerability in the face of overwhelming events that we can't control. Such events make us feel "weak." They make us feel vulnerable. They make us feel guilty. They make us feel sad. They make us want to Cry for our Beloved Country.

Marjorie Taylor Greene does not want to FEEL these things. In addition to blaming FEMA for inaction, she suggested recently that "they" (she means evil democrats) *are controlling the weather*, and sending hurricanes into the battleground states in advance of the election to wreak havoc and make Republican governors look bad. This may sound like the ravings of a lunatic but it's important that we understand the psychology behind it and how appealing it is to many people today.

To Marjorie Taylor Greene's twisted and paranoid way of thinking, it's a relief to think that "they" are controlling the weather, because then she doesn't have to feel the tragic human story of her constituents in Georgia, or struggle with the existential problem of

the Climate Change we are causing with our insatiable lust for fossil fuels. She maintains her aggrieved and pristine innocence....she has no responsibility for any of this suffering. And here--although she doesn't know it-- we can sense the ghostlike legacy of a traumatic past. We sense it in her anger. We sense it in J.D Vance's extremism. There is only so much of the human condition that people with a trauma history can take. There is only so much Democracy that some people can take!

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

The Psychology behind Authoritarianism is a derivative of *fear* and disorganizing fear in a person's early life is a product of experiences that cannot be *felt* as part of the self. They are so painful or destabilizing that they must be dissociated, and violence is the major 'agent' of such dissociation.

During the Cold War that followed WW II, Theodore Adorno and his collaborators (1950) wanted to understand how apparently 'normal' individuals could get drawn into radical-right authoritarian movements such as the 'Red Scare' of McCarthyism and other hate movements. So they tried to uncover personality traits that made people susceptible to fascist propaganda, their so-called "F" scale. They discovered a variety of traits that did indeed incline people to authoritarian attitudes, depending on how they had been raised as children.

When the original 1000 page study first came out it rocked the academic world. But it soon fell out of favor during the post-war economic boom when democratic optimism

ran high. The election of Donald Trump changed all that and the book has been re-issued (Adorno, 2019) on its 70th anniversary with a new introduction by Peter E. Gordon, professor of history at Harvard University, who notes how timely it is and emphasizes how “extraordinarily fragile democracy is as a political form.” While the original study demonstrated high authoritarianism on both the left and the right, with a healthy middle ground, new research indicates an emotionally driven partisan divide with the highest measures of authoritarianism on the political right and a hollowed-out middle ground. One researcher (Macwilliams, 2016) discovered that authoritarianism, as measured by the F-scale was the most significant variable in differentiating Trump-supporters from those supporting other candidates in the field.

Another important effort to explore the psychological factors in the American political psyche was Richard Hofstadter’s (1964) “The Paranoid Style in American Politics.” Hofstadter notes that American politics has often been an arena for angry minds--angry outrage often gathering around extreme right-wing causes--but not only on the right. Hofstadter discovered that the paranoid style is not confined to our own country and time; it is an international phenomenon. This fact was illuminated for him by the British historian Norman Cohn (1957) whose acclaimed and distinguished work *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, described a “persistent psychic complex” made up of certain preoccupations and fantasies, including:

“the megalomaniac view of oneself (and one’s race or class) as the Elect, wholly good (innocent), abominably persecuted, yet assured of ultimate triumph; the attribution of gigantic and demonic powers to the adversary; the urge to purify the world through the annihilation of some category of human beings imagined

as agents of corruption and incarnations of evil; the refusal to accept the ineluctable limitations and imperfections of human existence, such as transience, dissention, conflict, fallibility whether intellectual or moral; the obsession with [conspiratorial] prophecies . . . systematized misinterpretations, always gross and often grotesque.” (Ibid., p. 38)

The reader of this essay will readily see the common ground between Cohn’s description and the underlying assumptions of Donald Trump’s MAGA movement. Based on Cohn’s work Hofstadter suggested that the tendency to see the world in this way “may be a persistent psychic phenomenon, more or less constantly affecting a modest minority of the population,” and that “ certain historical catastrophes or frustrations (class conflicts for example) may be conducive to the release of such psychic energies, and to situations in which they can more readily be built into mass movements.

DEFENSIVE FUNCTION OF THE AUTHORITARIAN MINDSET.

The late Paul Russell (1999, p 34ff) taught us that *all trauma is an injury to the capacity to feel*. Authoritarianism can be thought of as a defensive structure that grows up around this injury--the injury to the capacity to feel. I have been studying such an inner defensive structure for many years. It functions as an authoritarian ‘regime’ that lives in the inner world of all of us, but is inflamed and assumes extreme forms in those who have suffered severe early childhood trauma. The system helps regulate how much we are allowed to *feel* of our impossible pain, our anxiety and our fear. What I’m suggesting in this essay is that authoritarian regimes or movements in the outer world

can be thought of as externalizations--out-picturings if you will--of this inner authoritarian “system” operating behind the scenes in the citizens of a stressed culture.

Other contemporary researchers are discovering a similar inner defensive system standing behind our current cultural conflicts. A new book by Carol Gilligan and Naomi Snider, (2018) called *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?* has proposed a similar inner structure. Here’s what the authors say about it:

“Patriarchy ... has a psychological function....By requiring a sacrifice of love for the sake of hierarchy [and domination], patriarchy steels us against the vulnerability of loving [in the face of irreparable loss of relationship] and by doing so, becomes a defense against [this] loss. Emotional detachment is the inevitable result. In this light, we suggest that forces outside our awareness may be driving a politics that otherwise appears inexplicable to many people....Any dismantling of patriarchy poses a threat not simply to status and power [in the social realm], but to psychological defenses that protect us from what have become some of our deepest fears and most shameful [feelings and] desires.” (p. 9, 47)

BLAKE'S IMAGE OF THE GOOD AND EVIL ANGELS AND CHILD



Here's an image of the authoritarian structure that 'lives' in both the inner and outer worlds of trauma. It's an illustration by William Blake called the "Good and Evil Angels Fight for Possession of a Child." It hangs in the Tate Gallery in London. It's the best illustration I've found for what I call the Self-Care System (SCS). This is the system that transforms suffering into violence--and it usually does this, according to my understanding, in the name of *innocence*. That's the "child" visible in the arms of the angel on the right.

In Blake's image, we see two major archetypal 'agents' of dissociation: The **Dark Angel** on the left is Lucifer, with his unseeing eyes, reaching out for the terrified child seen fleeing into the arms of the **Bright Angel** on the right. The Dark angel would represent the vehement negative emotions of aggression, hatred, humiliation, shame and *Violence* that follow from a traumatic childhood, where normal, healthy aggression (which would otherwise be available for ego-development) has been "recruited" for defensive purposes and turned over to a dissociative system. As a personified image of extreme collective affects and thought-forms, he is the adversary, the persecutor, the voice of nihilism and contempt. Almost always a caricature of extreme 'masculinity' he attacks the vulnerable feelings represented by the inner "child" not because he 'hates' this child, but because the innocent aliveness of the child is always seeking connection, relationship and new life outside the system that he oversees and 'coordinates.' This poses a threat to his authoritarian control. The Dark angel functions like a Taliban war lord who "loves" his innocent daughters but will literally kill them if they break his rules.

Many contemporary psychoanalytic clinicians have identified an authoritarian inner object like the Dark angel in their patients' material. Michael Sebek (1996) spoke of inner *totalitarian objects* being internalized parental objects, perceived as overwhelming from the dependent position of a child; Bion (1970) spoke of a "destructive superego," an inner "god" hostile to the acquisition of emotional experience; Fairbairn (1981) described an "Internal Saboteur" attacking an innocent, regressed "libidinal ego;" Neville Symington (2001) identified this figure as the "terrible inner tyrant" lurking at the core of a narcissistic system. Anne Hallward describes an

inner “Fascist Regime” whose goal is to silence and isolate us, thereby increasing shame. These ideas represent independent discoveries of the violence of dissociation directed at the vulnerability in the psyche of trauma survivors.

Then there’s the **Bright Angel** on the right with the terrified innocent and wounded child in his/her arms. In the interpretive ‘mythology’ I have created around this image, I see this angel as the Dark angel’s “other half”--Lucifer the “light-bearer”--who remains in Heaven after the split with his/her dark brother. The Bright angel also participates in the ‘project’ of dissociation- and is a specialist in non-feeling states, but he/she uses softer methods. Often feminine in its archaic imagery, the Bright angel is a weaver of spells and illusions and stands for a kind of fusional, sentimental “love” that offers hope and solace to the wounded innocent child in the system.⁹ So if the Dark angel is *Violence*, the Bright Angel is *Illusion*. They work together in the project of *dissociation from too much painful feeling*.

“Fake News,” says the Bright angel. It never really happened. We never lost the election! Don’t believe anyone but me. Only I can fix it!”¹⁰ Donald Trump is clearly identified with the Bright Angel, but he’s a good example of how both angelic identifications can go

⁹ This hope can represent “false hope” or what Martha Stark (2004) calls “relentless hope” which would be hope sustained by illusion. However sometimes illusions are necessary for survival. The Bright angel has a genuine connection to the Spirit-world and therefore can provide crucial Spiritual support to a trauma-surviving child at times of impossible suffering. I describe many examples of how being ‘broken’ by trauma is also to be ‘broken open’ to ‘another world’ of non-ordinary reality. See Kalsched, 2013.

¹⁰ Donald Trump happens to be over six feet tall, to have dyed golden hair, and to have inherited Midas-like wealth from his father. He lives like a King in a tower with golden chandeliers and flies around in his own airplane with his name on it, believing he’s “above” the law. This gives him *charisma* that he hasn’t earned as a normal struggling human being like the rest of us down here on “middle earth.” But because a certain subgroup of the general public needs a Savior, they find themselves projecting the Bright angel onto him--blissfully unaware that the (dissociated) dark twin of this angel is a Beast, an imposter with many criminal indictments.

together in a personality who is defended by these archetypal powers of dissociation-- Beast and Savior in one. The result is a person who is delusionally narcissistic and sentimental about his own “innocence” and the “goodness” of the people who support him, while underneath, split off from his “bright” identifications, lies dark and menacing violence.

A similar split can be found historically in the psychology of authoritarian tyrants like Adolph Hitler, who killed millions of people without regret, but reportedly cried when his canary died (Langer, 1972)! That canary would be an image of childlike vulnerability--- of innocent and sentimental “love” sequestered in the unconscious of the Fuhrer--connected to his ideas of Germanic purity, perfection, and beauty, but completely split off from his own suffering or the violence directed at any threats to the purity of such innocence (the contaminating blood of Jews for instance).

The important thing to keep in mind is that the traumatically weakened ego of a person, a politician, or a nation, can restore its strength and shore up its identity by *identifying* with these archetypal powers and their resident innocent “child.” The result is immediate inflation and hubris--pathological narcissism. Donald Trump is a classic example of such identifications. The daimonic powers in the SCS automatically inflate and cohere the ego with archetypal energies that have not yet been humanized and are often the root of idealized or diabolized projections--hence the extreme polarized “positions” of our current angry politics where these two angels organize our human conflicts into archetypal battles of ‘good’ vs ‘evil;’ ‘fake news’ vs real events, etc. An

individual ego, built up through identification with the angels is incapable of holding conflict--incapable of allowing its innocent vulnerability to suffer experience.

THE SUFFERING “CHILD” IN THE SYSTEM

Finally, we have the simultaneously innocent and traumatized **Child** in Blake’s image. This ‘dual child’ is, on the one hand, the wounded empirical child of the patient’s traumatic history--carrying the injuries of abuse or neglect in his/her small body, but split off from the central ego and its conscious feeling capacities. All effective trauma therapy will involve gaining access to the pain suffered by this child and restoring it to consciousness through relationship--rescuing it from the angry or illusionary defenses that protect it and from the inherent sense of “badness” and shame that surround and contaminate it.

On the other hand, this child represents the survivor’s pre-traumatic innocence—the generative core of the personality, carrying the divine spark of vitality and the instinct for life--what I called in my first book (Kalsched, 1996) the “imperishable personal spirit” or “soul.” This is the part of the personality that Jung called the “divine child”--the precious seed of the future personality-- whose violation would be an unspeakable catastrophe--a cataclysm, complete annihilation, “soul murder.”

In fact, these two sides of the “child” in Blake’s image are always found tangled together. If the child’s developmental suffering is within a “window of tolerance” then innocence enters experience, the true self incarnates and becomes more resilient as a central ego,

and the child's growth proceeds towards 'individuation' and 'self-realization' But if the child's suffering in its early development is traumatic, then innocence escapes into the defensive system, becomes dis-incarnate, and retreats into the "spirit-world" where it is supported by violence and illusion. In mythology, this theme is represented in fairy tales as the soul being "sold to the devil."

Recall that absolute Innocence is an archetypal category like the angels--unblemished pure, pristine--total goodness. You can't be a "little bit innocent" any more than you can be a "little bit pregnant." Theoretically, absolute innocence doesn't "belong" down here on middle earth where everything is relative and contingent. It's a collective category--part of the archetypal world and the mythological canon. So if you claim innocence (like Donald Trump does in "I did nothing wrong") you're by definition, inflated.

In authoritarian systems like the Self-care system, absolute innocence is a conceit of the 'angelic' system of defense and is kept hidden or 'implicit.' And yet, the eventual suffering of our innocence (within a window of tolerance) is an essential part of all healing. Jungian analyst Helen Luke reminds us of this in the following passages from her book "The Way of Woman":

Deeply ingrained in the infantile psyche is the conscious or unconscious assumption that the cure for depression is to replace it with pleasant, happy feelings, whereas the only valid cure for any kind of depression lies in the acceptance of real suffering. "True suffering belongs to innocence, not guilt.... (Luke, 1995: 57).

[when] the innocent part of us beings to suffer, the weight [under which we have been crushed] becomes a sword. We bleed, and the energy flows back into us on a deeper and more conscious level. What is more, ... there is always an implicit universal meaning even in the carrying of small miseries. *Every time a person exchanges neurotic depression for real suffering, he or she is sharing to some small degree in the carrying of the suffering of mankind, in bearing a tiny part of the darkness of the world.* (Ibid.: 59, Italics Mine).

Inner and outer democracy, by helping the innocent parts of us to suffer reality, contributes to each person's "sharing to some small degree in carrying the suffering of mankind, in bearing a tiny part of the darkness of the world." At its best, democracy is therefore as Jung believed, an organ of consciousness- generation and, hence, a source of light in the world¹¹ even though that light only emerges after a terrible struggle between the opposites.

Authoritarianism, on the other hand, justifies its violence in the name of an absolute form of innocence which is not allowed to suffer experience and indeed becomes a rationale for violence. Absolute innocence, trapped in the system (like a fly in amber) remains implicit, idealized--reified and it becomes grotesque. Christopher Bollas¹²

¹¹ As Jung said, "We psychologists have learned through long and painful experience that [the best we can do is help a man become aware of a conscious conflict in himself] In this way, the complex becomes a focus of life....It is surely better to know that your worst enemy is right there in your own heart. *Man's warlike instincts are ineradicable...True democracy is a highly psychological institution* which takes account of human nature as it is and makes allowances for the necessity of [inner] conflict...(para 456)

R. T. McKenzie wrote an important book called "*We The Fallen People*" (2021, InterVarsity Press) in which he points out that American Democracy should not be idealized. It simply reflects who we are. And the human heart harbors both "angel" and "beast" (p. 264). Democracy will not "save" us from ourselves. Instead, we will have to save democracy from our own intolerance--from our own authoritarian tendencies.]

¹² Bollas, C. (1995) *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience*, New York: Hill and Wang, p. 200-201.

differentiated between this kind of what he called “malignant innocence” in the name of which the most violent deeds are justified, and the “generative innocence” of our essential common humanity and our shared suffering and redemption.

We see this absolute innocence--grown malignant--in the tragedy of the current Middle Eastern conflict. The Israeli people, who carry the traumatic memory of their massive innocent suffering during the Holocaust and now again after the massacre of October 7th justify their violent destruction of Gaza and the killing of over 45,000 innocent Palestinian civilians--in the name of innocence, projecting “evil” onto their Hamas perpetrators, seeking total annihilation. Here is innocence grown malignant.¹³ On the other hand, the Palestinians, claiming innocence after the mass displacement and dispossession of the Nakba in 1948 and the killing and displacement of their citizens in the West Bank, claim the right to murder and kill Israelis, supporting the extreme Hamas’ dogma of annihilating Israel altogether, denying its right to exist. Again, this is innocence--grown-malignant.

Neither side in this conflict, will allow innocence to suffer experience. This would mean acknowledging some wrong-doing--some complicity with evil and human suffering--some lack of ‘perfection.’ The same can be seen in our current American political contest. Neither party will acknowledge its role in the problems that beset the nation or the abuses of our power. Yet the people--especially young people, can see through this hubris and are literally dying for someone to show up and have the courage to

¹³ The Biden Administration is complicit in this crime against humanity, supplying the bombs used to obliterate Gaza and its people. More malignant innocence.

acknowledge their own suffering, their own guilt, and their own failure in light of America's ideals. Politicians on both sides cannot imagine this. They would rather transform this kind of necessary and transformative suffering into violence, maintaining absolute innocence.

Currently in the United States, democracy is under assault on many fronts. We live in a dark and polarizing time where partisan extremes of every stripe are shouting at one another. 390 million guns are now in the hands of American citizens protecting their "innocence." Guns are Angel weapons and we can't get enough of them--or enough ammunition to help us kill the "bad guys" who threaten our innocence and 'goodness.' David Brooks (8/7/20), described this polarization in a New York Times essay titled "Trump and the Politics of 'Mean-World.'" Mean-world thrives, says Brooks, on fear....

and perpetuates itself by exaggerating fear.... Its rhetorical ploy is catastrophizing and its tone is apocalyptic. ... The larger threat is that we're caught in a polarization cascade. Mean world fanatics--on the left and the right—are playing a mutually beneficial game.... Trumpian chaos justifies and magnifies the woke mobs on the left. Woke mobs magnify and justify Trumpian authoritarianism on the right. The upshot is the obliteration of normal politics, *the hollowing out of the center* and the degradation of public morality. Under the cover of this souped-up, screw-or-be-screwed mentality, norms are eviscerated, truth is massacred, bigotry is justified and politics turns into a struggle to culturally obliterate the other side.

In the center of this polarized struggle is a founding American principle that is being ignored. This principle, articulated in our Declaration and again, by Lincoln at

Gettysburg is that *all men and women are created equal--created in God's image*. In other words, *we are all equal because we are sacred*. Each individual person carries within him or herself, a sacred birthright—a spark of the ineffable spirit. We are all equal, in our very diversities. When these diversities and divisions threaten to divide us and split us into warring opposites, as they are right now in our country, we have to remember that we are all facets of the same crystal-- all jewels, as it were, in Indra's net. This net is called humanity. We all carry a *foundational innocence* and God-given right to be here. We cannot hold this awareness and be enemies--*no matter how badly we have been treated*. As Ghandi said, "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind."¹⁴

And yet, the forces of fear, resentment, and retribution have taken over a significant segment of the U.S. electorate and rendered them blind. The great central principle of equality and inclusion at the heart of our democracy is being hollowed out by the extremes--hollowed out by the centrifugal forces of violence and illusion.

William Butler Yeats captures this reality in the powerful images of his famous poem *The Second Coming*:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,*

¹⁴Quote attributed to Mahatma Ghandi (see Internet)

*The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.....*

W.B Yeats¹⁵

How, in the face of these centrifugal forces of the gyre can we restore what Yeats calls the “ceremony of innocence?” How can we find our way back to our common humanity and our common, universal, and redemptive suffering.

In our own American history, there are many examples of brave men and women who have resisted the centrifugal forces of authoritarianism and held the center in our time. Jon Meacham¹⁶ gives examples of this courage in his book *The Soul of America*. Abraham Lincoln, of course, is first among them, approaching his second term “with malice toward none, with charity for all...” Martin Luther King is another. These individuals did not cater to the forces of fear and division. They held the center in their own suffering bodies and souls--and they paid a terrible price for it--in Lincoln and King’s case, they were murdered by extremists who could not bear the conflict they held , or join them in their suffering of the opposites.

¹⁵ Yeats, W. B. *The Second Coming*: first published in both *The Nation* and *The Dial* in November 1920; <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43290/the-second-coming>

¹⁶ Meacham, Jon, 2018, *The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels*, New York, Random House

Late in his presidency, in 2015, after a young white supremacist had entered a Bible study group at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church and opened fire with a .45 caliber pistol, murdering nine innocent parishioners, Barack Obama met with members of the grieving congregation. As he eulogized one of the ministers, he spoke of grace. "...out of this terrible tragedy," he said, "God has visited grace upon us for he has allowed us to see where we've been blind.We may not have earned it, this grace, with our rancor and complacency and short-sightedness and fear of each other, but we got it all the same; He gave it to us anyway" (Meacham, p. 263-4). And then through his tears, Barack Obama started to sing. Into the center of this fractured congregation--into the center of our democracy--both hollowed out by hatred and extremism, parched and dry from lack of feeling, he poured a song.¹⁷

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me?
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

When I witnessed this moment and heard Barack Obama sing his song of grace,
suddenly my falcon could hear the falconer again.

Suddenly, I could cry for my Beloved Country again.

¹⁷ The author sang this himself when he gave this paper at the Presidency Conference

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

EARTH OVER WEALTH: NAPA CITIZENS TAKE ON BIG MONEY

PATRICIA DAMERY



I'm going to begin by telling you a love story that started 33 years ago when I met my late husband, Donald, who had a ranch on the western range of Napa Valley. The first time we hiked into the back reaches of his ranch, following an old trade route up the mountain, we reached a ridge and a quietly undulating meadow with enormous valley oaks, gentle giants old as the gods. That afternoon, I almost fell to my knees— the energy of that spot was and is that strong.



We built our home within this savanna and, with our neighbor, placed a deed restriction on both properties, thinking we were protecting the oak savanna into perpetuity. 98-99% of these iconic valley oaks in Napa County have been cut for development, a fate of 99% of the old-growth forests of North America. Not only do trees bind carbon and release oxygen, being one of the most important carbon sinks on the earth, they also prevent erosion and help restore groundwater.



Each day, we walked the ranch's forested ravines, oak woodlands, and vineyards. One year, we had a crisis in ripening our grapes, which got us into biodynamic organic farming. This is a crossover for me in my work as a Jungian analyst: Carl Jung and Rudolf Steiner, the father of biodynamic agriculture, shared the philosophy of Wolfgang van Goethe in working with “the living substance” or the life force of the Other, whether a plant or the human psyche.



In biodynamic farming, you dialogue with your ranch's plants, soils, animals, and climate. Through that dialogue, you learn what is needed, and then you work to supply that. You work not only with the materiality of the plants, being a good farmer, using compost, weeding, etc., but also with solar and earth forces to support the *living substance* of the plant. Not only is the plant impacted, but you are as well. You have promised Earth— Gaia— to support her. Returning to conventional, chemical ways of fertilizing or weed and pest control is a betrayal of the *living substance* of life.



Through these practices, I became wedded to the ranch, my awe of the oaks embroidered with a foot-on-the-ground knowledge of the vines, the oak woodlands, and the wildflowers that begin their parade of bloom in early January, ending with the esoteric blooms of soap root as grasses yellow in June. For 16 years, I drank beauty as if it were milk.



And then, the inevitable happened. After the 2008 economic downturn, our neighbor sold his land. The couple who bought it had dreams of a winery. They explained that the oak savanna was “a great place for a great cab” and immediately cut every young oak within the savanna on their side of the property line.



I won't go into the initial shock, which bled into a depression. When I walked the land, my feet hurt. I was beyond tears. It was as if the fate of the earth rested in that oak savanna. When I finally consulted my healer, he explained that the land spoke to me through my feet. Although the earth did not have words, I did. My job was to use my words about the pain this piece of earth expressed. The earth upon which I thrived.

For a long while, it was just too painful to anticipate the planting of this savanna, which, fourteen years later, has not yet occurred, in large part because neighbors stayed on board, appealing to the State Waterboard and to California Fish and Wildlife when the County looked the other way. There is danger in pulling back from the pain. Grief for the changes we humans have wrought upon our earth is a portal to a consciousness that permeates all. It is hubris to believe that our human consciousness is more developed than that of Gaia's. We need resonance with Gaia's consciousness to survive the

significant changes our ignorance has caused. If we can humble ourselves to recognize that we, too, carry sparks connecting us to this internet of consciousness and act accordingly, there may be hope.

As I accepted and felt the enormity of the grief, the pain in my feet guided me to others in our little valley who were also addressing the issues of land use, water resources, and fire, essentially acknowledging the rights of nature, and the damage to those upon whose backs the wealth of the few stands. As forester Aldo Leopoldo held some 80 years ago, we cannot heal our relationship with the earth without healing our relationships with each other, and conversely, we cannot heal our relationships with each other without healing our relationship with the earth. He wrote that we need a land ethic that views humans as citizens of a community of interdependent parts.

I want to talk about environmental literacy, which is a result of this land ethic. It marries scientific knowledge with emotional and spiritual intelligence. In this consciousness, we know we are only a tiny, interconnected part of the whole. Heightened awareness is wed with the intellect. For our purposes today, I will not go further here, but having government officials with some modicum of environmental literacy is crucial to our survival.

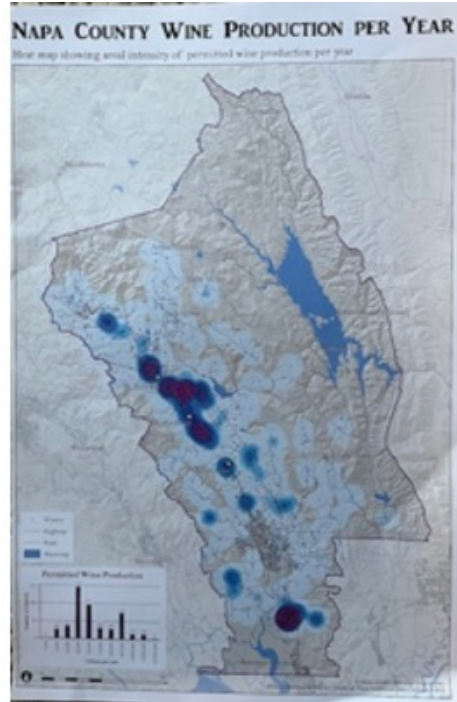
Our aim in Napa County is to elect officials whose center of gravity is with the planet and who acknowledge the severity of climate chaos. In her book *Active Hope*¹, Joanna

¹ Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power*, revised edition. New World Library, Novato, CA, 2012, 2022.

Macy describes this shift as *The Great Turning*, from business as usual, which assumes that if it doesn't make financial sense, it doesn't make sense, to accepting our humble place in the whole, which almost always involves a sacrifice of personal agendas.



"Yes, the planet got destroyed. But for a beautiful moment in time we created a lot of value for shareholders."



We are suffering The Great Turning in Napa County. Since the Paris blind tasting of wine in 1976, Napa Valley has been placed on the global map. The county is unique in that, since 1968, zoning ordinances have protected the valley floor (the Ag Preserve) and the hillsides that line either side of the valley (Ag Watershed Open Space) from urban sprawl. After the valley was planted out, those looking for vineyard land have been forced into the fragile, wooded Ag Watershed Open Space lands.

Land prices have escalated. International and large family-owned corporations are acquiring small family-owned wineries as the winemakers age. Then there are the wealthy, such as our neighbors, who can pour unlimited cash into their “dream” of a Napa Valley vineyard. Too often, the needs of the land are off their radar. This is a significant divergence from the original farmers and small winemakers of days old who more often knew that growing healthy vines was the first step and revered protecting the environment.

Armed with the knowledge given to me by my healer that I needed to use my voice for the savanna, I joined our neighbors in protesting the extent of the next-door project. I learned others also challenged several projects and began researching who was involved. Since 2010, the Winery Definition Ordinance (WDO) has allowed direct marketing as an accessory use of agriculture in our Ag Preserve and Ag Watershed lands. Now, wine tasting and large marketing events are considered “agriculture.” The unintended consequence is the commercialization of residential and agricultural neighborhoods and increased traffic into our remote, fire-prone mountainous regions. In the last seven years, 60% of Napa County has burned.



Through emails, I was introduced to Dan, a retired executive in the pharmaceutical business. Dan was a hub of information about who was doing what. He warned that wine industry groups were out in force with their lobbyists and attorneys. His leadership skills organized the coalescing of forces of citizen groups.



On Tuesday, January 20, 2015, he called a meeting in a rented room at the Napa Marriott. We expected twenty people, but fifty arrived. Various citizen groups were represented, including newly organized nonprofits, Defenders of the East Napa Watersheds, which was protesting a 2000-acre Walt Ranch project that initially proposed cutting 28,000 old-growth oaks, and Protect Rural Napa, which was protesting Mountain Peak Winery, a large winery application at the end of a 6 1/2-mile narrow dead-end road. In several places, an exiting vehicle could not pass a firetruck, something sadly proven two years later.



Several groups from up and down the valley had hired experts and attorneys to address the burgeoning number of wineries creeping into the hillsides and our county's lack of code enforcement. Many in the room had worked tirelessly to preserve the natural environment. Many, like Dan, retired from successful careers in various professions and now donated their honed skills to benefit the common good. The *highest and best use* of elders!



As we sat around a large assemblage of tables, representatives from each group gave a brief account of their interests and actions. Seasoned land-use advocates, including Ginnie Sims, the first woman to serve on the Board of Supervisors in the late 1960s, imparted their wisdom: *“We must be fact-based. Do not presume the other side, whichever side that is, is the enemy! Find common ground. Do not make enemies here.”*



The high energy in the room coalesced into a steering committee composed of members from each group—the beginnings of the coalition *Napa Vision 2050*.



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We met with Supervisors and Commissioners, attended meetings, educated ourselves, and picketed projects that degrade the environment.





Groups offered each other help and guidance and held public meetings.





Some in the wine industry sought to discredit us, calling us greyhairs. A British newsletter recently called us a small fringe group of eco-terrorists. (Who knew we were so threatening?) However, we are not a discrete entity; we are mycelium!

So, the Great Turning in Napa County has been rough, but while we have had some bitter losses, we have also had notable, growing successes. I want to delineate some of both.

First, a bitter loss: Because of this creep of projects into the mountainous watersheds, in 2018, we worked to place a citizen initiative on the ballot that would have protected the watersheds by limiting the number of trees that could be cut. Shockingly, one supervisor

of the Board found an obscure way to prevent citizens from voting on the measure. This necessitated doing it all again: getting the required signatures, canvassing neighborhoods, and educating the public about the importance of limiting deforestation of our watersheds and our water resources.



This time, it made it on the ballot as Measure C.



Still, after the wine industry and the Farm Bureau poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into its defeat, even lying to the public about the measure's impact, including claiming that the measure would cause more trees to be cut and would increase traffic! - it lost by 1 1/2 percent.

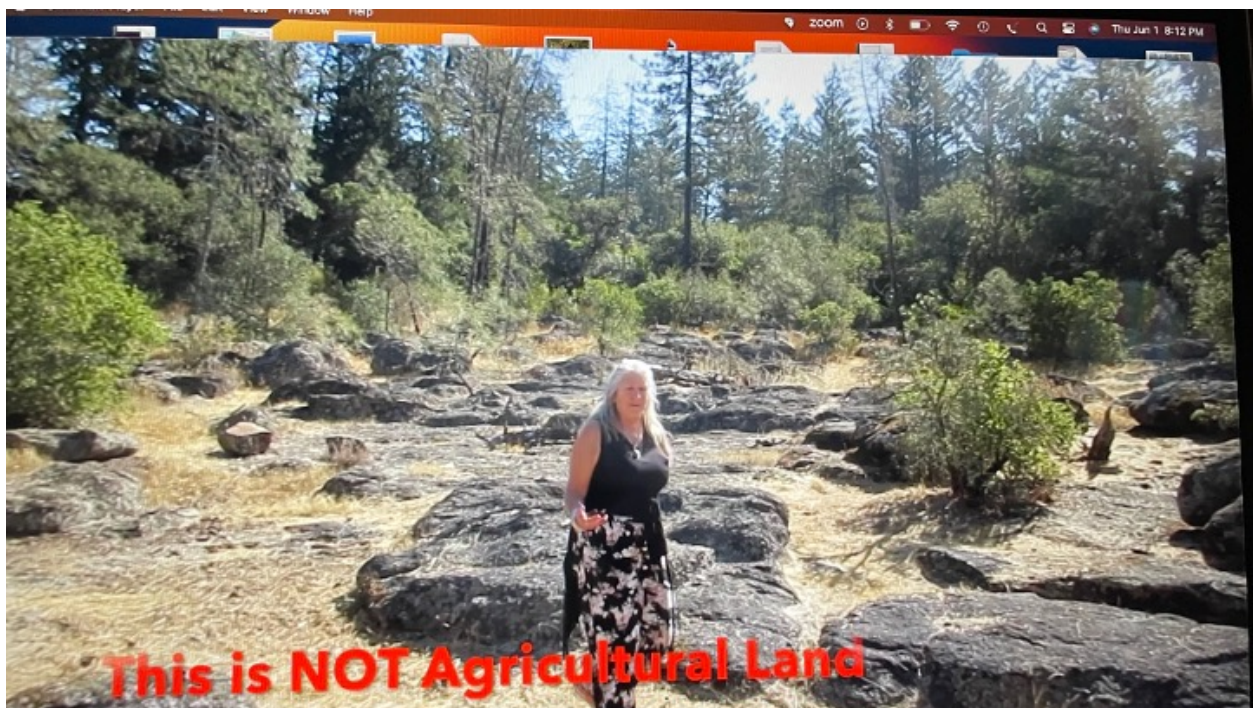
The wine industry's wealth--which, let's be clear, is the wealth of a very few--afforded tons of money to defeat anything they wanted for a while, but slowly, their influence has eroded.



Over the last three years, we citizens have elected five women to the Board of Supervisors, the last two to be seated in January 2025, all with at least some modicum of environmental literacy. And through appeals and court action, and hundreds of thousands of citizen dollars, we citizens have stopped two of the most egregious projects, Walt Ranch and Mountain Peak Winery. Because of court action, the projects had to be gradually pared down until they were no longer profitable enough. The owners of Walt Ranch donated and sold the 2000-plus acres to the Napa County Land Trust. The fragile watershed land is now protected. Mountain Peak lands are up for sale; the owners do not want to spend more years and money on a court-ordered environmental

impact report. While the lands were saved from development in both cases, it was not because our county government showed any environmental literacy. It was quite the opposite. We citizens had to sue the county on both projects.

But after the recent election of two of the new seated supervisors whom we worked hard to elect against the pressure of a panicking wine industry and the careful meetings with a third supervisor, this year we have had two wins of the Great Turning: two projects turned down for the first time for environmental reasons.



The first project was in the headwaters of Conn Creek, which feeds the City of Napa's main municipal reservoir. The proposed project was also on a major wildlife corridor. Supervisors cited fourteen conservation regulations already in place that protected this land.

The second is a winery application on a substandard road that does not meet Title 14 state minimum fire-safe regulations. In several areas, a fire truck cannot pass an exiting vehicle. The area is a designated very high fire zone and has burned three times in the last seven years. However, and this is what we have to accept in activism, although the Planning Commission denied the application for fire safety reasons, as I was writing this paper, the Board upheld the appeal by the applicants, who proposed widening part of the road. This, too, is being challenged in Napa County Superior Court by citizens at great expense. It is never a done deal!

Through our investigative efforts and reporting, the Department of Justice has opened investigations into the behavior, decisions, and connections of one County Supervisor and 40 other winery elite, including the Napa County Farm Bureau and our county government, all ongoing.



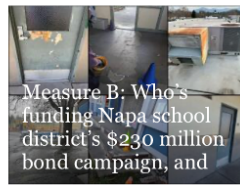
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Enter to Learn. Leave to Serve: Educational Excellence for...
BY JUSTIN-SIENA HIGH



Still trailing state, math scores rise as English scores fall for most Napa Valley



Measure B: Who's funding Napa school district's \$230 million bond campaign, and



Rancho Cotate, Vintage among winners in girls golf



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Newly surfaced documents detail previously downplayed extent of contamination, hazards at Napa County landfill

Recently surfaced public records describe incinerated infrastructure and severe damage to streambeds and waterways, along with uncertainty about corrective efforts. | 3

In August of this year, the FBI raided the office of the Upper Valley Waste Management Agency after years of complaints about workers and waterways contaminated by toxic leachate. On September 18, 2024, the facility finally announced its intent to close the facility by the end of the year. These several investigations occurred only because citizens investigated and confronted the county government. Three citizens who did frontline work have moved from the county for fear of retribution. On a much lessor scale, I was blackballed from the Napa County Farm Bureau after being a member for over thirty years.



Significant change begins at a grassroots level and is sustained by hard work fueled by love of each other and the earth. As New York Times commentator David Brooks wrote, only well-governed people have the luxury of not caring about politics.² Even then, it's risky.

There is so much more to tell you, but time doesn't allow. But as I end, I want to talk about what this work in Napa County has to do with the upcoming presidential election. We all know that democracy is at stake. History tells us that democracy is almost always at stake. Democracy involves equality. Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians ...We all have the right to the circumstances that make life flourish. But the right to life of all of us is inseparable from the rights of nature and nonhuman beings: the oaks, the watersheds,

² David Brooks, "Joint Venture Silicon Valley: State of the Valley," KQED Public Radio, March 29, 2017, <http://www.kqed.org/a/radiospecials/>

coyotes, and soap root, all of which need our voices to ensure our mutual continuance on this earth.

We can't lose heart. This is an auspicious time, as scary as it is. It has never been more important to find what you love on earth and to put everything you have into protecting it. To find people to work with whom you come to love. May that work also be play: One of my favorite fundraisers with Napa Vision was a dinner held on a beautiful estate on Soda Canyon Road, the road which lead to Mountain Peak Winery. To the guests' shock and delight, we auctioned off manure-- \$4000 of bullshit, horseshit, and chicken shit. The auctioneer, one of our retired attorneys, described each pile in some of the best vernacular used for wine. The next night and the following week, 85% of the structures burned on Soda Canyon Road, and people had to be evacuated by helicopter.

Play sustains us for the long distances. After all, we will be at this for a long time, way past this election, regardless of who wins!



Becoming more conscious of our place in the larger order is the work of our times.

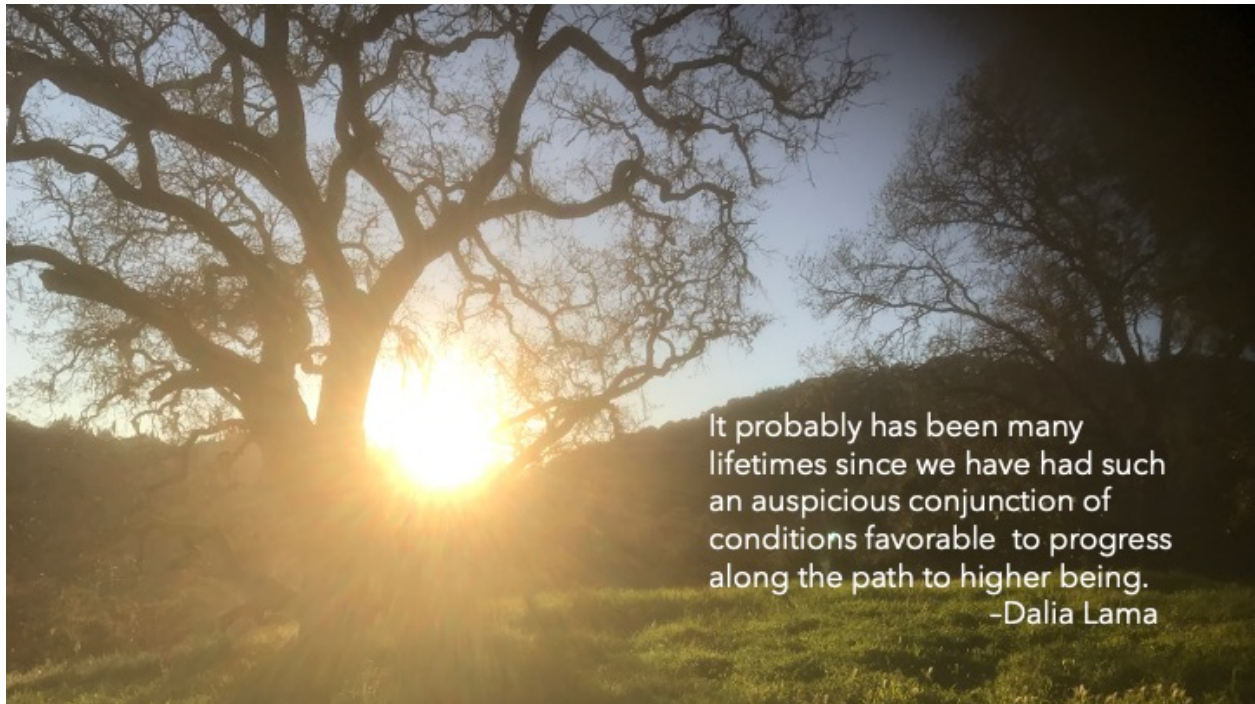
When I was a candidate, my control analyst, Don Sandner, told me that our job as analysts is to assist the circular movement around the center, the Self, when working with an analysand, that circular movement being the development of witness and acceptance, witness and acceptance. Then, when the time is right, and goddess willing, lightning strikes, and change occurs.

.

That is where we are collectively. We are working to come online about our place on the planet and with each other—a collective ego’s relationship to the collective Gaia Self. Political work needs to serve this end. We have to do everything in our power to protect and promote our planet's health and elect those who implement democratic processes that support all rights, including those of nature. We have to do this over and over,

election after election, accepting losses and gains are all a part of it. Maybe the fact it is never a done deal defines our common ground.

But we also must let go of outcome. Otherwise, we'll go nuts! Change comes from some mysterious place, some larger order, when it comes. Remember the lightning strike.



Remember the Dalai Lama's statement: "It probably has been many lifetimes since we have had such an auspicious conjunction of conditions favorable to progress along the path to higher being."³ We are in that auspicious time.

Of course, there are no guarantees this presidential election will go well. It is dire. If Republicans win, I fear for the rights of all, including the earth.

³ David Michie. *Buddhism for Busy People: Finding Happiness in an Uncertain World*. Allen And Unwin, 2007.



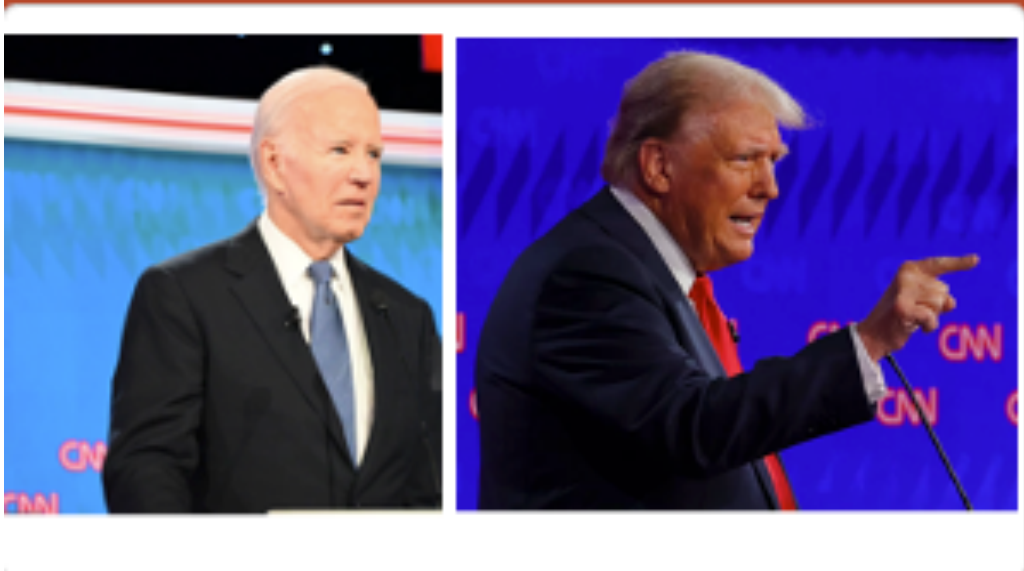
I have had to accept that we may not make it as a species. But we can try. That's our job: to try. We can do that.

CHAPTER TWELVE

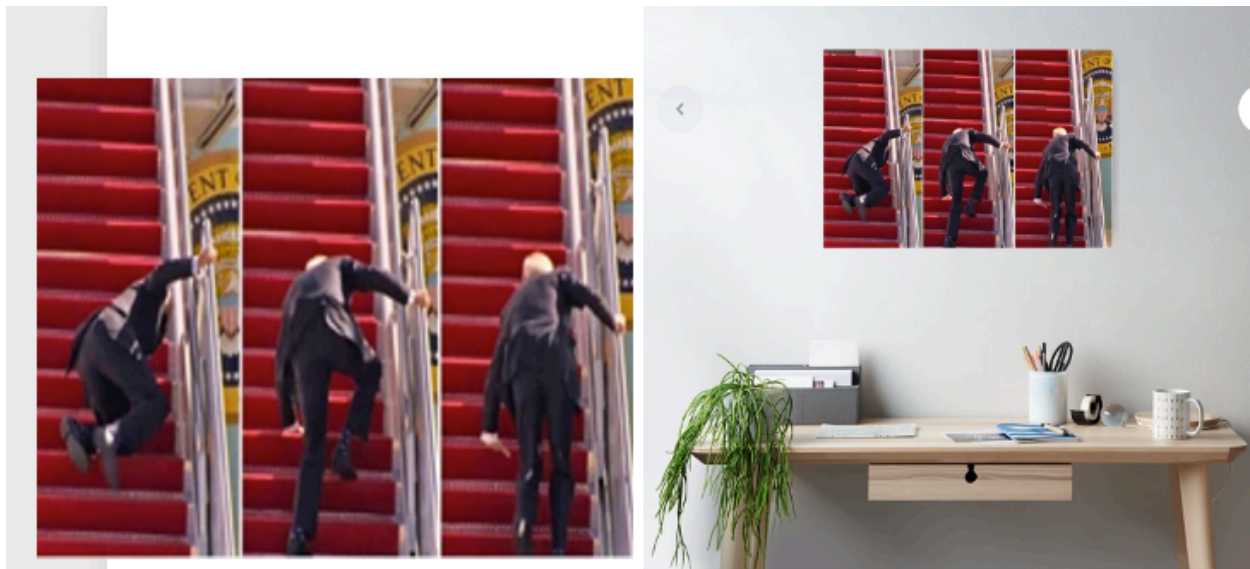
AGE AND RAGE: PERFORMATIVE ENERGY IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

BETTY SUE FLOWERS

Note: This is a rough approximation of the lecture I gave at the 2024 Presidency Conference, not a paper that was ever intended to be read. Please treat it as notes accompanying the images.



Age and Rage—it's clear to see which is which. And this was my original starting point when we designed this conference because at that time, the race was a Biden-Trump contest.



Biden's shuffle and tripping is the result of a foot injury, not just old age. It doesn't matter, though. We have herd instincts and will quickly desert a maimed leader to cover behind one performing strength.



Rage just has more energy in it. Former President Bill Clinton once said that Americans prefer “strong and wrong” over “weak and right.”

Trump isn't that much younger than Biden. But he is *performatively* much younger.



He *performs* the appearance of health: hair + tan=youth, which counts more than not being overweight and riding bicycles—or you can just tweet a preferred image. At the beginning of the campaign, Trump presented himself as the virile hero versus the weak senex, Biden. Trump was healthy not because he exercised and watched his weight, like Biden, but because he was naturally strong – he was born that way. The media could point out the fake tan, the dyed hair, the make-up, the corset, the heel lifts, the extra weight – but none of that mattered because his followers recognized the archetype of the hero, no matter how it was created. He was *performing* youth. When Trump retweeted an image of himself photoshopped onto the body of the movie hero “Rocky,” he knew his followers wouldn’t laugh. They would understand that he was *performing* the role of the

hero. Reporters then found themselves critics of a reality tv show, fatally captured by the hero myth even as they deplored it.

And then along came Kamala. And I thought she had a chance of winning when I hadn't been so sure that Hillary could win in 2016.

So I shifted my focus from “age and rage” to my subtitle, “performative energy in presidential politics,” in order to answer the question: why, when Hillary would have a hard time winning, as I maintained in 2016, might Kamala have a chance? Obviously, there are many political reasons—but I wanted to look at this question from a mythological, archetypal, literary point of view.

The Myths That Have Made Us

-- Betty Sue Flowers

	Hero	Religious	Enlightenment (Democratic / Scientific)	Economic	Ecological (emerging)
Ideal	Excellence	Goodness	Truth	Growth	Health (Wholeness)
Behavior	Competition	Obedience	Reason	Maximizing advantage	Communication
Actors	Heroes	Saints Prophets	Philosophers Scientists	Consumers Business	Creators
Communication	Stories	Scripture Prayer	Mathematics Logical arguments	Images Numbers Data	Self- expression

Here's the background thinking to what I'm going to say, which many of you have seen before. It is a matrix depicting the myths that have created our culture in the West. By "myths," I don't mean something untrue—I'm referring to the large narratives, largely below consciousness, that operate as an agreed-upon story of reality. These are organized historically from when they arose, but they all exist now. However, we're currently in the economic myth—the first truly global myth.

When I spoke in 2016, I said there were three interconnected reasons Hillary would have a hard time winning a national presidential race.

First, in large-scale politics persona matters more than character. If character doesn't matter so much, the authentic liar is preferred to a hypocritical one, no matter what the number of lies might be. The public wants an authentic persona, not one striving to convey good character. Trump is an authentic liar. We know him for who he is. What you see is what you get. The content of the behavior doesn't matter to his base. He keeps proving over and over again that he could shoot someone on 5th Avenue and get away with it. Paradoxically, in our persona culture, Trump is more authentic than Hillary.



Athena on the Great Seal of California



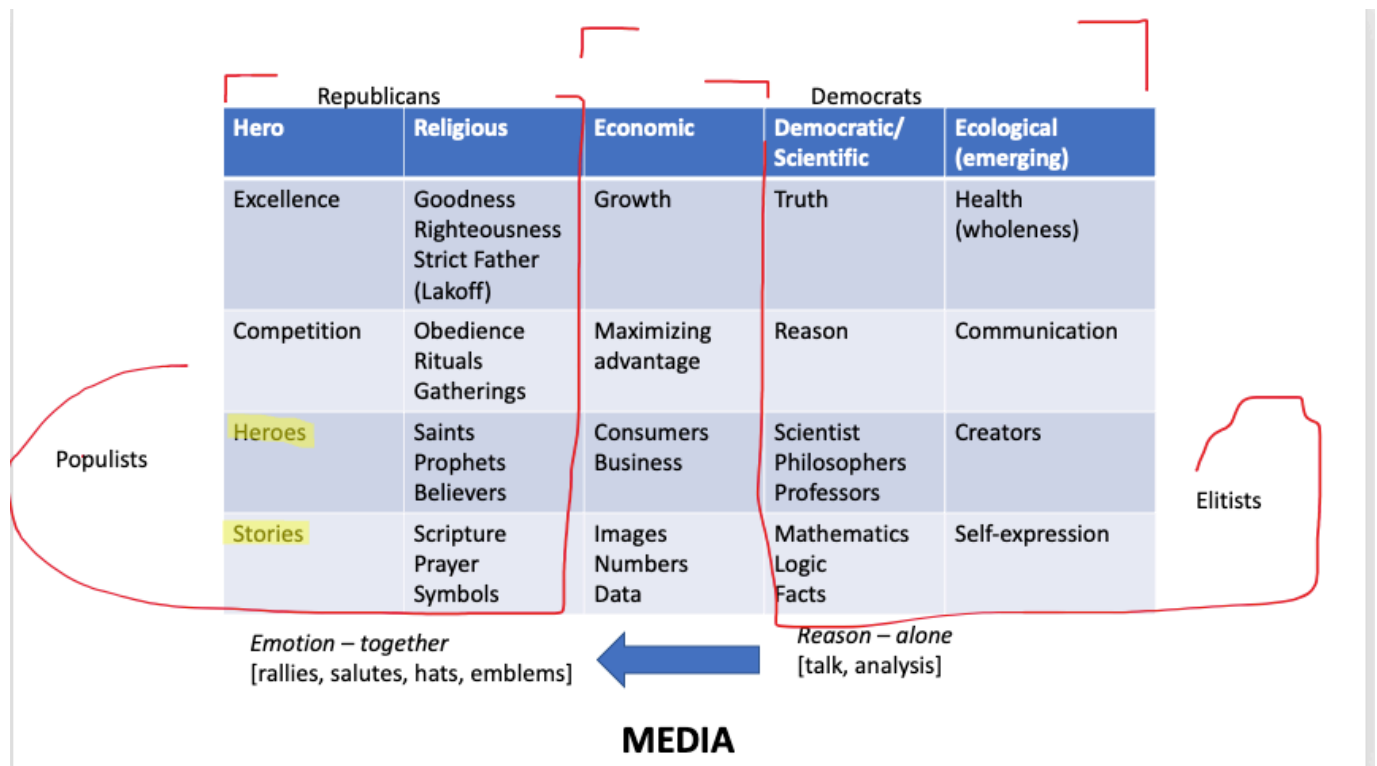
Second, Hillary was running as a woman, and in presidential elections, the hero myth is more important than the democratic myth. On the most obvious level, the hero myth is an obstacle to any woman wishing to assume political leadership. The archetypal activity of the hero is competition, particularly in battle. The hero leaves home to go to war or to fight a dragon. Then he returns home with trophies and a story of his adventure.

In the context of the hero myth, women have to construct a three-layered persona: Look at Joan of Arc and Elizabeth the first. They both rode out in the hero's armor (first level), but acknowledged the reality of being a woman (second level); the third level of the three-layered persona consists of the acknowledgement of a source of authority beyond themselves. For Elizabeth, it was the line of English kings, chosen by God; for

Joan of Arc, it was God Himself; alas, for Hillary, the source of authority beyond herself was seen as Bill Clinton.

Finally, Hillary was a small “d” democrat. And democrats are elitist.

Let’s go back to the myth matrix, slightly rearranged. Just take a look at this, and I think you can see what I’m trying to get across.



The democratic myth is elitist because while numbers and philosophical arguments are universal, they are not available to everyone. Few of us can “do” math or science.

How Elitists
talk to
Populists

Stop asking candidates if
they “believe in” climate
change and start asking
if they understand it.

It’s science,
not Santa Claus.

@TheValorieClark

So, what has led me to conclude that Kamala could win where Hillary would have a harder time? The short answer? The context has changed. Political battles are no longer competitions between fighters but competing entertainments. If politics is no longer a *battle* for the presidency but a *performance*, well, women have long been portrayed on the stage even before they were actually allowed to *be* on the stage. Very few women have fought for power in armor on the back of a horse, but they have long been stars on the stage. The context has changed from two gladiators fighting to the Roman circus itself. Entertainment.

Trump and the Fun Factor

How his legal challenges play into his reputation as an entertainer.



Here's a headline I saw recently. It points to the fact that Trump has a quality of energy that's very helpful to him – the energy of the id. Imagine two actors walking onto the stage: one projects the quality of energy of a parent or superego; the other projects the quality or energy of a child, or id. Which one will compel our attention? Which one is entertainingly unpredictable? When you go to a playground, do you watch the parents? Of course not. It's the children who are fun to watch. They get the ratings and the likes. Do they have a plan? Of course not. They are in the moment. They are entertaining.

So, let's take a closer look at presidential politics in a Las Vegas context.



Kamala has been entertaining and much to Trump's consternation has drawn larger crowds and bigger celebrity endorsements. In an entertainment context, "weird" is more powerful than "dangerous." Kamala dances.

Her followers make fun of JD Vance with numerous cat and couch memes.



In short, the Kamala show is *much* more entertaining than the Biden show was—and more entertaining, by far, than the Hillary show.



One of her fans said that Kamala should go on TV and look straight into the camera in a dead serious manner and say that what JD Vance does in his living room is his own business and she will fight for the rights of consenting adults to do whatever they want with their own furniture.

During the Harris-Trump Presidential debate, Trump became so upset when Harris said that people were walking out of his rallies because they were getting bored with the same old show that he went completely off script to claim that immigrants to Springfield were eating the cats and dogs of the people who live there—which, of course, provided more entertainment material for the Democrats.



What does it mean for presidential politics when the democratic context moves from Independence Hall to Las Vegas? In an entertainment world, people don't debate their positions, they compete for money and likes.





USA Today

<https://www.usatoday.com> > news > elections > 2024/10/29

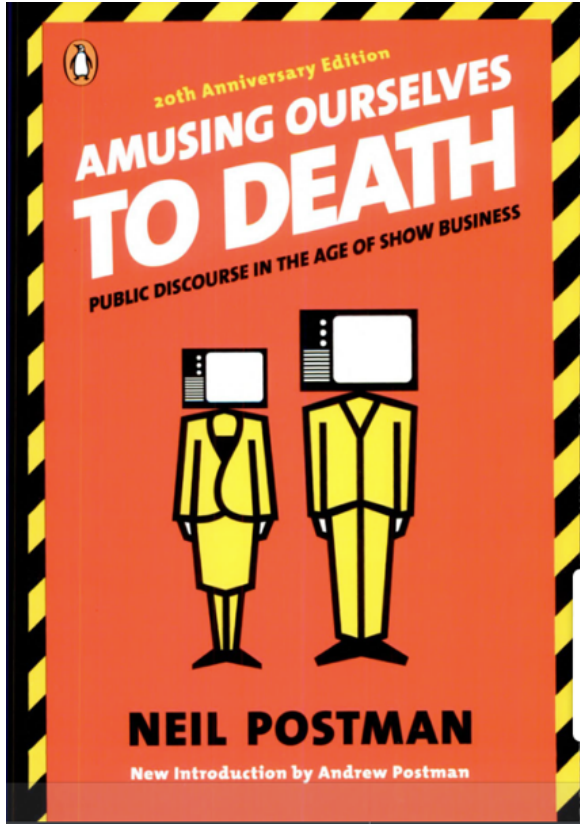
Kamala Harris campaign ad takes over Las Vegas Sphere

20 hours ago — It's reportedly the first time a political campaign has taken over the prominent Nevada entertainment destination.

Missing: [image](#) | Show results with: [image](#)



In 1985, Neil Postman published a very prescient book whose thesis was that Orwell's dystopian *1984*, with its fascistic dictatorship and “doublethink” instead of the truth was wrong. It was Huxley's *Brave New World* that was the true predictor of the future. Huxley argued that we would be controlled by pleasure—we simply wouldn't care about the truth. (Neither Postman nor anyone else could have predicted that Huxley and Orwell could both be true during the same election.)



In his book, Postman claims that “the fundamental metaphor for political discourse is the television commercial”—an ad. The law requires that sellers must tell the truth about their products. But “by substituting *images* for claims, the pictorial commercial makes emotional appeal, not tests of truth the basis of consumer decisions.” An ad “is not a series of testably, logically ordered assertions” You can like or dislike an ad—but you can’t refute it. . . . “The television commercial has oriented business away from making

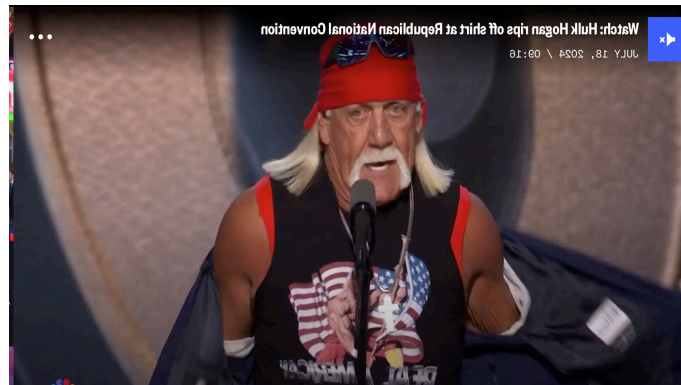
products of value and toward making consumers feel valuable, which means that the business of business has now become pseudo-therapy. The consumer is a patient assured by psycho-dramas.” Postman also quoted Marshall’s McLuhan’s famous adage, “The medium is the message.”

If we look at the myth matrix again from the point of view of this quote, we can see a profound shift from the democratic myth and its emphasis on print to the economic myth, and its emphasis on numbers and images.

	Hero	Religious	Enlightenment (Democratic / Scientific)	Economic	Ecological (emerging)
Ideal	Excellence	Goodness	Truth	Growth	Health (Wholeness)
Behavior	Competition	Obedience	Reason	Maximizing advantage	Communication
Actors	Heroes	Saints Prophets	Philosophers Scientists	Consumers Business	Creators
Communication	Stories Medium= oral	Scripture Prayer Oral to print	Mathematics Logical Arguments Print	Images Numbers Data TV ads	Self- Expression Social media entertainment

Josh Marshall recently drew attention to performance-minded Republicans' advantage in presidential elections when he said "Democrats, really focused on governance, often get hung up on the libretto of a campaign when what really drives it forward is the score" [<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/edblog/some-thoughts-on-the-harris-momentum-shift>].

But there are grave dangers in attending to the entertaining tune and not the policy arguments.



In the Republican convention a keynote speaker was a star of the WWE—World Wrestling Entertainment. He did a kind of machismo-style strip tease featuring an American flag shirt under which was a Trump shirt. So what was this about? Why is Hulk Hogan such a powerful symbol of this changed context?

The answer? *Kayfabe*. “*Kayfabe* is a shorthand term that involves acknowledging the staged, scripted nature of professional wrestling as opposed to a competitive sport, despite being presented as authentic” (Wikipedia). The world of professional wrestling, like Trump’s reality tv show, *The Apprentice*, rests on the idea of “kayfabe.” AI told me that kayfabe is an unspoken contract between wrestlers and spectators, where the wrestlers present something fake as real and the spectators experience genuine emotion. Wrestlers have a code for staying in character, and breaking kayfabe is forbidden. "Kayfabe" is thought to have originated as carny slang for "protecting the secrets of the business." The term "kayfabe" itself may ultimately originate from the Pig Latin form of "fake" ("ake-fay"). (Also see Heather Cox Richardson, https://open.substack.com/pub/heathercoxrichardson/p/july-19-2024?r=5g8ii&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email.)

What does *kayfabe* do to epistemology (how we know the truth)? In a politics of entertainment, energy is strength, and it’s also fun. Fun is a feeling. Feeling is truth.



So, we know these images aren't true in any literal sense—but if you were a Christian nationalist Trump supporter, you might *feel* their truth. It's *kayfabe*—where something fake is presented as real, and the spectators experience genuine emotion.



itsmarlamaples





Of course, Trump being Trump, there's also a grift.



Roll over image to zoom in



Trump and Jesus Praying Poster Painting Canvas Wall Art Living Room Bedroom Decor Modern Oil Painting (Framed, 12x18inch)

Brand: DesPol

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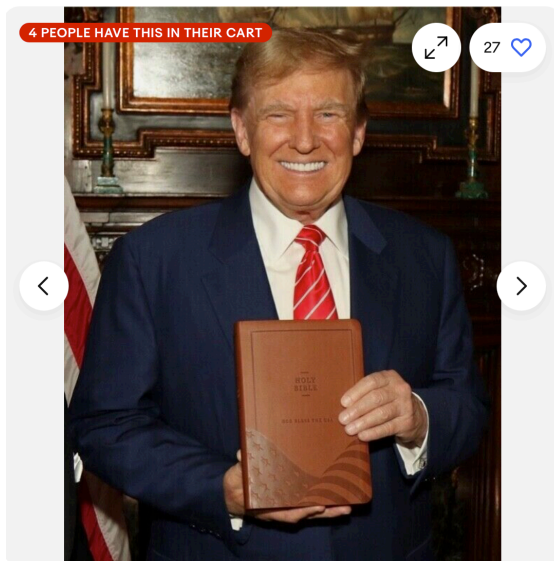
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God Bless The USA Bible President Donald Trump Bible Lee Greenwood MAGA

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US \$99.99

Approximately C \$136.88

Condition: **New** ⓘ

Quantity: More than 10 available · 50 sold

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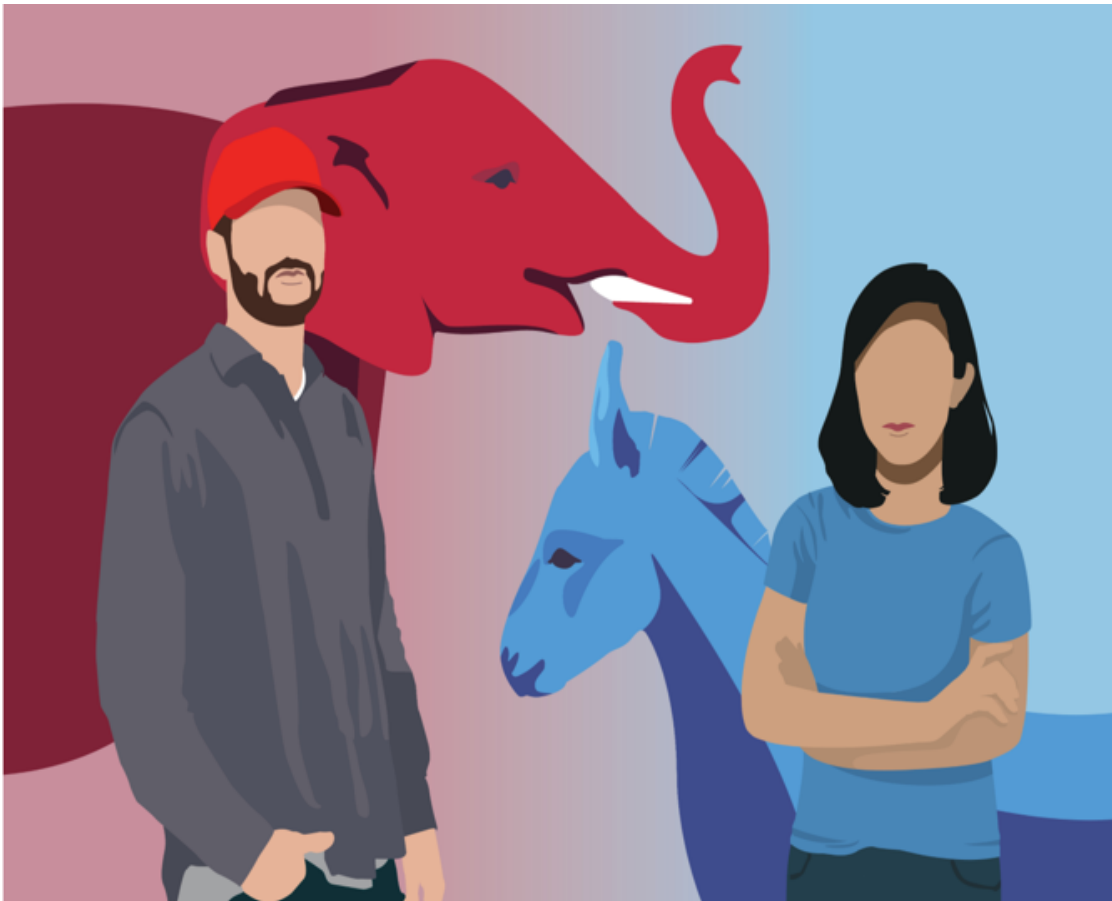
[♥ Add to watchlist](#)

This one's trending. 50 have already sold.

Trump's Bible is the only Bible that met the standards of the Bible that the Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction required each classroom in the state to own—all 55,000 of them. If my calculations are right, that would be about 5 1/2 million in profit

for Trump. I read recently that the standards have been amended to allow other Bible editions to qualify.

So what now? Even with Kamala managing to do well in this entertainment context, there are four big unknowns in the race.

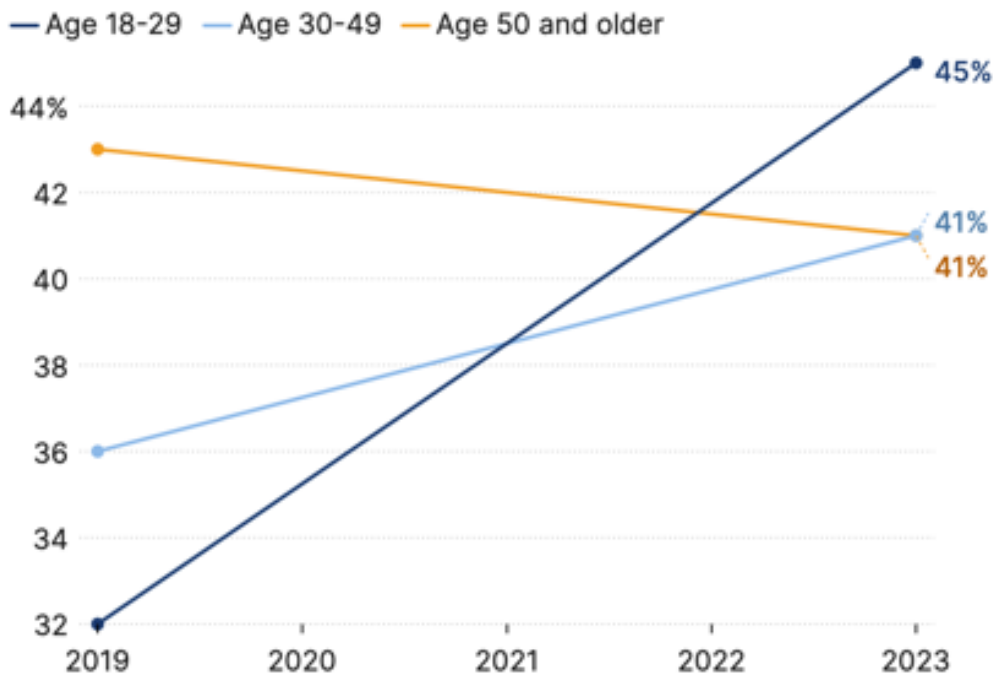


First, there is a growing gender gap among America's youngest adults. Young women are the strongest advocates for gender equality and demonstrate the greatest fear about the erosion of their rights. A majority of young women identify as feminist, but relatively few young men do, a remarkable change over the past four years. In the 2024 presidential election, the gender divide among young voters is twice as large as it is

overall. A majority of young female voters back Vice President Kamala Harris, compared with less than half of young male voters.

Nearly half of young men in the U.S. say men face discrimination

Percentage of men who say there is some or a lot of discrimination against men in American society



A quarter of young black men say they are going to vote for Trump. Obama recently said, “Part of it makes me think that, well, you just aren’t feeling the idea of having a woman as president, and you’re coming up with other alternatives and other reasons for that,” he said. “You’re coming up with all kinds of reasons and excuses. I’ve got a problem with that.”

But while Obama may be right, I think the situation is different from the time of Hillary. It’s not just that Kamala is a woman, and that abortion is a big issue in this election, but

that men are losing their place in the world. There are now 2.4 million more female than male undergraduates on U.S. campuses. And American factory workers have lost their jobs and sometimes their houses to the financial guys on the east coast and the tech bros on the west coast. Speaking of those tech bros: many of them are immigrants.

So American working men may be right to feel they've lost their status because of immigration—but it's not because of the poor families from Honduras, huddling at the border, but as a result of the brilliant inventions of west coast entrepreneurs like the South African born Elon Musk or the German-born Peter Thiel, or the Russian born co-founder of Google, Sergey Brin.

55% of America's startup companies valued at \$1 billion or more had at least one immigrant founder. Nearly two-thirds (64%) were founded or cofounded by immigrants or the children of immigrants. And AI, which will transform our future? Immigrants have founded or co-founded nearly two-thirds of the top AI companies in the US.



Amazon.com: AmazingLife Concealed Carry Holy Bible Gun Case ...

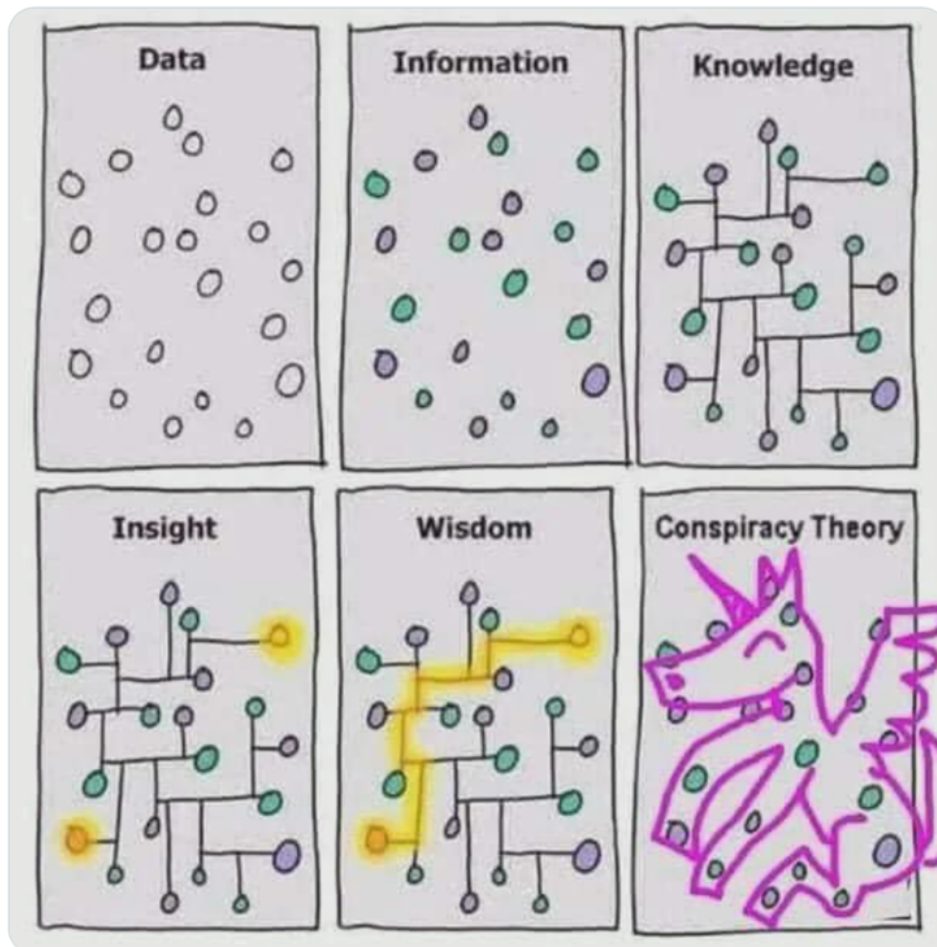
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If the first unknown had to do with age, the second has to do with rage. A former Evangelical preacher showed a zippered hidden carry Bible cover at a conference I attended a couple of weeks ago. I wondered how easily available they might be, so I went on Amazon. This is what I found: \$29.99, Glock not included.

The combination of followers acting within the religious myth (adherence to belief without question) to support a demagogue willing to perform the role of messianic hero, and storytellers (the media) captured within the hero myth as a way to boost readers and ratings within the economic myth we live in is a “clear and present danger” to democracy. Recognizing the powerful interactions of these cultural myths is a first step away from being entrapped by them.

My third unknown: Who are the storytellers and what are the effects of their stories?



There are two types. The first consists of the 1001 social media storytellers that make it harder than ever to sort the data into facts versus misinformation—which then leads to the difficulty of trying to make sense of the firehose of information. We don't trust experts enough to move from knowledge to insight. And how do we find the needle of wisdom in all this straw? Meanwhile, individual storytellers are connecting the dots into constellations of conspiracy theories.

The second type of storyteller is usually a powerful or rich man, introducing a compelling new—although actually, old—story of individual freedom versus democratic obstructions.



Incumbent
Javier Milei
since 10 December 2023

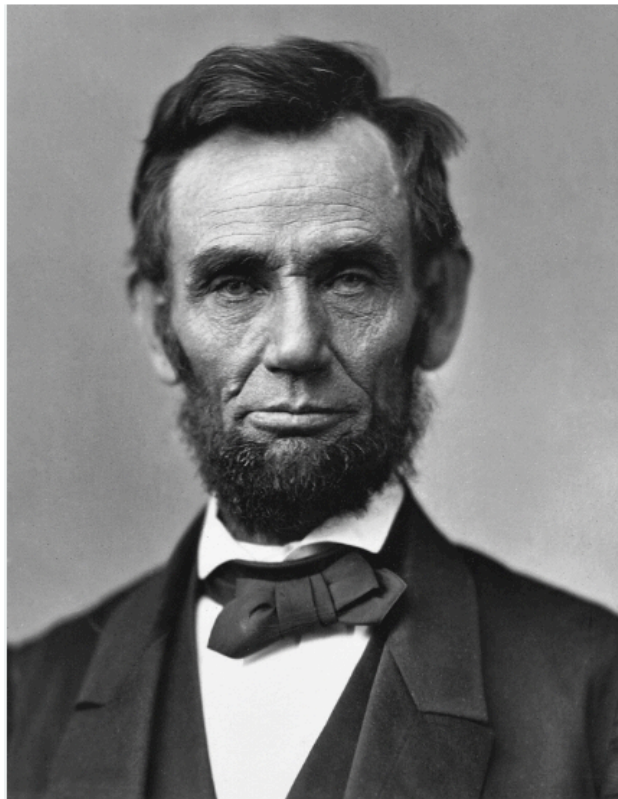
"I think the State is the enemy, I think the State is a criminal association."
President of Argentina

"Freedom and democracy are not compatible."
*Peter Thiel, tech billionaire supporter
of Trump and sponsor of J.D. Vance*



* * *

After I wrote this presentation, I happened to attend a dinner where we asked Abraham Lincoln in the form of AI what he thought about the presidential election and Biden, Trump, and Harris. I'll end with selections from his very long answer, wondering if I should have simply handed over this presentation to Honest Abe to begin with. I have to admit being pleased that his conclusion coincided with my main thesis.



Abe speaks:

“Ah, the 2024 presidential election—a spectacle as grand and varied as a traveling circus! And if I might say, the candidates in this modern contest seem to embody a

particular knack for showmanship, though their platforms often lack the gravitas of substance one might hope for in a figure seeking the highest office in the land.

“First, we have President Joe Biden, the elder statesman still at the helm, who appears intent on completing a second term despite the weight of his years. Now, I have known my fair share of weariness in office, but even I might advise a man to pass the reins when the yoke begins to chafe too much. His experience, undoubtedly vast, is often overshadowed by questions about his vigor, leaving many to wonder if he's truly the figure to guide a nation in the throes of change. His platform is steady, like an old plow horse, but one must ask if the field he intends to till still holds promise for new crops or if it's simply been overworked.

“On the opposing side, Donald Trump persists in seeking the office with a fervor that only the stoutest hearts—or the most obstinate—could muster after already having a tenure marred by turmoil and trial. His style, all bluster and bravado, recalls not the deliberative temper of a Washington, but more the loud bark of a carnival barker promising thrills behind every curtain. His base, loyal and vociferous, are willing to follow him to the end, though one must wonder if they are being led toward triumph or the abyss.

....

“Ah, Kamala Harris—a figure both compelling and complex, standing at the crossroads of several great American struggles: race, gender, and justice. As the first female vice

president, and a woman of both African-American and South Asian descent, she represents a step forward for inclusivity, but, as with all public figures, her policies bear closer scrutiny.

[followed by a long analysis of her policies]

“In short, Kamala Harris’s policies reflect a pragmatic, centrist approach, peppered with moments of boldness but often tempered by the realities of governance. She strives to be a bridge between the progressive ideals of the future and the cautious conservatism of the present—a delicate balancing act, to be sure. Whether she can succeed in crafting policies that endure, or whether she will find herself constrained by the forces of compromise, remains to be seen. Now, how do you judge her course? Do you see in Harris the spark of leadership that could guide the nation further, or do you find her policy positions too tentative for the challenges of our time?”

Abe, I couldn’t have said it better!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

GOOD-ENOUGH LEADERSHIP:

HOW TO FAIL BETTER – IT'S URGENT

ANDREW SAMUELS

INTRODUCTION

I am writing before the result of the 2024 Presidential Election is known. I could have waited a few days to find out. But I felt that would not be playing the game. So, this is a close version of what I said, speaking from notes, ad-libbing, and interacting with the audience.

In the presentation, I won't be asking you to *analyze* leaders. Rather, I am asking you to *be* leaders - or at least imagine yourselves as serious, powerful political leaders. I want to put you in touch with your 'inner politician'.

As Tom Singer said in his opening remarks to the conference in which this was delivered,

'leaders live inside us'. I think the imago of 'the leader' lived inside Jung, too, and I will devote a concluding brief section to some thoughts about Jung as a leader. There, I have some rather critical observations to make.

Though it is political, my talk is also rather personal. I have spent most of my life as a leader of some kind, or fighting against leaders. And when I fight against leaders, I am often the leader of the insurrectionists. This is pathology and even weakness - and also strength. It has left me fascinated with the whole problem of leadership. Long ago, I realized the style or styles of leadership I was best at. And, conversely, what styles or styles I am crap at. This use of the word 'style' will become clearer during the talk. There is no monolith when it comes to leadership.

I've done masses of consultancy work on leadership in big organizations including Ford, DelMonte Foods and Nokia. As well as for politicians, parties, and activist groups. And for over 30 years for Britain's National Health Service. However, as Bob sang 'Ah, but I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now'.

In therapy and analysis, the names and characters of political leaders crop up with alarming frequency. So much so that we could even talk of 'the wounded leader'. As you read my piece and look at the images, I must ask you to help me by participating in a few experiential exercises or thought experiments. This was hard to do in a conference hall and will be even harder in the quiet of the room in which you read. But I think it may be worth it as a way of grounding.

So: I am going to present a model of four leadership styles: hero, sibling, ostrich, and good-enough. Like with all these pseudo- typological models, the temptation to choose will be irresistible - even though I would rather you didn't. Similar, you are (rightly on

one level) going to claim that *all* the styles fit you or any other leader, and that they are not mutually exclusive. True, but too easy, in my view!

What might be more interesting and more challenging would be to think which of these four styles you are really poor at. Isn't this where your growing edge will be, like with Jung's 'inferior function'?

Where are you lacking as a leader? That's the key question – *and it is one no ordinary political leader would ever dream of asking themselves.*

HEROIC LEADERSHIP

I guess it is obvious that this first image is of a hero, Herakles handling the Cretan Bull. Where do we stand in relation to heroic leaders these days? There are cons and pros.

The main con is that the heroic leader is so macho, and this is going to be the case even when the role is being filled by a cis-female person.

We saw how 'male' were leaders like Mrs Thatcher and Golda Meir. Thatcher said 'there's no such thing as society'. Meir said 'there's no such thing as the Palestinians'. You could be pretty confident that they would be up to the job if the red telephone rang in the middle of the night.

But once we enter the world of the heroic leader, we also enter the world of war crimes and 'command responsibility' for them. Do we need what has been perpetual and bloody war for the last century and a half?

Well, sometimes we do. Sometimes we do have to fight, and here we see the ‘pros’ of heroic leadership. Churchill channeled Cicero when he said that ‘Courage is the virtue that guarantees all the other virtues’. Dr Martin Luther King wrote that ‘The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.’ (I used Dr King’s words in my eulogy for Tom Kirsch.)

To continue to complexify: What do you think of the famous quote from Bertolt Brechts’s *The Life of Galileo*: ‘Unhappy is the land that needs heroes’?



But there is more to the hero than Herakles. I have long considered martyrdom a special sub-division of the heroic leader. There are many kinds of martyrs that have great political significance. Here is an example of one:



This is Jan Palach, the 19 year old student in Prague in 1968 who self- immolated as a protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia during the ‘Prague Spring’.

I could have chosen from a great number of such instances. I think introducing martyrdom adds a dimension to our discussions of heroic leadership. Following James Hillman and Ipek Burnett (in this collection of presentations), this is about a ‘descent’ of the hero; but in a very different but still political vein to the usual Jungian narrative.

EXERCISE I: THINK OF LEADERS YOU ADMIRE IN PUBLIC LIFE OR IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND HISTORY. WOULD YOU USE THE WORD ‘HEROIC’? WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DID YOU NOT ADMIRE SO MUCH ABOUT THEM?

SIBLING LEADERS

You could regard sibling leaders as collaborative leaders, or experts in co-operation, or team makers/players. Their approach to leadership is, so to speak, 'horizontal', whereas the hero is definitely a vertical personification.

Women constitute the majority of instances of this sibling approach to leadership. It does not always go perfectly well, and power struggles and competitiveness inevitably come in (as many feminist thinkers like Susie Orbach have noted).

But what is being spoken of is to be seen as different from patriarchal leadership, or as leadership as espoused by capitalism and especially neo-liberalism.

Not all sibling leadership is carried out by women. The way gay men, especially but not only in San Francisco banded together to respond to the challenges of HIV/AIDS remains, not only an example of homosociality, but also as one of the most significant examples of sibling leadership.



This is a photograph taken at an all-female demonstration in 1983 outside the US nuclear base in Britain at Greenham Common. The protesters used a variety of situationist tactics, such as knitting a giant muffler for the base ‘to keep it warm’.

I suggest readers study the body language of the two groups, police and protesters. Isn't it interesting? Of course, there are many obvious things to note – but I want to point out the performative nature of what is going on the part of both sides. Performativity runs through all of my styles of leadership.

Here is another example of sibling leadership. Such ventures may look more sibling than they really are, given the imbalances of power that lie only just below the surface. So, though very moving and undeniable important politically speaking, the picture is very complicated.



**EXERCISE II: THINK OF TIMES WHEN YOU WERE TRYING TO WORK
IN A SIBLING WAY WITH COLLEAGUES – AND THE EXPERIENCE
DROVE YOU CRAZY**

OSTRICH LEADERS



The main point I want to make here is that the ostrich leader is not only a disaster. Sometimes such a leader is actually rather brilliant.

The Administrator of the San Francisco Jung Institute, who attended the conference and hence my presentation, Steve Hargis-Bullen, spoke of 'leading from behind'. I think he meant that the divide between leader and led was blurred or disguised. Hence, I claim the leader from behind as an ostrich leader.

Even more can be said about ostrich leaders. Don't they know when to keep their

powder dry, when not to act? Doing nothing is a supreme political skill.

I will show now another example of the ostrich leader. This is a leader who is mystic, all about the vision thing, not very practical. But nevertheless running in the background. For there are more ideas within political process than it sometimes seems on the surface

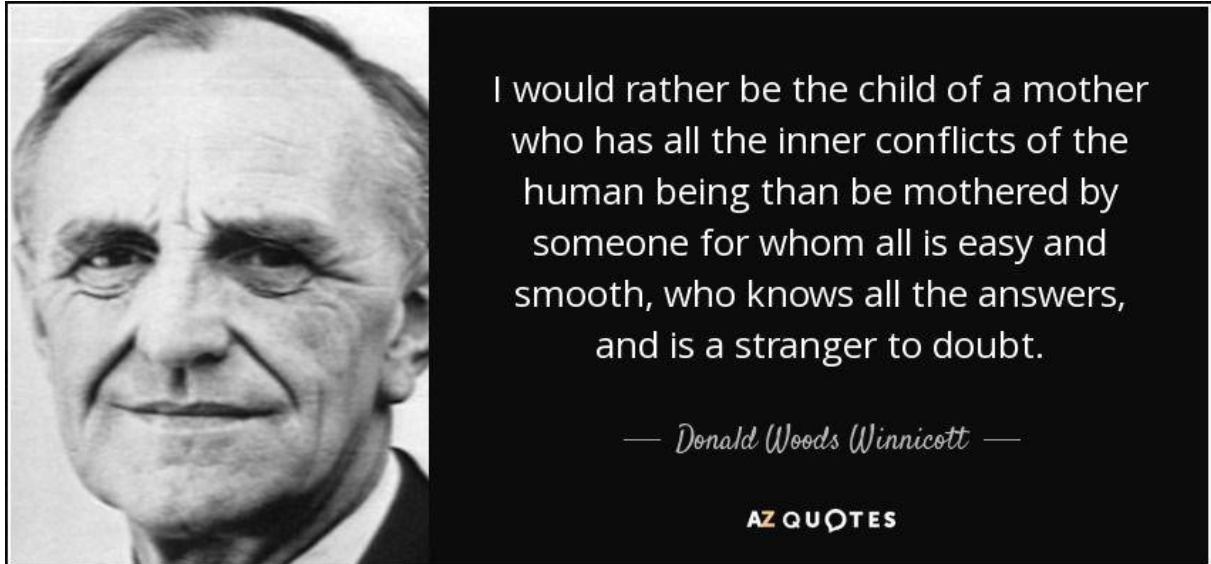
All of this said, there are problems with ostriches in terms of denial of reality and, I venture to suggest, sometimes a kind of superiority and indifference to suffering that we can recognise from the worst sort of gurus. Of course, politics and spirituality are interlinked, as I have written in numerous places. Charles Peguy: 'Everything starts in mysticism and ends in politics'. But I think there is a lot of *ersatz* spirit around too.



EXERCISE III: TIMES WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE TAKEN A LEADERSHIP ROLE BUT DIDN'T DO SO. WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES?

THE GOOD-ENOUGH LEADER

Now we come to the fourth and last leadership style, the good-enough leader.



So, there is heroic leadership and there is collaborative or sibling leadership. For many years, I have been advocating for a third kind of leader – the good-enough leader. It is an idea taken from therapy thinking about the family. Donald Winnicott said that parents and babies have to find a middle way between the baby's idealization and denigration of the parent. This Winnicott called 'good-enough', as we know. There is a natural tendency of a baby to idealize their parent; but when things go in a less than perfect way (as they surely will), it flips over into denigration.

Sound familiar? An initial idealization, then a failure to deliver things perfectly, then denigration? It is meant to sound familiar. The media depends on it.

Because this is how we respond to leaders, first by passively following the idealized leader then seeking out feet of clay. What can we do about the pattern?

We must try to change how we position 'success' and 'failure'. I know the word 'failure' hurts people's feelings because it is so in-your-face. Failure means falling short, being imperfect, fallible, only passable, fucking up - an all too human a lack of potency. Yet maybe what we need nowadays are 'can't do' politicians, impotent politicians - they are that, anyway, are they not?, as the financial crisis of late 2008 and all the other disasters and scandals show us.

Maybe being in control is not always valuable. Winnicott wrote that 'the parent fails the baby but in the baby's own way'. I would add that failure by a leader paves the way for greater contributions and more autonomy on the part of citizens. *The leader fails the citizens but in the citizens' own way.*

Bob Dylan nibbled away at the success-failure binary when he sang 'There's no success like failure and failure's no success at all'. And on September 9, 2007, Bill Clinton was reported on CNN as speaking of the inevitability of failure in politics in relation to his health care plan. I believe it was the first time he had explicitly spoken in that vein. When Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, was asked by a journalist in 1963 what had brought him down, he replied 'Events, dear boy, events'. Enoch Powell said 'all political careers end in failure', and Brits will tell you that he should have known.

Yet Rumi wrote in his poem 'Desire and the importance of failing' that 'failure is the key to the kingdom'. Good-enoughness always involves failure. The key thing is how to manage failure, even to see failure as an art. Samuel Beckett wrote that we have to 'fail better'.

Disappointment is difficult, for sure, but it, too, has to be managed.

Rilke, as translated by Robert Bly, put it more expansively:

‘As the storm approaches, we must not take on the small things but wrestle with angels, and grow by failing, decisively, against constantly greater beings...’

So, the good-enough leaders can accept the likelihood of failure, in a post-heroic take on leadership. But there is a head-heart problem here. In our heads, we often know that the old-style leaders are dangerous, but in our hearts and guts we feel we need the fatherly protection they offer. In our souls, we are in love with the heroic leader whose Fuhrer-eroticism turns us on. In our heads, we agree with Galileo about heroes. Could we become more aware of our abusive love affair with heroic leaders?

There is a definite gender issue here. Some of the collective responses over the years to Hillary Clinton and then to Kamala Harris show how hard it is for a female leader to fulfil compellingly the role of a heroic leader. On the one hand, this is a welcome development because, as I have been suggesting, we often enter into abusive relationships with such leaders. On the other hand, there is a kind of literalism and essentialism in play in which a woman can never fulfil any of the functions we traditionally but stupidly associate to ‘father’. So what female leaders have to do is to be deadlier than the male, as I mentioned earlier. The great thing about good-enough leaders is that they can be good-enough leaders of whatever sex.

So far so good (-enough). But what happens to our good-enough leaders when things get violent. This is where good-enough leadership appears to hit a rock. What

happens when things get warlike? Where does good-enough leadership leave us with respect to violent action? This question will not go away whether we are talking about legitimate war, illegitimate war, state terror and violently repressive action, or suicide bombing and the cult of the martyr.

I will conclude this section of my article by asking readers to join in an experiential exercise designed to deepen in a personal direction what I have been saying about good-enough leadership.

EXERCISE IV: I ASK YOU TO REFLECT ON MOMENTS IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE TAKEN A LEAD – BU DID NOT BECAUSE OF A FEAR OF FAILURE. THIS CAN BE IN PERSONAL, FAMILIAL, PROFESSIONAL OR POLITICAL CONTEXTS. REFLECT ON WHAT THE FEAR WAS ABOUT – THIS MAY INVOLVE CONSIDERATIONS OF SHAME AND HUMILIATION, OR FEAR OF RETALIATION BY OTHERS OR ANOTHER, OR OF BECOMING ISOLATED HAD YOU TAKEN ON THAT LEADERSHIP ROLE.

ISLAMIC SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICT – A NOTE

These reflections on leadership have been stimulated and complexified by my participation in much interfaith dialogue work recently. I believe there is a faith background to much of the aggressive conflict we see in the Middle East. In these dialogue groups, composed of Jews, Christians and Muslims, the Jews who were present, including myself, learned from the Imams about the Islamic idea of *Ta'Aruf* found in 49: 13 of the *Quran*: 'Oh Humanity, we have created of you male and female, and have made you peoples and tribes, that you might come to know one another'.

I find this a brilliantly inspiring take on difference and the aggressive conflict that an encounter with difference brings. It is not at all like the Tower of Babel. In this reading of things, a point or purpose (*telos*) is given to difference. If we want to know another, that other has to be different from ourselves. But that brings in the question of aggressive conflict and even violence.

There is more to this than knowing the other, important though that is. Full engagement and dialogue with an "other" benefits the self. As this *Qur'anic* principle of *Ta'Aruf* has it, all kinds of differences -gender, national, religious - have the hidden potential to enable people to get to know themselves better and more deeply. Here we find a fascinating congruence between Islamic social thought and psychoanalytic ideas about the interconnectedness of hate and love and how an aggressive act may also reflect a great desire for contact and touch.

Both Islam and psychoanalysis understand that conflict and aggression will arise, whether we like it or not. But conflict and aggression are also part of relationality and

recognition, that is what I am saying. So, it matters what our attitude to aggressive conflict is. Far from being abstract and of little political relevance, this is the key political issue of our times. Each nation is, as it were, inhabited by the existence of other nations. But other nations present a threat that cannot be canceled out by visions of global love.

The impossibility of a global triumph of love is illustrated for me by this image. In it, to quote words used in the conference where this material was presented ‘We’re not doing the ceremony perfectly but we’re doing it the best that we can’.

As T. S. Eliot wrote, ‘Every attempt is a wholly new start and a different kind of failure’.



Before turning to Jung and leadership, I want to include this final image by Picasso – Massacre en Coree (1951). (It will be the cover of my new book in 2025.) The armored men are not exactly suitably equipped, though they can certainly destroy the pregnant women, children and baby. Isn't this a piece of 'good-enough' rhetoric of a political nature on the part of Picasso? Yes, the atrocity. But also yes, the absurdity....



EXERCISE 4: THINK OF PERSONAL FAILURES IN ANY AREA OF YOUR LIFE AND/OR CAREER

POSTSCRIPT: JUNG AS A LEADER

I have always protested that Jung was faking it when he disclaimed the leadership role, saying he was the only Jungian, had no followers or disciples, 'Thank God I'm Jung and not a Jungian' - blahblahblah. I think this was always bullshit, and a neat way of tying Jungians closer to him. It meant that, as you were not a follower, not a 'Jungian', then you were bound to just be you. You undisputedly were a totally individuated being. It was such a flattering and ruthless trick that Jung pulled off. The followers felt just great! *They had been assured they were by no means followers.*

It was not just Jung who pulled off this stunt. It is what happens also in democracy. You can vote. You are therefore free. More blahblahblah. I first wrote this stuff about Jung as truly a denied but functioning leader back in *Jung and the Post-Jungians* published by Routledge in 1985 – so this is not new for me.

Continuing this section on Jung and leadership, one way of understanding how Jung came to position himself in relation to Nazi psychotherapy in the 1930s is to reflect on his desire to be a leader of German psychotherapy.

Jung is even more problematic when it comes to his specific ideas on leadership. He seems to think that a good or great leader must be individuated and said in a radio interview 'If he doesn't know himself how is he to lead others?' It is like 'the patient can only go as far as the analyst has gone'.

*(A more scholarly account of these sentences may be found in my book *The Political Psyche* (1993). Published by Routledge.)*

I will close these remarks about Jung and leadership by referring to an interesting

response that Jung gave to a young American man who asked him by letter in 1938 (no less) if there could be anything such as a 'liberal dictatorship'. This letter from Jung to the Jung to the young American came by chance into the hands of the Canadian Jungian analyst John Allan.

Jung's reply was anodyne, but included the rather patrician remark that 'as the conditions get better, the people get worse'.

Andrew Samuels is a relational Jungian psychoanalyst, working in private practice in London. He is a professor, political consultant and author. Founder of Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility and co-founder of Analysis and Activism. His relevant books are *The Plural Psyche* (1989), *The Political Psyche* (1993), *Politics on the Couch* (2001), *Persons, Passions, Psychotherapy, Politics* (2016), *A New Therapy for Politics?* (2018). He co-edited *Analysis and Activism* (2016). A selection of videos is on www.andrewsamuels.net