

**A Jungian Approach to Literature.** Bettina L. Knapp. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984, 402 pages, \$27.95.

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Many readers of Carl Gustav Jung's work have been astonished by the scope of his vision and yet have had difficulty applying "Jungian" notions in their own experience. One difficulty in particular is that of synthesizing the ideas of Jung's study of basic orientation types with those of his study of archetypes. Bettina Knapp's analysis of the ten works discussed in *A Jungian Approach to Literature* helps show how this difficulty may be overcome. This achievement in itself is valuable to students of Jung, but it is only one of the means by which she realizes her primary purpose—to present an approach to literature that will enable readers to see the universality of the problems articulated in literary works in order to help them enlarge their views, "develop their potential," and encourage personal confrontations. Knapp thus tries to reconnect the study of literature to the study of life—a worthwhile goal indeed.

Except for the last two of the ten essays making up this book, the works discussed are treated chronologically—beginning with Euripides' *The Bacchantes* and moving through Wolfram's *Parzival*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Corneille's *Horace* and *Rodogune*, Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, Novalis's *Hymns to the Night*, Nachman's "The Master of Prayer" to Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*. The remaining two essays discuss the *Kalevala* and *The Conference of the Birds*. Thus, literature from seven different cultures and eras is analyzed for its archetypal content, suggesting of course that archetypes have always been part of thinking and that they will continue to be so.

Each of the essays begins with a brief introduction; this is followed by an ectypal analysis, which is in turn followed by an archetypal analysis and brief discussion. Knapp's discussion of *The Bacchantes*, for instance, begins by pointing to an "unhealthy religious and psychological condition" that obtained in an era when "the all-powerful rational and logical view of life" encouraged "regressive and punitive measures" against women and the world of instinct. The play works out the conflict between these contending male and female forces and the inevitable reversal of the situation. Her ectypal discussion of Montaigne presents the great essayist as a child of his time, one who, criticizing his father's undue regard for learning, sought to balance both the conscious and unconscious facets of his own psyche. It was Montaigne's motive to transform "his life into art." He held that "To live in harmony with oneself and nature, to discover one's own needs and motivations through psychological investigation, is to enrich life, also to discover one's creative center, to experience serenity of being."

While Knapp's ectypal analyses are often helpful, they are sometimes redundant, too, and the archetypal analyses are of course the heart of her matter anyway. Her discussions of *Parzival* and of *Elective Affinities* may serve to illustrate her approach. She argues that *Parzival's* father, Gahmuret, was "destroyed by his masculine drive, his ego, which constantly pushed him on to more battles" and that as a result *Parzival's*

mother, Herzolde, withdraws from the world to her forest hermitage to save her son from a fate like his father's. In her protective effort to be both mother and father to Parzival, however, Herzolde "stunts his psychological development." Her effort is ultimately selfish and unnatural, a psychological castration of her son. But nature will out, too, and Parzival leaves the introverted and recessive world of the Great Mother to create a life of his own. His initial actions are ignorant, impulsive, unintentionally cruel. (Herzolde's swooning death on the departure of her son, one might note, is the psychological fate of many an overprotective mother.) He has, understandably enough, an arrogant, egotistical, proud "unthinking attitude toward women. Caught up in his so-called manly honor, the *logos* principle—devoid of feeling or *eros*, that relating quality—egocentricity prevails." When Parzival learns his name (it means "to pierce right through the middle"), however, he truly begins his journey of personal identity. And to truly find himself he must ultimately proceed alone, identifying and confronting especially those unconscious aspects of his being that "have never been allowed to emerge into consciousness." The first of these forces is a shadow force, which emerges when he kills the Red Knight in a rage. Such a powerful emotion he had never permitted himself before. His assuming the Red Knight's armor is the adoption of a new persona, which will better help him to face the world. The mask of the knight is presumably better than that of the fool, the mask his mother encouraged.

Parzival next permits himself to be guided by Gurnemanz, a *senex* figure. Knapp reads this as Parzival's obedience to patriarchal rather than matriarchal rules like those he had followed in the forest of his mother's protection. Although each set of rules is necessary, each, adhered to exclusively or only for too long a time, is destructive of individual development. He is not yet "in touch with his own world of feeling," his feminine side.

The feminine side of Parzival's being, his *anima*, begins to emerge when he listens to the lament of Queen Condwiramurs and is willing to fight for her cause. In his feeling for her he projects his *anima*. She accepts that projection and their love is thus complete, Parzival "conscious of her feelings and not only of his sexual urges." And, unlike his mother, the other major *anima* figure in his life, Condwiramurs does not refuse him the further development of himself. That further development means additional confrontations with aspects of the unconscious, of course.

In Parzival's next confrontation he is again guided by a *senex* figure, Trevrizent, who helps him to another persona, one that permits him to face his own mortality. When Parzival follows Trevrizent's advice "to have faith in God," Parzival psychologically increases "faith in Self, in his total psyche, that transpersonal sphere within each being." But the products of such faith may not be wrested from God in hatred, a course Parzival had hitherto taken. He had borne a grudge against God for his own failings but the hatred was really against the negative forces of himself—shadow forces again. (The struggle of the individual with unconscious forces is apparently never complete. Having already confronted shadow forces in his fight with the Red Knight, he will have to face other aspects of this force throughout his life.) Parzival now had to understand, accept, and integrate these forces into a whole. This chore is figured forth in his fight with his half-brother, Feirefiz, whom he does not know. Feirefiz's mother was Belacane, "black as the night," as were her people. The fight is unresolved and the doubles (black and white, Christian and pagan, positive and negative shadow figures) are united in harmony.

Knapp thus reads Parzival as "a spectacular psychological study depicting the birth and growth of an archetypal hero." Parzival's search for the grail, for Knapp, articulates the Jungian notion that "the Grail signifies inner plenitude, the transcendental function, the Self; the ability to synthesize conscious and unconscious contents; to give one's life an inner orientation."

Knapp's discussion of *Elective Affinities* sees the middle-aged couple, Edward and Charlotte, as deadened, too little concerned with their inner beings, too much turned toward the outside. Edward's basic orientation to life is through his emotions and "his action and behavior are never the outcome of reasoned thought." His secondary function is physical. Virtually undeveloped are his intuitive and rational functions. Edward is to a great extent dominated by his anima, projected onto Charlotte. He has thus ceased to develop: "Emotionally he is still a *puer*, an undeveloped boy tied to his mother's apron strings, an unthinking youth who lacks independence and foresight, a man who has never matured." He takes his identity from the various roles he plays—son/lover to Charlotte. Charlotte's basic orientation is intuitive, her secondary function reason. Undeveloped in her are emotion and sensation.

Into their lives Goethe introduces their complements—in the persons of Edward's friend, a captain in the army, and Charlotte's niece, Ottilie. That all four characters are related (psychologically speaking) is suggested by their names, for Edward and the captain are both Ottos and the "Ott" is apparent in Charlotte and Ottilie as well. Goethe presents the development of these characters as though they were undergoing an alchemical transformation. The pedestrian unity that existed in the lives of Charlotte and Edward will dissolve, and, should things work properly, a new unity will be brought into being by the interaction of these "elements" on each other. For Edward, Ottilie is that portion of his anima which he has had to suppress. He acts first as a father and then as a lover to her. For Charlotte, the captain is that portion of her animus she has had to suppress in her marriage to Edward. A new pairing occurs, but Edward and Ottilie fail to develop further, each remaining immature and unconscious of their actions and motives. Their child dies and so do they. Charlotte and the captain hold promise of a new "solution" and "coagulation" of elements; however, the individuation and unity are more possible for them because of their ability to bring the unconscious under conscious control.

There is much more in Knapp's book, her discussion of the *senex* hero of the *Kalevala* being particularly fascinating. It will remind many readers, no doubt, of the American Indian's desire to live in harmony with the natural world. Also impressive is her discussion of "The Master of Prayer" and *Hymns to the Night*, the first because it illustrates the continual struggle of the individual to establish the connection with God, the second because of the regressive "solution" that many people have found to psychological conflict. Finally, *The Conference of the Birds* discusses the manner in which Sufis suppress the ego in their service of God. This discussion sheds light on the actions of what today are sometimes called fanatics and helps us to understand not only what they do but why they do it.

The book contains an introductory essay that previews the argument of the book, asserting that a Jungian approach to literature helps readers to broaden their knowledge of literature and to discover their "own ground-bed" and develop their "potential and spiritual elan"—to help personalities "to grow and individuate . . ." Her assertions, I believe, are supported.

The concluding essay not only summarizes but also makes some application of her approach, her observations based on her discussion of *The Bacchantes* (that raging shadow forces are alive and well in the twentieth century being notably accurate). Knapp might have done more by way of application, some might say, but the reflective reader will have no trouble finding examples of the psychological insights of the works discussed in his or her own life.

Generally, Knapp writes clearly, and readers will appreciate her useful bibliography. Some readers will no doubt be annoyed by the several typographical errors that are in the text. Others will be more than annoyed by the omission of the notes for the last half

of Chapter One. Despite these problems, however, the book is excellent and readers interested in a "Jungian" approach to literature will welcome it.

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