

## Individual Inner Emotional and Logical Equilibrium via Jung's Psycho-Analytical Approach and Lakoff's and Wittgenstein's Psycho-Cognitive Approaches in Snodgrass Poetry

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**Abstract:** *The paper expands on revealing the hidden side of Snodgrass' poetry which will be constructed from Jung's psychological model, more precisely from his process of individuation which consists of the integration and assimilation of various archetypes and from Lakoff's Psycho-Cognitive perspective*

**Key words:** *Jung, Archetypes, Individuation, the Conscious, the Unconscious, Cognition, Perception.*

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON ARCHETYPES

Archetypes, defined by Jung as "the inborn preconscious and unconscious psychic structure of the individual" and by Demaris Wehn as "some sort predisposition possessed by man to form images" (archetypal image being an effect of this irrepresentable unconscious) are an entry to Snodgrass' way of thinking and feeling. Archetypes emphasize, according to Bachelard, "the dialectics of their profoundness" [Bachelard 2009:93], the dialectics of their self.

Minulescu has assumed that the self possesses a characteristic "phenomenology"<sup>1</sup> (Minulescu 2001: 94) which expresses itself through symbolic images. Such images signify the unity of contraries, the desire for completeness, for surpassing psychological barriers.

We will closely consider Jung's assumption that the dynamics of the relation, between ego and self is important for understanding the process of individuation. Individuation is mainly related to the development of those aspects of the personality that have long been neglected in order to find new ways of uniting the formerly opposed conscious and unconscious tendencies meant to achieve a harmonious whole.

The dynamics of the process of the individuation reunites the two poles (the conscious and the unconscious) which metaphorically symbolize the authentic original human characteristics. The application of metaphor in literature is a familiar procedure since we all use conceptual metaphors in our ordinary speech. It is the cognitive approach which makes us grow aware of the habit of turning ordinary conceptual metaphors into poetic ones. To extend the interpretation of the metaphorical charge of Snodgrass' poetry we will also apply Bachelard's methodology of associating "embryo" and "reason". Our assumption is that "embryo" can be related to the unconscious while "reason" to the conscious.

### CONSIDERATIONS ON THE IMAGINATIVE ASPECTS OF REASON

Further grounds for confidence regarding our psycho – cognitive approach doubled by Bachelard's methodology arise from the cognitive thinker Lakoff who makes two important assumptions: firstly, that reason has a bodily basis, and secondly, that the imaginative aspects of reason – metaphor, metonymy and mental imagery – are central to reason rather than an adjunct to the literal.

Since "bodily" signifies both "body" and "soul" in other words our complete, inseparable, undivided personality (where ego and self, on the one hand, and the conscious and the unconscious, on the other, are in a harmonious relation), vulnerable

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<sup>1</sup> Minulescu, Mihaela wrote an extremely inspired and well articulated study entitled "Introduction into the Jungian Analysis" (our transl.), edited at Editura Trei in 2001

ego-self, conscious-unconscious, send us to what Jung calls "the alienated man."<sup>2</sup> (Jung 1968: 106).

The alienated individual experiences various frustrations being profoundly affected both consciously and unconsciously by the maternal complex. Minulescu calls that process "the personal evocation of the archetype" and explains it as a "phase of living the self in projection" (Minulescu 2001: 108).

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SPACE OF SNODGRASS' POETRY AS A PROJECTION OF HIS DIVIDED SELF

In keeping with Jung's psychology, the controversial psychological space built by Snodgrass is a projection of his divided self, of his paired-off self that strives to arrive at identity, or as the poet himself puts it "to knell by my old face and know my name"<sup>3</sup> (in Howard 1969: 472). To arrive at identity Snodgrass has first to objectify his maternal feelings. And yet, instead of objectifying them, he casts about for dualities, for instance, in the poem called "The Mother". Here "woman and death are one; [it is] our common tendency to see death as a mother, the grave as womb" (in Howard 1969: 472).

As if intending to make an emotional vehicle out of his mother, Snodgrass launches another tendency, that of regarding life itself as a "loved woman" [in Howard 1969: 472], in "Leaving Ithaca."

### THE ARCHETYPAL CONNOTATIONS OF SNODGRASS' POETRY

"Love's Lady", or "love-goddess" (in Howard 1969: 472), in this poem is also associated with mother

*..... or overloving lady,  
You had been ruined quite enough already  
Now the children have chipped off half your nose  
.... My first wife tried to keep you in the attic;  
Some thought your breasts just so-so and your waist  
Thick with childbearing, not for modern taste.  
My father thought you lewd and flicked with buttocks*

[Howard 1969: 472]

Such controversial approaches to one's mother can be best uncovered through Jung's maternal archetype. Jung claims that Mother is a point of departure and of everlasting return, "a point of some unsurpassable wishfulness"<sup>4</sup> [Zamfirescu 2001: 192].

Jung operates on both the affective and the logical plane when he states that all the influences exercised upon a child's mind do not derive from one's personal mother, but rather from an archetype which offers the child some sort of mythological background filled up with "authority and numinosity" [Jung 1968: 191]. The creative aspects of their archetype are symbolized by fields, gardens, cliffs, trees, streams.

Creative aspects charged with metaphorical connotations can be identified in some poems from the already focused volume of poems entitled "Heart's Needle". Howard

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<sup>2</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav created the psycho – analytical theory of personality and laid stress upon unconscious processes. Jung divides the unconscious into two sections: the personal unconscious and respectively the collective unconscious. The contents of the collective unconscious are known under the name of archetypes.

<sup>3</sup> Howard is an accomplished American critic concerned with American Poetry since 1950 to the present. He wrote a collection of essays which is meant to be the rescuing anatomy of the believe "if you can not believe in the greatness of our age and inheritance, you will fall into confusion of mind and contrariety of spirit" (in Howard 1969: XII).

<sup>4</sup> Zamfirescu, Vasile Dem is the author of the study entitled "The Philosophy of the Unconscious" (our transl.) edited at Editura Trei in 2001.

claims that the poems dealing with the poet's childhood illustrate an emotional experience per se being somehow separated from the meaning normally attached to it.

Since the poem "At the Park Dance" contains elements belonging to Snodgrass' mental imagery materialized in the symbol of the park and of the trees, the poem can be read, according to Jung's archetypes, as the poet's consciousness of himself, as a divided personality "living in a world figured out as a child's game."

*As the melting  
darkens, the firefly winks  
to signal loving strangers  
from their pavilion  
lined with Easter colored  
light, fading out together  
until they merge with  
weathered huge trees and join  
the small frogs, those warm singers;  
and they have achieved  
love's vanishing point  
where all perspectives mingle,  
Where even the most  
close things are indistinct  
or lost, where bright world shrink,  
they will grope to find  
blind eyes make all one world;  
their unseen arms, horizons.  
Beyond, jagged stars  
are glinting like jacks hurled  
further than eyes can gather;  
on the dancing floor, girls  
turn, vague as milkweed floats  
bobbing from childish fingers*

[Howard 1969: 474]

The phenomenon of "toying" (Howard 1969: 474) is metaphorically alluded to through the specific amusing atmosphere of the park which includes the fireflies, the pavilion with Easter-colored lights, the small frogs, referred to as the "warm singers", because of the mating period, the glinting stars viewed as jacks and the girls vaguely floating in the dance floors, as "milkweed floats bobbing from childish fingers." The familiar ludicrous details that compose the atmosphere of the park together with the system of sound relationships structured in rhyming patterns such as "together-gather", "singers- fingers", "join-point", "world- hurled", are meant to hide the breakup of Snodgrass' personality.

Following the cognitive approach as well mention should be made of prototypicality (central elements vs. peripheral ones.). Here, "light" and "stars" are central, prototypical nouns, while "fireflies", "trees", "frogs", "girls", all indistinct and "vague", represent the peripheral elements meant to underline ambiguity (another cognitive concept).

The fact that the poet is deeply aware of his divided and estranged personality arises from his resorting to masks. This is another hint at the archetypal significance that can be attached to Snodgrass poetry.

Snodgrass himself posits that "Poets of our generation... have such extensive resources for disguising ourselves from ourselves" (in Howard 1969: 476). Such a statement sends us to Jung's persona which signifies a façade, a mask, a dissimulated behaviour, "the acquisition of a forged illusory social identity" (in Zamfirescu: 178).

Further evidence regarding Snodgrass' "reversed self" (Howard 1969: 476) can be found in the "biography and bibliography section" (Howard 1969: 476) of the anthology "A Controversy of Poets". There one can find a short passage referring to the place and time

the poet was born which runs as follows: "Born in Wilkirsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1926... teaches at Wayne State University in Detroit. Deeply influenced by the Texas poet S.S. Gordons" [Howard 1969: 476].

The same critic Howard figures out that S.S. Gordons represents a backward spelling of his name, claiming that it can also be regarded as another biographical clue for his split personality.

Snodgrass' confrontation with the dark side of his personality, with the archetype of the shadow reverberates in his Orpheus' address to the Powers of the Underworld "Who are all bright world's negative" [Howard 1969: 478].

*... And I went on  
Rich in the loss of all I sing  
To the threshold of waking light,  
To larksong and the like, gray dawn.  
So night by night, my life has gone*

[Howard 1969: 478]

The dichotomy "waking light"- "gray dawn" is a crucial poetic clue regarding the fact that Snodgrass' conflicting self is striving to come to terms with his controversial inner nature, permanently analyzed by as in terms of various archetypes (the maternal archetype, persona, and the shadow) by profoundly engaging his art.

"Light", again, is a prototypical noun associated with a prototypical adjective rendered by means of a participial construction "waking". It reflects the dynamics of individuation, of waking up to a form of enlightenment (by growing aware of various dark hidden aspects of one's personality).

Another volume of poems entitled "After Experience", published in 1968, can be interpreted as another clue regarding the fact that one can accomplish moral growth, that one can achieve "the unified self" (in Howard 1969: 478) only by acknowledging one's dark nature and by assimilating various archetypes. The poem "A Visitation" is a dialogue between the ex-soldier poet and Eichman's ghost and deals with accepting, assimilating, "acknowledging the despised other" (in Howard 1969: 478). "The despised other" stands, on the one hand, for one's formerly unknown dark nature, and, on the other, for the disregarded, averted other, for no other reason than selfishness, which results either from the absence of self- acceptance, or from the absence of sympathy for the others.

Such acknowledgement takes place precisely because the visiting ghost, one of Snodgrass' strongest mental projections of his recovered self, represents a genuine occasion for contemplating transcendence. Transcendence of what? Transcendence of ourselves and revelation of our true positive feelings which resound in the last part of this poem: "My own love, you're all I could wish to be".

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