

– *Nineteen* –

Me and My Shadow

I need to re-iterate that one's spiritual journey is itself an archetype. In addition to my pilgrimage dreams, and long before I had read any of Carl Jung's works, I had a lengthy dream of journeying that exhibited several archetypes. First was a subterranean journey through a stone crypt, where I went "through an opening in a door, rather than opening the door on its hinges. There are obstacles to making any progress, but I have superior knowledge or experience or confidence and can make my way." Next there were passageways and a labyrinth. Eventually I encountered Maestro Evan Whallon as Wise Man and a woman in white as Wise Woman (May 17, 1979).

Subsequently, several of my dreams that had feelings with both negative and positive valences were so powerful that I inferred they were archetypes, and sought confirmation in the works of Jung. I have grouped a few of them according to his schema in *Man And His Symbols*, where he outlines four steps toward achieving selfhood: recognizing and dealing with the Shadow, the Animus, the Self as one knows it, and the Social Self. Jung asserts that these steps are roughly chronological, so that is the order I followed when giving the examples below.

Dark Shadow

When I was a youngster in the late 1930s, I listened to a radio program called "The Shadow." Each program began with a voice-over, a man saying spookily, "*Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? Heh, heh, heh . . . The Shadow knows.*" That opening set up my equating shadow = evil. In fact, my parents forbade us kids to listen to the program, which made it all the more tempting. I tiptoed from my room to the boys' room to listen, until one night the story was way too scary and made me regret I'd ever listened

to it. Nightmares of a Blob, a Glob, and even a Golem sprang from that radio show, each picturing the ultimate invasion of privacy.

The intense fear generated by “The Shadow” program was undoubtedly the basis of my disallowing my own children certain television programs and many movies. In one dream note concerning “a terrific spiritual battle,” I labeled a dark haze Evil because, “Though it has light at its center, it does not allow illumination” (Nov 15, 1978).

During the Great Depression, I felt a dark shadow over our country. I knew poverty first-hand and sensed the general unrest, though I was too young to comprehend the social upheaval or the political furor. During World War II, my hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan was overshadowed by the loss of so many young men on distant battlefields. In my own family, my mother’s brother contracted tuberculosis while serving in the Philippines, and one of her cousins died on a battlefield, heaven knows where. Two of my dad’s brothers made landings in North Africa and Italy, and my dad traced on a huge map the military maneuvers that got through censorship of their letters. He also had a brother-in-law fighting in the “Pacific theater,” a euphemism that I did not understand. I was acutely aware, however, that the Catholic practice of “giving up something for Lent” had become a patriotic practice for every citizen—giving up many things “for the duration.”

In the 1970s, many years before I was introduced to Jungian concepts, I was dealing with my personal Shadow and was able to detonate some of the negative feelings by incorporating in a poem images of actual happenings that still haunted me.

Shadow

A presence felt, unseen—

The ether mask at Children’s Hospital.

A foreboding like the underside
of a star fish not quite dead.

Prickles of fiberglass and panic
when my brother locked me
in a suffocating attic.

Sometime more tangible—

The black veil worn by Cat-lickers,
those nuns who stalked in pairs to throw
lone children down the sewers.

A coal-grimed curtain floating
from a neighbor's upstairs window,
like the voice of a woman pleading,

Let me go, let me go!

Sometimes less—

Vapors hovering over the dye vat
in the textile factory,
fungus in my bloodstream,
voodoo in my dreams.

Carbon monoxide lingering
over our sleeping family.

A portent like this moment—

at John F. Kennedy
a huge jetliner crossing
two hundred feet above
our small plane's taxiing.
Shadow, Old Familiar,
you keep me shuddering.

Those threats arrived from outside of me; I had yet to deal with negativity inside me that I had repressed. For instance, in my childhood—in addition to explicit shaming—I was plagued with morality tales and Victorian verses about what marked a girl as “unbecoming.” One put-down was, “Don’t trouble trouble until trouble troubles you,” implying that I was the cause, not the victim, in many incidents. Even a Mother Goose rhyme was used to scold me:

There was a little girl who had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead.
And when she was good, she was very, very good,
But when she was bad, she was horrid.

I would have loved to be horrid occasionally! But, considering the punishment for small offenses, I was afraid of doing something big. The following dream is illustrative:

Jun 28, 1985

A Little Girl in Trouble

I've been pushed too far emotionally, and I scream at a woman whose relationship I'm not sure of, only that we've lived together for many years. "I can't take this any longer! I won't!" After my shouting, she makes it clear that I have poisoned the relationship, it can never be restored, she has no wish to continue it at all. The trigger [for my shouting] was her accusing me when I'd offered to go to the deli for some special food she might like. I just described what I saw [in the deli] yesterday, and their prices as indicators of quality. I was not begrudging her, just wanting to buy the right stuff.

Yet she riles up, "You just want to deprive me of a little pleasure." On and on, a tirade. I feel more and more like a little girl despised. I cry out, "You don't know what it feels like not to have any space for yourself, any privacy, any private thoughts. How it feels to be brought up where there's kicking and cursing and insults all around, and you're used as a ploy in arguments. How you don't dare speak up, and you're accused of being sulky, sullen, stubborn if you're quiet."

I go on and on about an unhappy home life, then say, "So I try to keep quiet and cheerful with you. But then you're demanding and accusing. You blame me when I'm trying to be helpful. I can't stand it any longer! I won't!"

There's no pleasure in my shouting and no satisfaction afterward. "I can't keep pressing this Stuff down!" I tell the woman. "I'm not a little girl, but you make me feel like a bad little girl, and it's hard for me not to be hateful. I can NOT live with hate."

On the same night as "A Little Girl in Trouble," I had a dream about Big Nurse. I had utilized an audiotape by the dream worker, Diane Keck, in which she guided the listener to encounter a

Shadow figure and then meditate on it. I had chosen Big Nurse, a very large, dominating woman who frequented my dreams. I was in anguish immediately, and there were no explanations forthcoming. Nor could I request a gift from her, as recommended by [dream researcher] Patricia Garfield.

Big Nurse epitomized the Public Health nurses who came to our house with big needles as well as the hospital nurses who loomed over me. This dream may have been my first awareness that in some way she also represented my mother.

REFLECTIONS:

1. On waking, there was an internal message that these dreams are complementary. All I can fathom is this equation: in trouble = troublesome = troubled.
2. I could not confront Big Nurse because that would only confirm that I was guilty for being sick and guilty for causing others distress. I felt that being sent to the hospital [where at that time no visitors were allowed] was punishment for “my fault, my fault, my most grievous fault.”
3. Today I’m thinking about Mother’s tale of woe concerning the intense care she gave me for a whole year—through the kidney failure. If it actually was that long a siege, then the mastoid surgery was less than one year later. That, too, was a severe drain on Mother’s limited emotional resources; that, too, produced guilt feelings in me.

One year after “A Little Girl in Trouble,” came a dream called “It Takes My Heart Away.” In it I arrived at a startling conclusion and, speaking to my Mother, I declared, “Each time I get a little closer to what’s bothering me, and now I think I’m onto it. As far as you’re concerned, I’m your shadow, even when I’m not there!” (May 30, 1986). Functioning as her shadow meant that I myself was a non-entity.

Notes for a half-dozen similar dreams are not necessary to include here. That I finally acknowledged that my situation had truly been precarious was an accomplishment. That I acknowledged (in the Reflections) how much negative Stuff I had carried into the marriage verged on the heroic.

Too often, when I have had a black woman in a dream, I have heard someone declare, "That's your Shadow." I thought not, because our family had been involved for many years in efforts at integration with blacks. We built in a "changing neighborhood," for which banks would not give us a loan. The architects of our house, Angel and Ransom (wonderful names!) were black. And at our open house, there were enough black friends that someone in the neighborhood, in retaliation, attacked our house—first with eggs and then with shots through the front windows.

Yet one version of the black woman in my dreams did qualify as Shadow—the inattentive mother that I chose never to be. Rather, I vowed to be superior to her in every possible way, even to being concerned about children who were not my own and feeling responsible for their welfare. That was a fact of life for me from age nine onward, when I took over many of my mother's duties—not only doing the household chores but also attending to her two youngest children. Here is an example of that Shadow:

May 3, 1984

Rescuing a Black Baby

I'm in a women's hospital, the maternity wing. In this room are six beds in a row, and at the end is a platform affair—well, it looks like a giant high-chair. On it is a black woman who has just delivered a baby. The baby is naked, though cleaned of blood or any birth particles, and is standing up, as on the tray of the high-chair. "This is the strongest baby I've ever seen," I tell the mother, "though I've had bigger babies than this."

The woman isn't even holding the baby, just gazing at it. Now the baby does a backward dive or somersault, flinging itself from a height of 8 or 10 feet. I catch the baby, like a heavy football, and clutch it to my chest as if to run for a touchdown. But I don't run, I just stand here, looking up at the mother, wanting to lecture her. I do let her know that the baby would have been killed if I hadn't been there to catch it. Now I feel a heavy responsibility. What if the baby is as intelligent as it is strong?

Now the mother comes down off the high-chair or throne? or judgment seat? to the floor level where all the beds are. I'm not elevated and she's not demoted, so we see face to face and focus on the baby as the center of attention.

REFLECTIONS:

1. I may be in my infancy as far as development of creativity is concerned. In this dream I am more closely related to the child than to the mother.
2. The Creative Child has "tumbled" for me lovingly, has flung itself at me. Such trusting!
3. This dream may also refer to this year of separation from my husband, noting that if I hadn't made the move, my Creative Child might have died.
4. What if I am as strong as I am intelligent?

Another example of that Shadow woman suggested that at the age of nine I felt like a slave.

Jan 18, 1987

Catching a Black Baby

A black woman has left a six-month-old baby in a small crib, like a doll's crib. The baby pulls himself up, and I think he could easily climb out. In fact, I catch him as he goes head-over-heels to the floor. Now an older sister of his (age 2 or 3) demands my attention. I'm just getting the baby settled down—his eyes are closing and there's a sweet smile on his face—when the girl tugs at the crib and wakes him.

The black woman comes in and out of the scene. I keep telling her, "Take the children and all their belongings. Take them out of here before the auction begins!" She ignores me.

Bright Shadow

Another perspective on Shadow is the denial of personal gifts and good qualities, to the extent of stifling energy, enthusiasm, and spontaneity. This is referred to as Bright Shadow. A succinct definition of it is given by Frank Ostaseski in *Discovering What Death*

Can Teach Us about Living Fully: “Sometimes what we repress is not our raw sexual energy, our shame, or something we feel guilty about, but rather our innate goodness.”

From my childhood onward, I was an expert at “hiding my light under a bushel.” The corollary of that was just as stifling: shining my light merely to gratify other people. From my earliest years, there were adults who spoke of me as “Sunshine,” and I felt obliged to put on a happy face for them. In Catholic schools, too, a smiling response gave me security, even when I was seething inside. At the university I was freer, with a range of verbal responses that led to authentic facial expressions and body language.

In the late 1980s, I encountered the work of Alice Miller, a psychotherapist and ardent supporter of the rights of the child. While studying her *Pictures of a Childhood*, I was grief-stricken by her thesis concerning the stifling of creativity in children by adults, including parents. In her attempt to rescue herself from exploitation, she “went underground” and, not until she was a mature adult, did her delight in creativity spring forth again. In the following passage, Alice Miller could be speaking for me:

The creation of a work of art has often been compared to giving birth, the artist identifying with the mother by bringing a “child,” the work of art, into the world. Yet as I envision the creative process, I do not identify with the mother giving birth but with the child struggling to be born. This holds true for my writing as well as my painting.

For me, abnegation was a defensive tactic. If I did not declare any power, I could not be robbed of what I had. Here is a dream that illustrates Bright Shadow:

Jul 5, 1992

A Reading of My Aura

A Being on a higher plane reads my aura and lectures me because: either I don’t realize, or else I don’t acknowledge, the brilliant purple. He asks, “To whom will you bequeath the purple?” As if that’s a possibility!

I'm puzzled because the purple that I sense is a very narrow band swirling in an odd arc—from my mid-thoracic area, across my back, then to eye level on my left side. Even if I could bequeath a certain energy field or virtue or disposition, to whom would I give it? I think of my children and how many gifts each of them has, I think of students. Maybe I'm looking in the wrong direction? Maybe I should be concentrating on the fact that something brilliant is part of my makeup.

Ironically, any self-denial of my brightness was a distortion of true humility. Yet I was still in denial at age 73! At that time an advisor said flat out, “You need to avoid speaking in neutral ways. That’s betraying the brilliance and richness of your experience” (May 24, 2005). Only one other person had ever commented on my brilliance (I almost typed “alleged brilliance”). It was the sociologist, Laurel Richardson, who pronounced it on several occasions, yet each time I had difficulty responding to the very idea. It was only when I became a Reiki practitioner that I was able to tap into the Energy that she called brilliance. Then, recognizing it in myself, I could also see it in clients, a gift for all concerned.

The Collective Shadow

As I was working on this book in the 21st century, when the Collective Shadow hangs over civilization as we know it, I discovered that there were 10 dreams of large-scale disaster in the first two decades of my record-keeping and only one in the next two decades. Though this is a small number for such a large theme, the intensity of feelings almost required that I include them in this book. Yet I debated about including them, wondering not about their relevance but whether they might have “redeeming social value” for readers. Society—as we have come to know it in our country—is in such tumult that I do not wish to give more energy to factions. Therefore, I follow the lead of Christopher Perry, who, under the banner of *The Society of Analytical Psychology*, gives a brief summary of the Collective Shadow:

In the deepest areas of the shadow, we find manifestations of evil as a dynamic in the world, to which we need to relate with collective guilt, responsibility, and reparation: privatised water, the arms trade, famine, torture, Guantanamo Bay, etc.; each of us will have such a list.

Here is my list of dreams about large-scale disasters, several of them provoked by human interference with Nature:

- Volcanic Eruption
- A Wave of Filth over Animals and People
- Day of Judgment of Living Corpses
- Flooding of the Known World
- Surviving a Tornado
- Surviving an Earthquake
- Annihilation with Few Survivors
- End of Our World Due to Nuclear Disaster
- End of Our Civilization Due to Violence
- An Attack by Armed Invaders

I include one example of the Collective Shadow in its entirety:

Jun 2, 1987

Unending Horror

Four dreams, horrific in themselves, have a cumulative effect.

1 a.m. Legal constraints by executors of wills are not followed through. Posing and trickery involved, a mockery of the judicial system!

2:15 a.m. A sense of disaster and doom. A stock-market crash, the wreck of the *Lusitania*, a dirigible in flames, mass hysteria, wildness overall. A downer for me to even write about.

3:30 a.m. Unending horror. Old films of destruction of Jewish ghettos and of extermination camps run before my eyes. Now I'm in the streets, seeing and hearing and smelling the stench.

Now viciousness in a black neighborhood—police brutality. I'm here for a concert by a black musical group that's performing on a stage of polished wood, floating in a cove or channel. They are slaughtered.

I am a victim, too. A bomb has been thrust in my hand, something longer than a hand grenade. I can't loosen it, maybe it's handcuffed to my wrist. I jump through an archway to an alley, trying to get away from the high-density crowd, to save a few people. But the explosion kills hundreds, and collapsing buildings crash on thousands. I am not guilty of this destruction, yet I am a carrier, against my wishes.

[There is a replay.] It's more awful because this time I know what's coming. The sight of a bass violin and other instruments ready to be played in the concert is heart-breaking.

[In the next scene] A black woman is pushing the remnants of my body in a wheelbarrow, thinking to bury her grandmother? When she recognizes me in the remnants, she's glad at our momentary reunion. We have truly loved one another in this lifetime.

REFLECTIONS:

Trying to shake off the violence, I wrote in my journal until 4:30 a.m. There hasn't been this much violence in my dreams *totally* during the past 12 years, and there's no sense of release. I protest this overwhelming onslaught of images!

CONTINUATION:

The onslaught continued when I went back into the dream:

6 a.m. A daughter of mine has been evacuated from a dangerous area, maybe from the hospital where she was just born. Angelyn, kindergarten age, is sent home from school to get parental consent for immunizations. A black girl of Angelyn's age has just witnessed the shooting of her father in the street. She's in shock but otherwise unharmed.

That these dreams occurred while I was at a conference of the Association for the Study of Dreams (ASD) encouraged me to share parts of them with conferees. Bob Ruhl stayed with me after supper

because he'd heard the distress in my voice during a workshop. Bob was a photo-journalist in Vietnam and "learned to remove somewhat from the *pain* of events while staying in the *reality*." He saw nothing wrong with my distancing devices "as long as they are done consciously and are not total denials."

I worked with that dream, "Unending Horror," for many months. In October I read parts of it in Dreamtalk, where members spoke of the courage in the dream. That was solace for me, yet those scenes will never leave my awareness.

The most recent large-scale disaster in our country has been the rise to power of the man who became our 45th President. I refer to him as The-Man-Who-Would-Be-King, one who would never yield to the will of the people. His name is not uttered in my house, lest I slide into a reactionary, hateful mode. Nor will his name be respected in my writing; consequently, I have kept only one snippet of a dream about him, which occurred within three days of his ascendancy. Attorneys General of several States had, that quickly, filed lawsuits regarding actions of his that were unconstitutional.

Jan 24, 2017

A Billionaire President

After three days in the presidency, he declares the country bankrupt and tweets, "No agency to pull us through, dangling over the edge of a participle."

From his first days until his last, he kept everyone dangling—the press, the populace, policy advisors, and powerful leaders of countries that had long been our allies. During his reign he kept every violent faction in our country dangling over the edge, as to when and where their fascist or neo-Nazi groups could do the most damage. Among his heinous acts was his repeatedly inciting violence. That played out in an attempted *coup* by well-organized fanatics who attacked the Capitol Building during a joint session of Congress.

His avowed intention was to overturn whatever Barack Obama, our first black President, had accomplished, and he set about doing that with vengeance. Within a fortress constructed of lies, he

seemed invulnerable; his claim to fame may be that he survived two impeachments by the House without being censured by the Senate.

Another disaster, the Covid-19 pandemic, occurred in 2020, during his final year as sitting President. Due to his original denial of the facts and his lack of leadership thereafter, citizens died off by the thousands—many of whom would have survived if he had followed the advice of epidemiologists and other scientists.

Foreshadow

Much has been said recently about the legacy of violence that we are leaving to our children and grand-children. Not as much has been said about the legacy of violence that we inherited from our forebears, all the way back to the Founding Fathers of our amazing country. The history of the United States is one of violence, and we are reaping what our forebears sowed.

Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War, questioned whether “a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” could long endure. That we come to grips with that question, and honestly face our Shadow right now, is crucially important to civilization.