

Witness to a Colonized and Wounded Human Psyche

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Human sexuality mirrors human culture. Mating dances of seduction and refusal, and acts of non-consensual aggression cannot be separated from traits witnessed, practiced and internalized by the people of a particular society. It is impossible to close the bedroom door to the culture at large. Eros not only inhabits the genitals and the heart but Anima mundi as well.

Sexuality is not going to go away because its nature, which is sublime in the sense of the beautiful and the monstrous, makes people uncomfortable. The phenomenon brings all things human to the fore of consciousness. Therefore, it is imperative we talk about it all, and without mind-negating shame and heart-freezing hysteria.

The late, archetypal psychologist James Hillman, in his final book, the brilliant but under recognized, *A Terrible Love Of War*, noted the consort, the backdoor man, of the Goddess of Love and Beauty is Ares, the God of War. Moments after her practical-minded husband Hephaestus would leave for work, Ares and Aphrodite would be ensconced in the lover's bed, locked in intimate embrace, under the very roof constructed by her craftsman spouse. Withal, libido translates, often, into impractical, irrational and dangerous phenomenon.

Hillman asks, "where else in human experience, except in the throes of ardor – that strange coupling of love with war – do we find ourselves transported to a mythical condition and the gods most real?" — *A Terrible Love of War* (p. 9).

When human beings evince the erotic, we are gripped and grappled by primal forces. The ancient Greeks traced the phenomenon to the heights of Olympus while the lurid, Calvinist/Puritan imagination places it in lakes of torment-inflicting hellfire.

Under capitalism, the activity will be commodified. Sexuality is deemed a "human resource." And, as is the case with the finite resources of all things on planet earth, designated as fodder for exploitation by ruthless profiteers. The genitals of an individual are but another precinct to be colonized. One is advised to be ready with a local insurgency of the heart, mind and body to retain self-rule.

If only it was that easy. Where are the mountains of the heart from which to stage a guerrilla war? The option is possible. But expect a long struggle, and for your heart to receive all manner of wounds. Yet the pain of struggle provides us with a common tongue that limns the radiance of everyday catastrophe, including catastrophes attendant to the realm of Eros, son of errant and erratic Aphrodite. Thus we blunder into self-knowledge, are privy to our own biography, read by pressing fingertips to the braille of one's scars.

Taking It All

When sexuality has been degraded by inequitable power, and the powers at large have decreed all the things of the world theirs for exploitation then the system from which the predatory class gains

their power over the individual must be challenged and dismantled. But the setup cannot be changed from within its own self-sustaining, self-defining order. The notion is as risible as a yellow fin tuna joining the crew of a massive, sea life-decimating fishing trawler, the tuna claiming it plans to reform the system from within.

Men who callously disregard the autonomy of others are only as powerful as the societal structures in place that not only protect but lavishly reward their hyper-aggressive mode of mind and attendant modus operandi — apropos, the spoils gained by the capitalist class by means of their acts of perpetual plunder perpetrated against all of humanity and the whole of nature.

Speaking of which, the coal and steel processing company town, Birmingham, Alabama, where I was born was a colonized place. The small, Southern city, squatting at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, was founded, built and controlled by Northern industrialists. The homes of the city's affluent management class, known among us economic lessers as the Big Mules, luxuriated in the clear, fresh air upon Red Mountain (on which stands an imposing, iron ore cast statue of Vulcan, the Roman version of the Greek's Hephaestus) while the white laboring class and city's Jim Crow-shackled African-American community were relegated to dwelling in the industrial smog below.

As is the case with colonialist socio-economic structures, worldwide, in which a region's wealth is generated by a local, under-compensated labor force, it was imperative for the anger and resentment of the colonized masses to be shunted away from the colonizers. The time-tested method of racial animus did the trick. In my memory, the air of Birmingham was ridden with a heavy industry-generated, sulfuric, rotten egg-smelling reek that was inseparable from the miasmic rage of white working-class men such as my father.

The reasons for their fuming resentment included: When my father would ask for a raise, the stock reply from management was, "You know, I can go over to Colored Town, right now, and hire five n*gg*ers for what I pay, your narrow ass."

Thus the anger of Birmingham's Jim Crow era among working men was always close to the surface, and, at the slightest provocation, would come boiling forth like phalanxes of fire ants from a disturbed bed. Exposing the hateful social milieu of the Jim Crow-ruled South to the world at large was a primary factor in the decision of Martin Luther King et. al. to bring the Civil Rights cause to the city of my birth.

Denuded Empathy

For the maintenance of a colonized order to be maintained, empathy must be denuded, fear and antipathy of the alien other must be perpetuated thereby obstructing any inclination towards mutual respect and incipient feelings of affinity between the tribe granted a favored, dominant position and the tribes subjugated into positions of low status. Alliances among the exploited would prove dangerous to the elites whose fortunes are dependent on perpetual racial and ethnic division and divisiveness. Then, as now, class consciousness must be suppressed by the fomenting of racial resentments. When one gazes upon the sorehead denizens of the so-called alt-right, one becomes witness to the workings of a colonized — and wounded — psyche.

In my father's case, the following reveals how he transmigrated the howling abyss of his displaced rage into the precincts of empathy.

My father injured his back in a fall from a freight car while loading a cache of pig iron; as a consequence, he, on a permanent basis, could no longer perform manual labor — the primary type of

work available to the working-class men of Birmingham. During his convalescence, he taught himself photography, and, by the advent of the Civil Rights Movement, he was freelancing to Black Star Syndicate and became Life Magazine's primary stringer in the region. I have memories of him arriving home from work, his clothes redolent of tear gas, his adrenal system churning, his mind buffeted, unable to process the brutality he witnessed being perpetrated by both city officials and ordinary citizens on the streets of the city.

On a Sunday, in late summer of 1963, my sister and I were immersed in Blakean innocence playing in the sandbox in the backyard of our family's apartment when he returned from the site of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. There was a quality about his stare that I found unnerving. His gaze kept returning to my sister and me. Being a father now myself, I know what thoughts were gripping and grappling him... "what if it had been them. My god ... what if it had been them."

Empathetic awareness has its starting point by evincing a sensitivity to the feelings, hopes, and aspirations of those close to one's heart yet cannot stall out there. The quality must ripple out to distance shores inhabited by the alien other. In this manner, the process of de-colonization of one's mind can begin.

Denial of the reality of Climate Change, albeit outside the cynical ranks of obscenely compensated Big Energy Industry lobbyists and shills, is borne of a similar, life-negating dynamic, i.e., an ossified egotism winnows down awareness to manageable bits of casuistry:

"I just shoveled three feet of snow from my driveway. Global Warming...my frozen butt." "I think too much political hay is made from weather. Our ancestors braved it and it was part of their lives," arrive the (verbatim) quotes as seen on my Facebook newsfeed.

The declarations reveal an inner colonization, manifested by a monoculture of the mind. Because the natural world and the human psyche emerged from the same evolutionary schematic, circumscribing down one's consciousness to ad hoc rationalizations for maintaining a destructive status quo, as is the case with climate denialism, amounts to psychical ecocide thus mirrors the fate of the earth, now in the throes of the sixth great extinction, due to the predation attendant to hyper-industrialization and consumerist addiction. The exponential loss of biodiversity is mirrored in the collective psyche of the consumer-scape, as if a massive fishing trawler has stripped all signs of life from the oceanic heart of humankind.

Going On

"I can't go on...I'll go on." — final two sentences of Samuel Beckett's novel, *The Unnamable*.

Yet, at times, I'm baffled as to how we, the scant and scattered few, who refuse to close our eyes and block our hearts to the realities of the day continue to go on. What force restrains one from reeling into the street seized by lamentation?

One foot is placed before the other. One word follows the next on the page. An ineffable understanding draws us into communion with the world and each other, even as the din of disconsolate angels braces the mind and cleaves the heart.

I know I am not alone in this. Nor are you. Even though, it seems so. What is the common prayer for those who cannot close themselves off from the agonized soul of the colonized world — for those of us who are ants who dream we are Atlas, and our visions crush us as if it were the weight of the earth itself upon our shoulders?

We face a vast aloneness together. An affinity of isolation binds us like a prayer of sacred vehemence. Empathy enjoins us thereby bestowing preternatural strength. Otherwise, the immense sadness of the earth would crush us into oblivion.

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Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-2960.html>