



Wilfredo Lam, *Your Own Life*

***Reflections Regarding Psyche: Drummed-Up Conjurations of Afro-Caribbean
Psychotherapeutic Knowing, Being, and Healing***

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"I wanted with all my heart to paint the drama of my country...In this way I could act as a Trojan horse that would spew forth hallucinating figures with the power to surprise, to disturb the dreams of the exploiters."

-Wilfredo Lam

And so we must invoke and praise the Dark Goddess, who has been banished to the neglected corners of our psyches. Her ultimate function is to facilitate the transformation that occurs in the dark. She provokes the death of our ego selves, of our old forms, and of our false assumptions, so that we can give birth to the new.

-Demetre George

Every split off portion of libido, every complex has or is a (fragmentary) personality....they manifest themselves as daimons, as personal agencies."

-C.G. Jung

For psychic objectivity, or what Jung calls the objective psyche, we require first of all psychic objects, powers that relentlessly obstruct the ego's path as obstacles, obsessions, obtrusions. And this is precisely how Jung speaks of the complexes as Gods or daimons that cross our subjective will.

-James Hillman

The unconscious produces dramas, poetic fictions; it is theater.

-James Hillman

A chain of fantasy ideas develops and gradually takes on a dramatic character: the passive process becomes an action. At first it consists of projected figures, and these images are observed like scenes in a theater. In other words, you dream with open eyes. As a rule there is a marked tendency simply to enjoy this interior entertainment. What is enacted on the stage still remains a background process, it does not move the observer in any way, and the less it moves him, the smaller will be the cathartic effect of this private theater.

The piece that is being played does not want merely to be watched impartially, it wants to compel his participation. If the observer understands that his own drama is being performed on this inner stage, he cannot remain indifferent to the plot and its denouement. He will notice, as the actors appear one by one and the plot thickens, that it causes these fantasy images to appear before him. He therefore feels compelled, or is urged by his analyst, to take part in the play.

-C.G. Jung

...the moment human beings began to think humanly, they have believed that through their dying the dead return to a realm of origins from which both the living and the unborn draw life. This is the awesome, anachronic realm of the progenitors to whom the living remain beholden for their houses, their harvests, their laws, their customs, their patrimonies, their wisdom, and everything else that keeps their societies from relapsing into an inhuman barbarism. Herein lies the authority of the dead and the charisma of the ancestor. By passing from the realm of the engendered into that of the engendering, the dead become the authors and proprietors of life, personifying all that transcends and yet at the same time generates human society.

-Robert Pogue Harrison

To Whom It May Concern, that is, to the Reader who seeks to imagine and practice depth psychology and therapy (particularly family therapy) through a vision and being that is far from the predominantly Solar, imperial, heroic, rational, dualistic, empirical, and technological influences. To the Reader who wants to expand beyond the current overemphasis on a psychotherapy proceeding as forms of literalizing, abstracting, objectivizing, and detaching thought, knowing, and being.

Here it is, almost midnight, and it has been a day of incubation—actually more like a lunar month—during which time I found myself leaving the sunlight, entering and hiding in the noonday shadows, seeking those portals of shade where the psyche loves to hide. The day-world I encounter is that of the modern work-world, is a fluorescent-lit realm of solar action, of subject acting on object, of getting things done with clarity and rationality, productivity and efficiency. Daytime is measured, portioned out sequentially, illuminating the rat-race performed on stationary and yet ever-spinning treadmills.

But it is through the indirect reflection found in shade, it is through poetic reveries seen by Persephonean pupils dilating to the night's own illumination, to the moonlit silhouettes of what matters to the soul: dream, emotion, feelings, spirits, the dead, the animal, the monstrous, the fantastical, the imaginal, the visionary, the metaphorical, the sound, the invisible scents, essences, intuitions, destinies and fates, presences and synchronicities, the shadowy and repressed, the forgotten and abandoned, the remembered and silently, lovingly cared for.

And it is under the cloak of night, the darkness of the oneiric depths, the lunar realm of the feminine, that one might gain a moving glimpse of psychotherapy seen through appearing, deeply animated

eyes. These reflections arise in relation to a therapist of Afro-Caribbean ancestry and culture. I have chosen the name “Psyche” to emphasize that the psyche, as James Hillman describes, always personifies. So to reflect on the psyche, psychology, and psychotherapy, I write these reflections in a personified manner, writing about a particular person and writing personally to you, dear reader, who, too, is a particular person. Psychotherapy appears in and through particularizing persons, the psyche or soul appears in beings, things, places, the very world, in personified and unique forms and ways. Hence, we will get to know, experience, and perhaps find our own psyches initiated into a new way of being, knowing, and proceeding through Psyche being witnessed, imagined, insighted, and honored herein. Through Psyche as found here, we find a way of moving in the rainforests of the soul.

When seen in the light of day and the lit surfaces of observation, I have noticed and can report how Psyche possesses solid and sound clinical acumen, how she is able to conceptualize a client’s clinical picture and larger family situation clearly and astutely within family therapy formulations and understandings. She moves confidently through the phases of family therapy with thoughtful planning and execution, applying techniques and interventions with deft timing and sensitive responses, fine-tuning her therapeutic actions with ever-adapting and self-correcting flexibility in order to assist families in escaping the endless round of damaging negativity towards, and incessant blaming of, each other in an oft-toxic and unconscious pattern—shaped like a poisonous snake eating its tail—and discovering *relation-based* understandings that provide them a healing and unexpected third point of view piercing *right through the circle of the endless round* and taking them all into an unforeseen new and revealing compassion-based vision of their experiences and interactions! This, Psyche does through creative and relevant theme-development, metaphorical images and associations, which enable the family to see what they share in terms of emotional wounds, aspirations, noble intentions, history, and longings to love and be loved, be witnessed and affirmed.

Not every therapist seeking to serve the psyche, channel and embody Psyche, and invite her appearance in a felt, lived, and embodied therapeutic moment can be an effective family therapist. One needs energy, wit, active and expressive eros, a strong, robust fullness of feeling, that can courageously go to where the families are suffering, where they are being stomped on by the stampeding White Elephants in the room, and wrap them, recover them, return them to the safety of love and understanding, hope and forgiveness. Psyche as will be seen, imagined, and manifested here is just this sort of family therapist! And I make this statement as a result of extended clinical conversation around Psyche’s therapeutic work with families and clients as well as via the measurable results revealed in self-report questionnaires filled out by the families in her care.

With all this said, and said with emphasis and an understanding of the practical significance of seeing how Psyche consistently and ably handles high-needs clients and families, emotionally-heated and reactive family systems, crisis-afflicted youths, siblings, parents, and grandparents, I now leave the day-world and descend into deeper, more essential reflections about Psyche’s work, calling, and gifts as a therapist.



Ever Fonseca Cervino, *El Nacimiento del Jigüe (The Birth of the Jigüe)*



Wilfredo Lam, a famous Cuban artist and contemporary of Picasso, expressed himself through an Afro-Caribbean vision. To the left is his painting entitled *Regard Vertical*. His artistic oeuvre was a magical descent into his cultural complexes to conjure the daimons, the ancestors, the dead, the spirits who provide the under-standing upon which he stood, grounded in their imagination and allowing their roots to shoot up through him into this life and the living, these times and their complexities. Such artistic descent into ancestral memory now enables me to see and discern Psyche's own Jamaican heritage and soul-geography or psyche-terrain upon which she stands as a powerful personality. To begin to speak to this in her, to what is moving through her and registering in me, is to first pause to gather the feeling Wilfredo Lam conveys in his imagination of "vertical regard." To see a person with poetic imagination and intuition, one must have ideas through which to see, or better said, *feel*. And in

ancient Greece, the shades of the underworld were known as the "eidola" and this word shares the same etymology as "eidos," *idea* or *image*. So, to begin entering the Afro-Caribbean soul-geography is to begin to develop a vertical regard for those seen by South American and Caribbean Island folk, otherwise known as the *loas*, the dead, the spirits, or—stated in modern Jungian psychological terms, the complexes—who offer a personifying and animating realm of psychological perception not

available to abstract and rational understanding. Hence, Lam's vision—"I wanted with all my heart to paint the drama of my country...In this way I could act as a Trojan horse that would spew forth hallucinating figures with the power to surprise, to disturb the dreams of the exploiters."—reveals that to have vertical regard for the above and below realms known within the theatrical drama of his country was to enable him to sneak into modern imperialisms of thought "hallucinating figures with the power to surprise" and shake up the habitual view of "the exploiters."

Modern psychologies, and evidence-based practices in particular, speak largely a language of empirical imperialism. What is valued is what can be practical and measurable, forcing the field of vision down to objects that are tangible and measurable, reportable and statistically-reviewed, analyzed and sifted to reveal tables and pie-charts. I speak sharply not to minimize the value and place of such practices in the application of psychology, but to hold up to this dominant perspective what this dominant perspective attacks by rejecting, minimizing, abandoning, and exiling views outside its purview. Lam uses the word "exploiters" to describe the colonial incursion of a European worldview—largely Christian, crusading, monotheistic, capitalistic, and rational—into the indigenous psyche of his native country and cousin-countries also rooted in Afro-Caribbean polytheism, a theological and cultural imagination that stays close to the psyche and its variegated images, that maintains a deep connection to places and nature, and appears as manifestations in the non-rational and feeling modes of experience.

Psyche, grounded as she is in psychology's current *Zeitgeist*, capable as she is within rational and technique-based psychological interventions, intelligent as she is in understanding psychological abstractions, conceptualizations, and explanations, *has a unique and exceptional—as well as natural and innate—talent of feeling, imagining, and encountering the psyche theatrically, poetically, and perhaps best described as shamanistically*. She has the ability to approach, enter, and encounter, the undiscovered verdant Amazonian realms of the psyche and all the soul-inhabitants—human, inhuman, animal, and otherworldly—to be found there. Jung developed his imagination of the complexes through his study of mediumistic trances, the word-association experiment, and the "little people" appearing as fairies, elves, and dwarves in fairy and folk tales, through his study of all that appears to have personality and presence beyond the ego and its identifications. At the core of the complexes were to be found the archetypes or what has since time immemorial been experienced as Gods and Goddesses. What a Jamaican Zion Revivalist priestess might see in a situation, what a Kumina Mayal-man/woman would discern as a bad spirit or a spell inflicted upon an individual, what an indigenous shaman might discern as an illness occurring due to a stolen or lost soul, and what a therapist might view as animating family dynamics and complexes creating pain and distress, perhaps are all similar visions and reflect a colorful and complex imagining and visualizing psychological imagination compensatory to the imperial, empirical, monotheistic, and literalizing, spiritualizing, technologizing approaches bereft of the hallucinating figures with their power to surprise and disturb the dreams of exploiting egoism that sees everything in relation to what will benefit and build up a singular/monolithic ego-identity, be it of an individual or a collective, be it of an individual's ego-psychology or of an evidence-based practice limiting its imagination and identity to what can be measured and empirically-verified.



Wilfredo Lam, *Various Paintings*



Wilfredo Lam, *Les Fiances*

...the moment human beings began to think humanly, they have believed that through their dying the dead return to a realm of origins from which both the living and the unborn draw life. This is the awesome, anachronic realm of the progenitors to whom the living remain beholden for their houses, their harvests, their laws, their customs, their patrimonies, their wisdom, and everything else that keeps their societies from

relapsing into an inhuman barbarism. Herein lies the authority of the dead and the charisma of the ancestor. By passing from the realm of the engendered into that of the engendering, the dead become the authors and proprietors of life, personifying all that transcends and yet at the same time generates human society.

-Robert Pogue Harrison

Let us return to this quote found haunting the *en-trance* into this reflection letter about how the Caribbean Psyche cares for and attends to the psyche in therapy. When we place this cave-mouth entry-point underneath Wilfredo Lam's painting above, we encounter the anachronic realm of origins, the realm of the dead, these from whom both the living and the unborn draw life. Psyche is called to engage the psyche at this depth, in these realms, wherein lies the authority of the dead and the charisma of the ancestor. When dealing with a client's or a family's psychological ailments, certainly one must provide those suffering with techniques and coping skills, but there is a fundamental, a critical, an essential aspect of therapeutic work which goes overlooked time and again: *the need to bring the fullness of one's feeling and imagination—as lived and experienced in the emotional/psychic body—to the encounter with what is in the room when one is engaging another's or a family's psychology and psychological distress.* To get truly to the "root" of the problems brought into the therapy room, to get to the source of another's psychological malaise, one must pass from what is presented to what, or *who*, is present; that is, we must pass from the realm of the living/engendered to that of the engendering/the dead, the *eidola*, the ideas and images that are populating the psyche as experienced in the therapy room who author and generate the dramas that are experienced. People will say, "I don't know what came over me!" It is that which "comes over us" and manifests as fantasy, compulsion, impulse, behavior, inspiration, pathological symptom, family dynamic, and creative genius even, which can be accessed by a nature and psyche such as Psyche's, informed as it is by her personal and cultural gifts and dispositions.

Every time she makes a case presentation, it is not long before Psyche begins enacting the client, the siblings, the mother, the father, the grandmother, and perhaps even the receptionist, the translator, the supervisor, or the colleague. Suddenly, a mere clinical recitation comes alive with the conjured presences of each significant character in the unfolding plot being discerned and attended to by her! Her voice changes as each character speaks and she offers her theatrical gifts over to the needs and truths of the client or family so that they can display their parts, sound their pain through their masks and roles, find their story as envisioned by the invisible playwrights of the soul, otherwise here being described as the ancestors, the dead, and the spirits.

To engage with the clinical material in the manner that Psyche naturally does, is to invite a deeper, less abstract and detached engagement with the psyche and its soul-inhabitants, these players of the inner theater. Let us hear Jung's words again: "The piece that is being played does not want merely to be watched impartially, it wants to compel his participation. If the observer understands that his own drama is being performed on this inner stage, he cannot remain indifferent to the plot and its denouement. He will notice, as the actors appear one by one and the plot thickens, that it causes these fantasy images to appear before him. He therefore feels compelled, or is urged by his analyst, to take part in the play." Psyche's Afro-Caribbean approach, this theatrical sensibility, this shamanistic conjurational (a word I just conjured to meet the psyche's needs of this sentence!),

bespeaks of this invaluable approach to therapeutic work! To approach the images and feelings and experiences, to approach the dream figures and soulscapes, as living others with whom one must engage with since it is the inner play of one's own life and this world one lives in, is to listen to the disenfranchised, the wounded, the shadowy, the repressed, the underdeveloped, the marginalized, the misunderstood, the judged, the overlooked, the scapegoated, the entire dark-hoard of all who are not accepted by oneself or the collectives in which we live, and allow them a place in consciousness. Only then, when we listen to what ails us, what ails another, when we confront what disturbs us, brings us to our knees, makes us surrender our ego-imperialism, will we perform the true and difficult but profoundly important psychological work and calling of *therapeia*, or caring for the psyche and for those Others found there who are crossing our ego paths so that we will finally see them and acknowledge their place in engendering our lives and soul-stories.



Now it is one thing to prescribe clients and families interventions and skills, to have them practice and role-play these, to have them create a behavioral chart, or track their thoughts, but it is quite another thing to enter the emotional depths, replete with unconsciousness and invisible complexes/dynamics, that are powerful enough to take a life through suicide or violence. To address and transform intense emotional complexes and dynamics requires emotionally working with intense emotional complexes and dynamics. One leaves mere skills-building or detached interpretations/conceptualizations and becomes an alchemist becoming an active chemical participant in the alchemical vessel of therapy seeking to create a chemical reaction to produce alchemical gold from those most repugnant and rejected aspects of an individual's experiences/nature and/or a family's experiences/dynamics. One must enter the emotion, one must encounter the complexes and engage them within one's own emotional life and through connections with one's own complexes! Put another way, one must engage the spirits of another or of a situation with one's own conscious and developed relationships with one's own spirits. Here again, we are back in an imagination of shamanistic practice and Jamaican cultural orientations. And

here again, Psyche is intuitively and naturally approaching clients and families within this feeling, emotionally-embodied, and theatrically-lived approach.



Here is a photograph (circa 1900) of Wilfredo Lam's godmother, a shango priestess. If one pauses to truly feel one's way into her display, discerns her imaginal presence as manifested here, we can gain a sense of an approach to the psyche far from the rational-empirical ones currently holding sway. How would this shango priestess approach a family's psychological dynamics and distresses? The therapeutic movement would come via the lived-in-and-felt-through emotional body, through a deeply-entered involvement with what is coming up within the therapy session.

A 12-year-old female Latina client reported a dream in which shadow-men were attacking people in her apartment building. She could see these otherworldly sinister ones creeping and hiding in people's shadows. She flees to her apartment where her siblings and extended family seek safety

on the kitchen table. They wrap blankets around them and this plus the being on the table affords them protection. At one point, she falls off the table and can't get back on, a fence rises up around the table and she panics: the sinister men-presences can now grab her. Suddenly a little four-year-old nephew reaches towards her extending his hand from there up on the table and past the fence. She grabs his hand, and he pulls her up on the table to safety with her family. Dream ends. Here we have an image of certain complexes, or presences—the sinister ghost-men—lurking and threatening. They hide in people's shadows. Is this not what happens as one group projects on another group

some negative trait, overlooking that this very trait is part of their own shadow-side? Does not the family-values politician who judges others suddenly discover his shadow-side has taken him into an airport bathroom stall to engage in decidedly non-family-oriented activity to his utter dismay? Does he not let out the cry, “I don’t know what came over me?” In the girl’s dream, she seeks safety in the *temenos*, the sacred precinct of the family table, for a family can provide safe haven to the threatening and unintegrated complexes of the larger collective or even of the family or culture. And it is the warmth of the blanket and the love of a nephew that create an image of *eros*, of that feeling-relatedness that keeps us human and psychologically contained.

And the dream speaks to Psyche’s approach to therapy and which I bring before this lunar reflection and indirection of the dead of night far from the rationalism and clarity of the day: this imagination of therapeutic presence is one that discerns the sinister and threatening agencies in the psyche seeking or perhaps even promoting through their disturbances greater consciousness and human relatedness. This therapeutic approach or intervention seeks feeling-relatedness and all that supports the creation and maintenance of a therapeutic *temenos* or precinct through the conscious use of boundaries, ritual, and a sense of the sacred through the deep reverence for holding the client’s/family’s feelings/material in privacy, as a deeply-regarded and cared-for secret, as a private and reverent viewing of a sacred theatrical play or a theatrically-enacted liturgy. This approach deeply sees, imagines, discerns, cares for, engages, participates in, and assists the transformation of the invisible Others shaping and impacting one’s psychological life and the lives of the families in our care. It is a therapeutic presence that has courage to look into death and darkness, the evil and the inhuman, with courage, stamina, and the fullness of one’s psychological/emotional being. So many people come into our presence having suffered such darkness, such tragic happenings, such losses, and such wrong-turnings. Nothing less than such a full-bodied and full-hearted and full-souled response will do!



Yoruban Priestess

We began with Lam's painting here and I want to return to it now. After these reflections regarding Psyche's therapeutic persona and nature, we can insight what I am discerning about her through its image. There is the dark feminine, perhaps the Dark Goddess herself, amidst leafy island nature, among birds and flowers and bones, the great mysteries of sexuality and feminine beauty, the mask as the vehicle for the deities and daimons, the complexes and the archetypes, to enter embodied consciousness through dance, movement, emotion, laughter, voice and display, through tragic lamentations and enactments of suffering, now—via the mask—with just enough emotional-distance-yet-still-deeply-felt—that one can reflect on what is happening, on what plot one is in the grips of, on what destiny one is being called to serve by the spirits and,



as a result, hash out and elaborate upon within the struggles of one's life. All is gray, shades of grey, perhaps not fifty shades, but full of enough shadow that one can reflect on the deeper mysteries of power, control, manipulation, sadness, depression, dying, losses, and endings. And yet, there is the greening of life, pushing upward from bony roots, sources invisible and at a right angle, a vertical angle to our typical and literal ways of seeing and living. We get in touch with hints of pink, the mysteries evoked by that color which so many adolescents bring in, flushed in the cheeks with their first loves and lusts. And there is the yellow, the wisdom that comes from the having lived things through, of having aged just enough that the leave-taking is felt more fully, humanly, tenderly. And there is that large eye, staring widely at us while we stare wide-eyed back: the image takes us in as it penetrates us; there is no escape from its deepening vision. It is psyche's dark, deep, Hades-informed vision, informed and authorized by the dead, those nameless multitudes of eyes peeking through the forest of grey all around us in the interstices and edges of shadows amidst all these black-and-white practices of psychology which have long left the emotional and colorful life of the parrots and the toucans of the soul. Psyche is this image.

But not just this image.

There is another that deepens this one and is pregnant with all that has been incubated upon here:

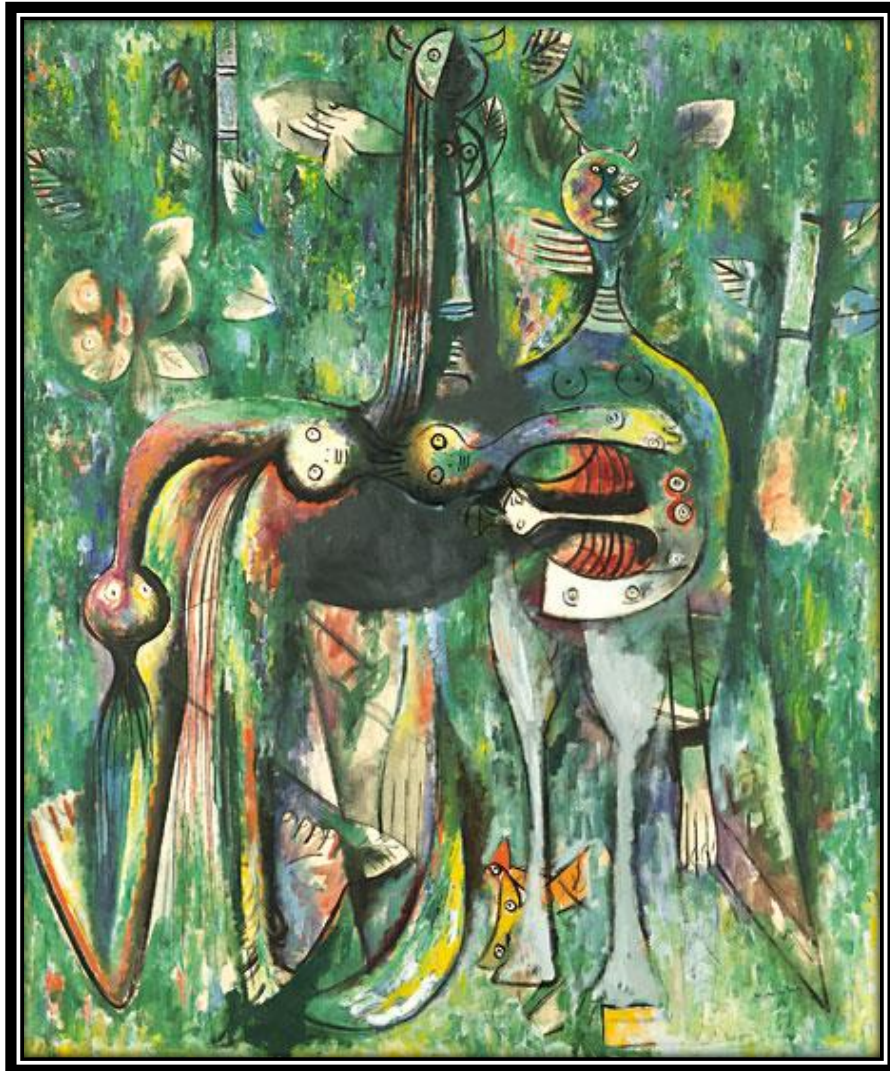


Wilfredo Lam, *Maternidad en Verde (Maternity in Green)*

Here we have the renewing green in which the descent into darkness has led to the germination of the invisible seeds of the psyche. Our vertical regard of all that is invisible and accessed only through an embodied and Dionysian imagination that is felt deeply, lived intensely, surrendered to in order to let the husk of ego reveal what has deep roots within our very ground, has led to this epiphany of a beautiful image, an artistic vision, one informing the therapeutic consciousness that Psyche is growing into. She is and can further become a feminine vessel for what ever-springs eternal, like Spring itself, for what is going to be born out of such persevering and courageous responses to her calling, out of her compassionate and giving way: a therapeutic essence that is born of inner work, of inner and outer engagement with the spirits who are all around us; under us, supporting us; above us, guiding us; amidst us, wreaking havoc and producing the need for greater engagement and consciousness. Once again, this maternity of greenness is ripe and replete with nature, the animals, the emotions of child-rearing, the music-making that is instrumental to any imagination of therapeutic attending, the chokehold of the feminine that calls us to greater psychological consciousness through the emotions of fear and melancholy and the violent pluckings of all that must be mourned as it “leaves” us, pun intended. Just like the horses hidden within the image, one must horse-around, too; joke and find joy through the epiphanies of humor and delight, through the parodies of what becomes so serious and is taken way too seriously, through the playful teasing of nicknames arising

from the noting of eccentricities that make each and every person or personage unique and peculiar, and which the soul adores and relishes.

In the end, these reflections are offerings of imagination to what is imagining to me through Psyche's display, spirit, essence, and presence. In the end, these images and words and ideas and *eidola* are efforts to mirror the subtleties of a colleague I have come to know personally and professionally as I seek to attune to, and support, her personal and professional growth, her psychological and clinical gifts. Here at the end, these are echoes and present-night Yoruban rituals seeking to evoke what is truly present in Psyche's presence! They are humbly submitted as just-so stories, musings that speak perhaps in half-truths because it is the created stories and images that can grasp the paradoxical and living truth more fully than any explanation laid bare through one-dimensional language and description-as-fluorescent-light making everything evenly made plain, without subtlety or the invitation into ever-revealing mystery.



Wilfredo Lam, *Le sombre malembo dieu du Carrefour (Dark Malembo, God of the Crossroads)*

To close, here is a little commentary by Carlos Suarez de Jesus of the Miami New Times:

“Two powerful figures dominate the composition. The one on the left sports a horse's tail; the one on the right a horse's hooves. Both have round, horned heads, a nod to Eleggua, the Afro-Cuban deity and trickster figure who guards the crossroads.

In Santería, priests who channel the spirits of powerful deities are called caballo, or horse, describing they are being "ridden" by an Orisha during possession.

Several of Lam's paintings on exhibit feature female subjects with horse heads, tails, and hooves, which directly reference spiritual transformation.”

This quote referring to the painting above of the Dark Malembo (also imagined as the Orisha Eleggua), god of the crossroads, gives us some closing ideas to further incubate regarding Psyche's clinical gifts and talents. I hear these references to Santería—for the sake of these reflections—not as a literal spiritual practice, which undoubtedly it is, but as a psychological *image* of how one with clinical gifts—such as those that Psyche has and which can be further developed as she continues her journey over all the different crossroads of life and clinical practice—can channel the complexes and archetypes, or the spirits and the deities, in the manner of Chiron, that Greek figure of the Centaur who is the wounded-healer, that figure half-horse (or *caballo* if we follow the quote above) and half-human, deeply-connected to both in the emotional/instinctual and psyche-lived body, who can carry the Orishas through Dionysian theatrical possession and procure healing, indeed psychological transformation, through his *performance* of the office and figure of the *psychopomp* or guide of souls across any threshold, crossroad, or impasse that arrives in our own life or in the lives of the individuals and families in our care.

May these words be received with the spirit and soul in which they were conceived and composed, may they be welcomed as caring and emotionally-felt reveries kept as close to my own South American/Venezuelan complexes and spirits as possible in order to speak to perhaps overlooked and unrecognized aspects of Psyche's nature and therapeutic practice, in order to raise them up in the cool air of the night and in the half-toned glowing moonlight informed by the Dark Goddess still vividly roaming through Caribbean terrains that have not yet submitted completely to the Sunlight of our current prevalent psychologies. She and her animals, she and her dark, fertile, green nature and underworldly mysteries are truly the source of hidden springs of healing and compensatory imaginings for this noble profession of *cura animarum*, this care of souls.

Sincerely, theatrically, psychologically, and with deep feeling and soul-regard for Psyche,

George Viney, Psy.D. MFT
Family Therapy Clinical Supervisor

Written in the wee hours at the crossroads between after-midnight and morning...

Postscript: We began with a multitude of voices/quotes, and as we linger here on the threshold of the ending, more quotes come alive to be heard not literally or spiritually, but as *images speaking about and within the psyche, speaking as the way we actually experience the imaginal Others in our daily psychological life.* We need not be triggered if the quotes speak outside of our religious belief system (if it does) because we are approaching these Others with *imagination* and with the *as-ifness of theatrical and embodied consciousness/knowing and artistic/poetic vision...* We approach ideas and images as felt and embodied as we would experience a dream with all its imaginings that are often so beyond our humble little ego's tightly held schemas and beliefs. How else can the new arrive in us as spontaneous, ingenious images, or ideas, or feelings, or rituals, if they don't arrive with their inimitable "power to surprise," as Lam put it? New images and ideas: new eyes and new experiences in the body, in our embodied knowing, *in our practice of psychotherapy.* We are imagining psychotherapy as a realm of Dionysus, the Greek god of madness, of the emotions as lived and felt, and of ecstatic/altered/tragic/embodied ways of knowing. We are imagining psychotherapy from Afro-Caribbean complexes that are utterly Dionysian. So here are the quotes:

While the Gods of Judaism and Christianity, according to their scripture, walked among us long ago and promised to come again one day, the Gods of Santeria are *here...* They sing, walk, talk, dance, joke, heal, curse, and save, through a process the West usually classifies as psychotic but which millions in Santeria experience with no evidence of psychosis: possession....

Gradations and subtleties of sacred states and behavior are enacted not only before your eyes but within your body...That's not at all like sitting still while a minister preaches about...divinity or a therapist theorizes about one's anima.

What in the west would be called "inflation" (at best) is an experience common to all in Santeria: the Orisha speaks through your very flesh. Which wouldn't be at all possible if flesh were, by its nature, suspect. (No Cartesian mind-body split around here!) To be in your body is a beautiful thing, and the gods prove it by joining you in your body. Is it surprising that peoples with centuries of such traditions move more easily in their body than Judeo-Christians for whom the body is suspect?

-Michael Ventura

Ultimately I am also concerned with how this behavior challenges the notion of hierarchical types of knowledge. Embodied knowledge—that is, knowledge found within the body, within the dancing and drumming body—is rich and viable and should be referenced among other kinds of knowledge. In performance,...Haitian, Cuban, and Bahian practitioners reveal and reference history, philosophy, religion, physiology, psychology, botany, and mathematics in addition to music and dance. These disciplines are among what the body articulates as it grows in spiritual practice over a lifetime.

-Yvonne Daniel

Were we in Haiti, set on Greenland's coast, up the river Niger, or in ancient Greece, an emotional seizure would be seen as a visitation of externalities. A mood descends, a passion strikes, an urge rises up and won't let go. These would be imagined as "gifts" (William James, Chapter XIX) of the spirit—or of what? But not mine. And, they would be treated with the respect due to guests rather than with the hostility that would attempt to get rid of invaders by tranquilizers, moral commandments, or abreaction.

But if imagined to be inside me, emotions are, of course, "too much" to contain and so become, in Blake's word, demonic, and need abreaction (exorcism). So goes our usual theory. We express emotions to get

them "out." Whereas, if we follow Blake, and how emotions actually work, we begin to realize that they come to us from elsewhere, the not-me, enter our premises, and enchant us into their condition. Blake also called emotions "divine influxes," suggesting that they are the way the Gods flow into the soul, moving it to a more-than-human condition of excitement and fury, of sorrow and mourning, of folly and ecstatic desire.

-James Hillman

Dionysiac psychology is rooted in emotions and the living of life as destiny. Euripides introduces us to this state of consciousness in his tragedy *Alceſtis*, when the chorus says:

I have searched through many books,
I have studied the speculations of the astronomers,
I have pursued innumerable arguments:
Yet I have found nothing stronger than fate.

I take the words of the chorus as being of great value in the sense that the psyche is freed of all its burden of knowledge and arguments when our complexes (in other words, our history) have become a consciousness of our destiny. For me, to contemplate the great afflictions of life (the paralyzed complexes) as destiny means a wider consciousness.

-Rafael Lopez-Pedraza

In general, we are too distant from the emotions that herald the presence of Dionysus. An awareness of this distance might be the only possible attitude, for to imagine a psychotherapist who would be sensitive to the appearance of Dionysus, and who would be able to respond at a Dionysiac level of the psyche and so propitiate the ancient healing attribute of this god, is hard to imagine today...With the repression of the emotional Dionysus, comes the repression of the body. Ivan Linforth says that the body is always Dionysiac, from which we deduce that Dionysus is always the body. This means leaving behind the intellect and being in the body, feeling the body. For me, the treasure hard to attain in psychotherapy is the emotional body, and this obviously has to do with Dionysus. We can say there is a Dionysus in one's body, waiting to be contacted, waiting to give access to the wealth of emotions and feelings.

-Rafael Lopez-Pedraza

...in psychotherapy, one is faced with cases of those whose parents have hidden all that has to do with family tragedy and death. Thus there is no familiarity with serious and tragic emotions and, as a result, the person is prone to being taken over by the most peculiar and unimaginable syndromes, which include strange depressions.

-Rafael Lopez-Pedraza

In modern psychology, as with Dionysus, there is very little discussion about the psychic body and our connection to it. But here, in the context of the body, is the place to discuss Dionysus and the theater. The art of Dionysus par excellence is seen in the theater. We cannot conceive of a good actor who does not have a consciousness of the body. One's thoughts move into the fascinating field of the actor's training, a discipline in which the psychology of the body becomes a painful reality and words and the body of the actor must come together in a Dionysiac consciousness. Such a combination of words and body constellate the Dionysiac strata of the psyche not only in the actor but also in the therapist.

-Rafael Lopez-Pedraza



Wilfredo Lam, *Untitled*

Let us conclude by returning to Lopez-Pedraza's reflections from above:

I take the words of the chorus as being of great value in the sense that the psyche is freed of all its burden of knowledge and arguments when our complexes (in other words, our history) have become a consciousness of our destiny. For me, to contemplate the great afflictions of life (the paralyzed complexes) as destiny means a wider consciousness.

This letter composed on the occasion of reflecting on Psyche's ways has been an effort to not only provide a picture of, and report on, her clinical gifts in her psychotherapeutic work with families, but to speak about and affirm her, and our, individuating and unfolding journey to deeply know, feel, and discern complexes and history in herself, and in others, with healing compassion and wisdom. This letter is an encomium to describe, highlight, honor, and give a place to this cultured, animated, embodied, Afro-Caribbean, and Dionysian approach to caring for the psyche in ourselves, others, and the very world.