

Coniunctio: Transforming the Wound of the Heart

by Carole Darnell

This is the third and final article of the *coniunctio* series, which continues to present profound experiences beyond the limits of words. I will resume from the last article, summer 2013 newsletter, discussing the final two bullets: my move to the Northern Kingdom, and the challenging transformations of my most intimate relationships. The last article ended with a description of a profound apparitional visit from my dead father. As is the supernatural case of all things *coniunctio*, the very night my father visited me, he likewise visited my mother.

That next day, I spoke with my 93-year old mother. She began ranting incoherently, “your father spent the night in my bed with me and you kids should be more concerned with how your father is spending his nights!” My heart raced with shock! I was willing to consider my father’s apparition as my own active imagination, but now she confirmed what the rational mind cannot. On my father’s death bed, I had privately spoken with him, “Dad, when you get to where you are going, please communicate with me whether I’m on the right path spiritually and make it in a way that I cannot mistake it’s you.” Clearly, he had succeeded!

The more mother talked, the more her sharp-tongued ability faded, slowly rendering her unable to connect the dots of her speech. My equally concerned siblings, who live close to her, rushed her to the doctor where she was diagnosed as having had a stroke. She has not regained her sharp-tongued abilities, leaving me to believe the stroke destroyed the area of her brain responsible for mean-spiritedness. Since my father’s apparitional visit, she has miraculously turned into a sweet old lady, opening up a sacred space more conducive for dealing with life’s challenging relationship issues. My father’s visit to both of us on the same night caused me to wonder how this sacred opening might best be used to heal our relationship. I was sure dad was keeping his end of our deathbed bargain. How could I respond in kind? Given the triangulated nature of my relationship with my mother and father, it seemed in everyone’s best interest that I not reveal to my family that dad had visited mother and me on the same night. I found myself haunted by my father’s visit, praying that I might be an appropriate vessel for its Divine purpose. Since his visit juxtaposed my sexual healing experience with the dark stranger, perhaps its purpose has to do with freeing my own sexuality, which somehow got sucked into the sexual wounds of both my mother and father. The more I’m able to view the physical world as secondary to the spiritual realm, the more it becomes increasingly clear that my sexual wounds extend beyond both my parents, stretching all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Shortly after my mother’s stroke, she was admitted to the

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hospital for gallbladder surgery. Louise Hay, author of, *You Can Heal Your Life*, states that gallbladder problems stem from “bitterness, hard thoughts, condemning, and pride.” It is comforting to consider my mother has perhaps been purged of such inner demons. Since her stroke, I can talk to her without holding my breath or fearing an emotional explosion. During a recent conversation she reported, “...I have some regrets...there were things I should not have said and things I should have, but I didn’t...just turned a blind eye, hoping the problems would go away. They didn’t...just got worse...then it was too late as everyone has died.” At first I considered this her way to apologize to me, perhaps in preparation for her own death. Upon further consideration, I wondered if it might be an opportunity for both of us to be more real, honest, and soul-worthy. Certainly, I was hyper-aware of that needy child in me that wanted to say, “What about me? I’m still alive!” Yes, her stroke had miraculously eradicated her mean-spiritedness, but still, my mother is likely not the best healing vessel for my childhood wounds regarding masculine/feminine sexuality; especially since I can now see its roots trailing throughout all of history?

I feel my relationship with my mother has come full circle: from narrowly escaping the terror of her primitive explosive blasts, to wondering through a motherless/fatherless terrain of the larger world, to finally discovering within myself and Nature a Divine Mother/Father behind it all who has been awaiting my embrace all the while. What a terrible and glorious journey with its dark and Light aspects of both mother and father! I’m reminded of my father’s apparitional instructions, “...the Light and dark are inseparable in their symbiotic dance. The best you can do is lean into the Light.” Perhaps this is everyone’s journey regardless of our biological parent’s positive or negative contributions. Can any of us ever claim rite-of-passage into adulthood without some conscious victory over our mother/father complexes? Just when I was beginning to relish in the slightest victory here, I was immediately humbled and brought face to face with my own less than perfect mothering.

As indicated in my last article, after a 28-year residency in Atlanta, Georgia, I up-rooted my entire life and moved to Newport, Vermont in the Northern Kingdom. This included selling my Lodge and Retreat Center, severing many long term professional and personal relationships, and altering my close physical relationship with my daughter. Although she is grown and has her own successful life and family, my move has not been easy for her. In a fit of fury and hurt she sobbed, “...but mom, my entire life, since I was in your womb, I have never been away from you!” All I could say in support was, “I know.” In reflection, I wondered about my dedicated relationship to my daughter. How much of it might have been an unconscious need to create a different mother-daughter relationship than I had had with my own mother. Had I run smack into the wall of enantiodromia yet again? Had the pendulum swung to the other extreme of dysfunction only to now dangle in some limbo-land? Had I too unconsciously dwelled in the land of *not-good-enough-mother*? I do not have the answers. On the surface, our mother-daughter relationship seems so close; a 360° from my own upbringing. I’m acutely aware of the highly volatile nature of our feminine dance; these two archetypal pairs: mother-daughter, Light-dark, struggling to gain a more evolved kind of harmony. I hold strong our relationship container as my daughter wails and rages at me. Occasionally, during the eye of the

storm, I bravely bring forth the sword of Truth regarding our feminine abandonment issues, which softens the anger and provides an opening of unconditional Love that springs up from the acceptance of what is. This provides hope.

Meanwhile, up in the Northern Kingdom of the frozen tundra, just two miles from the Canadian border, I'm facing similar issues with my son. I arrived on May 3, 2013, ready to begin nesting and creating order and peace in my new home, which is actually my son's home. For three years he had been asking me to move into his home and maintain it, "live mortgage free" he said. It had become impossible for him to maintain due to his full time employment in Boston as well as starting his own company. I had owned my own home since I was twenty so this was a gigantic step for me. However, when a buyer for my Atlanta Lodge showed up presenting the opportunity to eradicate approximately 20 more years of mortgage payments, leaving me mortgage free, I decided scratch this item off my to do list.

Nesting into my son's home brought with it a much closer relationship on many levels, including mingling finances! Yikes! He and I have lived in different states for over 20 years, our separation precipitated by his entrance into college and my divorce from his father. You can imagine the unhealed trauma that still existed for both of us. A wound entombed beneath huge boulders of physical distance, 20+ years of passed time and unhealed issues from my divorce. Seemed like overnight, by some supernatural force, we traversed past these entombing boulders and now stood face to face like two deer caught in the headlights!

Yes, he still lived in another state three and a half hours away, but visits are now frequent, including talking every day. Not even a month had passed since my arrival when we found ourselves right in the middle of a heated conversation about how our relationship changed following the divorce. There we stood in our naked vulnerability of hurt and rage, ill prepared to deal with this volatile space. Before me stood a massive, primitive, raging, annihilating beast of a man, behind which trembled a boy frozen in the painful wounds of divorce. I cannot imagine what I looked like to him! It was too soon. The time was not yet ripe evidenced by the beast's retreat and the mother's voiceless, wide-eyed stare. A bit of space was created and gradually a slow thaw is beginning to melt our frozen hurts.

What was I thinking to undertake such a massive re-do of my entire life at my age! I thought this was supposed to be my *golden years*! As I understood it, travel would be to exotic places with warm beaches and soft pink sunsets. It's as if I followed some coniunctio deer, luring me up to the frozen tundra where temperatures are dipping to record lows of -23°, spreading across the nation, dumping snow in places like Texas, home of my childhood! I thought I was following my inner guide to the fulfillment of my life's purpose, perhaps, I hoped, to some form of coniunctio experience. Had I naively set out on an adventure that would lead to the foreclosure of my life rather than a life culminating in some level of meaning?

Recently, I returned to Atlanta to attend a Jung Society lecture by Rick Tarnas, PhD, Harvard scholar and renowned astrological expert. He eloquently spoke through a wide lens that considered the sacred Mysteries of the cosmos and humankind's relationship to this ether realm. Tarnas made the following statement, "God works out his shadow side through humankind, especially regarding the masculine

and feminine." Tarnas had already succeeded in rendering my heart wide open with his infinitely expansive knowledge that poured from his own heart, but this statement brought me to my knees in a revelatory way. I simultaneously felt shocked and relieved; shocked to consider that God is still working out the polar energies of masculine and feminine, and relieved to consider that this might let me off the hook! Who was I to think I might resolve these polarities if indeed God was still working on this! Could it be that resolution is not *the* goal? Perhaps instead the *true* sacred opportunity is being able to hold the tension of these two, grappling with the volatility of this massively potent duo, the masculine and feminine, while maintaining some level of conscious presence. Is this the inner marriage, the coniunctio seed that holds the Divine Child? Deep consideration of this profound notion continues to bring waves of recontextualizing to my entire life, reminding me of a quote by T.S. Eliot, "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

Sometimes a move to foreign territory helps to shed much of life's surplus, including cozy old slippers and safe but impeding aspects of relationships. Shortly after returning to my frozen tundra from the Tarnas lecture, I encountered validation for these new revelations regarding this volatile masculine/feminine duo. I met a man who embodied the qualities of the archetypal knight, being both emotionally and spiritually sensitive to *her* needs while mastering the world's challenges for being an excellent earner and provider. He loved being known as a strong family man and pillar of his community. He lamented, "I had everything I ever wanted and then some, so why, after 29 years of happy marriage did I succumb to the seductions of another? Why would I jeopardize everything for what is now beginning to fall apart in a mere four years? Who will I be if I'm not in relationship with *her*? How will I get anyone to love me?" There it was, the ego in possession of the knight, driving our hero so far in one direction that he flipped into its shadow expression; enantiadromia playing itself out yet again, but this time for me to *really* grasp its deeper meaning. Even if the ideal man manages to shine forth from the abyss of patriarchy, riding high on his white horse, able to rescue damsels with polished chivalry, he is still accompanied by the darkest of companions, salaciously waiting for an opportunity to take him into the depths of despair just as soon as he falls into a comfortable slumber. This man's story reminded me of one of Rumi's great poems:

If you hear what I say, and if you hear what I cannot say, because there are no words terrible and beautiful enough for the flame I worship.

You will be ignorant of all you have ever been. And you will become bewildered, and you will run from all that is meagerly profitable and comfortable, because if you go on drinking those liquors, what you do is spill the Spring Water of your real life.

Forget safety.

Forget security.

Forget your own hungering for your own agendas. Don't you understand the Beloved is trying to build a new universe with your hands and faces and legs?

Don't you understand you are being summoned in the night of history to be the Beloved's chariots on which the Beloved can ride in splendor through the fields of nightmare?

Forget safety.

Live where you fear to live.

Destroy your reputation.

There are worst things to lose than your reputation.

Be notorious.

I have tried prudent planning long enough.

From now on I'll live crazy.

I held a new appreciation for Joseph Campbell statement on marriage, "...It's an ordeal, basically of losing oneself in a higher polarity; the interdependence of relationship... They [people] think it's a long love affair and it isn't. It has nothing to do with being happy. It has to do with being transformed. And when the transformation is realized, it is a magnificent experience; much greater than happiness."

In summary, this coniunctio project has taught me much about what it is not. Coniunctio is *not* something that can be intellectually and rationally researched for logical understanding. However, through this albeit inept process, I have allowed myself to follow the wise counsel from the greats who have traversed this Divine Mystery, surrendering to its luring powers and capacity to transform me. At my most fragile, utterly confusing, undone state, a dream landed in my lap:

I'm married to a salt-of-the-earth type man; ordinary, but extraordinarily family oriented and well grounded. I have just given birth to twins, a boy and a girl, who were still infants. My husband and I own an earth-moving company with several massive earth-moving vehicles. I am standing at the foot of one of these massive vehicles giving instructions to the driver as we are orchestrating a huge earth-moving project while making it possible for regular traffic to drive past. The scene switched to me and the twins in a public multi-stall restroom. I put them on the floor, swaddled in their pastel yellow and blue blankets. Suddenly, I'm horrified for them to be touching the floor of this public urinal/fecal place, but the girl sat up straight from her creamy-yellow blanket with her hair in a swirl on top of her head and began to speak in full sentences of profound meaning while radiating utter joy from her face. Suddenly I am no longer worried about my infants being exposed to such fecal germs. I gathered them up and ran back to my husband to tell him what our girl had done. The dream ended with me telling him, "...you won't believe what just happened!"

I was so mesmerized by the talking infant that I almost missed the significance of what preceded. My analyst pointed out that a shift seems to have occurred in me. My heretofore negative opinions of my "masculine" march through the first half of my life seems to have shifted to this "salt-of-the-earth, ordi-

nary, but extraordinarily family oriented and well grounded, even earth-moving" type man. One from whom the products of conception have birthed my Divine Feminine Child, my soul! She said there was much that could be said about this dream, but perhaps it was best to let it be. She also read a quote from Rainer Marie Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, "Don't be too quick to draw conclusions from what happens to you; simply let it happen, otherwise it will be too easy for you to look with blame...at your past, which naturally has a share with everything that now meets you."

Paradoxically, I have igloored into the new home of my frozen tundra. Stillness wraps me as pure white flakes continue silently falling. Somewhere down in the depth of my melted open heart, far beneath the new fallen snow, I feel the seed planted in me at my making, tenderly stretching upward to kiss the awaiting Father Sun.