

# Dads Versus Shadows

By Kyle Gann

James Hillman

In the '80s trendoids claimed distinctions between Uptown and Downtown were melting. There was a superficial truth to that: Uptown, it became hip to feign nonchalance and toss in token pop references, and Downtown half-assedly picked up on fractals and the Fibonacci series. But while surface differences blurred a little, battles still raged on a deeper level. Those trying to fathom these politics should read James Hillman's *The Myth of Analysis* (1972, Harper Perennial). Long before Hillman gained notoriety in the Iron John men's movement, he was the John Cage of psychology, brilliantly defusing unconscious assumptions.

In the book's first part, "On Psychological Creativity," Hillman outlines our internal myths of how the creative process works. The instinct to create (which everyone possesses, he and Jung claim, though Americans are champs at squelching theirs) gets modified by the psyche and takes on coloration from whatever psychic archetype is dominant. Thus different people experience creativity completely differently, and Hillman draws the possibilities into six categories.

The first one Hillman describes is God the Creator, filtered through the father archetype. The Father-God creates through method, hierarchy, structure. The composer creates masterpieces for



ERIC DROKER

posterity via an ordered system, and expects descendants to carry on his tradition. Hillman mentions Bach, but I think of Schoenberg, who wrote that his 12-tone row would "insure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years." Hillman states the attitude Schoenberg imparted to his followers: "[T]here is only one God, only one right way, one truth." Exaggerated, the archetype hardens into the *senex*, the sterile old man who can no longer create, but wages war against the irrationality of youthful imagination. Some of our most celebrated professors, warped by this identification, are less known for their arid music than for the bile they heap on those who compose without system or tradition.

Second is creation *ex nihilo*, which takes art as always unique, new, unprecedented, projected

through the *puer aeternus* (divine child). True art constantly moves on, tracing the trail of the zeitgeist. Originality is the cardinal virtue, and since "one can make nothing endure without killing the spark that is not meant to last, there must be continual... inspiration from the divine..." Maturity and tradition are enemies of this eternal novelty. Example: Charles Ives, who disdained structure and method, and whose torrential inspiration dried up early in middle age.

Third, creativity projects itself through the shadow: "iconoclasm, rebellion in the name of liberation, the creative process as protest." The creative urge merges with sexuality, and "is supposed to be kept in the irrational dark so that its primal power will not be inhibited." Drugs, drink, and magic help bring this image to the

brink of death, whence it draws inspiration, and whatever threatens to curb its power—bourgeois morality, for instance—must be antagonized. Gee, you don't know any Downtown art that fits this pattern, do you? No wonder those *senex* professors hate us.

Prometheus, the fourth type, embodies the creative urge understood through the ego. Through the fire he stole from the gods, man "can convert nature's mystery into a problem to solve, thereby extending the realm of conscious control." This is a utilitarian view of creativity, the process as self-imposed puzzle, and the theft from the gods must be paid for with hard work. This type's hero used to be Hindemith, who theorized his own rules of harmony, invented *gebrauchsmusik* (functional music), and could write a viola sonata during a train ride. Its motto is the chestnut that "art is 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration."

More in pop music than in art, the instinct can project through the persona, the fifth type, resulting in the indistinguishable merging of creativity and celebrity. "One becomes one's image," and then "the individual who wears the mask can no longer put it down because the mask itself has become the psychic carrier of the creative instinct, sometimes sacrificing the person in suicide and personal tragedy..." Details of the artist's life take on mythical importance for the masses. Madonna, or the Kronos Quartet.

Last and less recognized is the notion of creativity via the great mother archetype: "The creative is an external source, a mothering unconscious, ... naturally subject to periodic barrenness,

like the seasons." The artist paints what she sees, receives what she is given, and accepts that at times nothing comes. Stereotypically but aptly, I think of the first great woman composer, Ruth Crawford: Taking ideas of men like Cowell, Rudhyar, Seeger, she gave them more perfect expression than they could themselves, then endured a barren spell between 1932 and '41.

The categories aren't ironclad. Crisis can force a switch from one image to another; Hindemith, for example, was a shadow composer before his conversion to the ego. Others get caught between conflicting archetypes. Father types control our universities, shadow composers sell more records. You can make a party game assigning artists to the various categories. The point is that none of these archetypes is inherently privileged, none more right than another. Most artists feel so possessed by their operative archetype that they deny the validity of others, but there is no *essence* of creativity. Each has its excesses, but you can't dismiss an entire psychological complex because it can go too far: they all do. It's OK to feel there's only one way to compose, but it's not OK to attack someone for disagreeing.

Uptowners have to learn that irrationality has its place; Downtowners can learn that art isn't antithetical to tradition and structure. Everyone needs to learn to express these archetypes consciously, not with intolerant ignorance. Until we adopt an attitude that sees all creative modes as equally natural and fruitful, each with its place in the psychic spectrum, music will continue to be oppressively politicized. ■