

The Archetypal Hero Coyote: Etching Psycho-Social, Cultural Dynamics And Identity Renderings For Human Living

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Abstract

Coyote is often viewed as the archetypal trickster symbol with misdeeds and foolhardy behavior. Here, in the present Jungian psychological research, the Coyote is decoded as a cultural-socialization agent and a cultural hero. Coyote as the libidinal life-force's flow, guides the masculine and the feminine representation in the society, carrying the cultural legacy yet manifesting, shaping socio-cultural roles progressively. A Northern Paiute tribe Coyote myth is selected in this paper, reflected and investigated through the interdisciplinary prism and Jungian research tool of archetypal amplification. It resulted in understanding the existential expression, identity, cultural legacy, traditions, representation of male-female roles and the functioning of society as well as its culture at large, through the acts and learnings of the archetypal hero. This myth is also a dive into the collective memoir of the historical precedents of the Native American tribal movement, settlements and identity struggles indicated through the latent symbols of the physical problems of the Coyote and the granddaughter in the myth.

Keywords: Coyote, cultural-socialization agent, archetypal amplification, archetypal hero, identity

Introduction

The following Coyote myth of the Northern Paiute tribe of the Oregon county is selected to get yet another layer on the archetypal hero symbol as the forebearer of culture and living. Archetypal Amplification and Jungian reflections are applied as hermeneutical research tools to propose the results in the form of a hypothetical interpretation, mentioned in the section below. "For only through "amplification"—method of comparative morphological psychology, which interprets analogous material from the most varied spheres of religious history, archaeology, pre-historic studies, ethnology, and so on—can we reach an understanding of the archetypes and the individual symbols. However, the true object of our inquiry is the symbolic self-representation of the archetype that has passed through the medium

of man, and that speaks to us from images fashioned sometimes unconsciously and sometimes consciously" (Neumann, 1991, p. 13). The latent truths effuse through this myth such as the socio-cultural dynamics of the members of the community and familial roles of a daughter, son, mother, father and the rest, depicting micro and macro renderings of society. The psycho-social emanations are viewed too through the rich interpretation of the myth.

Myth of Coyote and His Daughter

The myth below is procured from the book, *Coyote was Going there*. Indian literature of the Oregon County:-

"Coyote and His Daughter: Coyote made a big storm come. He asked his daughter to fix the roof of the house. While she was there, Coyote looked up at his daughter. He saw that she was well-formed; she was larger than her mother. Then Coyote wanted to possess her. He got a toothache. He was nearly dead. 'When I die, I want you to marry a good man who can do things for you,' he told his daughter. 'When I die, don't bury me. Just gather some sage-brush and lay me out on top and burn me. When you leave, don't look back,' he said. Then he died. They did as he told them. They started off, and his son had his arms on his head. He looked back over his shoulder. He saw his father fall the other way. He said to his sister, 'It looks to me like our father fell the other way.' Then they came to the place they were going. They camped there. After a few days there came this man whom Coyote wanted his daughter to marry. He married her. One day he asked Coyote's son, 'Let's go where your father used to take you to hunt rats.' They found a rat under the rock. The boy was on one side poking under the rock, and Coyote was on the other side! The boy looked under the rock at the rat. He wondered why his brother-in-law made a noise as though he were using his teeth. Then he looked at the man's teeth. He saw his teeth; he saw that he had a rotten tooth. When he saw that tooth, he saw that the man looked like his father. That boy went home. He cried when he saw that. He came and told his mother and sister, 'He has teeth just like father. It is he, all right.' Then the mother said to her daughter, 'When he comes home, hunt for nits on his head.' So she did; she laid his head on her lap. He tried to hide his mouth and ears. But when that girl looked she found that he was her father. Then her mother got after him with a stick; she was going to hit him. 'This is your father; he doesn't know what he is doing,' she told her daughter. She tried to hit him but she missed. Coyote ran off. After a while he came home, a

pretty old man. He came back and found his daughter had a little child. That was his child, a girl. She called Coyote, 'My grandfather.' Then Coyote wanted to hold the baby. He said, 'You don't take good care of my little granddaughter. That's why she has bowel trouble.' That's the end of this story" (Jarold, 1977, pp. 239-240).

Hypothetical Interpretation

"The finest of all symbols of the libido is the human figure, conceived as a demon or hero. Here the symbolism leaves the objective, material realm of astral and meteorological images and takes on human form, changing into a figure who passes from joy to sorrow, from sorrow to joy, and, like the sun, now stands high at the zenith and now is plunged into darkest night, only to rise again in new Splendour" (Jung, 1967, §251). This myth is the manifestation of the libidinal flow, the hero in the son and the daughter of Coyote. It is how the hero shows how to fulfill social roles as males and females to live purposeful and culturally accomplished lives.

The storm-maker father (Coyote) desires his daughter from the very beginning as he notices that she is all ripe and ready. This myth is a variation of Lord Brahma desiring his daughter. The heavenly father was drawn to his daughter as an act to extend creation and the world in being. Here, creating a storm refers to the symbolic phallic principle, indicating fertility. The all-grown daughter is viewed to be possessed and this possession has sexual connotations. It infers to the grown daughter now, to take up the social responsibility of experiencing the world outside, extending from the traditional bounds of how her mother experienced life socio-culturally.

Used as a slang, 'weather-man' is denoted to someone who can make any woman swoon and as the weather-man in the myth, Coyote wants his daughter. He doesn't want his daughter to do conventional deeds only. He wants her to work outside and experience the outer world by giving her the so-called 'manly' job of fixing the roof. She is indeed larger and bigger than her mother as she experiences the outside world, initiated by the hero, the father. As she has the father in her too, she moves forward with the fertility of mind and body exuding through the experience of the outside world.

Jung states that the relationship with the father is the most significant factor, the fateful aspect that comes through as we live (Jung, 2012,

p.69, §715). Here, Coyote as the father figure passed on the all-encompassing potentiality to the daughter, to keep her fertile in all grounds and this fertility is symbolic of the manifestation of her potentials. The desire–possession aspect of the myth opens the possibility for the daughter to grow.

In the myth there is an aspect of the son's disobedience in following the suggestions given by the father to perform his own death rituals. This disobedience was symbolic of how the son will be in his own, yet along with carrying his father within (Whitmont, 1978, p. 301). Coyote passing the torch of culture, legacy and traditions. It began with him looking back even when he was asked not to at his father's death marked in the myth. The 'looking back' aspect is falling back on the culture and traditions laid down by the father to move forward in life. It is to follow traditions and conventional cultural ancestral norms, yet remodel it according to the spirit of the time. His death was to enrich the son and the daughter to be.

As the son takes on the legacy of the father, he still needs to be his own and that is established through the event in the myth where Coyote falls the other way. Jung states that the father reflects the idea of the son's masculinity coming into being (Jung, 2012, p.69, §737) and in the myth Coyote is leading the same for his son. The polarity between the father and the son, even if the son, is mirrored through Coyote's fall. It is an important event in the myth to denote how the father, the hero Coyote doesn't hold the son. He wants him to go his way taking the inherited guidance along.

There is emphasis on Coyote as the hunter in the myth which he wants his son to embody even as he takes the form of her daughter's husband. The first thing he asks the son to do is to take him to the spot where he used to hunt. It is in and through the hunting expedition we can safely assume that the son becomes the father. This is an exemplar of socialization through vicariously learning from the practices and traditions of the father. It is a reflection on the very functioning of community and society.

In the myth, the daughter marries the embodiment of her father-image, a prominent psychic unfolding for daughters as seen in the myth. His role is clear, to live through his daughter and the son, as heroes do. Coyote as the father, the husband and the hunter exhibits

the facets of him giving his all as he keeps alive through his son and daughter who are the symbols of rectification, progression and legacy.

As the hero, the father of his people he carries the cross of the identity struggles of the Northern Paiute's. Historically, their fight for survival has been constant, as the new settlers came in and US states focused on expansion and modern living. The rotten tooth as the symbol of the problem of his people was passed on to his grandchild as well, as she too has bowel troubles in the myth. It means that as an age-old problem it still exists and needs to be looked into, the continued struggle of the Native Americans in the contemporary American dynamics.

"Symbolically, teeth represent a kind of individual psychic mill where what's too rough to take in directly can be ground up by conscious consideration, digested and metabolized" (Ronnberg & Martin, 2010, p. 370). Through Coyote's rotten tooth we are reminded of the bitter truths of life that are prevalent and need to be accepted and addressed. Here, the hero is telling us and putting forth truths that require conscious grinding to deal with the age old problem which the mother in the myth tried to shoo away but it came back again. This was after the mother distinctly stated that it was Coyote and not the daughter's husband.

Coyote, in the myth is the reminder, the knower to churn on the truths of life and act on them for a better future. Coyote propagates social progression, reminding through the historical struggles of his people to work on a cohesive, contemporary identity.

Conclusion

Myths are predictors of the present and the coming world, vessels of symbolic knowledge for the operations of humankind. This paper endows us with a vision to view tradition, culture, identity and progression through the doings of the archetypal hero, Coyote.

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