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Creation, Destruction, and the Tension Between:

A Cautionary Note on Individuation in Tristan Egolf, W. G. Sebald, and Niall Williams

Nicholas Kanaar

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

August 2019

## **Abstract**

The modern individual faces a psychological disconnect between his conscious mind and unconscious due primarily to the outward attachments that dictate false tenets of ontological worth. This thesis investigates the benchmark of creation and destruction and narrows in on its utility in the individual's pursuit for individuation. The creation and destruction paradox is used to penetrate liminal space where personal transformation occurs, and it is used within those spaces to strip away old, ego-centric ideals in the service of new ones. C. G. Jung's "archetypes of transformation" are the main tools of the psyche for assisting the conscious mind to engage in open discourse with the unconscious. Uroboric archetypes such as the Great Mother, and projected archetypal figure such as Kali the Devouring Mother, are explored within the contemporary novels of Tristan Egolf, W. G. Sebald, and Niall Williams. The unconscious projects destructive archetypes to destroy the conscious mind's unhealthy ideologies. By sifting through the rubble of our immediate and shattered past, the individual can create the cornerstones of new philosophies that promote psychological wholeness. Once the individual establishes equilibrium of creation and destruction and, subsequently, of his psyche, individuation is achieved. Psychological wholeness leads to individual self-worth, confidence, purpose, and a sense of belonging in the universe.

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## Introduction

The plight of the modern individual is a teetering between self-significance and total subsumption by societal masses. The former, self-significance, is an intrinsic knowledge cemented by discourse between one's unconscious and conscious mind, a reciprocity between outward and inner wisdom. The latter, subsumption by societal masses, is a noticeable fissure in the psyche dictated by ego-centric reliance on social institutions as dogmatic cornerstones. The State, religion, family, education, work, and economies—all social organizations and foundations of decorum, are important for the regulation and growth of a body of people. However, within these systems, the individual—and subsequently his rights—may be lost under the crippling weight of control if the individual succumbs to an over-reliance on external direction. The result of such approbation, as Carl Jung says, is the “mass crushes out the insight and reflection that are still possible with the individual, and this necessarily leads to doctrinaire and authoritarian tyranny if ever the constitutional State should succumb to a fit of weakness” (*The Undiscovered Self* 4). History books are jam-packed with examples of “authoritarian tyranny,” where individuals fell under State control and blindly swung a collective, malicious iron fist (4). The underlying danger of mass alignment is the individual's dependence on the ruling class regarding worth and purpose. The individual carries out the will of the masses with no concern for what it means for himself as an individual. For the world, this is bad; it is equally detrimental on a localized level, for individual confidence is shattered by piercing shrieks of terror when confronted by existential logic. Who am I? And does it matter? Under the quantitative metrics of the mass, people are a number and solely do not have singular value. To create new ego-centric ideologies and to repair psychological wholeness, one must strip the conscious mind of, or destroy, the old, binding forces that ensure attachment to a dreary sum.

The battleground for identity, then, is not solely an external one, but rather it occurs within the stratum of the psyche.

The psyche of the individual consists of two parts, the conscious mind and the unconscious. Jung says, “By consciousness I understand the relation of psychic contents to the *ego*, insofar as this relation is perceived by the ego. Relations to the ego that are not perceived as such are *unconscious*. Consciousness is the function of activity which maintains the relation of psychic contents to the ego” (“Definitions” 421). The “ego” is the control center of the conscious mind and its “psychic contents.” Such contents include the subjective perception of the external world encompassing the individual, and subsequently, his identity. Jung calls this identity the “persona,” which he says, “is a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual” (“The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious” 94). The ego-consciousness is an important relation of the psyche as it surmises order from the external world and places the individual within, protected by “a kind of mask.” However, the psyche can become too reliant on a “complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society,” and in turn continues to seek out guidance from the surrounding populace as opposed to its own instinct, thus concealing “the true nature of the individual.” Instincts that the individual can not consciously identify are from the unconscious. The unconscious is a psychological depth of intrinsic knowledge within the psyche that contains both subjective and collective forces. These forces are difficult for the conscious mind to comprehend and tend to be communicated by symbols in dreams, active imagination, art, mythological and religious imagery, and so on.

Subjectively, the unconscious is a source for the individual's own repressed, or incomprehensible, feelings and motives.

The collective unconscious, however, is a source of wisdom inherited by all human beings, serving as a connective energy between humanity that contains instinctual impulses. Jung says, "The collective unconscious is a part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition" ("The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" 42). The collective unconscious does not "owe its existence to personal experience" because it is universal and inherited. The "personal unconscious" deals in subjective experience and is more akin to Freudian theory of repression and motive, but the collective unconscious is "not a personal acquisition." Even though the personal and collective unconscious can be "negatively distinguished" from each other, they both have difficulty communicating to the conscious mind, and tend to be ignored by the individual. For the sake of this argument, both the collective and the personal will be included when the unconscious is referred to, as both stem from the same complicated reservoir within the psyche. As mentioned above, when the individual relies too heavily on external institutions, he splits the conscious mind from the unconscious. Fear motivates the individual's outward reliance, and as humanity has evolved, the separation from self has widened. When institutions fail to recognize the individual, and to convey his worth, the individual feels lost within the world his conscious mind has worked so hard to put into order. The resulting alienation is two-fold: the individual is alienated from society and from himself, leaving no source for self-esteem. How much money an individual makes, for example, determines social standing, and subsequently affects the notion of identity. In the meantime, the individual turns away from intrinsic knowledge and connection found in the

unconscious. Due to its difficulty in interpretation, the modern individual avoids the unconscious in favor of attainable, comprehensible, and superficial dogma. When this kind of reliance occurs, the individual is no longer responsible for his own sense of purpose, and any feeling of autonomy is lost. Instead of connecting inward to the unconscious for reconciliation, the individual's conscious mind clings to his created persona and searches outward sources for the reassurance of being, only to be spun further in his own disjointedness.

Jung reviews his grievance with State mass-movements, and the subsequent reduction of the individual to a statistical nullity, within the first part of *The Undiscovered Self*, "The Plight of the Individual in Modern Society." With the looming threat of the Cold War, "symbolized by the Iron Curtain," Jung examines the historical effects from "times of physical, political, economic and spiritual distress..." (3). It is this "distress" that causes "men's eyes" to "turn with anxious hope to the future, and when anticipations, utopias and apocalyptic visions multiply" (3). The condition of political unrest, and the outward individual search for "utopias and apocalyptic visions," may result in a "collective possession," where society and its members form mass-movements to find comfort and guidance when facing uncertainty. Dictators at the top of State hierarchy, for example, can exploit the individuals and their vulnerability to acquire control. State control is possible "because the so-called normal person possesses only a limited degree of self-knowledge" (6). The "limited degree of self-knowledge" motivates the individual to seek outward leadership, exposing himself to manipulation from institutional figureheads.

To resist mass-thinking in society, Jung advocates for the integration of the unconscious with the conscious mind. This integration and cohesion of the psyche, or *individuation* as he calls it, is Jung's primary concern, and in "The Plight of the Individual in Modern Society" he suggests this process to be a solution to mass-movement threats, such as dictatorships. Within the



clutches of mass-thought, the individual does not acquire true “self-knowledge,” but rather “what the average person in their social environment knows of himself, but not by the real psychic facts which are for the most part hidden from them” (*The Undiscovered Self* 6). The individual, therefore, obtains his vision of “self-knowledge” from his “social environment” as opposed to “the real psychic facts” hidden within the unconscious. The false reflection of “self-knowledge” is shackled to the individual, and he is reduced to what the State sees as an “average person,” not as an autonomous entity. Jung says, “The moral responsibility of the individual is then inevitably replaced by the policy of the State” (12). Replacing “moral responsibility” with “the policy of the State” hinders the individual from developing intrinsic self-worth. The collective mentality is debilitating for the individual by keeping his focus on State-fueled doctrine, as opposed to understanding true self-knowledge through individuation. Jung says, “Under these circumstances it is small wonder that individual judgement grows increasingly uncertain of itself and that responsibility is collective as much as possible, i.e., is shuffled off by the individual and delegated to a corporate body” (15). The delegation of “individual judgement” to a “corporate body” is of concern in Jung’s essay, but again not a primary motive for his theory of individuation. These “circumstances,” such as dictatorial influence, is just one example on why the individual should open his conscious mind to the unconscious.

The present thesis is not a dismantling of State institutions or other societal institutions of similar structure and similar potential for threat. Instead, it focuses on the individual’s journey toward individuation, specifically the outward hinderances along the way. Lumping various institutions together proves problematic, due to the eclectic nature and purpose of each one. When a balance is struck, certain institutions may help the individual in his quest toward wholeness, as other institutions may prevent it. This is purely subjective to the individual and

should not be read as an attack on any certain societal structure. However, there is not enough room to address each institution independently and fairly, and to do so would stray too far from the point: the individual's subjective experience toward individuation. Therefore, Jung's reservations of State mass-control will be expanded to cover any institution that prevents or replaces the individuals' connectivity between his unconscious and conscious mind. In the end, it is not the responsibility of any institution to harness and facilitate individual morality, self-worth, or autonomy, but rather it is the task of the individual to create cohesion between his unconscious and conscious mind. How the individual chooses to use, or to avoid, institutional influence regarding individuation is entirely up to him.

Occurrences of institutional influence vary amongst the different social organizations, and vary from individual to individual, but it is worth exemplifying for the sake of clarity. Money, as previously mentioned, can attach the conscious mind to a career, and it is this career that the individual heavily relies upon for identity. Constructing ego-centric ideals focused solely on monetary income exposes the individual to outward manipulation, vulnerable to mass-thinking. Furthermore, the monetary attachment replaces the unconscious truths with temporal ones that may dissolve. If the individual loses his job, for example, due to the company shutting down operations, what is left of his identity? Without the monetary income of before, the individual wavers in his confidence and desperately seeks out an ego-centric replacement. Work, academic degrees, familial hierarchies, religious belief alignment, and so on, can work in a similar, unhealthy fashion. However, it is important to repeat, that all these institutions, and their relationship with the individual, may also benefit psychological growth. The idea, then, is finding (or creating) a balance between ego-consciousness ideals and unconscious truths that promote a wholeness within the individual. When the present thesis refers to unhealthy ideals, or

philosophies, it is referring to the instances where the individual prevents himself from individuation by clinging to external rhetoric. A healthy, evolved ideology is one that supports unconscious integration. For instance, staying with the above example, an individual's career may provide materialistic comfort, but it does not replace the intrinsic relationship of the unconscious and conscious mind. Knowing this, the individual can traverse upward through his career rooted in the knowledge and confidence that his true self is kept guarded without regard to his success, or his failure, with external institutions.

To obtain worth, significance, and potency, a balance between the dualistic modes of understanding must be struck; a paradox must be acknowledged and accepted. "To find one's place in the world," philosopher Luc Ferry says in his book *A Brief History of Thought*, "to learn how to live and act, we must first obtain knowledge of the world in which we find ourselves. This is the first task of a philosophical 'theory'" (9). As it stands for many individuals, and as Jung has pointed out, learning "how to live and act" is influenced through external institutions that may exercise control over the masses. However, this is not "the world in which we find ourselves," but rather an illusory curtain that hides the individual from his own sovereignty. To remove the hinderances preventing individual freedom, the curtain needs to be destroyed and a bridge needs to be constructed within the psyche, connecting the unconscious with the conscious mind. The exploration of "one's place in the world" requires the dismantling of old ideologies that anchor the conscious mind, and to develop new ones that hold firm in a new ontological understanding. Ontology, as used in this thesis, is the study of existence, or the nature of being. The "philosophical theory" of creation and destruction is both "the world in which we find ourselves," and a paradox the individual can use to restore autonomy.

The metaphysical paradox of creation and destruction contains all of life. The nature of existence is bookended: the universe was created and someday it will be destroyed; life happens in between the two forces. Throughout the individual's life, creation and destruction exist simultaneously, thus creating a paradox. Heraclitus, a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, engages the paradox of creative and destructive forces in many of his "Fragments." For example, he says,

That which always was,  
and is, and will be everliving fire,  
the same for all, the cosmos,  
made neither by god nor man,  
replenishes in measure as it burns away. (Fragment #20)

Heraclitus is recognizing the "everliving fire" as an energy that both "replenishes" as "it burns away." Everything that "was, and is," and "will be," is contained within the notion that destruction and creation exist simultaneously. New life is born on earth at the same moment other lives are extinguished; the destruction of borders creates new diplomatic relations between two countries; philosophies cycle synchronously as old ones are demolished, and new ones are created; the burning of wood so the ash can be used as fertilizer for the cultivation of future vegetation. Understanding Heraclitus's philosophy on the simultaneous existence of creative and destructive forces—that "the world is a majestic harmony of forms pouring into being, exploding, and dissolving"—can enable the individual to find order in the seemingly chaotic (Campbell 247). The two forces, "pouring into being, exploding, and dissolving," work in the service of each other for the sake of motion, both physically and metaphysically. The motion is circular, for as society evolves it remains at a distance from regression, and out of reach of utopian fantasies. Thus, the ontological framework of creation and destruction is one built on an

equilibrium: What *is* will perish, what perishes will be reborn, and so on, in perpetuity. Creation and destruction drive time forward, but it is the atemporal tension between the two where change can occur.

Suspended between the elements of creation and destruction is tension, noted as a liminal space. The liminal space prevails outside of time and physicality, and yet, carries with it the important fires of personal transformation. In his book *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode says, “The clock’s *tick-tock* I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between *tock* and *tick* represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize.... *Tick* is a humble genesis, *tock* a feeble apocalypse...” (45). The “disorganized time” that “we need to humanize” is the liminal space. The tick-tock “model” expresses the paradoxical framework of creation and destruction at an ontological level, but the representation is also accurate at the localized level, specifically—for present investigations—within the psychology of the individual. The liminal space is in between the unconscious and conscious mind, between the destruction and creation of old conscious mind ideologies and new ones. Philosophies, or ideologies, are created and destroyed in the liminal space between “a humble genesis” and “a feeble apocalypse.” This transformation, or dismemberment and rebirth, occurs when the forces of creation and destruction are in balance. When the individual is off balance—e.g., more reliant on destructive forces than creative, or, more concerned with temporal relief of the conscious mind than inclusion of the unconscious—psychological evolution ceases to transpire as the liminal space is eliminated. Opportunities of dismemberment (e.g., demolishing a bleak self-perception to create a new, healthier one) are found between “*tick-tock*,” between creation and destruction. It is in the liminal space where the individual can utilize what Erich Neumann calls “the projected figures,”

or archetypes—unconscious elements that shape behavior—to make the necessary psychological changes that will reconnect the conscious mind with the unconscious, interlinking external and internal wisdom (18). Repeating the process of creation and destruction throughout one’s life will keep the individual in motion, and it will help ensure the growth of the individual in positive, momentous ways. As utility, creation and destruction, and the paradoxical relationship of the two, can help the individual construct a healthy psyche. The paradox of destroying the old while simultaneously creating something new happens in between creation and destruction in liminal space.

The goal of creation and destruction as utility is to repair cohesive recognition and communication between the conscious mind and the unconscious. This harmonious settlement between both parts of the psyche is known as individuation. Jung says, “Inner peace and contentment depend in large measure upon whether or not the historical family which is inherent in the individual can be harmonized with the ephemeral conditions of the present” (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 237). The “historical family which is inherent” is that of the collective unconscious. Despite the individual’s personal experiences, the collective unconscious exists as an energized river underneath every human psyche. The “ephemeral conditions of the present” is what the conscious mind contains. Individual “inner peace” is reliant on the “harmonized” condition of both the conscious mind and the unconscious. The result of individuation goes well beyond “contentment” as an individual will feel the inherent connection between himself, humanity, and the universe, no matter what kind of external influences he may, or may not, encounter. Creation, destruction, and the liminal space between can be used in the service of achieving individuation, by stripping the individual’s conscious mind of false attachments and bridging the gap to the unconscious.

The constant cycle of creation and destruction is the way of life and should be utilized by the individual to pave new ways forward. Creation and destruction and the paradoxical relationship of the two can help the individual construct a healthy conscious mind, one that accepts the synthesis of the unconscious. Moving from macro to micro, from superstructure to substructure, individuals can use creation and destruction on a subjective level to improve their mental condition—in other words, traversing through fire by use of its flames. Joseph Campbell says, “[D]eath closes in; there is nothing we can do, except be crucified—and resurrected; dismembered totally, and then reborn” (12). For individuation, “death” is the surrendering of old, unhealthy ideals. To create a new identity, one must be “dismembered totally, and then reborn.” The psychological crucifixion is in the service of a resurrection, where the individual completes the former in anticipation of the latter—thus, encouraging the harmful, superficial holds to fall away, allowing the psyche to be “reborn” with the united intelligence of the unconscious and the conscious mind. “We re-create the horizons we have abolished, the structures that have collapsed,” Kermode says, “and we do so in terms of the old patterns, adapting them to our new worlds” (58). Living in what Kermode calls the “middest”—between what was and what will be, or liminal space—the human race is constantly creating and destroying “the horizons” of our lives (29). Kermode’s outlook in this quote is a positive one as it indicates a building up of new ideas. In a perfect world, creations of new horizons would occur; however, often individuals replace old horizons with the exact same horizons previously “collapsed.” From the point-of-view of pessimistic historians, history is doomed to repeat itself. When the masses make the same psychological mistakes in cyclical fashion, so too does the attached individual. If, though, the individual can detach himself from toxic dogmatic concerns and rely on the intrinsic wisdom of the unconscious, he will be able to create new horizons that evolve from “old patterns.” One

way of doing this is to accept the destruction of the past and to collect the fragments that can help form new, constructive ideologies. The process of dismemberment and reassembling requires a confrontation with one's negative attributes—an oftentimes fearful and reluctant activity by the individual. To actualize individuation, the individual will face his lighter and darker characteristics as he follows the path toward the uroboros.

The root of the complete psyche is the uroboros—a level of the psyche in which all duality resides, where the conscious mind and the unconscious are one and the same. In defining the concept, the authors of *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis* declare the uroboros “suggests a primal state involving darkness and self-destruction as well as fecundity and potential creativity. It portrays the stage which exists before delineation and separation of the opposites” (Samuels et al. 158). The “primal state” houses creation and destruction, and other dichotomies, in a monolithic state. The uroboric condition is of primordial nature, where the primitive mind exists before “delineation and separation” of its ontology into “opposites.” The uroboros is often represented symbolically by a serpent consuming its own tail, where the animal is both devouring itself in a form of “self-destruction” and exhibiting “fecundity” by its immortality—rotating like a wheel, never diminishing, and representing the motion of creation and destruction. The uroboric serpent embodies both beginning and endings in paradox. When “delineation and separation of the opposites” occurs, the uroboros is split into the unconscious and conscious mind. As humanity evolved, a focus on ego-centricity developed alongside society and intellectual advancement, superficially replacing the need, or desire, for instinctual wisdom. The development of the modern psyche split the uroboros into an ego-centric conscious mind and branches of the unconscious known as archetypes. However, one has not replaced the other, but rather stolen focus.



The archetypes are unconscious forces attempting to communicate with the conscious mind to reunite both parts of the psyche. “[The unconscious] consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes,” Jung says, “which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents” (“The Concept of the Collective Unconscious” 43). The “pre-existent forms” cover many different variations of projected figures, too many to count. All archetypes, and their various projected forms, are attached to the uroboros, and “become conscious secondarily.” The uroboric connection is never lost, enabling the archetypes to serve as guides for the conscious mind in its reconciliation with “certain psychic contents.” The push-pull relationship with the conscious mind is hindered by the ego-consciousness as the individual struggles to establish order outwardly instead of inwardly. For this reason, and paired with the complexity of the unconscious, the archetypal projected figures only communicate to the individual through familiar imagery found in dreams and active imaginations. By incorporating these figures into the conscious mind, the individual can interpret a deeper understanding that all humans inherit at birth from the collective unconscious, and in turn establishes autonomy fueled by the self-assurance that his existence is recognized and sensible. Ignoring the attempts of the unconscious to provide wisdom and solace will result in an overcompensation of projected imagery, commonly triggering a psychosis. This psychosis results from archetypal insistence, which may intimidate the individual if unimpeded. In turn, the individual seeks additional, external comfort, often putting too much emphasis on State doctrine, thus dividing his conscious mind from his unconscious. One archetype, or an extension of the uroboros, that can frighten and repel the individual from individuation, and cause psychoses, is that of the shadow.

The shadow of the unconscious is a representative of one’s capability of evil; it is a crude reflection of the negative aspects of identity. Opening a discourse between the conscious mind

and the unconscious means opening one's vulnerability to the shadow. It is an acknowledgment of one's own faults and destructive potential. Like the groundhog scurrying back to its burrow, scared by his shadow, the individual is frightened by facing his own inner demons and oftentimes avoids the experience at all cost, but to no avail. "The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form." Jung says. "It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness. This problem is exceedingly difficult, because it not only challenges the whole man, but reminds him at the same time of his helplessness and ineffectuality" ("Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 21). Seemingly, the shadow is counterintuitive to the goal of individuation by reminding the individual of his "helplessness and ineffectuality." However, the shadow "cannot be argued out of existence," resulting in the need for acknowledgment and acceptance on the individual's part. The "whole man" is challenged by the shadow, but not defeated. An awareness on the individual's part is the first step toward individuation; instead of running from the shadow (which leads to the projection of the shadow onto others) and anchoring one's self-worth to another's ideas, the individual can learn how to incorporate his light side with his dark, striking yet another balance in the psyche. The inclusion of the shadow is "exceedingly difficult," but by utilizing the creation and destruction paradox, the individual can identify the uroboros and the archetypes of transformation that infiltrate the conscious mind in aid of individuation.

Specific "archetypes of transformation" employ creation and destruction to drive psychological change (Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" 38). In his book *The Great Mother*, Erich Neumann says, "[A]s the personality is differentiated and emerges from pure unconsciousness, the transformative character also become independent and is experienced as such. The transformative character drives toward development; that is to say, it brings

movement and unrest” (30-31). The development of the ego-consciousness has split the uroboros, and the “transformative character[s]” emerge “from pure unconsciousness.”

Transformative archetypes bring “movement and unrest,” as opposed to other archetypes, such as the shadow, that do not promote “development.” The “independent” nature of the transformative archetypes gives them agency within the individual. Archetypes of transformation use their agency to cause “movement” from a former conscious state of “unrest,” thus motivating a desire for change. The archetypes, then, are tools for the individual to assist in aligning the conscious mind up with their unconscious; to repair the metaphorical belt that connects one psychological gear to the other. Archetypes of transformation, such as the ones that stem from the archetypal Mother Goddess, who embodies a unity of both life and death, are used to communicate with the conscious mind and to help raze the toxic philosophies that prevent the individual from connecting with himself.

The Mother Goddess represents a unity of both life and death, as do the archetypes of transformation that connect to her. Jung says, “In Western antiquity and especially in Eastern cultures the opposites often remain united in the same figure, though this paradox does not disturb the primitive mind in the least” (“Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype” 102). The “opposites” of creation and destruction exist paradoxically within the “same figure.” The archetypal “paradox” is a representation of its uroboric roots. The “primitive mind” of the past accepted the intrinsic and paradox of creation and destruction, and it is believed the collective unconscious maintains this truth. The psyche, however, relies on archetypes like the Great Mother to guide the conscious mind back toward a uroboric state. The Great Mother archetypes destroy old ideologies and create new ones, all in attempt to turn the ego-consciousness inward to recognize and contemplate the unconscious, further enabling the individual to improve their

mental fortitude. By engaging with Mother Goddess archetypes through mythology, dream analysis, active imagination, and/or guided therapy sessions, the individual can investigate the stability of his conscious mind, thus possibly benefiting from their transformative potential. The Great Mother is a step removed from the uroboros, but from her, near the level of the conscious mind, projected archetypes such as the Hindu Goddess Kali engage the individual by broadcasting the necessity for individuation. The archetypes of transformation, and the subsequent projected figures in the ego-consciousness, are the players that attempt to reconcile the conscious mind with the unconscious.

The Devouring Mother, such as Kali, is ever present in the collective psyche (as represented in various mythologies), and can be used for clarity, or—if ignored—can consume and possess the conscious mind, clouding it mind with confusion. To help the individual restore a uroboric-type connection within his psyche, archetypes of transformation are employed as guides for the conscious mind. Kali, and other projected figures, can assist in sending the individual into motion to overcome crippling psychological attachments. She does so by harboring both creative and destructive elements. Kali is a mother who creates life, and she is the destroyer who takes it. Understanding her paradoxical duality can provide the individual with the insight needed to evolve from a former self into a new one that has more trust in his own intrinsic knowledge. Individuals can understand Kali's paradoxical duality by studying the mythologies she appears in, and by comparing the symbolic meaning of her representations and various physical attributes.

Kali is a Hindu figurehead that represents both destruction and creation. In their essay "Introducing *Kālī* Studies," Jeffrey J. Kripal and Rachel Fell McDermott say, "*Kālī* is commonly perceived as a goddess who encompasses and transcends the opposites of life. She is,

for example, simultaneously understood as a bloodthirsty demon-slayer, an inflictor and curer of diseases, a deity of ritual possession, and an all-loving, compassionate Mother” (4).<sup>1</sup> In various texts Kali is known as the Devouring Mother as she is both “Mother” and “bloodthirsty demon-slayer.” What is important to note is that Kali “encompasses and transcends the opposites of life.” With the ability to rise above the paradoxical, Kali can be an important and useful tool in the search for individuation; she is not victim of creation and destruction, but rather is a proponent of the forces that are responsible for movement.

The visual depictions of her exhibit the duality of her nature, “...wearing fetuses for earrings, decapitating men, sticking out her tongue for all to see, wearing a garland of chopped-off heads and a miniskirt of human arms, and living in cremation grounds” (4). She is often naked, full-breasted, and standing on the presumed corpse of Shiva, who—by some legends—lay trampled by his own sacrifice to subdue the violent lashing of his wife Kali. She has been worshiped throughout South Asia, India, Nepal, and surrounding areas since 600 A.D. and is believed to express “transformative power (*śakti*)” (4-5). For the fortune of new life to be created, devotees would sacrifice animals in Kali temples because “the Goddess is due the life blood of all creatures—since it is she who has bestowed it—and that is why the beast must be slaughtered in her temple; that is why temple and slaughterhouse are one” (Neumann 152). Kali is “due the life blood of all creatures” because symbolically she has given birth to all life. Yet what Kali gives, she also takes away, and such blood rituals are an acknowledgment of the balance between destruction and creation. The “temple and slaughterhouse” are both one and the same as people praise Kali for the life she’s “bestowed” by giving back a sacrificial the life. This ritual not only consents to paradox but recognizes the importance of creation and destruction in

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<sup>1</sup> Authors have chosen the North Indian transliteration of Kali.

the ontological framework of life. Kali is widely recognized as a force that not only contains the paradox of creation and destruction, but also utilizes destruction in the service of creation, and vice versa. Projected transformative figures can be dangerous if the paradox of creation and destruction is skewed. For instance, relying too heavily on destructive forces can turn Kali into psychological wrecking crew without regard for the creative balance. The Destructive Character, a Walter Benjamin theory, is an example of an unbalanced archetypal figure that razes without consideration.

Benjamin's Destructive Character is an archetypal figure that employs destruction. "The destructive character is the enemy of the etui-man," Benjamin says. "The etui-man looks for comfort, and the case is its quintessence" (*Reflections* 302). The "etui-man" is the tidy, encased man, content with outward attachments that need to be obliterated to change. His "quintessence," or fundamental drive, is to keep life in order, specifically by adhering to society's many rules. The "destructive character" as "enemy of the etui-man" is in turn a champion of individual freedom, as destruction is a way to drive development. This conceptual figure destroys without concern to create, as he does not pause to replace what has fallen; however, by destroying he is creating new "ways," or, paths. The clearing away of the old, allows room for the new, and much like Kali, these archetypal figures can be used for the reshaping, reconnecting, of the individual psyche. What is put in the place of the newly-clear ways is not up to the Destructive Character. Kali and the Destructive Character can be used to strip an individual of old ideologies and establish the way for new ones to develop within the conscious mind. The eternal dance of creation and destruction is important for the health of the individual psyche. Without the motion that is ignited in liminal space by metaphysical dismemberment, individuals are unable to adapt to the moving world around them. Society, then, blindly ossifies in sterile groups, and is unable

to progress toward spiritual fulfillment. However, Benjamin identifies another version of archetypal energy that never ceases to exist. Regarding the Destructive Character, Benjamin says,

Because he sees ways everywhere, he always positions himself at crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble, not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it. The destructive character lives from the feeling, not that life is worth living, but that suicide is not worth the trouble.

*(Reflections 303)*

The collapse of psychological attachments occurs because the Destructive Character “sees ways everywhere.” He “reduces to rubble” in tempo with chronological time. This correlation confirms the paradoxical framework of creation and destruction, but more importantly, informs the individual that he can use the paradox as a tool for personal growth. The individual can see life not as a stagnant crawl through the metaphysical mud held thick by various extraneous dogmas, but rather he can see life as a series of “crossroads” attached to a boundless array of “ways” by aligning his perspective with that of the Destructive Character. Despite Benjamin’s seemingly dismal disposition, the Destructive Character presents good news: What has been erected in the present is guaranteed to be destroyed in the past. Granted, the unaware individual will build the same ideological pillars as before, hindered by his sole reliance on external institutions. For example, an individual replaces scholastic achievement with economic milestones, both relied upon to provide a sense of belonging in the world, and of his own confidence. It is the byproduct of certain dogmatic rhetoric: the mainstay of ideals despite societal evolution. To reiterate a previous point, the dogmatic rhetoric, and its institutional source, that prevents individuation is subjective to the individual. But if the individual’s

awareness is raised from the confines of his ego-centric conscious mind, and he can accept the underlying unconscious, then he will choose different ideological pillars to build. These metaphysical pillars are built with the wreckage from his recently destroyed ideologies.

In the wreckage left in the wake of Kali and the Destructive Character are pieces—keystones—used to support growth and reconciliation. These pieces, or fragments, are the shattered remains of old, ego-centric ideologies. From the pile of debris, fragments can be sorted and used to create new, evolved, ideologies that better serve the individual. The importance of such fragments is pivotal for the individual to restore wholeness and can be framed by understanding Benjamins' philosophy on time and collecting. As humans move forward in time, history is destroyed and piled behind. To capture the flashes of historical fragments is to collect. Benjamin says, "Thus there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order" (*Illuminations* 60). The "collector," in this demonstration, is the individual, and the dialectical tension between the poles" he feels is a liminal space, between what was and what will be. Within the liminal space, the "collector" sorts through the "disorder" of his fragmented past and creates "order" with new ego-centric ideologies. Creation and destruction propel the individual forward both in time and with new philosophies that are built on his old ones. The "collector," then, can construct a new conscious mind that engages with the unconscious, or he can re-erect the same debilitating, subjective dogmas he's acquired from external institutions. The restoration of old ideals is known as reconstitution. However, recreating ideologies does not mean the individual is doomed to maintain the same mindset. The individual can re-erect similar fundamental ideologies as before, covering his basic convictions (e.g. spirituality, health, relationships, financial, and so on), but each one can evolve with new



connotations. Reconstitution in this sense is not only a recreation of the past, but rather a sifting and then creation, built on the sediment of the old, “disorder” into “order.”

Art, such as literature, can be used to examine, sift through, and reconstitute the past, and with this idea in mind, three contemporary novels will be used to demonstrate the conceptual ideas of creation and destruction, both ontologically and as utility: *Lord of the Barnyard*, by Tristan Egolf, *History of the Rain*, by Niall Williams, and *The Rings of Saturn*, by W. G. Sebald. Each novel is vastly different from the others, but the steps to the paradoxical process can be found throughout, offering different perspectives of the important aspects of creation, destruction, and individuation. The paradoxical process utilizes the forces of creation and destruction, along with the liminal space between, to destroy ego-centric ideological attachments rooted in external reliance, and to clear ways for the individual to create new philosophies from the assemblage of old, fragmented ones. The result is of individuation, where the individual constructs a new conscious mind that includes the interpretation of the unconscious. By employing the selected novels, different stages of individuation can be highlighted and examined, thus demonstrating the factors, both dangerous or beneficial, that the individual may face.

*Lord of the Barnyard* by Tristan Egolf is a gruesome novel that puts the heinous actions of Baker, a small Midwest town, on display. A group of garbagemen, known as the Hill Scrubs, assume the third-person narration and tell the tale of John Kaltenbrunner, a victim and proponent of Greene County cruelty. The story recaps the entirety of John’s life from his childhood through adulthood and beyond death. John is raised by his mother, Madame Kaltenbrunner, alone as his father, Ford Kaltenbrunner, has passed away before his birth. At a young age, John is a recluse and an outcast from his school peers, and he becomes obsessed with fixing up the family farm.

John does not do well in school, but he excels at farm maintenance and poultry raising. Bad luck plagues John as the farm is in a constant flux between creation and destruction; every time he fixes things up, they somehow fall apart again. Eventually, John's reclusiveness generates attention from the school and John's life becomes hindered by unwanted attention. Isabelle, the Kaltenbrunner's goat, passes away and seemingly ignites a downfall for the family. A tornado annihilates the farm, and John is forced to begin anew. However, his mother falls ill and is hospitalized with Cushing's disease, and John must attend to her needs. A group known as the Methodist Crones begin sniffing around the dying mother and the Kaltenbrunner assets. The crones, led by the diabolical Hortense, are known for seeking out the terminally ill and convincing them to sign over all belongings to the Methodist church. In turn, the church sells the assets under the guise of helping with the medical costs, but it is greed that motivates the church's actions. John sees through their attempts and fights off the crones for a short period before falling victim to their deceit. Hortense is the driving force behind the takeover. She and John square off with each other during Madame Kaltenbrunner's degradation. Eventually, John barricades himself in the farm house with a shotgun and a shootout occurs between him and the police. John is arrested, sentenced, and banished from the town of Baker to work on a riverboat for three years. Upon his return, still fueled by anger, John passes through various disgusting and violent jobs before landing a position as a garbageman. The Hill Scrubs accept John as one of their own, and John proves to excel at the job. The garbagemen are mistreated by both their boss and the town's inhabitants, and it is John who proposes a strike. The strike propels the town into chaos as the garbage piles up. The Hill Scrubs are eventually vindicated, and their demands are met, but not without John becoming a public enemy, and subsequently losing his life during the Baker riots.

Despite John's martyrdom in the eyes of the Hill Scrubs, he is a man far removed from individuation. *Lord of the Barnyard* is a great demonstration of archetypal possession, as John succumbs to the destructive influences of projected figures. Instead of finding balance, John's psyche is skewed, and the potential one-sidedness of transformative archetypes in turn control his actions. John lashes out toward the external institutions in an attempt at retribution and it eventually propels him toward his own annihilation. The extreme distance between John and individuation serves as cautionary to the individual who refuses reconciliation with the unconscious. The novel's main achievement is highlighting the existence of projected archetypal figures within the conscious mind.

As a contrast to John, Ruth Swain, the teenage protagonist in Niall Williams' novel *History of the Rain*, discovers the necessary process toward individuation. Her story is not one of complete reconciliation between her unconscious and conscious mind, but rather it is a journey of exploration in how the past is utilized for reparation. Ruth has an unidentified blood disease that keeps her anchored to a boat-shaped bed in the upper story of her Irish home. Both her father, Virgil Swain, and brother, Aeney Swain, have passed away due to sudden, unforeseen circumstances. Ruth takes to writing to comprehend the world around her, including the loss of her family members. She reads through her father's library and establishes connection with literature and her own writing. The inhabitants of her house are her mother, Mary Swain, and grandmother, Nan. Ruth records her family history from the life of her great grandfather, to the meeting of her parents, to the deaths of her brother and father, the novel ending after her hospital stay, where it is uncertain for how long Ruth will live. The Swain home is located next to the River Shannon, which is a source of both treachery and serenity. The paradoxical nature of the river, containing both creative and destructive forces, is metaphorical for the way Ruth

recognizes life. She must sort through her shattered past to construct new ideologies to help accept her grief. The importance of the past and its rubble, along with the act of collecting, is the result of Ruth's prose, and firmly points her in the direction of individuation.

The narrator from *The Rings of Saturn*, a novel by W. G. Sebald, fully realizes the creation and destruction paradox and utilizes it to complete the individuation process. The novel begins with the narrator in the hospital, reflecting on the journey he had taken that left him exhausted. The novel is then dedicated to the narrator reflecting on his musing that took place during his walk across the Suffolk countryside. During his trip, the narrator thinks about various destructive past events that seemingly connects all humanity. Themes of destruction run through the narrative, along with the ideas of indestructibility and transformation. Many of the narrator's ponderings are allegorical demonstrations regarding the power of creation and destruction, such as the thread of silkworms and their silk that weave throughout the novel. Through his contemplation of destruction, creation, and the past, the narrator arrives at a point where his unconscious and conscious mind return to a uroboric state. Sebald's themes exhibit what the dismembering of old ideals and the creation of new ones can look like. The meandering execution of the narration might seem daunting, but the payoff for the narrator, and the reader, is the knowledge of humanity's undercurrent—the collective unconscious.

Processing creation and destruction in the service of psychological dismemberment and renewal results in a harmonious mental development. Once psychologically repaired from its former chasm, and free of external tyranny, the new psyche—and subsequently the individual—can relish in a sense of purpose and understanding. Otherwise, the individual will be “constantly and anxiously looking around for external rules and regulations which can guide him in his perplexity,” only to be led astray and further from his self (Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

330). When the individual establishes reciprocity between his unconscious and conscious mind, he will no longer be “anxiously looking around for external rules.” Instead, the “rules and regulations which can guide him” will come from within, from his intrinsic knowledge. As it stands for many individuals, “perplexity” instills a sense of fear into the conscious mind, and people look in the wrong external places to establish order. By analyzing tangible segments of creation and destruction, and its process, through contemporary musings of Egolf, Williams, and Sebald, the individual will find a clear-cut path toward resolution in a world caught between tick and tock.

## **The Functionality of Creation, Destruction, and the Liminal Space Between**

Creation and destruction will be viewed in two respects: ontologically and functionally. Once the ontological paradox of creation and destruction is accepted, its utilization on the individual level for obtaining, or preventing, individuation can be analyzed. Within the paradox, between the forces of creation and destruction, tension arises, creating liminal space between what was and what will be. Within this space the individual sheds ideological inconsistencies that prevent him from connecting with the inner knowledge found through willingly communicating with the unconscious. The novels discussed—*Lord of the Barnyard*, by Tristan Egolf, *History of the Rain*, by Niall Williams, and *The Rings of Saturn*, by W. G. Sebald—each share different elements of creation, destruction, and liminal space, and will lay the groundwork for understanding how the paradox surrounds and interacts with individuality.

All life is bookended by creation and destruction. “Birth initiates dying... Each beginning creates; each ending destroys. Both exploit the power of life,” says Josephine Evetts-Secker in her essay titled “Incipit and the Interrogation of Nothingness: Psyche's Response to the Question ‘Why is There Not Nothing?’” (21-23). The “power of life” is a never-ending cycle in which both creation and destruction exist at the same time, resulting in a paradox. As each “beginning creates” and “each ending destroys,” the occurrence and motion of life is driven by the paradoxical energy of endings and beginnings. In his book *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Heinrich Zimmer claims, “That is to say: the creative principle and the destructive are one and the same. Both are at unison in the divine cosmic energy that becomes manifest in the process of the biography and history of the universe” (212). The individual falls within the “history of the universe,” thus unable to escape the state of paradoxical being, forever cycled between the shattering and collecting of things. It is the “divine cosmic energy” that

propels life into motion, as well as the individual. This “unison” is the framework that encapsulates the universe and its inhabitants, and should not be feared for its entropy, but rather glorified for its existence. Despite the various ideologies and actions of people as either individuals or as groups, nothing can alter the devouring and creating powers surrounding life. Regarding progression and regression, Samuel W. Thomsen says,

We are logically assured, then, that progress is impossible. All joy is, in the long term, balanced by suffering. But we also know that all suffering is eventually balanced by joy. Not only progress, but regress too is impossible. In fact, many of the fears of the reactionaries and eugenicists are as irrational as the hopes of the utopians and progressives. (79)

No matter how society aligns creation and destruction with “joy” and “suffering,” the simultaneous existence of both keeps life churning. Thomsen is not presenting an existentialist perspective, where absolute “progress is impossible,” but rather he is establishing the impossibility of “progressives” and “reactionaries” of reaching their full, speculative potential. Creation and destruction will always remain in balance, constantly policing the other back to equilibrium. Utopias and dystopias are of equal distance away from society, thanks to the creation and destruction paradox, and “[b]liss will probably continue to occur, but just as it always has—balanced by its opposite” (Thomsen 43). The “bliss,” or societal cohesion, continues to “occur” only when the individual accepts natural harmony between creation and destruction. Understanding the limits of utopian and dystopian fantasies does not prevent the individual from progressing in the paradoxical world. Instead, he can better understand creation or destruction and their relationship, as each is “balanced by its opposite.”

Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* examines the creation/destruction paradox using the meandering observations of a narrator walking through the Suffolk countryside. The musings reflect on destructive events in Europe spread out over time along with the persistence and beauty of nature. "In Sebald's literary monism," Mark R. McCulloh says in his essay "Destruction and Transcendence in W. G. Sebald," "the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum* rules, predicated upon a dialectic in which destruction and creation (among other opposites) are inextricably linked" (405). The unity of opposites, or "coincidentia oppositorum," echoes the paradoxical energy mentioned. The "dialectic" rules link creation to destruction, where a constant push-pull motion occurs, keeping balance. The "monism" is reflected by the narrator's constant engagement with his world—internally and externally—and by his discovery and rediscovery of creation/destruction existing simultaneously; thus, the narrator is verifying the world he walks through is paradoxical. A hurricane, for instance, batters the south-east part of England, giving witness to intense destruction, and yet, the following night opens to clear, calming views of the stars:

For a long time I stood choked with emotion amidst the devastation. It was like being in a kind of wind tunnel, so strong was the suction created by the onrushing air, which was far too warm for the time of year.... I walked once more through the park. As there were power cuts throughout the whole region, everything was in a deep darkness. There was no glare from streetlights or houses to dull the sky. But the stars had come out, in a display so resplendent as I had seen only over the Alps when I was a child, or over the desert in my dreams. (Sebald 267)

The narrator has a cosmological connection with the "stars" coming out—one enabled by the destruction of "power...throughout the whole region." The narrator, "choked with emotion



amidst the devastation,” discovers a “display so resplendent.” Within his understanding of destruction comes an understanding of creation. The destruction of electricity so “no glare from the streetlights or houses ... dull the sky” creates an unimpeded appreciation toward the cosmos. He is not whipsawed between the two forces, but rather finds himself balanced in the middle. In this example, destruction leads to creation, which leads to the discovery of something greater. The same can be true if the order is reversed. As the narrator says, “On every new thing there lies already the shadow of annihilation. For the history of every individual, of every social order, indeed of the whole world, does not describe an ever-widening, more and more wonderful arc, but rather follows a course which, once the meridian is reached, leads without fail down into the dark” (23-24). For every new creation this “shadow of annihilation” is linked. One side of the paradox inevitably leads to the other side, an inescapable travel from one “meridian” to the other. The link between creation and destruction guarantees “every new thing” to “fail down into the dark.” It is a constant equilibrium, or as Jung calls it, an “enantiodromia”: a changing of things into their opposite (Samuels et al. 53). What destroys will eventually create, and what creates will eventually destroy; this is a fundamental axiom witnessed by the narrator. The reader of *The Rings of Saturn* is led to believe power will be restored to the societal dwellings of south-east England after the hurricane, and the stars will darken once again.

Williams’ *History of the Rain* invokes the paradox of creation and destruction in a different way: the constant churning of Ireland’s rivers, such as the River Shannon. The beautiful novel is about Ruth Swain, an ill Irish girl, who attempts to reestablish a connection between her deceased father and brother through the reading of literature and reflective writing. The River Shannon is responsible for her brother Aeney’s death, flooding, and the destruction of her father Virgil Swain’s poems, repeating a cycle of giving and taking. Ruth Swain reflects: “Because here

is what I know: the rain becomes the river that goes to the sea and becomes the rain that becomes the river” (Williams 353). The River Shannon gives, and the River Shannon takes. The motion of the water that “becomes” the “rain,” “river,” and the “sea” is cyclical. The river creates as it destroys, and the forces are recycled back into each other. The cycle is ever-present throughout the novel, affecting the Swains both metaphorically and physically, enabling the River Shannon to loom throughout the narrative, much the same the paradox of creation and destruction looms over life.

Ruth’s “river narrative” exhibits meandering-like qualities as her writing envelopes her family history with the same ebb and flow of the River Shannon (Williams 110). In the beginning of the novel, Ruth says, “We are our stories. We tell them to stay alive or keep alive those who only live now in the telling. That’s how it seems to me, being alive for a little while, the teller and the told” (3). Her characters, members of her family, are created and kept “alive” by drifting through her narrative until they are either destroyed (death), ossified, or left to float past the ending of their “stories.” She is collecting histories and allowing characters to glide into her narrative at will, and eventually she watches as they sail away. The death of Aeney, of her father, and the loss of the poems serve as creations in Ruth’s story that meet destructive ends. Ruth assumes a God-like creative drive to retain her family’s legacy, and by doing so accepts the inevitability and recognition of destruction. So, to “stay alive or keep alive,” Ruth must promote the balance of creation and destruction, not only in her art, but also in her life.

The perpetual creation and destruction in Egolf’s *Lord of the Barnyard* exhibits the simultaneous existence of creation and destruction. Protagonist John Kaltenbrunner is faced with the push-pull of creative and destructive forces as he navigates his hectic life in the dysfunctional

town of Baker. Much like the oscillation of the River Shannon from *History of the Rain*, the Kaltenbrunner farm is in constant flux between repair and disrepair:

As an example, the farm, which had deteriorated into an almost uninhabitable wreck during Madame Kaltenbrunner's extended period of mourning, had been systematically pieced back together into a fertile, well-maintained estate over the course of a few short years, while John, the lone overseer of its reconstruction, remained scarcely capable of keeping his own shoelaces tied. (Egolf 12)

After her husband, Ford Kaltenbrunner, dies, Madame Kaltenbrunner is unable to move past her grief and assume responsibility for the upkeep of the farm. Subsequently, the house deteriorates into an "uninhabitable wreck," until the fragmented pieces are collected and repaired by John. The "reconstruction" is a success, and the farm returns to the former glory it saw during Ford's life. However, forces beyond human neglect destroy the farm when a tornado "came around the bend gutting up the ground, destroying everything in its path.... The Kaltenbrunner farm had been all but annihilated. In the course of less than a minute, a full decade's worth of labor had turned inside out, leaving only a razed pit of mud and trash" (55-56). Despite the time it took to restore, a "decade's worth of labor had turned inside out." In "less than a minute" all of John's creative efforts succumb to destruction, much the same as it happened in the past, only under different circumstances. The forces of creation and destruction—natural and otherwise—prevent the farm from stabilizing for any long period. Zimmer's "divine cosmic energy"—the combination of creative and destructive forces—envelopes the universe and all human life within (212). John can build, or create, but a tornado annihilates; Sebald's narrator walks among similar devastation and witnesses the rebuilding of nature and society; Ruth surrenders to the power of

the River Shannon, recognizing its cyclical power. Creation and destruction are one and the same, existing simultaneously, and surrounding all individuals.

It may be daunting to think ontologically in terms of creation and destruction, or annihilation and formation, but accepting the paradox gives way to life's ultimate achievement: harmony. A harmonious life is gained by balancing creation and destruction. Heraclitus speaks on harmony in the following two fragments:

What was scattered  
gathers.

What was gathered  
blows apart. (Fragment #40)

...

From the strain  
of binding opposites  
comes harmony. (Fragment #46)

Life consists of things blowing “apart,” and gathering, and then repeating. Heraclitus is touching on an eternal dance of movement: creation and destruction churning cosmologically, constant like the blades of a windmill. The “strain” mentioned by Heraclitus retains connection between the “opposites,” thus creating a paradox. Metaphorically, creation and destruction circle each other, held in check by their connection, neither one able to fully escape from the circumference. The link between the two does not prevent motion, but rather drives it, as creation and destruction are both repelled by the other and connected, and it is “from the strain” that life finds harmony. The idea, then, is to not only accept the paradoxical framework, but also utilize it to navigate life. Understanding the paradoxical ontology can provide insight into suffering and joy,

how if one exists then so too does the other, which can motivate the individual to favor balance over excessiveness.

Many Eastern religions have rebalancing concepts promoting dialectic harmony, such as yin and yang, or Hindu figures such as Kali the Devouring Mother who both births and destroys life. In his essay titled “The Power of the Dark Side Part 1,” David Tacey comments on the “Jungian theory of the interplay of opposites, a theory that, in turn, Jung borrowed from German philosophy and aesthetics and from Chinese Taoism” (59). The appropriation of Jung’s “interplay” between good and evil, for instance, applies to the balancing of creation and destruction. When this balance is tilted, chaos ensues, but only temporarily; eventually, the paradoxical “interplay” restores equilibrium between creation and destruction. “The Cure, Jung felt,” Tacey continues, “was homeopathic: take in and imbibe some of the poison so that it does not totally destroy us” (60). To achieve the “homeopathic” cure, life requires equilibrium of the opposites. Life needs harmonious paradox. To take in “some of the poison,” no matter if that is attached to creation or destruction, is inevitable for the paradox to find stability. The tension between the two forces may swing out toward one side until it is elongated and taut, but it always returns to a balanced, middle position.

Between destruction and creation, in the harmonious tension referenced above exists a liminal space, a place quickly evaporated when the paradoxical balance is skewed. Life is considered in a constant liminal space—or as Frank Kermode says in his book *The Sense of an Ending*, in the “middest”: between “recorded past and imaginatively predicted future” (8). In accord with paradoxical ontology, creation can align with the “predicted future,” and destruction with the “recorded past.” For the creation of the future, present time must be destroyed; hence another dialectic truth: time is both created and destroyed simultaneously. If the

creation/destruction paradox exists, so too does a liminal space. On a localized level, the individual interacts with his own liminal space, as he finds psychological balance between ego-centric ideologies created and destroyed. It is important to recognize this as the scope of the metaphysical narrows to the individual parallel, for he will find psychological transformation within liminal space. But due to the uncertainty of one's own handling of mental evolution, society oversteps its utility by acting as a fraudulent North Star, claiming capability of leading the masses toward serenity.

To establish seemingly concrete guidance, institutions take the place of liminal space by slanting the balance between creation and destruction. Out of total fear of one's risky autonomy, institutions such as the State are overly relied upon for personal growth and direction, thus tilting the creation/destruction paradox and subsequently evaporating the individual's liminal space. Evetts-Secker says, "Before creation, and after destruction, we can feel threatened by nothingness" (9). In the place of "nothingness," society erects (creates) institutions to provide frameworks for understanding. Foundations such as the State (i.e., governmental, economical, and judicial systems, and so on) fill the void where "nothingness" lingers, seeking to squash any threats of meaninglessness. However, by clinging to societal structures and doctrines, the individual initiates a roadblock between his unconscious and conscious mind by falling into reliance. The danger of such reliance can be reiterated by revisiting a quote used above in the introduction: "The goal and meaning of individual life (which is the only *real* life) no longer lie in individual development but in the policy of the State," Jung says in *The Undiscovered Self*, "which is thrust upon the individual from outside and consists in the execution of an abstract idea which ultimately tends to attract all life to itself" (12). The attraction Jung refers to is that of external stimuli pulling the conscious mind away from the unconscious—stretching apart the

individual, leaving the liminal space displaced and the paradox unbalanced. The unbalanced psyche is damaging, and as time progresses, individuals—and consequently, society—are conditioned by “the policy of the State.” Vulnerability is eradicated by the subsuming of the individual into the masses, and personal identity relies on the perception of others; this “attract[s] all life to itself” by offering an alternative to facing one’s own fallibility.

John Kaltenbrunner’s journey through the flawed world of Greene County in *Lord of the Barnyard* remarks displeasingly on the many societal institutions tapped to steer individual development. Normally, these institutions are a comfort to the unindividuated person because they provide order and reassurances. The legal system will keep people safe; the Church serves as moral compass; academia provides a roadmap; and the individual never has to venture into his own mind for direction at all. However, in Baker, these institutions are presented with stains of ineptitude. John partakes in a shootout with local police as a final stand against losing the family farm to the Methodist crones. After he is apprehended, John faces the judge for sentencing. The Hill Scrubs comment on local process:

There’s never been a consistent methodology to Baker’s judicial system. From the homiletic rulings of the valley’s first council to the modern day courts’ enforcement of a *regionally prioritized* derivative of national law, it seems that for as long as any legislative body has been in place, all the right people have, indeed, gotten all the wrong treatment. And vice-versa. (Egolf 117)

In Egolf’s world, the “judicial system” stands on shaky ground. The lack of “consistent methodology” is terrifying for the individual who finds himself attached for moral decorum. If the system is broken, it is no wonder “all the right people have...gotten all the wrong treatment.” Society and the individual rely on these institutions, so when they falter by enforcing a

“derivative of national law,” the public is negatively affected. The State is regarded as top layer of the hierarchical codes of conduct. If this institution is defective, then a trickle-down effect can be expected. For John and the other residents of Baker, relying on such atrocious displays of incompetence prove fatal for individual identity and self-worth. John is sentenced to work on a river boat, and his mental fortitude declines with the degrading institutional frameworks around him.

According to the Hill Scrubs, the religious institutions exhibit similar corruption as the judicial system. The Methodist church and its “crones,” who “have probably always existed in one form or another—their lateral equivalents run like cancer through every society,” depict the church and its affiliates as money-greedy, “closet-case necrophiliacs” who are not interested in assisting spiritual journeys, but rather in financial gain (Egolf 66, 68). Reliability in Church and State is destroyed, thus dragging the individual’s notion of decorum through vile and corrupt mud. John never shakes the hold of the institutions on his conscious mind and eventually succumbs to a violent demise, his culmination serving as a warning to the modern individual who replaces the transformative powers of the liminal space with external systems. Creating distance within the individual’s psyche destroys the harmonious comfort of the liminal space. Unfortunately, for the modern man, liminal space, and its connection with the unconscious, has become fearsome, and yet unconsciously desirable for the sake of dismemberment and rebirth.

Liminal space does exist amongst the corruption, destruction, and creation, both in *Lord of the Barnyard* and *History of the Rain*, in the symbolic representation of rivers. The Kaltenbrunner estate experiences constant destruction, and John is unable to keep up with its repairs. Without running water, John cleans in the river. For John, the Patokah river provides a momentary balance, resulting in a feeling of peace: “He threw himself into the water. The



current wrapped around him like a cold wet glove. He came up shivering. Clouds of mud churned up at his feet. The grime and blood from his body drifted away in an oily film. The water soothed the aching in his ribs. It was a momentary reprieve” (Egolf 72). There are mounting pressures in his life, and John is overwhelmed. The Methodist crones have begun to investigate the property; Roy Mentzer, the school’s principal, is threatening to transfer John to a different school; and his mother, ill from Cushing’s disease and unprotected, remains isolated at the hospital. The river—a representation of the creation and destruction paradox (gives and takes)— “wraps[s] around him” and strips John of the “grime and blood.” By submerging in the river, by throwing “himself into the water,” John accepts the tension between creation and destruction, and feels the curing effect of the liminal space. John’s placement in the river is metaphorical to a liminal space because the water both destroys and creates, and within the current between, John is stripped away of “grime and blood.” For a twinkling of time, John is not consumed with anger toward the Methodist crones, or the school, or any other Baker miscreants, but rather he is content in the soothing waters of self-assurance.

John departs Greene County to work the “rivergoing freight barge” (sic), another metaphorical liminal space offering him the chance to reset his psychological balance (Egolf 119). John is “sentenced to three to six years of work release as an unpaid deckhand,” and soon realizes that while he is on the river he has “no tangible link to his past, no idea of what was going on back home, ...*no history*, other than his own head full of memories. He’[s] been temporarily relieved of everything” (119, 121). No “history” provides temporary alleviation, enabling John’s psyche to balance itself as the liminal space—between what was and what will be—provides homeopathic energy. This experience represents liminality by its placement between the destroyed past and possible future, as if the water and the freight barge remove John

from chronological time to heal his psychological injuries, much the same as the Patokah river had. The shattering of all ego-centric “tangible link[s] to his past,” such as ideologies, emotions, subjectivity, and so on, creates potential for new philosophies and perspectives to be conceived. The allegorical river is both destroying his “memories” and creating relief along with ideas of the future. John could take advantage of this moment by healing his psyche and fixating on the here and now; however, the liminal space thins as John skews the paradox by clinging to the disastrous events of previous years, subsequently denying its healing effects. On the barge, John swings to one side of his conscious mind, the destructive side, and meditates on past misgivings: “But there still wasn’t an hour that went by over the next three years that [John] didn’t relive every step of the holdout in graphic detail” (121). The reliving of the “holdout” ensures the continuation of John’s emotional hijacking, and a downward spiral of violence ensues. The liminal space is inadvertently offered to John through his sentence, but he is unable to collect the benefits as his anger invades his conscious mind. For the “next three years” John succumbs to violent possession as he plots his return to Baker, thus pushing individuation beyond reach.

Virgil Swain’s father, Abraham, also experiences the healing power of river waters acting as a liminal space. His English father, referred to as the Reverend, pressures Abraham to follow in his own footsteps by joining the church, but Abraham disappoints by resisting. The defiance is in accord with what Ruth calls the “Impossible Standard” (Williams 7). The Swains, going back to great-grandfather, grandfather, and father, are plagued with the belief that whatever they do will never succeed in the eyes of their predecessors. Ruth says, “The basis of the Philosophy of Impossible Standard is that no matter how hard you try you can’t ever be good enough” (7). The Reverend wants Abraham to devote his life to the church, and anything other is not “good enough.” The “philosophy” wedges Abraham from his father both physically and figuratively.

The father and son are separated when Abraham goes off to war. Abraham is wounded, discharged, and lands in Ireland where he buys a house, and all the while the Reverend is under the impression his son is dead. Motivated by a desire for approval, Abraham spends years fixing up the “Ashcroft House & Lands,” and eventually sends an invite to his elderly father (58). The Reverend refuses Abraham’s invitation and dies shortly thereafter. Subsequently, Abraham “stopped believing in God, and started believing in salmon” (60). The holy institution constructed from the Reverend’s firm belief is reduced to rubble in Abraham’s psyche. Abraham, “standing thigh-deep in the river proper, ...had lost all care for this life which he believed random and meaningless, a constant proof but small comfort he found in those salmon that passed and those that were caught” (64). Losing “all care for this life” does not necessarily mean Abraham has not found reprieve, but rather that the running waters of the river and the “constant proof” strip away oppressive ideologies, giving Abraham a sense of psychological weightlessness. The only source of conduct for young Abraham was the Reverend and the church. For individuals such as Abraham, developing psychological autonomy is a terrifying process. Facing oneself is facing one’s insecurities and uncertainties. The internal confrontation evaluates one’s level of resilience. Standing in the river, however, Abraham bathes in a momentary calm of the liminal space, freshly dismembered and raw. He allows parts of himself to wash away and discovers comfort in knowing where the fish came from and where they are going.

Virgil Swain departs by sea in attempt to reset his life, only to be blocked by his own insecurities. Ruth reflects: “Three weeks after Grandmother died, Virgil too left Ashcroft. There was no natural place left for him to fit into the world.... Two days later he stepped on to a Merchant Navy ship docked on the River Liffey. Then he went to sea” (Williams 154). The

“River Liffey” carries Virgil away from a life he no longer feels is a “fit.” The exodus by river is a symbolic transition to the liminal space, because—much the same as John and Abraham—Virgil is carried away by constant waters, symbolically stripping him of old, ego-centric ideologies in anticipation of his return as a changed man. Virgil enters the allegorical liminal space to reset his mind and to find concreteness in a world where he feels has “no natural place...for him.” However, he too comes up short and is unable to shake the oppressiveness of the Impossible Standard. The nagging acceptance of an abstract inheritance prevents Virgil from ever truly reconciling his psyche as his unconscious and conscious mind remain amiss, restricting him from stepping toward individuation. Even though liminal space has power to annihilate decrepit ideologies of the conscious mind, the individual can resist transformation by clinging to those precious few he is too afraid to lose. Both Virgil and John attach identity to the flaws that anchor them away from curative metamorphosis, under the faulty notion that it is better to cling to something than nothing at all. By letting go of hinderances, and accepting the essentiality of ideological dismemberment, the individual may employ liminal space for improvement.

The narrator of Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn* roams the countryside in a liminal state full of disjuncture and renewal, where he seemingly approaches transformation as a necessity as opposed to an avoidable horror. The narrator appreciates life’s creations, such as the mathematical pattern known as the “quincunx” that Thomas Browne “identifies...everywhere,” including “in the physical shapes of caterpillars, butterflies, silkworms and moths,” and “in the creations of mankind, in the pyramids of Egypt and the mausoleum of Augustus...” (Sebald 19-21). The “quincunx” weaves through all life, both natural and man-made, thus establishing a creative connection “everywhere.” The paradox affirms that if natural “physical shapes” and

“creations of mankind” are connected through creative forces, they are also connected through destructive ones. Therefore, the narrator is observing and reflecting on a world in flux—a post-war world connected through destruction and creation. The narrator’s mind strays from the dreamlike stillness of the present to historical occurrences that have contributed to modern ideologies, specifically that of collective deterioration. To put this in perspective, Sebald’s narrator is walking around within the same liminal space that John, Abraham, and Virgil find in the rivers. Traveling between Lowestoft and Southwold, the narrator expresses awareness of atemporality: “Doubtless it is only a matter of time before one stormy night the shingle bank is broken, and the appearance of the entire area changes. But that day, as I sat on the tranquil shore, it was possible to believe one was gazing into eternity.... It was as if the world were under a bell jar” (59). It is “doubtless” that the “shingle bank” will break, changing the area. Creation and destruction will change the countryside, but in this moment the narrator sits on the “tranquil shore” between what was and what will be. Allegorical to the individual’s conscious mind transformation, time is suspended as if it were “under a bell a jar,” primed for individual psychological alterations. The narrator gazes “into eternity” because time does not police the liminal space. In metaphorical rivers, or beneath bell jars, exist atemporal planes backdropping immense potential for renewal.

Numerous additional examples throughout *The Rings of Saturn* occur in the dawn after destruction and before creation (both physical and psychological rebuilds and understandings), positioning the narrator, the reader, and all of humanity in a transformative state. For instance, Somerleyton Hall contains an eclectic assortment of oddities collected over various decades, placing the visitor out of time. The narrator tours Somerleyton and reflects on the liminal aspects:

There are indeed moments, as one passes through the rooms open to the public at Somerleyton, when one is not quite sure whether one is in a country house in Suffolk or some kind of no-man's-land, on the shores of the Arctic Ocean or in the heart of the dark continent. Nor can one readily say which decade or century it is, for many ages are superimposed here and coexist. (Sebald 36)

Various artifacts from different locations and periods evokes the feeling of a “superimposed” coexistence. This “no-man's-land” is a liminal space where everything exists concurrently, including time, location, and paradox. The narrator traverses through a “no-man's-land” as he walks through Suffolk—along with his roving thoughts. He “passes through rooms” in Somerleyton as if surveying the timeless collection of life's many ideologies, cycles, and phases. Unlike John, Abraham, and Virgil, the narrator is making use of the liminal space by accepting the atemporality of his journey, thus demonstrating a willingness for ideological change and accepting his vulnerability, all the while stripping away his fears of the surrounding destruction of past, present, and possible future.

Vulnerability is the prime vehicle driving the individual's ability for psychological change. In her essay “The Power of the Unconscious: Descent into Madness or Spiritual Emergence?” Ursula Wirtz says, “In liminal space—often ‘located’ at the edge of chaos, where one's original sense of identity dissolves—one is caught in extreme openness and vulnerability. There is a sacred quality to being in liminal space; it is numinous and alluring, but it is also dangerous” (110). Sebald's narrator observes the world and its individuals in a period of “openness and vulnerability.” The “dangerous” aspects of liminal space are observed through the images of manmade destruction throughout England. On “the edge of chaos,” between creation and destruction, “one's original sense of identity dissolves.” Dissolving identity is to

breakthrough one's persona, as mentioned earlier in the introduction, to enter a liminal space where ego-centric transformation may occur. Sebald's narrator senses numinous weight of change during his tour of Somerleyton Hall, remarking "how fine a place the house seemed to me now that it was imperceptibly nearing the brink of dissolution and silent oblivion" (36). Old artifacts and old ideologies will meet a "silent oblivion," and in turn new ones will emerge. Understanding how "fine a place" the liminal space is can lead to the necessary vulnerability required for change. Much the same for Abraham, Virgil, and John, the narrator's embrace of "dissolution" is an embrace of vulnerability, and it is often a frightening and challenging act. The individual can either use the vulnerability to shed his persona for the acquirement of healthy change, or he can fall victim to the horrors of what is seemingly unmitigated destruction—sending him into violent recourse or further away from his unconscious. Regardless, in the end it is the individual's leap into vulnerability, below his touted persona, that enables rebirth from the liminal space, emerging wiser and more resilient than before.

The individual uses creation and destruction to penetrate liminal space, where the restoration of the paradoxical equilibrium occurs. Before extrapolating contextual examples of the utilization of creation and destruction (as opposed to its ontological existence), it is imperative to discuss a reason for its use. Tacey offers this important declaration:

The first wholeness [uroboros] has to be broken so that the second wholeness can come into being. In this way, destruction serves creation.... The basic realization is that a creative force tears the original unity to pieces so that it can be reconstituted at a higher level. Creation is not satisfied with itself as things are. There has to be upheaval, suffering, strife, and conflict. The old has to die so that the new can be born: unity,

disunity, and unity regained. This process is repeated in countless ways, in each individual life and in the lives of cultures and civilizations. (62)

Destroying “unity” is the goal of the individual charged with the task of individuation. To strip away the undesirable and debilitating aspects of modern life, “disunity” and “unity regained” must be “repeated in countless ways.” The destruction of muscle fibers for the body builder is an adequate comparison. Muscle growth is only achieved by the ripping apart and subsequent healing of muscle fibers. During the healing process, new strands of muscle fibers connect, resulting in increased growth and strength. The creation/destruction process begins again, and the bodybuilder continues to increase muscle mass. A metaphysical equivalent to the body builder (to some degree) is the therapist’s patient. Therapy involves a complete dismantling of past events that root present ideologies of the conscious mind, and only through analysis of the psyche can the patient rise anew. To reiterate: “The old has to die so that the new can be born” (62). The destruction of “wholeness” is necessary for creating new, evolved “wholeness.” “Upheaval, suffering, strife, and conflict” all serve the purpose of sending the individual into liminal space, where ego-centric dismemberment and regathering commences. Ideally, psychological growth propelled by the creation and destruction cycle will eventually breed an understanding of uroboric realities, surfacing in the individual as unadulterated self-confidence receptive to transformation. These uroboric realities, it should be noted, are not subject to change, but rather integrated into the conscious mind by ego-centric transformation.

*The Rings of Saturn* employs a cliché for individual transformation in the guise of silkworms metamorphosing into butterflies. The narrator says, “In this shell, which admits neither air nor moisture, the caterpillar changes into a nymph by sloughing off its skin for one last time. It remains in this state for two to three weeks in all, until the butterfly described about



emerges” (Sebald 276). The transformation occurs “in this shell,” which is a representation of liminal space. The entity enters the shell, protected from outside interference, such as “air” and “moisture,” and “emerges” transformed. The narrator undergoes a similar transformation of the silkworm as he ponders Europe’s destructive record. Peeling back the layers of violent history for the sake of understanding is the same as “sloughing off its skin.” Understanding humanity’s violent nature, the narrator says, “Our spread over the earth was fueled by reducing the higher species of vegetation to charcoal, by incessantly burning whatever would burn” (170). The reader, guided by the narrator, surveys destructive forces—the “incessantly burning”—of nature and humanity, and by the end of the novel senses rebirth as new ideas of the individual are cultivated. The enormity of European devastation, of its “spread over the earth,” is difficult to understand, but Sebald paints a picture through fragmented histories that are tangible enough for the narrator to comprehend, thus fostering intellectual growth. He enters a shell, only to emerge anew. *The Rings of Saturn* dismembers society held together by violent events for the prosperity of new ideologies to transform in liminal space (like silkworms to butterflies). The connotation of these new ideologies (good or evil, temporal or atemporal, linear or cyclical, and so on) is up to the reader to determine.

Creation and destruction in the service of psychological wholeness is witnessed again by Temple of Jerusalem model maker Thomas Abrams, who says, “In the final analysis, our entire work is based on nothing but ideas, ideas which change over the years and which time and again cause one to tear down what one had thought to be finished, and begin again from scratch” (Sebald 245). To evolve, or to bloom from the liminal space transformed, the changing of ideas “over the years” must happen. Individuals “tear down what one had thought to be finished” to create ideas that support psychological healing. The metamorphizing of ideas is a tool toward

individuation, as the individual uses the change to improve unconscious reconciliation.

Destruction in the service of creation—to “begin again from scratch”—results in the utilization of creation and destruction to enter liminal space where true wholeness is accomplished. Like muscle fibers, Thomas Abrams is suggesting psychological growth through the obliteration and reconfiguration of old ideas into new, stronger ones.

Egolf's *Lord of the Barnyard* is littered with destructive forces, and when examined metaphorically, utilization of creation and destruction is exemplified. As John grows, the farm improves, and “In the course of a few short years, he'd revamped the dilapidated estate to its former glory, modeling it after an old photograph hanging from the blue-papered walls of his mother's bedroom” (Egolf 14). John's psyche correlates with the development of the farm. Using “an old photograph” and restoring the “estate to its former glory,” John is connecting with his father, Ford. In this connection, John forms an identity, or persona, based on the physical maintenance of his surroundings. However, Madame falls ill, later diagnosed with Cushing's disease, and John must drive her to the hospital, interrupting his restoration. On the way, John wrecks the car and the police intervene. John is separated from his mother at the hospital and returns to the farm. It is when sickness befalls the family that the Methodist crones descend. The crones use the separation of John from his mother to manipulate Madame into signing over power of attorney to the church. Madame is confused, leaving John to face the Methodist crones and their destruction alone: “Their labors may have been performed in the name of Christian charity, but as John saw it, their real drive was to bear witness to all that withered and died” (69). The predatory aim of the crones is to acquire assets from the gullible. Witnessing “all that withered and died” is a means toward wealth, so the crones circle destruction, seeking opportunity. The “labors” of the crones succeeds when Madame signs over the farm to the

church, sparking John's rebellion of destroying the property. "Then the rampage had begun—pounding and smashing and cursing, glass exploding, wood snapping. The walls around ... shook with the impact" (105). The "rampage," or reducing, is important as the farm represents part of John's conscious mind. The physical represents the metaphysical, and as "glass" and "wood" explode, so too are John's ego-centric ideologies. To make room for new mental cornerstones, the individual must destroy the old by "pounding and smashing and cursing," and so on. John develops alongside his reconstitution of the farm primarily due to the absence of Ford and the extended period of grief by Madame. By systematically destroying the farm, John is destroying a part of himself that held onto certain ideologies. In this case, such ideology is the worship of Ford and the comforting protection of his mother, both shattered and no longer attached. However, the crones' infiltration into his life leaves John stripped of old ideas and he succumbs to destruction in a fit of fear and rage. Instead of erecting ideologies that transcend injustices, John explodes in the other direction, travelling lower to the next rung on the downward spiral.

During his "rampage," John discovers an effect of dismemberment: unrecognizability (Egolf 105). "Inside the bathroom," John "stopped to regard himself in the full-length mirror along the wall. He barely recognized the face staring back. The emaciated figure with the sallow, cadaverous complexion and the crooked posture was slightly elongated by the bowed contours of the mirror's frame. Death eating a cracker" (108). The dreary description of his "sallow, cadaverous complexion" ignites a frightening reflection. Here, metaphorically speaking, John is in a liminal space, because he is pulled outside of time and space to view himself objectively, and his vulnerability is exposed by "the face staring back." It is a violent representation, but accurate when considering the liminal space can be "dangerous," as Wirtz says (110). Individual

reaction to such a reflection results one of many ways. For John, he plunges further into his fury and is possessed by violence, as will be discussed in the proceeding chapters. For others, it is an opportunity to gain a glimpse of the person one was, or is, or possibly could be; it is an unfiltered inventory of core individuality.

Destruction affects the citizens of Greene County who endure an explosion of unrest. John organizes a strike with the garbage men (Hill Scrubs) of the town, resulting in the accumulation of trash bags in every front yard along every street. Mixed with a drought, the citizens of Baker become increasingly irritable. The strike leads up to Baker's annual basketball game against rival Pottville, an event that often leads to unnecessary violence. Finally, frustrations boil over: "It was at that point, on the eve of the Pottville/Baker playoff, that the main Channel 6 correspondent made his renowned observation, against a backdrop of decay, that all of Baker appeared to be awaiting the arrival of the four horsemen" (Egolf 353). As predicted, tempers explode "against a backdrop of decay," and the heated city capitulates to its hysterical compulsions. The "four horsemen" seem to have arrived as the city is razed by rioting violence. By morning, dust settles, and Baker residents realize a settlement must occur with the Hill Scrubs. In the following weeks, order is restored, but with better understanding of municipal dynamics. The Hill Scrubs' demands are met, and Greene County resumes its daily activities better than it did before. Allegorically, and regarding the individual, this is not suggesting the physical destruction of surroundings better one's conscious mind, but rather it provides a clean-cut example of destruction serving the purpose of creation. The "decay" and downfall of Baker eventually creates dynamics that promote a civility that was once lacking. "Just as all energy proceeds from opposition," Jung says, "so the psyche too possesses its inner polarity, this being the indispensable prerequisite for its aliveness, as Heraclitus realized long ago" (*Memories*,

*Dreams, Reflections* 346). The destruction, and eventual reforming, of Greene County demonstrates a display of “energy proceed[ing] from opposition.” The town’s “inner polarity,” as metaphorical to the psyche, fell heavy on the destructive side and rebalances when old ideals detach. Baker’s “aliveness” is its ability to repeatedly gather and blow apart, as Heraclitus observed long ago (Fragment #40). It is the repetitive creation and destruction of ego-centric ideologies that drive the individual forward in his evolution, such as Baker. For the rebirth of a better Baker, the town must first perish under the flames of old assumptions and John—a man far from individuation—ensures the arrival of each steamed-horseman.

Comparably to Baker and John Kaltenbrunner, Virgil Swain from the *History of the Rain* is also battling the “polarity” of creation and destruction, both inner and outer (Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 346). With the existence and influence of the Impossible Standard—a Swain curse, according to Ruth—Virgil never achieves the harmonious equilibrium of the creation/destruction paradox (Williams 7). After Abraham passes away, Virgil is tasked with the upkeep of his family home. Ruth imagines the outcome: “Two things were certain. One, that he would set about the tasks with that fierce boy-concentration I remember seeing in Aeney, and two, that he would fail hopelessly. Still, he banged and sawed, he painted over the dark stains coming on the walls and he stuffed the gaps between the window sashes with newspaper” (140). Virgil’s efforts to maintain the farm prove useless, and eventually the property is repossessed by the bank due to delinquent payments. Throughout his life, Virgil will “fail hopelessly” at the other projects he attempts. Virgil “banged and sawed,” and yet his efforts came up short. Another instance: after Virgil and Ruth’s mother, Mary, are wedded, Virgil sets off to make the difficult farm profitable. Unfortunately, the farm proves to be unsalvageable due to its agricultural difficulties: “In the meantime my father’s farming went poorly. Our cattle were unique in being

able to eat grass and get thinner. They add to this a propensity for drowning” (229). It was not just the cows that are unmanageable, but as well Virgil’s attempts to grow potatoes: “It was another week before Virgil saw the blight.... The potato stalks started withering” (235). Virgil creates opportunities for success, but the land destroys his efforts time and again. It is implied that the reason the “cattle...get thinner,” the potatoes are “withering,” and their horse is aged beyond utility, is because Virgil Swain is destined to fail the Impossible Standard. Whatever Virgil creates soon meets a destructive end. He continues his attempts to turn a profit, but his confidence waivers as the Impossible Standard skews his conscious mind to the side of destruction, causing a near constant feeling of ineptitude.

The Impossible Standard prevents Virgil Swain from achieving individuation because his instinct is to keep the scale of the creation/destruction paradox off-balance. Every attempt of Virgil fails against the looming Impossible Standard—under the heavy, debilitating belief that nothing he does or say will ever be good enough in the eyes of his family. The notion of immanent failure maintains a deep fissure within Virgil’s psyche. For him, wholeness—the unimpeded discourse between unconscious and the conscious mind that supports self-assurances and instinctual knowledge—is unattainable. The estate Virgil fights to improve catches fire, and it is the River Shannon (the same river that took Aeneas’s life) that douses its flames: “Because it was beside the river, because it was damp and soggy and owned body and soul by the rain, our house did not burn down. It smouldered” (Williams 341). The “damp and soggy” land is the rightful owner of the house, not Virgil. He is impotent in his attempts to create something new, and therefore, destruction and disappointment continue to reign supreme. The house and its inhabitants are all “beside the river,” all within the creation/destruction paradox. However, the balance leans to the destructive side, where Virgil’s psyche “smoulder[s].” The annihilation of

Virgil's confidence even leads to destruction of his poetry. After all the heartbreak, Virgil loses faith in all creation, including his own. He collects the poems he had written and stands on the river edge, releasing each piece of paper into the rushing waters. Ruth walks up behind him, says, "I didn't believe they were pages and then knew they were the poems, and knew the answer he was going to give me when I asked why. 'They were no good, Ruth'" (345). The River Shannon—a representation of creation and destruction—overwhelms Virgil, and he concedes defeat, giving more credence to the destructibility of things than to creative powers. Virgil's poems are sacrificed to the changing waters of the river in self-exaltation. It is fire that forges a man, but Virgil's false ideologies of the conscious mind trap him in the flames; instead of a rebirth, Virgil is ossified and smoldering.

The reality of creation and destruction varies from rushing river waters to decaying landscapes to fluxing conditions of a farm, but the axiom of its representation proves inescapable. What has been created will eventually be destroyed, and in the ruins, creation will begin again, and so on. This framework translates to reality and individual will benefit once this empirical truth is accepted. Understanding the harmonious effects of equilibrium will prime the conscious mind for what is seemingly a terrifying process of evolution. Harmony opens liminal space where ego-consciousness is dismembered and reformed. However, as is illustrated in each novel, how an individual handles the paradox may also vary. John Kaltenbrunner and Virgil Swain deny liminal space as each is hindered: John consumed by anger and Virgil by his insecurities rooted in familial hierarchy. Asking oneself to let go of toxicity is asking to let go of present identity. John and Virgil cannot sever external projections and attachments, thus denying themselves inward perspective. They cling to present, ego-centric ideologies, never stepping toward individuation. For these two, creation and destruction are off-kilter, influencing logic

with unequal weight. In comparison, Ruth Swain is working toward finding balance between creation and destruction. She constructively analyzes the paradox through her reflective writing and moves toward a clearer understanding of life within the universe. For Ruth, grief is not debilitating, but rather an opportunity to take stock of ideologies that are beneficial to the conscious mind or need changing. This process is similar for Sebald's narrator as he roams the countryside. In this case, though, the narrator fully embraces liminal space by first accepting creation and destruction as paradox, and his place in between. He takes heed of the destruction all around him, including destructive events of the past. However, the narrative contains appreciation for the creative aspects of life, from nature to man-made. Between these two forces, the narrator unearths a collectivity amongst humanity. He enters liminal space under the assumption that change is necessary, a realization John, Virgil, and even Ruth (to a point), are unsure of. Residence within liminal space requires vulnerability, a departure from a persona. Sebald's narrator opens himself up in the presence of decay in anticipation for transformation, as noted in his recollection of silkworms. To take the next step, to dismember one's conscious mind for healing, the narrator, and individuals alike, must utilize "archetypes of transformation" that help guide the individuation process (Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* 38). In this way, as exemplified in the next chapter, individuals can ride the "divine cosmic energy" toward a healthier, stable psychology (Zimmer 212).



## **The Great Mother Archetype, Kali, and the Destructive Character**

The universe was created, and the universe will be destroyed; the best way for humanity to navigate the existential sheathing is by utilizing its energies to manage psychological and physical harmonies. Liminal space—tension between creation and destruction—enables the removal of hindrances and the cultivation of cognitive evolution. Existing within the collective unconscious are archetypes that can help the individual restore connection with his intrinsic wealth of knowledge, archetypes that can help destroy or create, or—as will be exemplified—both. These archetypes stem from the uroboros—a harmonious unconscious plane in which all dialectics coexist. The Great Mother, or Mother Goddess, connects to the uroboros, and it is from her that other archetypes emerge that encapsulate both creation and destruction in paradox. Archetypes such as Kali, the Devouring Mother, carry a useful duality for the completion of individuation. Understanding Kali’s motives as noted throughout mythologies enlightens the psyche to developmental strategies previously unknown. For instance, Walter Benjamin’s philosophical idea of The Destructive Character echoes similar principles of clearing away. According to Benjamin, the Destructive Character lacks concern for creation, but rather destroys for the sake of “ways” (Benjamin, *Reflections* 301). The danger of an unimpeded Destructive Character is a constant upheaval of psychological tenets, such as confidence, worth, compassion, and so on, without concern for healthy ideologies or the creation of new ones in the conscious mind. The modern individual can obtain individuation by utilizing these archetypes to guide them back to a psychological balance between creation and destruction. However, as will be revealed, if the individual is unable to break free from external attachments and emotions, he will be consumed and possessed by overcompensating archetypes. In other words, ignoring the collective unconscious only causes its accessories to try harder for reconciliation with the

conscious mind. Using both representations of destruction in the service of creation will prove advantageous for the individual's campaign to wholeness. First, to understand the beneficial, or detrimental, effects of archetypes, an elemental understanding of archetypes is necessary.

Many scholars have championed the theory of unconscious archetypes, but none more than Jung, who, for present purposes, serves as a foundation. Jung's "life is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious" (Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 3). Jung and Sigmund Freud gave rise to psychoanalysis in the twentieth century and contributed to the scrutiny of the "unconscious" and the extent of its "self-realization." "Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation," Jung says, "and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole" (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 3). After a lifetime of work, Jung determined "the unconscious seeks outward manifestation." For "the personality" to "experience itself as a whole," Jung identifies forces, or entities, that work in the service of connecting the conscious mind with the unconscious. These entities are called archetypes, and Jung calls for their acknowledgement among the collective unconscious—a plane connected to all humans. Jung says:

From the unconscious there emanate determining influences which, independently of tradition, guarantee in every single individual a similarity and even a sameness of experience, and also of the way it is represented imaginatively. One of the main proofs of this is the almost universal parallelism between mythological motifs, which, on account of their quality as primordial images, I have called *archetypes*. ("Concerning the Archetypes, with Special Reference to the Anima Concept" 58)

The "determining influences" and "parallelism" of these archetypes as witnessed by societies and various mythologies promote confidence—not only in their existence, but in their abilities to

shape or direct conscious intention. The “primordial images” perceived by the conscious mind—found in dreams, active imagination, and represented in art—connect to the uroboros.

Metaphorically speaking, the uroboros is the soil from which specific archetypes emerge. The psyche’s original state of being—elements of both the unconscious and conscious mind mixed in uroboric soil—provide nourishment for the outreach of each extremity. In his book *The Great Mother*, Erich Neumann says the uroboros “is the ‘Great Round,’ in which positive and negative, male and female, elements of consciousness, elements hostile to consciousness, and unconscious elements are intermingled” (18). Jung identified the intermingling of “consciousness” a necessity for individuation. By confronting these archetypes, such as the shadow, the individual becomes aware of inner attributes that influence his personality, thus identifying areas of potential change. The intermingling of elements in the uroboros eventually breaks off into well-connected archetypes that serve different functions. One such divergence is that of the Great Mother, a feminine “element” who retains some of the paradoxical energy sucked from the uroboros.

It is from the Great Mother that archetypes spawn and infiltrate the individual’s conscious mind. Neumann’s “Schema I”—a flowchart of origin—places the uroboros near the bottom, followed by the Great Mother, then the anima, topped by “the projected figures” (18). “The projected figures” are the archetypes found in the conscious mind, represented in images such as mythical gods and goddesses. “When analytical psychology speaks of the primordial image or archetype of the Great Mother,” Neumann says, “it is referring, not to any concrete image existing in space and time, but to an inward image at work in the human psyche” (3). Often these archetypal images, or characters, differ from individual to individual, but they point to the same “inward image at work in the human psyche”: the Great Mother. The “primordial image” is projected up to the conscious mind and is expressed in images, often leading to

representations within art. Examples of representations are found in all the world's mythologies, such as the Hindu Goddess Kali, the Devouring Mother who encases both destructive and creative potential; the Gnostic Great Mother Sophia, who contains all-seeing wisdom and an understanding of paradox; the Greek Goddess Aphrodite, representing the creative powers of nature; the Roman Goddess Diana, who many believe propels transformation; the Madonna, a depiction of Mother Mary holding Jesus; and many more (Neumann 115-185). The archetypal force of the Great Mother reaches from the uroboros to the conscious mind through projected figures, and this presence is felt in childhood and beyond.

Children project the all-encompassing Great Mother onto the dominant mother type in their lives. This projection is apparent in infancy as the child is unable to differentiate himself from the mother, but to a small, varying degree, aspects of the Great Mother can linger in its projected form for many adolescent years. Ruth Swain from *History of the Rain* reflects on a previous projection of the Great Mother onto her own mother:

You can see how she will *not be defeated*, how the world has thrown sadness after sadness at her and knocked her down and she's still getting up, she's older than she was and there's these few silver hairs coming at her temples and her eyes have that extra deepness of knowledge that makes her more beautiful in a kind of lasting way. It's like she's the eternal Mother, my mam, this wall around me, holding back the sea that keeps coming for me." (Williams 90)

From Ruth's perspective, the "eternal Mother" who "will *not be defeated*," is "holding back the sea." Ruth's observation of the "few silver hairs coming at her [Mam's] temples and her eyes" that "have that extra deepness of knowledge" is like the way the Gnostics perceive the all-knowing Sophia, both eternally full of wisdom. Ruth is in her teenage years, and the comparison

of her mother to the Great Mother is playful, but nonetheless, it is an accurate depiction of the magnificent power of the “archetypal feminine” (Neumann, Schema I), a uroboric entity unbeatable due to her permeant, untouchable existence.

Additionally, Ruth observes her Mam provide reprieve for Virgil during his struggles with psychological equilibrium. The Impossible Standard—a constant wedge in Virgil’s psyche that keeps wholeness out of reach—is only diluted briefly by the calming logic of Mam, the Great Mother. Virgil is constructing boat-shaped beds and cannot get the measurements right: “Four legs wouldn’t support the weight evenly so...he was still falling short of Impossible Standard until Mam told him I was hoping it wasn’t going to be too solid but would still have a little give because I liked to rock myself to sleep.... This was always Mam’s role, to show Dad he was all right, to redeem him from the place he kept pawning himself into” (Williams 55). In this moment, when Mam “show[s] Dad he was all right,” Virgil believes he has lived up to a potential that otherwise is out of reach due to the self-imposed Impossible Standard. When utilized, “Mam’s role,” or the role of the Mother archetype, is to restore balance between the unconscious and conscious mind, and to enforce instinctual confidence. Virgil is redeemed “from the place he [keeps] pawning himself into,” and momentarily feels confident in his attempts. It is in the fluttering moments such as the boat-beds where Mam can sooth Virgil’s pessimism to an undetectable, almost minuscule, amount. However, Virgil never permanently strips the notion that destruction and failure are unavoidable and considered likely, thus keeping his psychological wholeness at bay.

The Great Mother extends into countless terminuses within the unconscious hierarchy. The reason for the veined-expansion is in response to the development of the ego-consciousness by the individual. The ego is a blockade of sorts, preventing full discourse between the conscious

mind and the unconscious. The ego-consciousness is selfish and oftentimes frightened, hence its attachment to external reasoning for instruction and notions of safety. The development of the ego-consciousness happens in infancy; according to Jacques Lacan, the infant, who is “[u]nable as yet to walk, or even to stand up, and held tightly as he is by some support, human or artificial...nevertheless overcomes, in a flutter of jubilant activity, the obstructions of his support and, fixing his attitude in a slightly leaning-forward position, in order to hold it in his gaze, bring back an instantaneous aspect of the image” (1163). No longer is he a part of the mother, or “of his support,” but develops a breaking off, thus causing a psychological splitting. The “human or artificial” support, such as his mother’s warm embrace or toddler rocker chairs, is heavily relied upon by the infant. However, the infant “overcomes” the “obstruction of his support” and discovers he is separate; he is *other*. The “aspect of the image” ignites the development of the ego-consciousness. He has every right to be “jubilant” over his newfound independence, but onwards from the mirror stage, uroboric connections become difficult, and oftentimes skewed to one side of the conscious mind. Without an equal balance between ego-consciousness and unconscious the individual will find his psychological state to be unnerving and spotted with insecurities as the whole reserve of knowledge, both intrinsic and external, is unobtainable. For instance, after his infant break from the mother, the individual may project mother archetypes onto future relationships, consequently seeking outward affection and comfort, reaching further away from uroboric forces. It is the cohesion between the two knowledges that make up consciousness that enable psychological wholeness, and from a young age the individual unknowingly ignites the push-pull of his own paradoxes.

In terms of archetypes, Jacques Lacan’s Mirror Stage can be expanded to include the metaphysical separation from the uroboros. “The child, for example,” Neumann says, “first

experiences in his mother the archetype of the Great Mother, that is, the reality of an all-powerful numinous woman, on whom he is dependent in all things, and not the objective reality of his personal mother, this particular historical woman which his mother becomes for him later when his ego and consciousness are more developed” (15). The “child” perceives himself attached to the “Great Mother,” as if he is an extension of her eternal presence, but once he breaks free from her support and discovers his autonomy, mother is realized as caretaker, “objective” and separate from his “consciousness.” The important observation is a move from instinctual understandings to a dependence on externality—from uroboric integration to a split consciousness. Though similar in concept, there is a difference between the theory of Lacan and that of Neumann: the “all-powerful numinous woman” does not necessarily leave the individual as soon as the object reality is comprehended; rather, the individual, at mirror stage, realizes he is not one-and-the-same as the uroboros, and is in fact separate. However, Mother, “on whom he is dependent in all things,” remains a part of the archetypal feminine for many years to follow. In other words, the splitting of consciousness does not destroy uroboric connections, but rather creates difficult psychological distance, causing the unconscious to project archetypes, such as those stemming from the Great Mother, onto the conscious mind. The distance created, between the conscious mind and unconscious, is travelled by the unconscious in form of projections, and is tasked with the goal of communicating through familiar imagery. The revised Lacanian Mirror Stage, with the inclusion of Neumann’s projection theory, suggests reason to further contemplate additional separation trauma at later stages of an individual’s life. An individual, for instance, may realize the shattering of a projection in adult relationships, causing further trauma, such as John Kaltenbrunner’s realizing his mother’s mortality in Egolf’s *Lord of the Barnyard*.

At a point in John's life, he is faced with the realization that his mother is not a "numinous woman" (Neumann 15). She is described by the Hill Scrubs as experiencing an "extended period of mourning" accredited to her husband's death during John's early years, but it is during her battle with Cushing's disease that John realizes the fallibility of his mother (Egolf 12, 69). Before Madame Kaltenbrunner is hospitalized, John notices "Some kind of change was coming over her—her physical appearance had altered somehow, though the alteration was creeping in from around the edges and was not immediately discernible" (58). This physical transformation renders her appearance distorted, or "discernible," and it is from the change that John experiences a ripping away from the eternal mother. "Some kind of change" that is "creeping in from around the edges" is an implication of a greater transformation. Metaphorically speaking, the physical change of Madame precedes the abstract dislocation within John's psyche. Losing his mother, both physically and figuratively, causes distress. As the Methodist cronies assume control over the Kaltenbrunners' finances and assets, Madame's appearance becomes unrecognizable. John "had to stifle his immediate urge to scream: seated on the couch with her back to the blanketed window, what had become of Madame Kaltenbrunner was situated like the remains of a bloated piñata that had been dragged from a septic pit" (76). The mention of John's inaudible "urge to scream" is an important indicator of the psychological connection with the Great Mother pulling taut and eventually shearing clean, severing John's reliance on a mother figure. She is now perceived as something foreign, something "dragged from a septic pit," a different image of John's mother than what he is used to. John "half-expected the frame of the house to come down on him directly. He would have let it," and this is because the world John had rebuilt in the presence of his mother—a world where the two of



them are safe from the other Baker inhabitants—is metaphorically (and, soon, physically) crumbling around them (65).

Separation trauma generates a feeling of hopelessness for John, and at first, he is inclined to resign himself to the impending doom. However, bleakness evolves into anger, and John is momentarily lifted by a spell of redemption. Hortense arrives at the farm and sits with Madame as John looks on. John explores his awareness of the situation and realizes he could escape his desolate musings: “John couldn’t believe what was happening. He stood in the doorway looking down on them, disgusted to the point of heartbreak. . . . He had to get out, had to save himself if no one else. . . . He was an exiled monoglot. There was nothing he could do about it. He left” (Egolf 79). John feels forced to give up on his mother, “to save himself,” as he believes it is too late to repair any kind of connection—or to rehabilitate his “heartbreak.” He is “disgusted” with the corruption of the situation, with the Methodist crones infiltrating his family assets, but he accepts his exile. At this point, John clings to a possibility for redemption. The faint beacon of hope keeps him afloat a little longer, but it is temporary, as eventually he succumbs to the destructive energies pulling him down.

Allegorically, Madame’s dramatic metamorphosis from John’s mother to Methodist crone prey is a reliable model for the individual’s separation from his projected version of the Great Mother. John has subjectively established individual identity after Lacan’s Mirror Stage, but once the Great Mother projection shatters later in life, the distance away from the uroboros increases, causing a second traumatic disengagement. This severing is problematic for the ego as the level of its awareness is much more substantial at an older age than it is in its infancy. The infant can pivot his ego-centric ideologies because he has not had the experience of, or time for, anchoring pillars of truth, whereas the adult can find it much harder to topple his longstanding

ideas and to face the truth of a uroboric detachment. As the colloquialism says: You can't teach an old dog new tricks. Of course, this archaic summation is not entirely true, but it is rooted in a kernel of truth: After the initial mirror stage in childhood, future uroboric disconnect is difficult for the adult to navigate. This difficulty is exemplified by Virgil Swain from *History of the Rain*, as he projects the Great Mother onto two women in his life.

Within Ruth Swain's writings, Virgil's separation from both his mother and his wife demonstrate the jarring effect of an archetypal mirror stage. After Abraham dies, Virgil is left "with a mother who's working her way through the wine cellar" (Williams 152). Mrs. Kittering-Swain slowly descends into depression, leaving Virgil alone to care for the estate. The parental impotence is like Madame Kaltenbrunner's reliance on John after her own husband's death. Virgil attempts to care for the house, but it proves too difficult for him. With his head in the clouds, Virgil ignores his surroundings and commits his focus to writing. Eventually, the bank seizes the Swains' possessions, and, in the process, Mrs. Kittering-Swain suffers a stroke. "Grandmother did not recover," Ruth recounts, "...She had the second stroke" and died (152). The death of his mother—the stripping of her numinosity—confuses Virgil, as the eternal projection of the Great Mother is shattered by mortality, and he departs the country by sea. No longer feeling the connection to the uroboros, Virgil assumes there is "no natural place left for him to fit into the world," and so, he enters the calming waters of liminal space, a place between creation and destruction, between his unconscious and conscious mind (154). The purpose of Virgil's departure is to escape a life and identity that feels foreign to him. The archetypal mirror stage, the separation from the Great Mother, is unnerving and requires a reconfiguration on the individual's part to stabilize his footing in the world. For Virgil, it was the navy that enabled him

to rewrite the world; for John, it was his plunge into destructive urges. Though different in outcome, both ways are reactionary to uroboric divorce.

Virgil's second uroboric separation occurs during his marriage with Mary. Aeneas dies in the River Shannon and Virgil struggles to recover from the loss. Mary, referred to earlier as "the eternal mother," attempts "to show Dad he was all right," but this time her effort is unsuccessful (Williams 55, 90). Mary, or Mam, formulates a plan to publish Virgil's poems, and Ruth ponders the gesture: "But [when] Virgil had stopped trying...Mam decided the remedy was that my father needed the world to respond.... I knew it was love with hurt in it and already knew that was the real kind.... In time he would come downriver into an anthology" (318, 317). Ruth approves of the publishing plan, and the two women set about to pull Virgil out of grief by creating a new sense of purpose, a rebirth coming "downriver." Maybe an "anthology" will spark Virgil to reengage with life, to restore balance between the creative and destructive forces. As noted earlier, one of Mam's objectives is to keep Virgil from succumbing to one side of the creation and destruction paradox. She may not be aware of her assumed role as the Great Mother, but nonetheless, Mam's actions are in accord with the homeopathic nature of the archetypal feminine. Virgil concedes to destructive forces—the river destroys his son, drowns his cows, and the land destroys his crops—but Mam plans to restore the creative by getting the "world to respond" to his poetry. However, Mam's efforts fall short and Virgil never recovers. He has succumbed to the darkening force of destruction, leaving no room for creation. Ruth says, "I think I knew then that a letter would come from London... *Dear Mrs Swain, we thank you for your letter. We are sorry to say we have no record of ever receiving History of the Rain*" (345). Virgil discards the collection of poems that make up "History of the Rain" down river and dies shortly thereafter, never knowing his work may exist somewhere out in the world. In this quote

Ruth realizes her father could not be saved from the Impossible Standard. She knew a “letter would come from London” extinguishing any hope for the poems and, subsequently, any hope for Virgil.

The above examples focus on woman in the role of Mother Goddess archetypal figures. For other archetypes, such as the shadow, father, trickster, and so on, separation can also occur. The difference of archetypal projection is not a focus of the present analysis, but it is important to note the common effects of unconscious and conscious mind estrangement. At certain pivotal points in an individual’s life, he is faced with the realization that the eternal is far from reach, or so it seems. “The archetype is experienced indirectly also through individuals upon whom it is projected,” Neumann says. “Such projection phenomena, as modern depth psychology discovered, are of crucial importance not only for the genesis of psychoneuroses and for their therapy but also for normal development” (22-23). The “projection phenomena” covers all uroboric archetypes, both feminine and masculine, creative and destructive, limited and with abundance, strong and weak, light and shadows and so on. The indirect experience of these projections, the “crucial importance,” is subjective to the individual themselves. Neurosis or “normal development” result from the individual handling of unconscious archetypes. So, the same Mother Goddess argument presently demonstrated could be made (with adjustments) for other archetypes. The important consideration is that a uroboric separation happens—sometimes more than once—in an individual’s life, and when that occurs, the archetypes do not simply go away; they reemerge in the conscious mind through various modes of outreach and demand reconciliation. Often, an archetype is “experienced indirectly...through individuals upon whom it is projected,” like the people in close relationships to the individual. Jung says, “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived,

and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 5). Perceiving all archetypes as “unconscious content[s]” clarifies how uroboric forces act in “consciousness.” The widened view of the unconscious provides a better understanding of unconscious and conscious mind relations and allows for variety as each archetype “takes its colour from the individual.” From this point of view, the unconscious contents are motivated to bridge both parts of consciousness. The underlying motivation is common for all different archetypes, no matter psychological characteristics. But by returning to the specific, this archetypal relationship can be analyzed in detail. For instance, to better understand the Great Mother, who nestles near the uroboros, analysts and scholars alike can study one of her projections: Kali, the Devouring Mother.

Referring again to Neumann’s Schema I, the focused levels of feminine archetypes are the uroboric (the Great Mother) and the projected figures (Kali) (18). The Great Mother, in Neumann’s words, is an “*elementary character*” where “aspect[s] of the Feminine” are designated “as the Great Round,” or the “Great Container,” that “tends to hold fast to everything that springs from it and to surround it like an eternal substance” (25). The individual’s disconnection from the “Great Container” can be traumatic on the psyche, and resolution may be obtainable through “everything that springs from it,” such as the projected figures. The “elementary character,” then, is just one step removed from the uroboros. The projected archetypes stem from elementary characters and are higher on a psychological level and closer to the conscious mind than to the uroboros. Neumann goes on to say, “Everything born of [the Great Round] belongs to it and remains subject to it; and even if the individual becomes independent, the Archetypal Feminine relativizes this independence into a nonessential variant of her own perpetual being” (25). In other words, the archetypal projected figures are extremities of

the Great Mother, as they are, without a doubt, “born of it.” When the “individual becomes independent,” the Great Mother reacts and “relativizes this independence” using individual specific projections in the form of familiar imagery, such as dreams involving recognizable people. The interpretation of these dreams, however, is specific to the individual, but the content “remains subject” to the uroboros. When uroboric estrangement materializes, the unconscious does not go away; instead, it appears in projected figures and attempts to restore harmony with the conscious mind. Jung says, “Evidently an enantiodromia, a play of opposites, has occurred: after being rejected the unconscious insists on itself all the more strongly” (“Individual Dream Symbolism in Relation to Alchemy” 83). The individual feeling a loss of uroboric grounding is essentially rejecting the unconscious and the instinctual wisdom it carries. Throughout the individual’s life the unconscious will insist “on itself all the more strongly” along with its importance until the psyche actively restores balance. In “a play of opposites,” it can be dangerous as the unconscious overcompensates to be acknowledged, moving from integration within the conscious mind to possession of it. The titans of insistence—the extremities of the Great Mother—are manifested in the individual’s dreams, active imagination, art, and projections; they are unavoidable and can either help the individuation process, or further hinder the psyche by complete occupation. An example of such an archetypal projection is that of Kali found in Hindu mythologies, who can wrap consciousness in a cloud of destruction, paying no heed to creative necessity. Her symbolism, that of Devouring Mother, is harmonious in its duality, both destructive and creative. However, when balance is skewed, Kali can obsess over destruction. This danger of misalignment is consequential for the individual as his conscious mind may give to destructive urges, thus preventing him from paradoxical balance.

The Great Mother is considered an “elementary character,” or an elementary archetype, and Kali is symbolic of archetypes of transformation, an archetype that stems from the uroboric and introduces energy for the sole purpose of change (Neumann 25). Neumann says:

In the transformative character, the accent is on the dynamic element of the psyche, which, in contrast to the conservative tendency of the elementary character, drives toward motion, change, and, in a word, transformation. In psychic development the transformative character is at first ‘dominated’ by the elementary character and only gradually throws off this domination to assume its own independent form. (29)

The previous examples represent the uroboric mirror stage, where the individual is the driving force that “gradually throws off...domination” of the elementary character, or more accurately, the experiences of the individual sever the psyche from the uroboric and give “motion” to the “transformative character.” For example, Hortense from *Lord of the Barnyard* represents a “dynamic element of the psyche.” She “throws off...domination” of the elementary character, portrayed by Madame Kaltenbrunner, and “assume[s] [her] own independent form.” Hortense’s actions are villainous in their finest form, but the allegorical implications of “motion” are obvious. She is the extreme projection of destructive archetypes, calibrated to one side of the creation and destruction paradox. At one point, after Madame finally returns home from the hospital, physically mutilated from her illness, John finds himself between his mother (the uroboric Great Mother) and Hortense (the transformative projection akin to Kali). John lectures his mother regarding her involvement with the Methodist church, and Hortense enters the house behind him:

From where [Hortense] stood, out of view of Madame Kaltenbrunner, all the unadulterated malice was plastered over her face. It was unmistakable. She harbored no

shame in its exposure. On the contrary, she seemed to revel in it. They stood there, caught up in a whirlwind of mutual recognition. There it was—the essence and epitome of all he despised. He wanted to tear down the wall and reveal it to his unsuspecting mother.

(Egolf 78)

Hortense appears “to revel in” destructiveness. She harbors “no shame in its exposure,” and fully assumes the role of destroyer and as “the essence and epitome of all [John] despised.” The “mutual recognition” between Hortense and John is a recognition of a projected archetype in the conscious mind. The “malice” that is “plastered over [Hortense’s] face” hints at the destructive capabilities of her character, and John succumbs to her influence, subsequently yielding to the influence and motion of unbalanced transformative archetypes. The motion can be described best as a survival instinct of the unconscious, a last line of defense from separation within the psyche. The further the individual pulls away from mental cohesion, say, by putting too much emphasis on societal institutions to dictate core fundamental ideologies, the more noise the transformative archetypes make. It is important to reiterate that even though the individual can be successful in creating distance between his conscious mind and unconscious, he can never fully succeed in a total, permanent, dissolution. The presence of archetypes is universal and constant, but to what degree of pressure felt is determined by the size of the individual’s mental crevice.

The permanence of archetypes should be considered as companionship and not as nagging estrangement. This is not to say that the projected figures of the unconscious are incapable of pestering the conscious mind, but rather, when accepted, should provide beneficial reciprocity. “[O]ne has to admit that there are problems which one simply cannot solve on one’s own resources,” Jung says. “Such an admission has the advantage of being honest, truthful, and in accord with reality, and this prepares the ground for a compensatory reaction from the



collective unconscious: you are now more inclined to give heed to a helpful idea or intuition” (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 21). Admitting the “problems which one simply cannot solve” is not a form of failure. Instead, it is an acknowledgement of one’s right to the reservoir of wisdom found in the collective unconscious that is inherited by the individual at birth. Opening the conscious mind to intrinsic knowledge and giving “heed to a helpful idea or intuition” is how the projected archetypal figures can assist the individual lay the course for growth by developing and using complex ideologies. For example, an individual may rely on institutional labels to determine self-confidence; State hierarchies, religious ceremony, job promotions, academic degrees, and so on, provide individuals with titles of accomplishment. These titles are expected to ignite confidence in the individual, and often they do, but other times they fail. To find, or cultivate, additional confidence, individuals may chase after more accomplishments, thus moving further away from their unconscious. The confidence found in this external searching is ephemeral and lacking, needing to be validated by societal institutions. If, however, the individual recognizes his faulty reliance on the external, then he can face the collective unconscious and benefit from its “compensatory reaction,” giving him the long-lasting confidence of a deeper inner knowledge. The archetypes bridge the gap between the unconscious and conscious mind, but if ignored the fissure remains, and the efforts for communication by the archetypes intensifies.

Once the individual experiences a metaphysical distance between his unconscious and conscious mind, projected archetypal figures become dominating. It is imperative to remember that the projected archetypes are an extension of the uroboros and act as a direct path back to the wisdom of the collective unconscious. Interaction and acceptance of archetypes will guide the individual’s return to a psychological state in which communication with the unconscious is

brokered by the conscious mind, and its chosen ideologies. The result is individuation, or mental wholeness. Ignoring the broken state of psychological health ignites an aggressive attempt of communication by the unconscious through projected images into the conscious mind that may overwhelm the individual with its imagery. Conversely, if the individual embraces the incompleteness of his mental fortitude, he can utilize the projected archetypes to chaperon him back to a place of clarity. How the individual chooses to interact with archetypes determines the polarity and severity of the outcome. Kali, for instance, includes a creative side and a destructive one. Interpreting this duality benefits the individual by providing balance but ignoring the importance of the paradox can put focus on one side, threatening the psyche with instability.

The mythological representations of Kali serve the individual through her potential, transformative powers. The theory of anima and animus archetypes are important in Jungian scholarship. Anima/animus archetypes are “The inner figure of woman held by a man and the figure of man at work in a woman’s psyche.... As psychic components, they are subliminal to consciousness and function from within the unconscious psyche; hence, they are of benefit to but also can endanger consciousness by possession” (Samuels et al. 23). As discussed, Kali is capable of endangering “consciousness by possession.” For a man, Jung believes individuation is achievable by reconciling with his Eros, or anima; for a woman, it is Logos and animus, “from within the unconscious psyche.” Jung says, “The man’s Eros does not lead upward only but downward into that uncanny dark world of Hecate and Kali, which is a horror to any intellectual man. The understanding possessed by this type of woman will be a guiding star to him in the darkness and seemingly unending mazes of life” (“Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype” 100). Kali can be the face of Eros and a “guiding star” through the “darkness” for the individual. The “darkness...which is a horror to any intellectual man” is his unfamiliarity with

the unconscious. Modern, “intellectual” man is defined by the external institutions that dictate his convictions, and facing the unconscious is to abandon the complete comfort of societal frameworks. Kali, representing an extension of the uroboros, is tasked with “guiding” the conscious mind back to the unconscious. As a tendril attached to the Great Mother, Kali harnesses both powerful attributes of creation and destruction and is useful to individuals who need to destroy old, ego-centric ideas in the service of creating new ones, replacing external attachments with internal compliance.

Kali encourages the completion of individuation by enabling the individual to see destruction as a healing force, as opposed to one eternally linked with evil. In her essay titled “Kali: The Protective Mother and the Destroyer,” Dariane Pictet says, “This transformative power of Kali pushes us to examine our shadow, to break through our attachments to outer forms, to examine our attitudes to embodiment, suffering, exile, loss, aging, and death” (87). Destroying, or “to break through” unhealthy, external “attachments” of the conscious mind, is the first step toward a return to self-examination. Kali can bring about necessary attitude adjustments to handle the “shadow” parts of individual psyches by shifting fearful perspective to one of understanding. If fear of the individual’s shadow is understood, then the attachments to “outer forms” is no longer relied upon for the conscious mind’s ideological arrangement. Self-worth, confidence, and inner peace are byproducts of an individual who can undam the connective river between the unconscious and the conscious mind. Individual evolution is stimulated by the natural creation and destruction of ego-centric ideals.

Archetypes increase their insistence based on the individual’s urge for certain energies. The unconscious detects what the conscious mind requires for mental reprieve. As stated earlier, the connection between the conscious mind and the unconscious may weaken by the individual’s

reliance on institutions, but it can never fully divorce. Transmission flows down a narrow link within the psyche, and the uroboros is called into action. The chosen projected figures are then plastered throughout the individual's conscious imagery, be it either dreams, or art, or active imagining. "When a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype," Jung says, "that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness appears, which, like an instinctual drive, gains its way against all reason and will, or else produces a conflict of pathological dimensions, that is to say, a neurosis" ("The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" 48). "Situation[s]" such as trauma activate "an instinctual drive." The "compulsiveness" that transpires must be dealt with one way or the other. The activation of archetypes is not something the individual can control; his only control is what he decides to do with the energies being presented. If the individual engages the "archetype" through analysis, then the knowledge of the unconscious becomes accessible; if, however, the individual ignores the calling of the archetype, then a "neurosis" can develop, further hindering the individual by mental paralysis.

John Kaltenbrunner from *Lord of the Barnyard* initially answers the call of Kali—a projected figure rooted in the uroboros—by embracing the destructive urges that arise during the downfall of Madame Kaltenbrunner and the farm. Madame's health has declined, and the Methodist crones have swooped in to acquire the family's assets. John, realizing the stratagem of the church, rebels in every way he can, but eventually is left with only the violent impulses of destruction. The Hill Scrubs narrate: "For the moment, [John] knew he was still in control, but even that knowledge began to dip in and out of uncertainty as his agitation increased. It was like a snake devouring itself into a vanishing point" (Egolf 86). Two important things are happening in this quote: firstly, the image of the "snake devouring itself into a vanishing point" is a common symbol of the uroboros; secondly, John is aware of a force that is challenging his

control—a force that altogether feels foreign to his conscious mind and subsequently causes “uncertainty.” The uroboric snake (or serpent, as referred to earlier) symbolizes both receiving (feminine) vessel and phallic (masculine) insertion. The motion of the snake acts a wheel or, more accurately, of motion. Contained within the circular formation of the snake is the uroboros, which is made up of all the paradoxes that exist simultaneously. Neumann says “the uroboros of the beginning is not only the Round but also the wheel rolling upon itself and the serpent which at once bears, begets, and devours” (30). In common depictions of the snake, it is an unending turning that “bears, begets, and devours,” but John’s version of the snake is destroying itself into a “vanishing point” (Egolf 86). The vanishing of the snake is a vanishing of the uroboros—a disconnect that calls the unconscious into action. The paradoxical balance that keeps the snake turning—that keeps the uroboros churning—is skewed, and the snake devours more than it “begets.” Chaos in the psyche ensues, and John becomes engrossed by Kali’s nature to destroy. For individuation to take place, John would need to heed the presence of Kali as one existing in tandem with his conscious control. However, no reconciliation takes place, and John is vulnerable to the point of a hostile takeover.

The foreign feeling John is experiencing is the archetypal energy of transformation. Kali has hijacked John’s conscious mind and is driving the instinct to rage, to destroy, and to clear a way for something new. The days leading up to his standoff with the police is an internal battle for control. The more John represses the notions for destruction, the more insistent Kali becomes. The more the individual ignores the unconscious, the more intense and possessive the archetypal projected figures emerge in the conscious mind. Jung says:

The chief danger is that of succumbing to the fascinating influence of the archetypes, and this is most likely to happen when the archetypal images are not made conscious. If there

is already a predisposition to psychosis, it may even happen that the archetypal figures, which are endowed with a certain autonomy anyway on account of their natural numinosity, will escape from conscious control altogether and become completely independent, thus producing the phenomena of possession. (“Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” 39)

In John’s case, Kali has “become completely independent.” Her “natural numinosity” has entangled John’s conscious mind and keeps him rooted in anger. Instead of helping John reconcile communication between the unconscious and conscious mind, Kali takes “possession” and drives him until “the rampage had begun” (Egolf 105). Before the Methodist cronies can auction off the Kaltenbrunner estate, John mutilates the house and land. He uses a shotgun to blast holes in all the walls and appliances, rendering the home unsellable. At the end of the razing, John feels a sense of accomplishment from his destruction: “No one could take it away from him now. There was nothing left to take. That was more than could be said for the cronies’ former associates. He allowed himself that” (113). John’s ego-consciousness is one-sided, leaning toward the destructive, and the rubble he has created is safe, as “[n]o one could take it away from him now.” Kali has consumed John’s conscious mind, providing a sense of accomplishment, of control. John relishes his destruction as he has denied the Methodist cronies complete take over, and “[t]hat was more than could be said for [their] former associates.” For most of his time in Baker, leading up to and after his mother’s death, John is consumed with the destructive forces of Kali. What Jung is suggesting in the quote above, then, is a balance of both the light and dark forces of the individual’s life. If the balance is off—if creation or destruction outweighs the other—the individual will find themselves in a “psychosis” (“Archetypes of the

Collective Unconscious” 39). John’s emotional hijacking denies a balance within his psyche, and he spirals downward in his own destruction.

Together, Madame Kaltenbrunner and Hortense represent both sides of the Devouring Mother: life-giver and life-taker. The ailing physical health of Madame indicates the skewing of the balance between creation and destruction. As Madame’s health declines, Hortense’s presence and control increases. John, stuck in the middle of the two, succumbs to the devouring nature of Hortense and the Methodist crones and falls into possession. The pivotal moment when John loses control is after Hortense engages him sexually: “She wanted even more. She wanted to batter, maim and disfigure him, then trample and desecrate his grave beyond recognition. She was on a killing spree. She seized him by the collar and threw him to the ground. She tore open his trousers. She hiked up her dress and lowered herself on to him, snarling and hacking into the dirt” (Egolf 103). John at this point has now been totally consumed by the dark goddess, who “wanted even more.” Hortense’s goal to “disfigure him” is successful and there is no going back for John. The act of sex—especially this being John’s first time—is yet another way Kali ravages the conscious mind. In many depictions of Kali, “the full-breasted Goddess is usually depicted naked and is often described as engaging her supine husband in sexual intercourse” (Kripal and McDermott 5). All forms of consummation are up for grabs with Kali, and Hortense follows this destructive model by “snarling and hacking into the dirt” while engaged in “sexual intercourse” (Egolf 103). Symbolically, Hortense is both a receiving vessel and appropriates the phallic penetration; she violently turns the wheel of the uroboric snake and skews the balance between destruction and creation within John’s psyche.

John’s only moments of remission occur when he is on the river boat during the years out of Baker, but as soon as he returns, the psychological balance is tipped to the side of shadow, and

subsequently his mental state is emotionally hijacked. On the river, John didn't have to worry about "the incubus of crones, trolls, deputies and schoolrooms," so the Hill Scrubs ask: "*Then why didn't he just leave?*" (Egolf 121,167). John returns to Baker because it is the only place he knows. Had he been able to resist the return to familiarity, then he could have escaped the archetypal possession still lingering in his conscious mind. As soon as he returns, he is reminded of past devastation by the unchanged people of Greene County and the atrocities he has experienced among them, and so succumbs once again to their destructive possession. The Hill Scrubs say, "John was too far into his own history in Baker to pack up and leave" (167). This is an accurate observation as John returns, motivated on consuming, or being consumed, by the rampant fires of "Baker" and its dysfunctionality. John, "too far into his own history," has a tendency for destruction, and this force is wielded toward everything and everyone around him, the crosshairs even landing on himself. John, therefore, is not destroying for the sake of new creations; rather, he is destroying for the sake of smoke and rubble.

John is splintered beyond repair and ultimately meets his demise in the storm of destruction that he put into motion. The other way it could have gone, had he escaped the gravitational pull of Greene County and his history, is by destroying and rebuilding ego-centric ideologies for the betterment of his self-worth. "Thus Kali wisdom evokes the totality that Jung calls the Self which encompasses a light side," Dariane Pictet says, "the love and wisdom of the godhead, and the urge toward individuation. And a dark side, the divine that is being born in us, who continually shatters us so that we can be ever more receptive and compassionate and thus reflect and witness the glory of creation" (99). The "light side" seems out of reach for John as his entire life is plague by misfortune and an underlying pessimism. The "dark side" that Pictet identifies is ever more powerful for John, but instead of becoming more "receptive and



compassionate,” John continues to shatter the psychological pieces for the sake of destruction. John’s disconnect from the uroboros prevents the duality of Kali’s light and dark side. Instead of evoking “the totality that Jung calls the Self,” the one-sided Kali possesses the individual and subsumes control over his mental state. The Devouring Mother can lead the individual back to mental wholeness, but not without his psychological willingness to reconcile conscious control with unconscious wisdom.

The story of Tz’u-hsi from *The Rings of Saturn* is another allegorical example of the danger of succumbing to the power of archetypal takeover. Sebald’s narrator reflects on the story of Tz’u-hsi, a Chinese dowager empress from the nineteenth-century, who assumed control of the government during the Qing dynasty. Tz’u-hsi accomplishes severance in three ways: disrupting the process of government, physical violence to potential enemies, and the cultivation of silk. In 1861, Chinese Emperor Hsien-feng dies during the invasion of British soldiers. After the “Treaty of Tienstin” is signed by both Chinese and British forces, Hsien-feng’s concubine, Tz’u-hsi, assumes power as her son—the appointed heir, T’ung-chih—is too young for the throne (Sebald 145). “Tz’u-hsi,” the narrator says, “who had risen from the ranks of concubines...had assumed the illustrious title of Dowager Empress” (147). Once in power, the Empress is motivated to keep her powerful position by any means necessary. Much like Kali—or other ignored archetypal figures, such as the animus, the self, the shadow, the hero, the wiseman, and so on—she strives to further root her control over the empire in every possible way.

The compelling nature of Tz’u-hsi’s need for control is like the unchecked motivation of the transformative character within the psyche. Neumann says,

But even where the transformative character of the Feminine appears as a negative, hostile, and provocative element, it compels tension, change, and an intensification of the

personality. In this way an extreme exertion of the ego is provoked and its capacity for creative transformation is directly and indirectly ‘stimulated.’ (34)

However, for John and Tz’u-hsi, the “provocative element” pushes the characters past the point of “transformation” and instead stimulates a paralysis by possession. The individuation process is disjointed to the one-sidedness of the psyche. The unconscious, feeling the injury of rejection, attacks the conscious mind stronger than it has before. Therefore, John falls into a destructive cycle, and Tz’u-hsi’s tenure as Empress is fueled by paranoia and violence. The attachment to external, violent means keeps all “creative transformation” out of reach for broken individuals.

The Dowager Empress, “whose craving for power was insatiable,” resorts to violent measures to ensure her power remains in place (Sebald 147). It is the Dowager Empress’ violent stronghold on the throne that represents the violent nature of the Devouring Mother. Even though Tz’u-hsi has given birth to T’ung-chih, she has destroyed his chances of ruling through manipulation. She prevents the rightful heir from ever assuming his rightful place in the hierarchy of the kingdom. Her “insatiable” power grab knows no bounds. “The princes...” for instance, “were condemned to be dismembered and cut into slices” (Sebald 147). “The princes” are slaughtered based on the Empress’ paranoia. During her reign of terror, her son dies of a smallpox-type disease (suspiciously), and she imprisons her heir-to-be nephew who eventually dies from suspected poison. Anyone who could, or does, hold the ability to challenge her powerful position is met with an untimely demise. Much like the Devouring Mother, Tz’u-hsi is quick to destroy anyone who stands in her way of more destruction.

Paranoia and a reliance on violence motivate the Dowager Empress to dismiss creation. “Unable to sleep,” Tz’u-hsi roams “the bizarre shadow landscapes of the palace gardens, amidst the artificial crags, the groves of ferns, and the dark arborvitae and cypresses” (Sebald 150). She

is pacing the “artificial” landscapes that house the “ferns,” “dark arborvitae and cypresses” in a controlled atmosphere. The living things outside of the palace threaten the destructive forces the Empress has begun to rely on. The narrator notes, “She took the greatest of pleasure in lifeless things, and by day would sometimes stand for hours at the windows of her apartments, staring out upon the silent lake to the north, which resembled a painting” (150). A “painting,” much like the “artificial crags,” is something still and unmovable, both framed and under control. “She [takes] the greatest pleasure” in artificial things that encapsulates the notion of manufacturing, and thus control. Things alive can create and expand, thus threatening the false stability Tz’u-hsi has painstakingly installed around her. The artificial, however, cannot spread beyond her reach, providing a sense of domination.

Destruction, believed to have stemmed from the Dowager Empress, poisons the Chinese landscape and the civilians. This destruction of the area is symbolic to the overwhelming nature of archetypal possession. The narrator says, “Travellers who were in China between 1876 and 1879 report that, in the drought that had continued for years, whole provinces gave the impression of expiring under prisons of glass” (Sebald 150). The imagery of a drought is one of painful decline. “Travellers” are the ones to report this, not the citizens themselves, as they are consumed by the infliction, “expiring under prisons of glass.” It is implied that the Dowager Empress is responsible for the “drought” and destruction of her kingdom, and in response she holds “a daily blood sacrifice offered in her temple to the gods of silk, at the hour when the evening star rose, lest the silkworms want for fresh green leaves” (151). Tz’u-hsi believes the “silkworms,” or “the gods of silk,” represent prosperity and will redeem her role as leader. The Empress never strays too far from the confines and protection of her palace. Her resolution to

solve the drought in the South is to spill more blood. Like Kali, the Dowager Empress only knows destruction. And like Kali, the Dowager Empress demands the “blood sacrifice.”

The silkworms play a pivotal role in the allegorical symbolism of Tz'u-hsi and her power-grab. Metaphorically, the silkworm represents the individual transformation from one state to another. Revisiting a quote from earlier, Sebald's narrator says, “In this shell, which admits neither air nor moisture, the caterpillar changes into a nymph by sloughing off its skin for one last time. It remains in this state for two to three weeks in all, until the butterfly described about emerges” (276). It is a clichéd model for individual transformation, but constant throughout the novel. The “caterpillar” enters a proverbial liminal space by spinning a cocoon of silk around its body. It then spends “two to three weeks in all” going through the transformation process. When the silkworm emerges, it is now a butterfly. To obtain silk from the silkworm, the Dowager Empress must interrupt the transformation process. For the Empress, the silkworms presented another version of control: “To her they seemed the ideal subjects, diligent in service, ready to die, capable of multiplying vastly within a short span of time, and fixed on their one sole preordained aim, wholly unlike human beings, on whom there was basically no relying...” (151). The silkworms existed for her sole purposes of farming silk, but “human beings” could not be relied on because they are harder to control. The silkworm creates, and the Empress destroys, and for her, this is “ideal.” If humans could be “ready to die” in the service of their leader, it would make Tz'u-hsi's desire for destruction much more attainable. The craving for destruction and interruption of individuation/transformation is how the Dowager Empress and the Kali-possessed are alike. When the unconscious is ignored it takes the form of projected figures such as Kali. The impulse for recognition becomes stronger and can take over the conscious mind and form a psychosis or neurosis. The invasion of the unconscious is too much for the conscious

mind to handle, and it ends up doing more harm than good. Tz'u-hsi is the unchecked Kali, and the individual the silkworm. Every time the individual turns away from the process of individuation, Kali comes along and plucks away the liminal space. She, in turn, keeps the creation and destruction balance skewed in favor of destruction, thus preventing the harmonious reconciliation between the conscious mind and the unconscious.

The one-sidedness of Kali—the destructive side—shares similar attributes to Walter Benjamin's "The Destructive Character" (Benjamin, *Reflections* 301). The Destructive Character can be considered a representation of one of Kali's arms: the destructive arm as opposed to the life-giving arm. Benjamin says, "The destructive character knows only one watchword: make room; only one activity: clearing away. His need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred" (*Reflections* 301). Like the Kali-possessed, the Destructive Character only engages in one dominant "activity: clearing away." Creation is of no concern for the Destructive Character as his primary objective is for "fresh air and open space." The projected figure destroys uninhibitedly for the sake of destruction. To "make room" within the psyche is the driving force behind destructive archetypal forces. Ideally, the making of room would spark the creation of new ideas, but left overwhelmed, the conscious mind will find itself in a downward spiral of destructive intent.

The Destructive Character blindly destroys and, in the process, establishes space for new ideologies to be created and cemented into place. "The destructive character does his work," Benjamin says, "the only work he avoids in being creative" (*Reflections* 302). This concept is important because the projected figure "does his work" without any concern for the "creative," but by making ways he is creating access for other archetypal forces to come through. This, too, is the power of Kali when she is utilized in proper fashion. When Kali possesses the conscious

mind, she overcompensates the amount of destruction necessary. However, when the conscious mind accepts the functionality of the archetypes (as opposed to rejecting them), the individual can find function in the “clearing away” (*Reflections* 301).

The Hill Scrubs recognize the destructive force of John, along with the understanding of the necessity for destruction in the service of creating a better work environment for the garbage men. At the end of *Lord of the Barnyard*, the Hill Scrubs “remember how [John] kicked and lashed his way through one disaster after another with all the accumulated confusion of a life gone wrong from day one boiling to the surface at once. Boiling to the surface for us; beckoning us to unload our own bile into its chamber pot, then walk away new men” (Egolf 406). John was completely consumed by the destructive power of archetypes like Kali and the Destructive Character, but it was not without the benefit for the Hill Scrubs who “walk[ed] away new men.” In this way, John was not only possessed by the projected archetypal figure of Kali, but also, he transcended into uroboric energy himself. The Hill Scrubs used John as a Destructive Character to lead them to “unload [their] own bile into its chamber pot”; they used John to transform into better men than they were before. By accepting John as energy, the Hill Scrubs are accepting the unconscious into their own conscious minds. They are, in a way, individuating themselves by partaking in John’s leadership. In his essay “Kālī,” David R. Kinsley says,

To meditate on the dark goddess, or to devote oneself to her, is to step out of the everyday world of predictable dharmic order and enter a world of reversals, opposites, and contrasts and in doing so to wake up to new possibilities and new frames of reference. In her differentness, strangeness, indeed, in her perverseness, Kali is the kind of figure who is capable of shaking one’s comforting and naïve assumptions about the world. In doing this, she allows a clearer perception of how things really are. (35)

The message of the above quote—follow Kali and shake your “assumptions”—is something John fails to absorb. He falls victim to the destruction and becomes possessed to the point where he metamorphizes into a Destructive Character. The Hill Scrubs, however, “meditate on the dark goddess” through John. The group of garbage men “step out of the everyday world of predictable dharmic order” and turn their world upside down for the betterment of their organization and themselves as individuals. The “dharmic order” is the Hindu belief of decorum, duty, and cosmic law. By removing themselves from the order in which they believe life works, they can perceive the ontological differently, thus destroying “naïve assumptions about the world.” At the end of *Lord of the Barnyard*, the Hill Scrubs “wake up to new possibilities,” thanks to the over-the-top efforts of John. John represents an unconscious force that is in constant motion, and “an object in motion tends to stay in motion,” like all uroboric figures tend to do (Egolf 410).

The Great Mother that springs from the uroboros is ever-present within the unconscious. The individual is pulled by external attachments and abandons the intrinsic wisdom of the collective unconscious. When this fissure between the conscious mind and the unconscious occurs, the uroboros projects figures in the form of archetypes to repair psychological damage. Unfortunately, depending on the individual and their situation, the mere presence of the archetypes is not enough to individuate the person. The strong external attachments can prove too difficult to abandon. In these cases, the projected figures overcompensate and seize the conscious mind, driving the individual too far into psychosis. However, the Hill Scrubs stumble upon allegorical success in their relationship with an uroboric force (John) that wielded the destructive arm of transformation. In his essay titled “Why the Tāntrika Is a Hero: Kālī in the Psychoanalytic Tradition,” Jeffrey J. Kripal asks of Kali and psychoanalysis, “Why would one wish to identify with, to actually become, a form of thought that dwells so obsessively, so

obscenely, on sexual organs and acts, human aggression and ambivalence, and the deepest, darkest secrets of the human psyche?” (217). In other words, if Kali is so dangerous and violent, why do individuals need this archetype? On the surface, it seems the “aggression and ambivalence” would be enough to drive a person mad. The scary parts of the individual’s shadow are what fuels the desire for external attachments, but if the individual can contemplate the “darkest secrets of the human psyche,” he will be able to transcend into wholeness. Kripal’s answer: “[T]o be transformed, to lose one’s egoic head and its hardened categories in an exhilarating experience of freedom and depth beyond the surface consciousness we mistakenly take as all we are” (217). The fallible ideals upon which we “mistakenly” build our personas must be driven from the individual’s “egoic head.” To be “transformed” Kali and the Destructive Character must break through “hardened categories” and reduce the stronghold to rubble. In these piles of rubble, the individual can sift through and begin to collect the fragments that will serve as the basis for newly formed and transcended ideas—the formation of a conscious mind that openly communicates with the unconscious.



## **Collecting and Forging the Fragmented Past**

The utilization of memory is more than just recalling past events of an individual's life. It is a way to sift through difficult experiences and assemble a new psychological foundation. The fresh foundation acts as a stage where both the conscious mind and the unconscious correspond with each other. When the foundation is cracked, both parts of the psyche disconnect, and the individual is disjointed from the collective unconscious. The trauma of the individual's divorce between psychological forces can have lasting negative effects. One common side effect is the acquisition of external attachments that act as guiding light for the individual. Institutions such as the State, religion, academia, and other forms of organization and tribalism, provide a code of conduct in some manner. The convenience of these systems may lead to overreliance by the individual, thus replacing the intrinsic notion on what is, or should be, individual decorum. The individual's moral compass is no longer found within, but rather dictated by others. Everyday thought and opinions are forced upon the individual by the masses through constructs such as social media. The individual looks to the posted wall to understand how he should think, what he should feel, and what he should hope for. Self-assurance, therefore, is no longer a force cultivated by the individual himself, but rather it is a byproduct—a gift—only received with the permission of the masses. When permission is not granted, self-worth is unattainable. If the individual is marginalized from the group, then there is no hope of psychological autonomy. To return to a wholeness—or to individuate—the individual must reestablish a cohesive relationship between the conscious mind and the unconscious. He can do so by employing archetypes of transformation to destroy the ego-centric ideals that keep him slave to the masses, and by using memory to build a stronger, internal bedrock.

Benjamin's philosophy is useful to understand the purpose and utilization of memory and/or time. Benjamin saw the past as a growing pile of debris made up of the shattered fragments of yesterday. From his famous essay titled "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin says:

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating... His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (*Illuminations* 257-258)

Two ideas should jump out for the individual in need of understanding his own history: The angel is "fixedly contemplating" with his face "turned toward the past," and he is never looking toward the future. The angel here is an eternal witness to the mounting pile of "wreckage upon wreckage." The urge to "awaken the dead...and make whole" relates to hindsight: repairing regrets, reliving past glories, altering time spent, analyzing lessons learned, and so on. However, the "storm" of progress "propels" him just far enough out of reach to never fully reconstruct the past in terms of wholeness. The angel, thus, is in everlasting reflection of the fragments that make up his life and philosophies.

What is fascinating about Benjamin's analogy is that the angel is constantly aware of creation and destruction. The angel may not see what has been created in front of him—as he is

“turned toward the past”—but he is aware that the destruction “in front of his feet” can only accumulate with the shattering of experiences already created (*Illuminations* 257-258). The storm in this sense, “blowing from Paradise,” is inevitable because time moves on no matter what; the Destructive Character, Kali, and other archetypal figures of transformation will always exist and will always clear ways. The unconscious and the conscious mind and their reciprocity (despite the strength, or lack thereof, of cohesiveness) will always remain in motion as psychological elements of the ego-consciousness are constantly being destroyed and created. The individual, therefore—much like the angel—faces past destruction and, subsequently, is aware of the creation in front of him. This awareness is the basis of art—an attempt to immortalize the past to analyze the human condition.

Art in the service of reflection is one of the individual’s methods of scrutinizing his fragmented past. By sifting through the fragments, the individual creates new philosophies that help repair the bridge between the conscious mind and the unconscious. Benjamin provides another analogy of the past: “The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.... For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (*Illuminations* 255). As the pile of discarded memories grow, some fragments will be buried deep under the wreckage and “never seen again.” Benjamin confirms in this quote the vulnerability and temporality of abstract rubble that is in danger of “disappear[ing] irretrievably.” The individual can collect these fragments of the conscious mind for the assemblage of new philosophies for future demolition, thus continuing the everlasting cycle of creation and destruction, and thus remaining in motion. Art in its various forms is a method of collecting the fragmented bits of the individual’s past. Reflection conducted through

art acts as a liminal space—outside of time—in which the individual, or the angel, can seize shards of the past that “flits by.”

*Lord of the Barnyard* utilizes art in the service of reflection by employing the Hill Scrubs to recount John’s tumultuous life leading up to their much-needed strike in the town of Baker. The garbage strike cripples the town of Baker, and John is perceived as a messiah figure to the Hill Scrubs. Their telling the story of the “Lord” of the barnyard is way to reflect on the shattered past and to collect the fragments that they believe are important for future stability and Baker’s newfound respect for the garbage men (Egolf 47).

The Baker Lay, excluding the Hill Scrubs, collects pieces of the past to justify their accusation of John’s terror: “If any coparcenary peace of mind was ever to be attained, they were going to have to put the crisis into terms they could learn to live with. They were going to have to disfigure and trivialize it into sterility, then chase it out the back door as an unwanted intruder” (Egolf xvi). This statement is a prime example of a mass of individuals who erect familiar horizons instead of constructing new narratives. Instead of participating in the destruction of old notions to create new ones, the Baker Lay is looking for a “peace of mind” with old assumptions still intact. The “terms” the Baker citizens “could learn to live with” are rooted in the dusty perception of John as a menace. The recycling of ideas—destroying and creating the same conscious ideologies—traps the population to circle in place. No growth by individuals, or the masses which they make up, could be expected when psychological evolution is denied in favor of inherited ignorance.

The Hill Scrubs destroy old conscious ideologies, clearing ways to create new ones. They are retelling John’s story to solidify an understanding of the new and improved status of their position, and to document the dismembering and reassembling of Baker for the betterment of its

inhabitants. In response to the cycle of stubbornness recognized among the rest of the Baker Lay, the Hill Scrubs write their observations to shake the foil of stagnation. It is this account that breathes life into the fragmented events of John's life. The Hill Scrubs say, "That's where we come in. It's not that we're necessarily qualified to write an authorized biography on John's life. That's not our intention. Our interest is in preserving the history of an achievement before it's carried off by hill people" (xxi). The Hill Scrubs are concerned the warped version of the strike and of John will demolish the results of their revolution. To fight back against the formation of familiar narrowmindedness, the Hill Scrubs are instituting a new narrative to replace it—a new "biography" built on the shattered pieces of the old one. To preserve "the history of an achievement before it's carried off" becomes the prime objective of a group of people who feel life in Baker has improved due to the chaotic events of the past. The Hill Scrubs destroyed old ideologies in the service of creating new ones. What they accomplish is an understanding of the new and improved status of their position, and to document the dismembering and reassembling of Baker. Ideally, eventually this created account will be demolished and reconstructed to form additional ideological strengths, as the process of evolution is eternally turning. "In other words," Katy Remark says in her essay "Dismemberment: A Clinical View of Destruction in the Service of Creation," "there is a cycle of transformation of the personality in which rebirth and creation are preceded by destruction and death" (119). The Hill Scrubs' narrative does not conclude with their ending, but rather continues to be reshaped by the "transformation" of creation and destruction. This "cycle," like the uroboric serpent, consistently churns, reshaping the "personality" and moving toward a psychological wholeness. What is witnessed in the *Lord the Barnyard*, then, is the current formation of philosophies, but should not be noted as a final form, as the "cycle" continues to create and destroy.

Ruth from *History of the Rain* uses retrospection and art to rediscover and reestablish the past lives of her father, Virgil Swain, and brother, Aeney Swain. The trauma created by loss—the destruction of lives or the creation of separation—motivates Ruth to compile a “river narrative” that encapsulates her family members and their history (Williams 110). “This is my father’s story,” Ruth says. “I am writing it to find him. But to get to where you’re going you have to first go backwards. That’s directions in Ireland, it’s also T. S. Eliot” (5). Ruth is recognizing the metaphysical importance of looking “backwards.” Benjamin’s angel from “Angelus Novus” is also stuck looking backwards at the fragmented pieces of rubble that make up the past. Ruth’s meandering narrative is fitting for the unchronological assembly of past events that comprise the individual’s present and possibly future understanding. To “find him,” to find Virgil Swain, Ruth is combing through the rubble of her past—or the past as she has come to believe it—to assemble a new, everlasting image of her family. “We tell stories.” Ruth says. “We tell stories to pass the time, to leave the world for a while, or go more deeply into it. We tell stories to heal the pain of living” (176). Another way of saying this: We analyze pieces of the past to create new ego-centric ideologies that can be utilized in the coping with hardships. The new emotional defenses created on top of pivotal past moments (trauma) are to help “heal the pain of living.” “We tell stories to pass the time,” but also to develop an ego that can endure.

The narrator from *The Rings of Saturn* chronicles his meandering walk through the Suffolk countryside along with his reflection on past worldly events. The recording of these musings at first seems trivial and oftentimes unconnected, but as the narrator goes deeper into his recollection, a relationship with time is established. The narrator paraphrases writer Michael Hamburger, a friend who the narrator feels has led a similar life to himself and who provides an important perspective on memory and time: “Whenever a shift in our spiritual life occurs and

fragments such as these surface, we believe we can remember. But in reality, of course, memory fails us. Too many buildings have fallen down, too much rubble has been heaped up, the moraines and deposits are insuperable” (Sebald 177). The “fragments” that “surface” are incomplete, and do not resemble a whole memory; the false notion of a complete memory “fails us.” However, what Sebald is demonstrating through his narrator is that such “fragments” do serve a purpose. The “moraines and deposits” that are “insuperable” cannot be overcome to reconstruct a perfect, whole past—but the collected fragments can serve as foundation for newly created connections. As such is the novel *The Rings of Saturn*: a collection of fragmented histories strung together to construct meaning. What the meaning of the novel is will be up to the reader to decipher, but the selected pieces of rubble are there, immortalized in art, for the individual to process. “This then, I thought,” the narrator says, “as I looked round about me, is the representation of history. It requires a falsification of perspective. We, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was” (Sebald 125). If understanding is to be made of the past, it “requires a falsification of perspective.” The individual cannot reassemble rubble perfectly the way it was; seeing “everything from above” means seeing what came before and what came afterward, not reliving the moment accurately. The best thing the narrator can do—as well as the individual in subjective terms—is to scrutinize the piled fragments of the past and collect and forge the cornerstones of fresh ideas for the future.

Collecting is an imperative part of the creation and destruction paradox for the sake of individuation. Attempting to construct an accurate depiction of past events is impossible due to the destructibility and shattering of moments as they pass. But through art, dream analysis, and active imagination exercises, the individual collects important pieces of his history that warrant a merging with other historical fragments. The fabrication is the basis for new, conscious

philosophies—evolved from previous versions, and yet imperfect—that bridge the gap between the conscious mind and the unconscious and drive the individual toward psychological evolution. It is important to reiterate that the individual should not be avoiding his past—or, as can be associated, himself and his shadow—nor should he try to reconstruct old, damaging ideologies, but rather he should face his history with the sole goal of collecting certain attributes that will benefit him along his journey toward wholeness. The repetition of this process—of creating and destroying—will strengthen the individual’s mental faculties and serve the attainment of clarity, worth, and confidence.

Hannah Arendt summarizes Benjamin’s philosophy of collecting and the relationship between the collector and what is collected in her introduction to Benjamin’s *Illuminations*. Arendt says, “The collector destroys the context in which his object once was only part of a greater, living entity, and since only the uniquely genuine will do for him he must cleanse the chosen object of everything that is typical about it” (45). Arendt’s statement is in accord with Benjamin’s metaphorical demonstration of the painting “Angelus Novus” (257). The “object” collected is a fragment that was a part of a greater whole. However, the destruction of the present has shattered the memory into incomplete pieces. With no possibility of the individual (or angel) compiling completely what once was whole, the debris will serve a purpose on its own, once it has been “cleanse[d]” of its former “context.” The typicality of an object is no longer of a concern for the collector. The new purpose of the object is the melting down and merger with other found objects to form the basis of new ideas that the individual moves toward. The purpose of construction makes the collected items “uniquely genuine.”

According to Benjamin, the act of collecting is a utilization of creation and destruction, and the process leads to discovery. As mentioned earlier, “Thus there is in the life of a collector a



dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order,” says Benjamin (*Illuminations* 60). As the individual vacillates between “disorder and order,” he is essentially creating and destroying, or destroying and creating. The “dialectical tension between the poles” ensures the motion of the individual toward discovery. From the start, the individual approaches the wreckage of disorder—a pile of debris accumulated from the shattered remains of the present. The individual assumes the role of “collector” as he chooses the fragments he will collect. The collector, then, arrives at the pole of “order” by allocating the chosen objects into new assemblages. Benjamin says, “The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of the individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them” (60). Appropriating Benjamin’s theory of collecting, one could say current, ego-centric ideologies and perspectives are fractured into pieces and jumbled in disorder until the individual examines the rubble, collecting and “locking” chosen fragments that will serve as the development of new philosophies. These new philosophies, along with their “enchantment” of growth, result from merging fragments together “within a magic circle.” The result, or the “final thrill,” is a psyche evolving toward a reconciliation between the conscious mind and the unconscious, known as individuation. By engaging in the “dialectical tension” between “disorder and order”—creation and destruction—the individual collector discovers something unique and can use the “thrill of acquisition” to keep in motion toward individuation.

The completed bridge in the psyche enforces the connection between the individual and the collective unconscious. The return to the river of intrinsic wisdom means a renewed sense of worth as the individual feels his relation to, and within, the universe. The rubble that is faced is always faced, but the act of collecting and assembling—destruction in the service of creation—is the way the individual finds harmony. “The degenerative processes of history,” Mark Richard

McCulloh says in his essay “Destruction and Transcendence in W. G. Sebald,” “paradoxically, can be countermanded, or at least ‘overleapt,’ metaphysically speaking, by human consciousness attending to them and wherever possible preserving memory (even in acknowledgment of memory’s unreliability) as well as preserving images of the ever fading, receding present” (400). Countermanding history by “attending to them” is another way of saying collecting. “Preserving memory” of the “receding present” is unearthing fragments from the wreckage. “The degenerative processes of history” are “overleapt” by the collecting of various fragments. The formation of new ideologies in the conscious mind is an imperative process for the individual in his crusade to develop psychological autonomy and separation from societal masses and institutions.

Sebald’s meandering narrative through the Suffolk countryside reaches back in history and pulls out isolated pieces. The narrator (though buried in ambiguity) and the reader form new philosophies based on the collection of the fragmented past. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator looks out the window of his hospital room: “[S]o I too found the familiar city, extending from the hospital courtyards to the far horizon, an utterly alien place. I could not believe that anything might still be alive in that maze of buildings down there; rather, it was as if I were looking down from a cliff upon a sea of stone or a field of rubble...” (5). The narrator is in a psychiatric ward after his journey through southern United Kingdom. During his pilgrimage, the narrator witnessed and contemplated the collective destruction that connects all humanity—so much so, that in the hospital he looks out and can “not believe that anything might still be alive.” This stated realization at the beginning of the novel is of conclusory nature; the narrator is aware of the constant confrontation he has with the shattered past. The rest of the novel is a series of

musings and observations that has led the narrator to accept the “utterly alien place,” but it is also a demonstration of a collector collecting.

The narrator analyzes collected ideologies through the examination of the seventeenth-century doctor Thomas Browne and the seemingly immortal objects he was concerned with. The narrator says, “Browne scrutinizes that which escaped annihilation for any sign of the mysterious capacity for transmigration he has so often observed in caterpillars and moths. That purple piece of silk he refers to, then, in the urn of Patroclus—what does it mean?” (Sebald 26). The metaphysical items we collect—memories, ideologies, perspectives, and so forth—are also “that which escaped annihilation.” Much the same as Thomas Browne, the narrator is transfixed on “the mysterious capacity for transmigration” that certain histories seem to have. The novel raises the question: In the shadow of constant annihilation, what do the things that survive tell individuals about humanity? Two concepts: It is a hint on how individuals can use the collected items of the past for the strengthening of mental fortitude, and it serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of ignoring individual transformation.

The mention of “caterpillars and moths” and “silk” leads the reader down a narrative thread that cautions against the psychological instability of torpidity. Ignoring the fractured psyche has consequence on the individual (Sebald 26). Over relying on external rhetoric weakens the ego’s resolve. The allegorical examination of silkworms in *The Rings of Saturn* demonstrates the unhealthy potential of ignorance on individuation. When the narrator reflects on Tz’u-hsi, the Dowager Empress of nineteenth-century China previously mentioned, he recognizes how her thirst for power led her down a destructive path. The Dowager Empress becomes entranced with silkworms and begins to cultivate silk from the “transparent creatures” (Sebald 151). To reiterate, the silkworm’s process of metamorphosizing into butterflies/moths represents the

individuation process, and by farming the silk the Dowager Empress is interrupting this transformation by acting as a destructive archetypal figure. Sebald weaves in the mention of silkworms throughout the novel, carefully reminding us of metamorphosing processes. So, the “purple of silk” the narrator refers to in the above quotation is packed with more meaning than initially realized. The silk is a surviving artifact of transformation interrupted—a purple relic of forewarning (26). How the piece of silk was created was through the destruction of a silkworm’s cocoon. Centuries before Tz’u-hsi, Thomas Browne contemplates what implications the perseverance of destruction—the silk ripped from the silkworm—have for present day. The underlying message of the novel ignites from here as the narrator reflects on the constant, never-ending stream of destruction humanity has faced over past centuries. The overwhelming indestructability of destruction is a dreary concept to accept, but through the accumulation of various historical fragments the narrator eventually relishes in the creation of new ideals based on old ones; *The Rings of Saturn* is a demonstration of the importance of the collector and the assemblage of things collected. Furthermore, the indestructability of the “purple silk” as metaphorical token of broken transformation is a foreboding reminder of the psychological dangers of an unbalanced, unindividuated mind. “Looking back, [Dowager Empress] said, she realized that history consists of nothing but misfortune and the troubles that afflict us, so that in all our days on earth we never know one single moment that is genuinely free of fear” (153). As representative of the negative effects an overcompensating archetype can inflict, the Dowager Empress sees “nothing but misfortune and the troubles that afflict us.” Her history—the fragments Tz’u-hsi sifts through— is full of pain, and instead of constructing new philosophies from ideological debris that could have helped her escape the prison of paranoia, she builds the same dismal horizon repeatedly, never escaping the fossilization of her psyche.

*Lord of the Barnyard* echoes similar warnings of psychological obstruction that the recycling of old ideals can create. As with Sebald's narrator, collecting and the things collected drive John and the Hill Scrubs' narrative. Hidden in the family barn, John discovers a room full of artifacts that his father, Ford, had collected: "That's how John discovered the Gwendolyn Hill artifacts, and through them, also and incidentally, how he discovered the only tangible manifestation of his father he would ever know.... Through the artifacts, he would somehow become convinced his father had been a great man, and thereby look upon himself as the sole trustee and inheritor of an empire" (Egolf 41, 48). John reconstructs an idealistic picture of his father, whom he believed to be a "great man." The tangibility of John's "manifestation" is due solely to the belongings his father had left behind. John sifts through the "Gwendolyn Hill artifacts" and in turn develops a picture of who his "father" was and the possible traits he himself has inherited. John creates an image of Ford as a "great man," and builds his evolving identity around the notion that he too has worth. Unfortunately for John, misfortune strikes the family and the farm, and this created narrative is destroyed. Hortense (another representative of an archetype of destruction, as previously mentioned) shatters this metaphysical horizon by telling John the truth that "Ford Kaltenbrunner had been a crooked, manipulative, womanizing, alcoholic sonofabitch who'd made deadly enemies of almost every soul in town" (101). John's present idea of his father is demolished, and the pieces are scattered among past debris. From this point on, John collects the pieces that help form a new narrative that his father was "a crooked, manipulative, womanizing, alcoholic sonofabitch," and that he too is worthless to the folks of Greene County and to the universe. This newly-constructed version of John's past acts as a beacon for his future actions. John repeats the cycle of creation and destruction as each moment in his life is destroyed, and then familiar, almost identical, ego-centric ideologies are constructed

again. Instead of transcending the anxiety caused by his past, John finds himself fastened to the influential tangles of doubt.

The pileup of garbage in Baker during the Hill Scrub strike indicates a metaphorical demonstration of destruction without creation; it is the scattering of ideologies that leads to unmitigated chaos. Before the strike, John thrives at his new position of garbage man: “From the rear-view mirrors of the compactor pits he appeared to be taking out a lifetime’s worth of bloodlust on a few random bags of garbage” (Egolf 208). The collecting and violent sorting of trash bags is a coping mechanism for John as he rages against the injustices he has felt. John “taking out a lifetime’s worth of bloodlust” exemplifies how one sorts through their own fragmented past. Even though it is allegorical, John can meditate on past instances and project these memories onto each bag of trash. As each piece of trash is violently thrown into the “compactor pits,” John is releasing an attachment to it. However, when John and the Hill Scrubs stop collecting—when they decide to go on strike—the fragmented past is no longer being sorted; the metaphorical pile is not being used to create new, healthier states of conscious mind. The Hill Scrubs consider the effects of a strike: “If one day we, for example, were to walk off the job arbitrarily, the impact on Baker would be instantaneously devastating” (246). They are accurate in their speculation regarding a strike being “instantaneously devastating” on Baker, and they are also accurate on the metaphorical plane with regards to John’s psyche.

If the conscious mind “were to walk off the job arbitrarily”—which for many modern individuals it has—then devastation is imminent as people attach themselves to external institutions for worth (Egolf 246). John turns his back on the collective unconscious and rebels against the corrupt social institutions found in Baker, therefore leaving himself utterly alone and vulnerable to the influence of archetypal possession. The Hill Scrub strike is a wonderful form of

destruction that leads to the creation of new ideals. But for John, it is a metaphysical freefall into a destructive black hole. The strike occurs and “after four full weeks of pile-up in the streets of Baker, the whole valley was by now wafting out like treated bait to every species of scavenger for twenty miles around” (292). The mounds of garbage are “wafting” as no one collects the discarded. Time creeps on and the piles grow higher and the smell gets worse, attracting vermin to infest the community, causing disgust and unease. The onslaught of scavengers and the increase in temperature accumulates the collective frustration within the Baker city limits. The ending is explosive as the town succumbs to violent actions. The ultimate destruction for Baker means a rebirth for the Hill Scrubs, as their workforce demands are met, but for John, it is a final surrender to the over-piled wreckage of his past. No more sifting through the artifacts; no more collecting and sorting the trash—John has given up on ever connecting with his inner wisdom and falls victim to the creation and destruction paradox, both metaphysically and physically.

Facing one’s own fragmented past does not always result in archetypal possession and mental demise, as exemplified by John. Ruth Swain from *History of the Rain* examines relics representing the past to reconstruct the phantom figures of her father and brother. In turn, Ruth assembles the fragmented past into written narrative to both immortalize her family and to develop new understanding of the creation and destruction throughout life. Before her collection is created, Ruth scrutinizes Virgil Swain’s left-behind personal library, and says: “Then I turn to Mrs. Quinty and nod towards the books that all smell of fire and rain and I tell her, ‘I am going to read them all because that is where I will find him’” (Williams 17). In his life, Virgil collected books, and each one represents some aspect of his life. By reading “them all,” Ruth is investigating each piece collected and arranging them in a way she finds tangible. With age, Virgil never threw out a book despite his preference change; Virgil “did not edit himself. He did

not look back at the books of ten years ago and pluck out the ones whose taste was no longer his” (258). Subsequently, this offers a wide spectrum of material for Ruth to pour over. Or, to put it in terminology relating to Benjamin: Virgil’s library is a large accumulation of wreckage, metaphysically piled high with the shattered remains of a life documented through collection. Many of these artifacts intersect with Ruth’s own life, and by using art in the service of reflection, she can sort through the past and construct a new, everlasting image of her brother and father, reconstituting the past to “find him.”

Both Ruth from *History of the Rain* and the narrator from *The Rings of Saturn* are collectors in their own way, and at times they interact with other collectors. The interesting relationship here is between collector and collector, going beyond heredity and suggesting a promoted importance. Ruth is sorting through her father’s collection, but she is also sorting through her own collection of past fragments. Also, in parallel, her grandmother keeps every newspaper from her life: “There [Nan] keeps her Complete Collection of *Clare Champions*, an ever-expanding series of yellow mountains of newspaper in which is recorded the full entire life of the county.... The *Champions* are an inexhaustible chronicle of everything that happened here in Nan’s lifetime” (Williams 51). Ruth’s observation of this collection is rooted in confusion, but as the narrative continues, it is clear that Ruth is also attempting to “chronicle” her own life. Nan is never observed sifting through the “yellow mountains of newspaper,” but their existence in her life is important. Individuals, such as Nan and Ruth and the narrator from *The Rings of Saturn*, traverse through life both physically and metaphysically, and an order is sought out to combat the feelings of insecurities of one’s own universal standing. Nan isn’t individuated because she has a collection that documents the events surrounding her life, but rather, her collection is an attempt to fabricate psychological order by rearranging the external attachments, the physical



order aiming to act as complete psychological order. The narrator from *The Rings of Saturn* comments on the scattered piles of paper spread out in the office of his colleague, Janine, saying, "...her response was that the apparent chaos surrounding her represented in reality a perfect kind of order, or an order which at least tended towards perfection" (Sebald 9). Janine associates "order" with "perfection" the same way and for the same reason that Nan collects the *Clare Champions*: To find cognitive stability by any means necessary. Sebald's narrator observes this in Janine, and Ruth observes this habit in her father and grandmother, subsequently transcending the false notion of physical order by engaging in the process of collection to strip away old ideologies in the service of creating new ones. Ruth's path toward individuation is not a certainty, but as she is faced with her own immortality, she recognizes the importance of creation and destruction and its use for mental evolution—a precursor toward individuation.

Ruth is aware of the power of creation and destruction, and she employs it to push her psyche closer to wholeness. Ruth says:

When I call my father Virgil Swain I think he's a story. I think I invented him. I think maybe I never had a father and in the gap where he should be I have put a story. I see this figure on the riverbank and I try to match him to the boy I have imagined, but find instead a gristle of truth, that human beings are not seamless smooth creations, they have insoluble parts, and the closer you look the more mysterious they become. (Williams 169)

Ruth's admission to her capability of inventing her father implicates a deeper truth. Ruth is recognizing substantial effects of creating ideas out of fragmented pieces of the past, of creating a "story." Substantial effects can be both enlightening and damaging to an individual's conscious mind, damaging in the ways that people and relationships have "insoluble parts." To attach

oneself to false and dangerous ideologies is to deny mental cohesion, to compromise with a “gap.” Ruth understands that the phantom figures she has created have the power to disrupt her psyche the same way external institutional attachments do. Like Nan and Janine, Ruth could establish a false order based on her own projected attachments. But, by Ruth’s own admission, “the closer you look the more mysterious they become,” and she understands the limitations of invention. Through collecting, Ruth can take the shattered remains of various histories and forge healthier philosophies that promote internal guidance, as opposed to external physicality that only provides false order. For this reason, Ruth is not necessarily individuated at the end of *History of the Rain*, but she is on her way.

*History of the Rain*’s narrative analyzes creation and destruction and its paradoxical use to the individual who is full of uncertainty by lighting a path toward individuation. The River Shannon represents the ontological nature of creation and destruction, and it encases the town of Faha. Within this framework, archetypes of transformation impose their energy onto the individuals through their conscious mind. The duality of the archetypes can enhance the individual’s mental wholeness, or it can consume the conscious mind and cause psychosis. Virgil Swain falls victim to the archetype’s duality and is swept away by his own shadow. The remains of his library and memories are left behind and inspire Ruth to construct new ideologies out of the debris of old ones. Ruth’s experiment with art and reflection and collecting sets her on a path toward individuation. To find worth in the universe one should only have to look within. Ruth is challenging the barriers and external attachments that keep her anchored to her boat-bed and provoke her conscious mind to consider the concepts she is creating and the ones she is destroying. Through the collage of familial history, Ruth is sensing the archetypal energy that is

attempting to guide her back toward the collective unconscious. As she writes and reflects, the beginnings of a psychological discourse between her conscious mind and unconscious develop.

John from *Lord of the Barnyard*, however, is consumed by an archetype of transformation and moves further away from individuation. Unlike Ruth, John turns his back on collecting metaphysical fragments. Instead, he is driven by the destructive energies of an overcompensating archetypal figure until he reaches a point of no return. John never repairs the connection between his unconscious and conscious mind; he becomes tangled up with his external attachments and allows them to pull him down. Jung says, “Inner peace and contentment depend in large measure upon whether or not the historical family which is inherent in the individual can be harmonized with the ephemeral conditions of the present” (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 237). John does not identify the “historical family which is inherent,” but rather becomes hijacked by an unconscious invasion. The “ephemeral conditions of the present” are in the crosshairs of John’s unconscious drive for destruction. Allegorically, it is the Hill Scrubs who exhibit a rehabilitation between what was and what will be. Through the chaos in Baker, the Hill Scrubs recognized the archetypal force John represented and use his tale to heal old wounds and discover “inner peace” within their organization, and possibly themselves. For future times, the Hill Scrubs have vowed to glean the lessons learned from John’s life to help establish and maintain equilibrium in their own lives. John, however, is consumed by the destructive energies until he is permanently incapacitated.

The truly individuated hero from this examination is the narrator from *The Rings of Saturn*. The Suffolk countryside provides the narrator with a landscape to contemplate the creative and destructive bell jar humanity lives under. Furthermore, he recognizes through his musing the collectivity of humanity’s histories. Many of the figures discussed—such as the

Dowager Empress Tz'u-hsi—represent a projected archetype of the unconscious. All around him there is an endless stream of destruction, and—though not glorified outright—there too is creation. The narrator is engaging in the act of collecting through reflection, and as he arranges each obtained artifact, new philosophies are being created. The narrator is spinning a finely-knitted cocoon in a similar fashion to the silkworms that crawl throughout the narrative. The narrator sits on the Orfordness island, among the decay of “military installations,” and finds himself between creation and destruction: “The tide was advancing up the river, the water was shining like tinfoil, and from the radio masts high above the marshes came an even, scarcely audible hum.... There, I thought, I was once at home. And then, through the growing dazzle of the light in my eyes, I suddenly saw, amidst the darkening colours, the sails of the long-vanished windmills turning heavily in the wind” (Sebald 237). This moment occurs near the end of his travels, near the end of his wondering thoughts. In this place, between the advancing tide and the “darkening colours,” the narrator embraces the tension of the paradox and enters a liminal space. With his collection of histories assembling into something new, the narrator allows the dismemberment of his conscious mind to make room for new ideologies. Individuation happens in atemporality, and the narrator feels the harmonious balance of a whole psyche; he is “once at home.” Past and present, creation and destruction, old and new, converge in uroboric fashion, and the narrator suddenly sees “the sails of the long-vanished windmills turning heavily in the wind.” Balance is restored; the mind is at peace; the narrator is individuated.

Jung observes the predicament of the modern individual and advocates a high priority for the restoration of psychological balance. As exemplified in the current analysis, this process could be managed by destroying unhealthy, ego-centric ideals and creating new ones, allowing the inclusion of the unconscious within the conscious mind. John Kaltenbrunner fails to

recognize his intrinsic utility and denies himself growth, a familiar image in modern times. Ruth Swain, however, embraces the liminal space between creation and destruction and begins to reconcile both parts of her consciousness. But it is Sebald's narrator who embraces the archetypes of transformation, who transcends the limitations of his conscious mind. In doing so, he sifts through the fragments of his past and forges new ideals steeped in clarity. This process of transformation is not to say that all institutional systems should be eradicated for the sole purpose of individuation, but rather, as with most elements of life, a balance needs to be struck. An individuated person can maintain healthy relationships with the State, for example, and yet retain their internal ever-expanding sense of purpose and worth. By finding autonomy through the creation and destruction paradox, the individual shields himself against the complete overrule of the masses. Dictatorships, and other overreaching authorities, remain in check when the individuals that make up the masses are less susceptible to manipulation. In an individuated state, then, the societal mass will work in tandem with institutional organizations to further promote the wellness of its citizens. When the manipulators at the top lose "control" over the population, it does not mean society devolves to chaos, but rather it merely enables a web of cohesiveness to spread throughout the nation's people that ensures equality and worth to all. "If we don't do anything about this," Tacey says,

we will be destroyed by outbursts of irrationality and unreason, such as we see in war, terrorism, and violence. Hence the most important act for the future is to become aware of our darkness, to lower our moral sights, to resist the desire to be perfect, to recognize our complexity, to become critical of conventional morality and search for a new balance that includes our dark side as well as our light. (79)

Tacey is calling for equilibrium, to find a “new balance” including both “light” and “dark” sides of consciousness, to transcend personas. Otherwise, “[individuals] will be destroyed by outburst of irrationality and unreason.” Employing creation and destruction for the inclusion of the unconscious into the conscious mind is not a “desire to be perfect,” but rather a necessary step toward “balance,” enabling the individual to generate his own confidence. The act of tribalism is increasing alongside fear, as people are grouping together to alleviate anxieties. The comfort provided by these pockets of people is temporal as groups are pitted against other groups, and new anxieties descend. Huddled together, individuals look up to the leaders for direction, opening themselves to a vulnerability that can be preyed upon. The leaders often fall into manipulation, and the level of dysfunction continues to rise, eventually leading to “war, terrorism, and violence.” Utilizing archetypes of transformation to destroy old ideals in the conscious mind in the service of creating new ones will safeguard the individual from manipulation. From the ideological fragments, new assemblages are created, enabling individual autonomy, and priming the psyche for repairment. For society to establish a strong foothold on its humanitarian climate, the masses need to disband, and individuals must allow a psychological dismemberment to strip away toxic, ego-centric ideologies to make room for the new ones that will lift humanity back where it belongs: within the harmonious tension between creation and destruction.

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