

Tour of the Works of Andrew Fekete

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Exhibition curator for the Exhibition held at the National Dance Theatre, Budapest, January 2014

“Those whom the gods love die young.”^[1] These words of Oscar Wilde apply to my brother, Andrew. My older brother, Andrew Fekete, died in 1986 at the age of 32. He died young. Andrew was a Jungian alchemist. What does this mean?

Many of our actions are based on unconscious forces. Which of us here today can really explain exactly why he or she has come to this theatre tonight? Why have you decided to attend this speech and, for those not present, who heard about it, why did they decided to stay away?

Jung tells us that our actions are driven by unconscious forces that he calls archetypes. In dreams and visions these archetypes become visible as images.

An alchemist is someone who deliberately looks for his dreams and visions, to make those images become more and more real to him. He embarks on a quest that is akin to the search for happiness. Some call it a quest for enlightenment, some for balance. My brother called it “the quest for gold”.

Tradition tells us on this quest that there is a long and a short path. My brother took the short path. That means that he made no compromise with the normal conditions of living. How did this journey come about?

In his diaries my brother tells us that he was hallucinating from the age of three. He could see kaleidoscopic lines and images, and that these at times took the form of organic shapes, faces and figures.

At some stage in his early childhood he lost this power of vision. He felt this as a tremendous loss. The power to see these images gives one rootedness in the infinite. It is talking to god.

In 1979 he decided to search again for the visions of his childhood. In so doing, he became an alchemist. My brother used fatigue. He would stay up for days on end, and after the second day he would start to experience visions. The experience of visions then became normal for him, and he could see these at any time. When he had a vision he would paint what he saw, and afterwards re-enter it in another vision. Andrew used the technique primarily of automatic painting. He would give up any attempt to control the outcome of his work, but surrender himself to the process – allowing the unconscious to paint through him directly.

Andrew was from the earliest days a man of extraordinary talent, which expressed itself initially in architectural drawings that amazed his tutors and earned him an offer of a place at Cambridge, though he was unable to take it up and studied at Liverpool. Andrew researched incessantly as a child all the forms and techniques of art, and hence, when he surrendered to the unconscious, the unconscious had great skills to draw upon.

The surrender to the Unconscious is the short path. The more complete the surrender, the more likely is early death. An early death means that one cannot sustain the burden of living at the level of the intensity of the fully committed artist for a long period of time. From an early stage Andrew knew he was dying. His dreams also express the recurring motifs of sacrifice and dismemberment. The image of sacrifice comes from the knowledge that he has given up his life in the quest for gold. The image of dismemberment derives from the same source.

The plunge into the realm of the Unconscious – Mythology tells us of the story of Acteon. The hero and hunter, Acteon, meets the goddess Artemis, naked, in the forest. As a punishment, Acteon is torn limb from limb by his own dogs. Artemis, the goddess, is a powerful symbol of the Unconscious. Andrew wrote a poem, *Punishment for the Transgressors*, in which he compared his entry into the Unconscious to the myth of Acteon and predicted his own death.

So in these works that you see hanging today on the walls of the National Dance Theatre, you see no separation between the work of an artist and a religious quest. Abstract expressionist art is the attempt to paint emotions. It can degenerate into mere illustration. These works are not illustrations, but the products of real experiences. Direct communications.

What did Andrew “see” when he entered into the Unconscious and made darkness visible?

He saw a portal or entrance between the conscious and unconscious mind. This is a gate or an opening. On entering the gate the power of vision increases, he experienced images and heightened consciousness. He was dreaming while still awake. This is a stream of consciousness which is called “in the flow” or “in the stream”. At first, the images my brother saw took the form of geometric shapes. He called this “hyperbolic space”.

There are protecting “deities” guarding the gate and entrance into the stream is dangerous. The region on the other side is a labyrinth and the destination not certain. The protecting deities are guards or sentinels. Initially, when Andrew entered the gate, their presence is hinted at rather than organically depicted.

Once through the gate Andrew experienced either a city or a landscape. The city is labyrinthine, the landscape mountainous, rocky and arid. There is an explosion of colour, the transformatory possibility of magical powers offered by the other world.

Both city and landscape tend to lead in the same direction – through the labyrinth or through a fissure or crevice towards a cave or burial chamber. The protecting deities and transcendent guides manifest themselves as representational forms: faces, figures and hands.

Within the cave one reaches the totem of the Ancestors. Communion with the Unconscious is established and there is a dialogue. Several evocations take place leading up to the final encounter with the Great Man, the primordial spirit of the Ancestors, who alone can unlock the key and grant admittance to the shrine. The shrine itself is a symbol of unity and of balance of opposites where transcendent male and female forms play upon each other in harmony.

The vision has been granted, but this is the short path. “Not a few died in pursuit of the goal” –one my brother’s favourite expressions from an alchemical treatise frequently quoted by Jung. Dismemberment and Death are the price paid on the short path, and Andrew paid that price.

These paintings are Andrew’s testament to his journey. He brought back this treasure to the upper world and completed the hero’s task after all. These paintings act as a bridge to the unconscious and a reminder of its existence. They are a testament left by the Unconscious for our benefit.

Notes

[1] A Few Maxims For The Instruction Of The Over-Educated (1894)