

The Soul In September

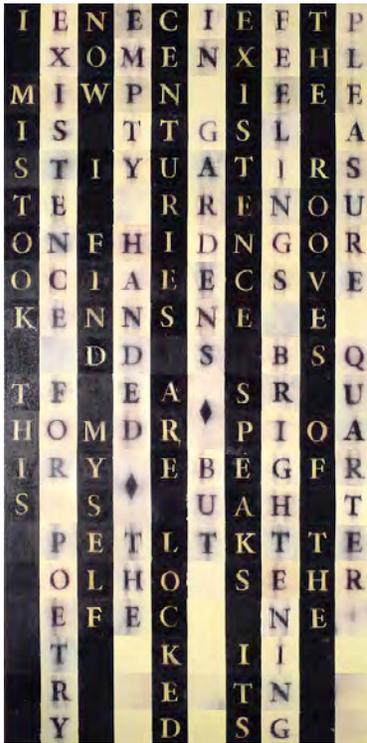
Not The End

And so, believe whatever you want.
Believe in the concrete. Believe in nothingness.
We are all doomed. We are blessed.
A holy goof's golden eternity
There is the Milky Way.
There are embers burning in Big Sur fireplaces.
All in all, all around,
can't touch it.
There are axe handles
And hunger. There is nothing to be said.
Can't say...?
Say love. Say here. ¹
2012

... and now

2014, looking and asking again, I am sure to lose most of the young and half of the middle-aged. But the old will likely pocket these notes and fiddle with them, until they have become a dust jacket for the dry cleaner.
On patrol, on the perimeter, I came back to the idea of the 'soul'. I looked at that, and with an old-fashioned dialect of sorts, put a light on it. And for now it's a dreamer's account, that welcomes people who no longer dream of such things.

Andy Patton



Mistaken

Oil on canvas, 60"x30", 2013-14

'I mistook this existence for poetry,
Now I find myself empty-handed.
The centuries are locked in gardens.
But existence speaks its feelings,
Brightening the rooves of the pleasure quarter.'

Metronomic

Assembled in columns of violet and naples yellow, a gentle fall of lettering, like single drops of rain, condense as vapour on a misted pane of glass.

Was it ever a poem until it had been made a painting? This is a painting whose words are cobbled together, from fragments of dusted off translations, from archaic entries and poems un-penned. This is the syntax of time, fluent and effortless.

In our Western tradition of painting there are rarely moments that reflect and satisfy an eastern aesthetic that we can value as respectful and accountable to their inspiration. One such case has been the 'Cold Mountain' series by American painter Brice Marden, or I would suggest the late 19th century 'nocturne' paintings by J M Whistler. Today, we have again the cross traffic from east to west, in the work of Andy Patton.

Can we link the soul-image to the passing of time? Time gives us shadows and fog, mists and shrouded memory. There is a longing for the 'other', whatever we may consider it, as an assurance against dissolution. It is a warm and welcome thought to believe in the soul, the soul in all things, which may carry us over the gardens, above the rooves of the pleasure quarter, to our appointed rendezvous.

In the West, Emily Dickenson wrote:

'Had I but further scanned,
had I secured the glow,
in an hermetic memory
it had availed me now.'

...this sense of hesitation, coupled perhaps with the need to be reassured and reunited within the mystery...this echoes the 'empty-handed' of the mistaken one.

Without the reflective partner of the soul-image we live in a state of unknowing, mistaking identity for being, appearance for reality. Existence casts down upon us like moonlight through the pines, the spectrum reflected in a pool of oil. We burn in a fire of unknowing. Sometimes we are mistaken and sometimes, we know. Psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas refers to the *unthought known*.

"The *unthought known* may indeed be the basis of a *jouissance* of the interformal real, the bliss of thoughtless engagement between self and other."²

Philosophy consists of six separate but overlapping branches: metaphysics, logic, psychology, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics.
Ontology is the area of metaphysics that is concerned with being, the nature of existence.
Poetry can tell us as much about existence and the human condition as any analytical system or scientific method.

In correspondence Andy Patton says,

"It's really a painting made with Zhang Dai in mind.

He was a writer in the late Ming period, born to real wealth.

But the Manchu conquered China and his world essentially disappeared.

His most famous book is 'Searching for West Lake in Dreams.'

West Lake is incredibly famous—it's in Hangzhou—and I've sat at 'Orioles Sing to Willows' and read Chinese poetry there.

'Searching for West Lake' begins:

'Born at an evil hour, I have been separated from West Lake for twenty-eight long years.

Not a day passes however that West Lake does not enter my dreams.' "

Nicole Collins



Smoke

Video, 6:12, 2008

“...the soul...was visualized sensuously as a breath-body”³

In the dim light of a grey afternoon this film follows the tide of a single strand of incense smoke as it stratifies and dissipates into the atmosphere of a quiet room. As we watch the minutes gently unfold, we unfold as well, and accept the dissolution of one substance into another. And how deeply familiar it is.

A Vanishing

... departure of the soul...did we see it that day rise from the chimney and dissolve into the sky above the trees?

Can we witness the subtle grace of this moment?

Is the soul carried upward by heat, divesting from gardens of the ground, a thermodynamic lift?

Can the soul be carried on a pencil of smoke?

Can it draw a line for us against the daylight of the eternal?

Smoke is a liquid parable, a floating, drifting narrative that tells a story of what once was, that teaches us a lesson in transience, that guides our floating in space, that is the manifestation of an absence, that leads to nothingness. Smoke is light transit of the body, the remainder on a current of air that rises into distant night. Smoke is the cooled rags of heat, that sail upward through branches and curl the treetops. Smoke is the atmosphere we generate, from the biosphere we burn, the final sighting of the body electric. Smoke is the trace of love departed, that we may see in it the soul-image. Smoke is evidence.

"D'ailleurs, c'est toujours les autres qui meurent" ("Besides, it's always the others who die"). – 1968, epitaph for Marcel Duchamp, at Rouen Cemetery, France.

*"Anima is a subtle imperceptible smoke."*⁴

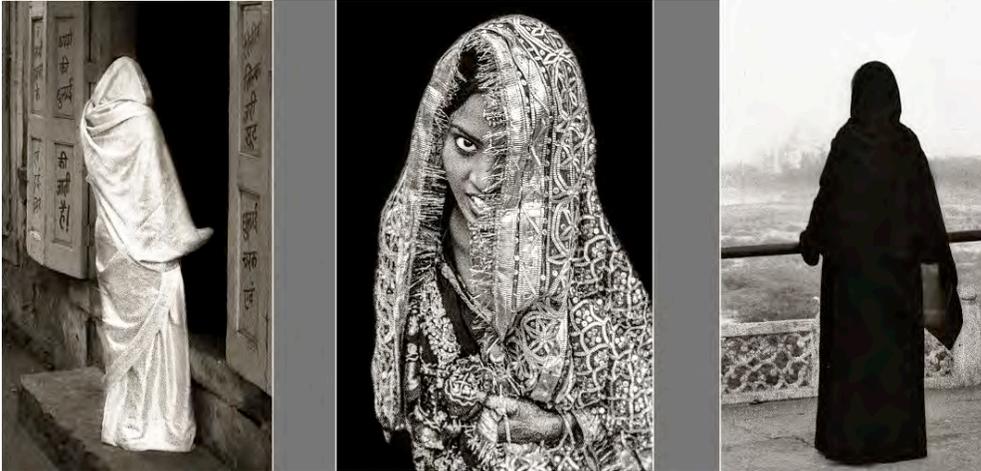
There is the old story of the experiment of Sir Walter Raleigh, conducted for the Queen of England... tobacco is weighed on the scales, then filled into a pipe and smoked. The ashes of the same tobacco are then weighed on the scales. The resulting difference in weight is the weight of the smoke.

"How much does life weigh?

They say we all lose 21 grams at the exact moment of our death... everyone. The weight of a stack of nickels. The weight of a chocolate bar. The weight of a hummingbird..."

from the 2003 film 21 Grams by Alejandro Iñárritu,

Jacques Oulé



Orion's Belt Gaze

3 photographs, black and white, 20"x12", 2005

Prepared as a composite narrative, the three monochrome images originate in India in 2005. It is natural to think that these consecutive images could be the same woman imagined at different times in her life. The paradox reveals itself.

Three distinct figures are presented as one and we receive this as a unified experience, an experience of transition where this portrayal speaks to us of evolving stages in the passing of life itself.

Epsilon

A world of light and shadow is contained in a trinity. Our senses move within each painted frame and taste and scan the different parts of this world. Our eyes rest upon the first instant. A young woman in gossamer silk is about to enter through a darkened door of encrypted panel and stone.

She goes to her future... and steps out of her past.

In the second instant, she faces us from the shadows.

She is now the young adorned bride, bride to destiny, bride to fate.

She is no longer the child, she has become Epsilon and the light from the middle star shines through her dark piercing eyes.

She carries with her the promise of the soul-image, the central truth, and that truth gazes upon us.

She steps forth from Al-Khamet, the black land, with knowledge she knows cannot be spoken of.

In the final instant, a woman wise in her later years, dressed in reverential black, stands quietly in daylight with her back to us. Her gaze is no longer upon us.

The Taj Mahal, great palace to the spirit of existence and the existence of spirit, can be seen across the plain. One can believe she is in contemplation, the secrets of her soul kept for a while longer, as she knows her transition is nearly complete.

She is an incantation. She is a powerful word. She is everything I am not. She is the elixir I have taken. She is the overseer of the future I cannot find. She is alive, while I am almost. She is gone while I am almost. She is my soul present and my soul blossoming. It is only a matter of time.

Alchemy...from Al-Khamet...in Egyptian: the holy black land

I am reminded of the extraordinary film by Robert Gardner: 'Forest of Bliss'. Unflinchingly recorded on location at Varanasi, in India, Gardner captured the hypnotic essence of a living culture in the face of a dying nature. Together hand in hand, the syzygy of life and death...and a ritual practice which transcends all time, its fierce beauty objectified in the orange marigold petals and the ceremonial ablutions from the sacred Ganges.

An instant might be 1/30 of a second at an aperture of 5.6 on a 50 mm lens...or... all ticking clocks... or...the light from Orion's Belt, seen in the blink of an eye.

In China, Orion was one of the twenty-eight lunar mansions Sieu (Xiu). Orion is known as Shen, literally meaning "Three", for the stars in Orion's Belt. They are called Zeta, Epsilon and Delta.

Erin Loree



The Glass Of All Things

Oil on Canvas, 12”x12”, 2014

Form...

In a play of poetic abstraction, carved in skeins, ropes, slashes and scars of oil paint on canvas, we begin with what resembles the tracing of a human form. Where the face may have been we are witness to a transmutation of sorts, an illusion of a different nature. Where the eyes may have been the painter has opened onto a central poetic vision.

Look deeply into the face,
vast fields
of blackened space.
The stars at night
canopy an ice field
beyond an emerald lake.

“The colour green...is associated with Venus.”⁵

...and Formless

Behold the stars. On nights that afford the city-dweller darkness, it is easy to ask whether life is anything but our own. We crane our necks or lie on our backs and look up and out. It is a foolish question. Why would we assume for a moment a singularity of earthbound existence? Of course there is life out there, it is teeming with life; in fact it is all that life is. It is also all death. It is the form of all things. It is not the life of forms we are accustomed to in our blue world. Even the stars themselves are not forms we can experience. As points of light they are by definition formless. We have walked on the moon, have watched the Mars Rover litter a far planet, and witnessed a paper trail of

voyages into our solar system unmanned. But our experience of the stars is, for the most part, a superalloy of the imagination.

Perhaps it is really a question of orders of magnitude. We leave this order and expel into a higher order. We simply cannot 'grasp' the reality of these things, nor where the soul resides in dissipation. And for each of us to some degree the moon is our reflective partner, a primordial soul-image. Under the moon we make vows. And we take vows. And we keep them.

"I often looked up at the stars and asked myself the question – What is the stars, what is the stars?"

Sean O'Casey, Irish playwright

"Green, the life-colour, suits her (the anima) very well..."⁶

Jung has said, the anima is the soul, the soul is in all things. If the soul is in all things, our rivers, mountains and trees, the moon and stars as well, as believed in the Tao, herein the 'anima' of the West establishes a point of intersection with the 'Tao' of the East. This is referred to as 'animism'.

John Brown



GRIMM

Oil on canvas, 24"x24", 2014

The painting "Grimm" is a study in the hermetic, a portrait of secrecy. Light has been cast upon a face which seems at any moment will recede back into the blackened depths of the envelope around it. The defined form of the head and its visible features do not give up identity, as well the figure remains concealed behind a black mask. To speculate a black velvet choker and frockcoat or cape, completes the attire. We have caught his attention, as he looks right at us, but he will remain a duende to us. This is the mirror of the arcane...

L'Arcano Incantatore⁷

There once was a boy magician, a child of the early sciences in the time of the quattrocento. His knowledge and abilities far surpassed his youthful appearance. He was a seeker and a keeper of secrets. It is said that in an effort to unlock the mysteries of his world, to peer for once into the region of his soul, he had accidentally locked himself into a dark life immortal, an imprisonment of six hundred years or so. This was the destiny of alchemy for the boy. In a laboratory of experiments, while conjuring a plume of gold, with a trick of the fingers and the spilling of a cylindrical phial, his fate had imprisoned

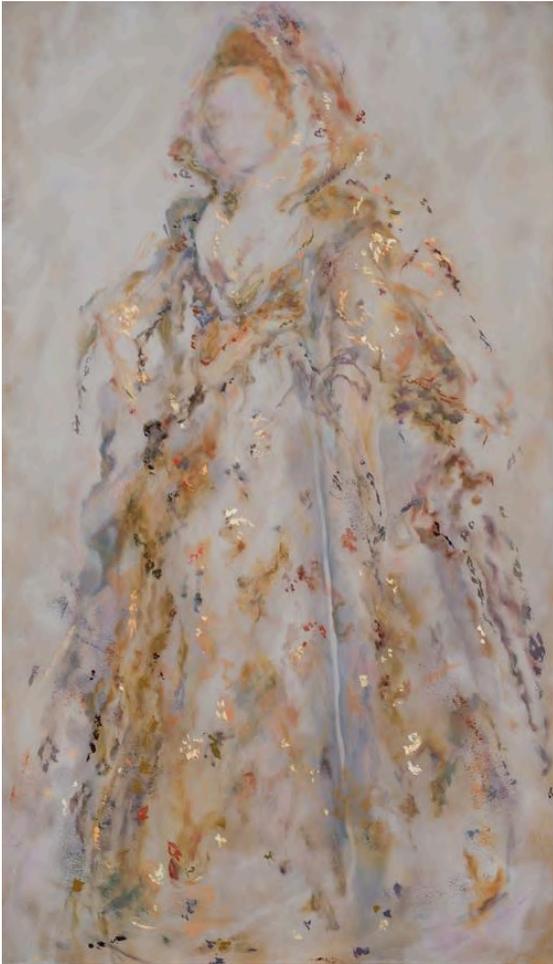
him, forever to walk his lonely hillsides, never to greet the shadowy figures hiding in the Cypress grove. “I, whose eyelids have been cut away, gaze on all of day and night, it's violence revealed. There is no escape but perhaps a final end to this immortal sentence. And what of all seeing? This world is woeful. Is it blindness? Am I condemned to the subjugation of cruel humanity, to be forever wounded by fear, to never once look upon my soul?”

There is a notion expressed in alchemical texts that suggests the potential for man to work against the perceived laws of nature in order to rise above the limitations, which have chained him to a life in anticipation of death. This is referred to as the Opus Contra Naturam. The paradox is of course that in order for life on Earth to remain in equilibrium, man must be limited in his effect.

“In alchemy the growth away from nature is spoken of as the *Opus Contra Naturam*, a key concept for the psychological, in distinction to the naturalistic, understanding of psychic events.”⁸

“Psyche in this sense means all the processes depicted in alchemy, including body, spirit, sun and moon, mercurius, etc. They are each psychological; they are all taking place in the psyche. Anima would only be one of these factors.”⁹

Amanda Clyne



Excavating Artifice I

Oil on Canvas, 67x39", 2013-14

Visibility

I see a woman whom I have conjured, through her last vestiges. She is simultaneously appearing and disappearing before my eyes. Traces of silk and golden brocade lead me to think of her as ennobled. It is strange to see a ghostly image arrayed in the finery of aristocracy. But if we imagine this as a manifestation of 'another', such as you might wish for someone once distinguished in your memory, special at the deep heart of your matter, resplendent as your reflective partner, your soul-mate; then the image seems right somehow. This may be understood in the same sense as when enacting (or witnessing) a ritual in a religious festival of flowers and incense and saturated colours, in an adorned temple. In a sense, we adorn our phantom soul-image.

But there is also an emptiness in this portrait, an unknown individual whose presence relies entirely on an encounter with faith.

Like the lonely spirit that haunts, like the longing associated with absence, she is almost with us, and almost gone. The soul-image is not concrete, it is a wisp, an ephemerality, and we are drawn toward the shore waves at twilight, when we feel breath on the cheek, and remember words in a letter once sent, that let you finally sleep. It is everywhere. It is nowhere.

“The soul-image: In a man the soul, ie. anima, or in a woman the soul, animus, or inner attitude, is represented in the unconscious by definite persons with the corresponding qualities. Such an image is called a “soul-image”. Sometimes these images are of quite unknown or mythological figures.”¹⁰

“This less conscious aspect which is turned inward and experienced as one’s personal interiority is the anima, or animus, and the ‘soul-image’.”¹¹

For centuries children have frightened themselves using only a mirror and low lighting. Repeating the name “Bloody Mary” three times while staring at the mirror for long periods of time lead to hallucinations, visual shifts that suggested a dissolution of the facial features.

Rebecca Ladds



Beatrice

Plaster with black ink, 18x6x10” approx., 2012

Mediatrix

A portrait in feminine mystery, this anonymous masked figure does not reveal herself in terms of specific identity. We respond to her beguiling presence, the inkwork on her neck and shoulders, and wonder. But no reading of a female form now given the name of Beatrice can be possible without taking into consideration the ‘Beatrice’ of Dante Alighieri, who in her, created one of the great examples of the ‘anima’ in Western literature.

From the spell of the first encounter between Dante and Beatrice, found in *La Vita Nuova* of 1274:

“Here, among the other young ones, Dante for the first time laid eyes on Portinari’s daughter Beatrice. He was captivated on the spot, and remained so in fact and in visual and poetic memory, all his life.”¹²

From the words of Dante, in his ascension into paradise:

“Then she began: I do not ask, I say what you most wish to hear, for I have seen it where time and space are focused in one ray.”¹³

After her death, Dante in one sense died with her, as indicated in the end inscription from La Vita Nuova. He writes:

“Here Ends
The
New Life
Of
Dante Alighieri”¹⁴

There is an aspect to this work, which, while crossing contemporary issues of representation, automatically conveys a broader sense of time, our cultural history and the universal umbrella of the past, what Jung has called our collective unconscious, our ancestral memory. Is this a piece that has traveled us through time? These qualities imbued in the plaster are manifestations of the mediatrix.

“*Anima as relationship* means that configuration which mediates between personal and collective, between actualities and beyond, between the individual conscious horizon and the primordial realm of the imaginal, its images, ideas, figures, and emotions. Here anima functions as mediatrix.”¹⁵

Afterword

Everything the anima touches becomes numinous – unconditional, dangerous, taboo, magical.¹⁶

It is known that all human beings begin the earliest stages of life carrying a genetic bundle of X and Y chromosomes.

In the event that a new human being has been born a male physically, it is because the genetic encoding for masculine traits has essentially won out over the complimentary set of feminine traits. And for each new being coming into this world carrying female physical traits it is because the genetic encoding of the feminine has become the primary directive over the complimentary male characteristics. This does not mean that the associated sets of genetic information have disappeared. They are still there, and to assorted levels within each new person, are still active and influential. Each person starts out life with unique and varying balance between these sets, one perhaps superior to the other, or resting by degrees, in equilibrium. This accounts for, in certain respects, everything from intuitive response, to social engagement, to sexual orientation. In other words, all outcomes are natural and part of the same balance.

It is thought that this alternate, or secondary set of characteristics is what we often recognize in others, as that which we sense in ourselves, and ultimately accounts for what is called the ‘soul-image’. Jung referred to these distinct, but co-conditional manifestations as the anima (the feminine complimentary to the primary masculine) and the animus (the masculine complimentary to the primary feminine). The soul-image then, is thought to be that crystallization or vision, that completes us.

Artists Biographical Information

Andy Patton

“I study calligraphy in order to learn the Doctrine of the Mean,” said Liu Yuxi. I wish I had said that, but instead I find myself thinking of Su Shi—who believed that to bring balance to one’s time, it was sometimes necessary to lean in the opposite direction.”

-A. Patton, Toronto

Andy Patton is represented by Robert Birch Gallery, Toronto.

Nicole Collins

Nicole Collins’ artistic practice focuses on the effect of time, accumulation, force and heat on visceral materials, through painting, drawing, installation, intervention, video, and sound. Nicole Collins is represented by General Hardware Contemporary Gallery, Toronto.

Jacques Oulé

Jacques Oulé was born in France in 1958. He grew up in Aix en Provence and lived in Paris before moving to Toronto in 1981. As a visual artist Oulé uses the camera as a tool to look deeply and carefully at the world around him and brings images together in an attempt to amplify their presence through the questions and dialogues they create. His work has been featured in Triangle magazine, books and newspapers and in exhibitions in Canada and the US, most recently as part of "Autoplasmic" at the McMaster Museum of Art in Hamilton. www.jacquesoule.com

Erin Loree

Erin Loree is a Toronto-based painter whose imagery is inspired by Taoist philosophy, Jungian psychology, plant life in the Amazon jungle, the study of the cosmos, the Buddhist understanding of the interconnectedness of all things in the universe, and her own experience as a human with all its inherent implications.

Erin Loree works out of Nest Collective Studios, Toronto.

John Brown

“I do not teach. I engage in no activism, in either art or life. The work conveys a plurality of meanings, none really stable, all more or less unreliable. But it is an art against utopia, which has produced all kinds of horrors, an art that celebrates life, anti-teleological, and skeptical.”

-J. Brown, from an imagined interview with John Bentley Mays

John Brown is represented by Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

Amanda Clyne

“I am invisible. I make art to grapple with the trauma of being unseen. In the portraits of others, I seek traces of my own reflection. Gazing at the figures cloaked in extreme artifice, I find empathy in their attempt to be made visible.”

-A. Clyne

Amanda Clyne is represented by P/M Gallery, Toronto.

Rebecca Ladds

“Through contrasting the use of ink and carbon I examine the dualities that exist within historical representations of women. Placing ornamental armor, weaponry and foliage as delicate protection, I highlight the smooth hardness of flesh, similar to classical marble sculptures. Using dramatic figures and events from history, I create portraits that display the beautiful violence surrounding feminine sexuality. With these works I praise woman as the warrior, the martyr, the murderer, and the healer, all at once.”

-R. Ladds

Rebecca Ladds works out of the Carrier Arts Organization, Toronto.

1. Foreword from Autoplasmic, M. Davidson, July 2010, Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles

2. Christopher Bollas, *The Christopher Bollas Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2011, p. 248
3. CG Jung, *Collected Works*, 14, §748
4. CG Jung, *ibid*, 12, §394, n105
5. CG Jung, *ibid*, 14, §393
6. CG Jung, *ibid*, 5, §678
7. *L'Arcano Incantatore*, film, 1996, Director: Pupi Avati
8. James Hillman, *Anima: An Anatomy Of A Personified Notion*, Spring Publications, 1985, p. 75
9. James Hillman, *ibid*, p. 79
10. CG Jung, *ibid*, 6, §808
11. James Hillman, *Anima: An Anatomy Of A Personified Notion*, Spring Publications, 1985, p.9
12. RWB Lewis, *Dante/A Life*, Penguin Books, 2001, p 23
13. Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, Canto XXIX, verse IV, c. 1308-20, translated by John Ciardi p. 303
14. RWB Lewis, *ibid*, p.61
15. James Hillman, *ibid*, p.39
16. CG Jung, *ibid*, 9i, §59