

PREFACE:

My goal for this talk is to apply a mythic perspective for how one can engage with the city and explore archetypal images of my hometown of San Diego. The objectives of the talk are three-fold: 1) to layout a theoretical methodology of archetypal inquiry toward city and soul; 2) to offer a few images of San Diego's geography informing the collective psyche of a city-place; and 3) to summarize the "so what?" aspect of an archetypal assessment of city.

INTRODUCTION: San Diego as Archetypal Geography

Look at any local newspaper or even the social network *Nextdoor* and it does not take long to find that some of the most divisive and controversial issues facing a local municipality involve land use decisions. We are either building too much of this, or not enough of that, or not preserving enough of those over there. Shopping malls are dying, and Airbnb rentals are, for better or worse, redefining neighborhoods – examples of the contradictions between a state of constant flux and chaos against a general sentiment against change to old established environments and the perceived need for more controls. We have LULUs (Local Unwanted Land Uses), NIMBYs (Not-In-My-Backyard), and more recently YIMBYs (Yes-In-My-Backyard). And what about the traffic, oh boy, what about all that traffic!?!

In a 25-year career in city planning, I have observed a broken and outdated mythos toward the city-making process where economics and control govern the process, where the pedestrian plays second fiddle to the almighty automobile, and where issues of aesthetics and beauty, the subjective elements that stir the soul, either have no part in the city-making process, or become add-on pieces of regulated public art policies.

The modern cityscape has for the most part become homogenized into a patterned mode of development where one subdivision looks just like the next, and where suburban strip malls are surrounded by a sea of asphalt parking. Driving along the southern California landscape I call home, I see how one town bleeds into the next without any symbolic features differentiating them from forming an anonymous and amorphous megalopolis stretching essentially from the Mexican border to Santa Barbara, and beyond. If it weren't for the Marine Base Camp Pendleton spanning two hundred square-miles along the norther edge of San Diego, there would be no way to distinguish between San Diego and Orange counties.

The pattern of modern city-making is to continue to expand, pushing people out into the margins -- both physically and psychologically. In James Hillman's words, "we have Megalopolis and Metroplex, throw-away

suburbs, divisions and subdivisions, beltways, strips, squatters, squalor, slums and smog” (Hillman 17). And as observed by Robert Sardello, the psychological symptoms of this type of environment include “feelings of isolation, absence in relation to others, superficial glitter, and a vacuous inner life” (Sardello 33). If one considers a city without any central images, or a city without a strong sense of its local geography or its mytho-historical underpinnings, a city becomes muddled development without community, a collective house without a sense of home. People live in residential developments yet remain out of touch with community. Human connectivity is severed from the landscape. The imagination is dulled.

AN ARCHETYPAL APPROACH TO CITY: Depth, Archetypal and Eco-Psychological Perspectives on San Diego

Archetypal psychologists like Hillman, Sardello, Thomas Moore, and Gail Thomas, among others, have written much about city and soul, arguing that archetypal psychology can help re-imagine how city-making can relate more directly to the psyche as a form of soul-making. This talk, and the dissertation from which it is developed, offers a mytho-poetic perspective toward my hometown of San Diego where, through the primary lens of archetypal psychology, city is approached as subjective being to inform one’s ability to understand, and to relate to, presences that are palpable but

invisible in the natural and physical landscapes. I argue that city planning can benefit from archetypal psychology by offering a perspective that is absent in the process of planning cities: one that re-visions the city by activating the figural, the metaphorical, and the imaginal as crucial and essential forms of a city's soul.

However, before getting into the archetypal images that inform the city soul, it is important first to establish the pertinent theories of depth and archetypal psychology that serve as the basis for an archetypal perspective regarding the concept of an urban *soul*. Carl Jung developed the basis of his analytical psychology as a study of ideas about the "soul," which Hillman subsequently extended into his method outlined in archetypal psychology. Jung and Hillman both lean heavily on the Greek and Latin terms for soul: *psyche* and *anima*, respectively. As Hillman explains,

By 'psychology' I mean what the word says: the study or order (*logos*) of the soul (*psyche*). This implies that all psychology is by definition a depth psychology, first because it assumes an inside intimacy to behavior (moods, reflections, fantasies, feelings, images, thoughts) and second, because the soul, ever since Heraclitus twenty-five hundred years ago, has been

defined as immeasurably deep and unlocatable”

(*Ecopsychology xviii*).

Using this guiding reference, depth psychology becomes a “study of the soul” and the “depth” aspect entails deep interior psychological work toward self-discovery and self-actualization. In a clinical sense, the trajectory of this depth psychological work is inward and downward, an *introverted* approach to understanding the depths of the human psyche.

Hillman’s later work in archetypal psychology inverts the inward and downward trajectory of a depth psychology and takes it upward and outward to understand and analyze the pathologies and soul-making capacities of the physical world and collective culture. Put another way, Hillman takes depth psychology out of the individual and out of the therapy room, and places it outside to understand the larger context of the (outer) *anima mundi*, or world’s soul. Whereas Jung’s depth psychology is an inward- and downward-directed psychology of introversion, James Hillman’s archetypal approach becomes what he calls a “depth psychology of extroversion” (Hillman, *Hundred Years of Psychotherapy* 53).

Archetypal psychology thereby provides a perspective in understanding how the (outer) natural and physical landscapes shape the deep psyche of the city collective. Archetypal images and ideas are applied

and amplified to aspects of the outer geographical world. “As above, so below” notes ancient alchemist Hermes Trismegistus in his *Emerald Tablet*, connoting that what is internal is also external, a psychological exercise that is both introverted and extroverted.

Allow me to take the theory a step further. While my work is rooted in depth and archetypal psychology, my particular study of San Diego also becomes a work in eco-psychology, which I believe to be the natural extension of Hillman's work in archetypal psychology. In his forward to *Ecopsychology*, Lester Brown argues, with shades of Hillman, that all philosophical, ideological, and political ideas also have a psychological dimension (*xiv*). He describes “ecopsychology” as “an emotional bond between human beings and the natural environment out of which we evolve” and offers an application of ecopsychology that “brings together the sensitivity of therapists, the expertise of ecologists, and the ethical energy of environmental activists” to inform a more philosophically-grounded form of environmental politics (*Ecopsychology xvi*).

Because San Diego is so heavily rooted in its natural setting and the city is so uniquely informed and influenced by its varied geography, its temperate climate, and its inter-relationship with the natural environment, ecopsychology becomes an approach distinctly appropriate to studying city

soul-work in in creating a foundation for how San Diego can be (re)imagined from depth, archetypal, and eco-psychological perspectives.

Using techniques adapted from Craig Chalquist's work in *Terrapsychology*, let's now look at some images of San Diego's archetypal geography. In *Terrapsychology*, Craig Chalquist suggests locating archetypal patterns in the local geography so that we can deepen our grasp as the city as imaginal place and space that shape the collective psyche of a place.

ARCHETYPAL GEOGRAPHY: Multiplicity within the Natural and Cultural Environments

Imagine, if you can, the natural geography that characterizes San Diego: long sandy beaches and coastal headlands, active bays and serene lagoons, narrow finger canyons and flat mesa tops, coastal mountains and range of the San Bernardino mountains, and vast empty deserts of Borrego in east San Diego County.

Joseph Campbell suggests that the terrain draws up the local mythologies (Campbell *Atlas of World Mythology*) and my research relates the local geography back to the creation story of the Kumeyaay, a people who have inhabited the San Diego landscape by some 15,000 years prior to the date of the first Spanish explorers.

Without getting into all the details and images in the story, the Kumeyaay creation story tells how two brothers who swim up from the depths, one opens his eyes on the way up through the water, is blinded, and returns to the depths. The other stays above the waterline, creates red ants who crawl forth to make the land, and man and woman are then made from the clay. As the story continues, a giant serpent comes from the ocean and devours all human language and song and ritual, and then returns to the ocean depths. A medicine man is then sent to retrieve the culture, who turns himself into a bubble and is devoured by a 2nd serpent (who may or may not be a manifestation of the 2nd brother).

The medicine man slashes a hole in the top of the snake and escapes to meet up with the first snake who is the keeper of all the culture and knowledge. After some negotiation, the snake agrees to follow the medicine man to his lands and, upon arrival, coils around and around and around the ceremonial hut (it is a huge snake!). The people throw embers on the snake, who catches fire; his head becomes one mountain peak and his body a second peak.

The Kumeyaay Creation story can certainly be imagined from a geographical lens: the presence and predominance of the ocean; the redness of the soil; the serpentine river valleys; and the “other” brother who blow the

depths shakes and quakes every time he is bothered. However, the aspect of the Kumeyaay story that caught my attention is a sense of doubling, or “two-ness” within the story: the two brothers; the two snakes; the two mountain ranges that manifests as natural “doubles” in the local geography.

In a 1974 planning survey of San Diego entitled *Temporary Paradise?*, noted urban planners Kevin Lynch and Bruce Appleyard write of a “doubling” in the regional landscape of San Diego, exemplified in their study by two large hills, Mount Soledad and Point Loma, anchoring a sweeping arc of beach and sheltering two great bays. The two bays themselves, San Diego Bay and Mission Bay are also natural “doubles.”

Interestingly, or synchronistically, a sense of doubling manifested in the local natural geography sets an unconscious momentum for the cultural geography. San Diego’s history is a story of a city built around a pattern of two-ness: a “doubling” in the manner in which the physical city has historically developed. For example, the original “Old Town” was later relocated six mile south and replaced with Alonzo Horton’s “New Town” (downtown today). As a well-known military town, San Diego is heavily anchored by large military installations for both the US Navy and the Marine Corps. Even the bi-lateral cities of San Diego and Tijuana represent the doubling of the metropolis, if not separated by a border wall.

These patterns in the physical and cultural geography suggest a multiplicity to the San Diego psyche. For example, the two bays show two distinct aspects of San Diego: San Diego Bay as safe, secure, working harbor, and home to the Navy's western fleet. Mission Bay historically known as "False Bay," is the largest human-made water body created for recreation, forever young, relaxed, and anchored by the aptly named, Fiesta Island, perhaps reflective of a puer aspect to the greater Southern Californian psyche, or a shade of Aphrodite's beauty in a town so closely tied to the militaristic Ares.

Chalquist has written much about an archetypal history of San Diego and asserts that the city retains a sense of "defendedness" that comes from a long history dating back to the Spanish presidio and that has continued into the city's present-day heavy military presence. I would like to expand on Chalquist's archetypal history with a geographic overlay to suggest that such a defensive posture may also derive from the area's geography.

ARCHETYPAL GEOGRAPHY: The Image of the Box

Another geographical image I ask that you hold for purposes of today's discussion is that of a "box." Geographically, the image of the "box" is derived from the "box canyon," a predominant, natural geographical feature in the San Diego region and an image that is reflected into the natural

landscape, the cultural landscape, and the psychological landscape. The box canyon is characterized as a narrow canyon, or gorge, with steep, nearly vertical walls, including a wall on the upstream side.

San Diego is boxed in, boxed out, and on the edge. Boxes, borders, and boundaries. It is a city at the end of the line. With a coastal hillside that provided refuge and security above an ample and safe harbor at the time of Spain's arrival, the city's box like geography adds to a sense of safety and protection. San Diego is a border town, and it is defined by its borders, both natural and human-made. To the west is the jagged coastline, stretches of long sandy beaches, bays and estuaries and beyond that the vast Pacific Ocean. To the east the San Bernardino mountains and the vastness of the Anza-Borrego desert beyond. To the north, Camp Pendleton buffers San Diego from a megalopolis that is Orange and Los Angeles counties.

The City of *El Cajon* is the easternmost incorporated city in San Diego county, its name meaning "the Box" in Spanish and derived directly from the large box canyon environment within which the city is located. Campbell suggests that to understand a culture's mythology, look to its tallest building, and Chalquist has observed that, for a period of time in El Cajon, its largest building was Las Colinas prison, an institution commonly referred to as "the box." Carrying the archetypal image further, can it be any

real surprise that *Jack in the Box*, the chain of fast food burgers and purveyor of the Jumbo Jack, was conceived in San Diego?

The box as image for city connotes an even more ancient image for the city: the city wall. In *Beauty Without Nature: Re-Imagining the City*, James Hillman refers to the city wall as an ancient urban archetypal phenomenon. The symbolism of a wall connotes safety, security, protection, and privacy. This concept also brings forth questions of duality and division: protection versus restriction; isolation versus community; and city versus nature. Hillman posits that “the image of the city wall protects and restricts those who live within it” (Hillman, *Beauty Without Nature*).

But the box is also a container. It holds in. It also keeps out. It keeps things safe and secure. In her book, *Healing Pandora*, City activist and archetypal psychologist Gail Thomas suggests that the city is an alchemical vessel, a container. Think of Pandora’s Box that holds all kinds of human evils. At the bottom of Pandora’s box, after all else is let loose upon humanity, there is hope.

SUMMARY: HOPE

Re-Visioning City-Making and Hope for a New Paradigm

So then, despite my earlier dour prognostications over the state of the city-making in San Diego and elsewhere, community planning trends are shifting for the better. In her Introduction to Hillman's *City & Soul*, Thomas recognizes the current wave of new urbanism in city planning -- a change for more walkable and livable communities and an effort to display a "green" perspective (Hillman, *City* 13).

Under the banners of "New Urbanism," "Neotraditional planning," and "transit-oriented development," new planning trends involve reinvesting in, and redeveloping decayed urban core areas, putting more emphasis on walkability, providing easy access to goods and services, and incorporating sustainable design to reduce the carbon footprint of development projects.

An even greater shift can occur, I propose, if planners view the city as not just a physical plan for an objectified thing, but one that is re-visioned as a living, organic set of patterns and purposes that responds to a community's sense of place, and its mythologies, its geography, and its sense of history. The natural and physical landscapes shape a mythic mode of knowing the city. The mythologies of a place illuminate undercurrents of beliefs,

energies, and symbols that shape history, often revealing what may be hidden or unseen (Slattery, *Joseph Campbell class lecture*).

Through mythologizing, or “archetypalizing” the landscape, one gets “outside” themselves to see a bigger picture of personal and collective myths. Hillman argues that, by “seeing through” to a new mythology, one can get under the surface into the deeper myth, image, symbol, and narrative going on in the city’s soul.

I leave you today with one last image for the city. Seaport Village is a popular tourist attraction, a collection of bayside shops and restaurants along the waterfront embarcadero of San Diego Bay. Like many shopping “centers” Seaport Village is being redeveloped, better yet, let’s call it re-imagined to become more “experiential” or “Instagrammable” as they might say in planning circles. The proposal includes a 480-foot tower situated on the waterfront. The hope for the tower is that it becomes a lasting, immediately recognizable image for San Diego, something like Seattle’s Space Needle or Paris’ Tour Eiffel.

But, here’s the rub. California Coastal Act policies limit building heights along the coastal zone without a special exception being granted in order to protect coastal views, public accessibility, coastal resource

protection – all good things. And, if such an exemption is granted, there is concern of “opening the floodgates” to allow other buildings the same, at the expense of established public policy. However, to reduce the height squashes the image.

There is also the bigger public debate of whether this is even an image commensurate with the perception of San Diego? San Diego has some existing, but perhaps lesser known central images for the city, like the Coronado Bay Bridge, California Tower in Balboa Park, the Hotel Del Coronado, or maybe even SeaWorld or the San Diego Zoo, but one can argue whether any of these represent a central, unifying architectural image for the city.

This is be an interesting phenomenon to see play out considering a highly regulated process involving a number of competing interests. Perhaps it is time to think outside the box.