

Writing about War: Jung, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and the Troy novels of Lindsay Clarke

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The four sinister horsemen, the threatening tumult of trumpets, and the brimming vials of wrath are still waiting; already the atom bomb hangs over us... (Jung, CW11 par. 451)

But this much I would claim to know: that a man cannot go to war in quest of power and wealth without doing mortal harm to some portion of his soul, and once the soul is damaged and impaired then all kinds of madness follow. (*The War at Troy*, by Lindsay Clarke, p. 272, 2004)

Leonato: You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and her; they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them. (*Much Ado About Nothing*, Act 1, Sc 1, l. 56-9)

Benedick: Come, bid me do anything for thee.

Beatrice: Kill Claudio. (Ibid. Act 4, sc 1, l. 284-5)

Introduction: The Psyche of War

One particular phenomenon links the plays of William Shakespeare and the writing of C.G. Jung and that is the threat of war. Bringing the topic to the twenty-first century, yet in the light of ancient myth, is Lindsay Clarke's re-telling of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in novel form as *The War at Troy* (2004) and *The Return from Troy* (2005). I will return to the significance of the shift from epic poetry to novel later. Now I want to note that these texts with such diverse forms, late sixteenth century drama, words of psyche, psych-ology, and novel, nevertheless offer something to each other, as words about war.

For Clarke and Jung, war is about the failure of a myth to contain personal and collective dark energies. Both authors seek an art of healing, a way that writing can do more than describe what is needed; it can embody it. Crucially both authors include elements of comedy in their writing strategy against war. So I have chosen

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to look at a rather unlikely war play by Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), to examine the connections, if any, between comedy and war. Moreover, this paper is suggesting that it might be fruitful to read both Shakespeare and Jung in an unusual way, as if they were *always* writing about war.

War and Myth

One text in Jung's *Collected Works* particularly echoes Clarke's *Troy* novels in invoking the psyche of present anxieties through the animation of ancient myth. *Answer to Job* (1952) is Jung's most direct attempt to expose the deadness of, and so re-animate, the Christian myth for his time. The myth is explicitly situated as a path to war, if it fails. And failure means failure to be re-invented. In order to find life in a dying myth, Jung shifts the register from tragedy (the possible destruction of mankind), to comedy, in God and Adam's marital problems.

Clarke makes a similar move in *The Return from Troy* when Odysseus seeks change. Horror struck by the sacking of the city, Odysseus sees where his trickster nature has brought not only himself, but his culture. So his voyage home fails for many years. It has to become a true voyage *home* to his inner 'home' or self, in order to make his self-inflicted deadness come alive.

While not normally considered a war play, *Much Ado About Nothing* is about a world at war. Ostensibly a happy domestic comedy, the play begins with the men coming home from fighting, with their opponent, John the Bastard. Claudio is keen to conduct a romance with Hero, daughter and heir to the noble Leonato. His friend, Benedick has a far more ambiguous relationship with Hero's cousin, Beatrice. Moreover, Don John decides that he can best continue his war by other means, by corrupting the sexual tensions between the lovers.

Much Ado takes 'war' into the heterosexual romance. War is 'outside' the domestic by being that which isolates the men from the women. It also shapes Claudio's ignorance and cruelty as he denounces Hero for a sexual crime she is innocent of. Yet just as Claudio brings war into the home in his substituting his male 'honour' for knowledge and tenderness, so war always has a conduit from masculine to feminine worlds in the 'merry war' of Beatrice and Benedick. In this male/female pair, aggression appears transmuted into a fire of sexual fertility. Much of the laughter of the play surrounds Beatrice and Benedick. Their wit charms the audience and then we laugh at them as they are tricked into love for each other.

Yet, war can be black even when beginning as a merry war. Powerless to help condemned Hero, Beatrice makes a cold demand of Benedick's love: "kill Claudio." Here war as sexual playful aggression breaks down before the socially more potent masculine codes of honour. If there is no other way to prove Hero innocent, then the old traditions, of a male champion fighting for her honour, must be used. Beatrice has tried to feminise war, to enter a man's world on her terms.

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Yet as a woman in this patriarchal war society, when the male war code is used to destroy a woman, she can only think of responding in the same code. This is the point in the play when it could turn from comedy for tragedy: if Benedick had killed Claudio in a duel, if Hero had died.

However, Beatrice's perspective, as she succumbs to the male honour code, is not the play's. For she is in a comedy, not a tragedy. Comedy has resources beyond the dominant discourse of patriarchy. Its root in death is accompanied by rebirth. Also comedy can accommodate many opposing points of view. It here needs to identify what is denied in the persecution of Hero and the desperation of Beatrice. What this society cannot tolerate, what it fears, is the dark feminine.

War and the Missing Fourth

Much Ado and Jung and the *Troy* novels identify the missing dark feminine as a cause of that breakdown of myths which lead to war. To take *The Return from Troy* first, Odysseus is the focus of this tale, although many voices and stories twist about his own. Indeed we are brought near to the horrors endured by the women survivors of Troy and to one who learns to embody the horrors as well as to be victim of them, Cassandra. After the destruction of the city, we witness the atrocities committed by the victors, the deadening of humanity of the victims, and the rise of something 'other.'

Cassandra is only the most aware of those who become vehicles for a kind of darkness that the men of war can neither incarnate nor destroy. An enraged father of a Greek traitor visits all the wives of the war leaders to insinuate that their husbands have deserted them. This counsel of sexual insecurity succeeds with many in prompting wives to take lovers and to seize power before their husbands return. On meeting Penelope, Odysseus's wife, the mischief-maker is sent away. Yet when he meets Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's Queen, he shrinks from one deeper involved in weaving darkness from sexuality than himself. Clytemnestra, who saw Agamemnon kill her first husband and baby, who was driven beyond herself by the enforced sacrifice of her daughter, Iphigenia, gave herself to dark revenge. For Cassandra, to surrender to the violent gods inside her is to continue her family's war by other means. Both women are similar in passing from a patriarchal war-based society to a psychic space where sexuality and spirit invoke an-other kind of revenge: they become hollow instruments of the 'other' feminine retribution.

This is not to say that the death of Agamemnon (and Cassandra), is the liberation of the feminine in the society saturated by masculine war. To become the means of this revenge from a dark place in the psyche is a surrender to despair; it is not a means of self-assertion. The devouring mouth of the vengeful dark feminine

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first eats the soul of her instruments. This society is polarised between masculine warrior ideals and repressed feminine humanity of sexuality, body, domesticity, procreation. The consequence is that what should be feminine being in the light of collective social symbols, as well as psychic depths, has been repressed so far into darkness as to become inhuman and black.

The 'total war' of Troy means that the returning victors discover that there is no way back to a domestic life with women and children. Blindly, unconsciously they emerge from the sea with captives and loot. They discover a domestic space polluted by what they have shut out of themselves to form that once noble warrior code. Echoes of the brutality they have inflicted upon the Trojans, stare back from the eyes of what was once a home.

Odysseus does not need to go home to realise that he himself has destroyed it. He wanders the Mediterranean, sometimes on drugs (the Lotus eaters), and sometimes surprised at the happier achievements of cultures that he considers inferior to his own. Finally, he meets a powerful woman who can contain his pain as he tells his dreadful story. Circe encourages him to think about the myth that framed his experience of a world at war. Why did the Greeks attack Troy? Why was the love affair of Paris and Helen so disastrous? If we need to find the original tear in the psyche, the one unleashing the terror of a god, then it goes back to fatal invitation to the gods to attend the mortal wedding of Peleus and Thetis. It is fatal because one goddess was not invited: Eris, goddess of discord.

Her name means *Strife* or *Discord*, and she is twin sister to the war god Ares. Like him she delights in the fury and tumult of human conflict... Yet all of the immortals have their place in the world and we ignore any of them at our peril. (*The War at Troy* 15)

The story of Eris, the feminine form of war, and her golden apples marked 'for the fairest' and made to create dissension amongst the goddesses, is, as Odysseus painfully learns, a way of apprehending the true depth of the One Goddess. In fact the story tells of a crucial cultural event, of how the fullness of the Goddess is ignored in refusing to acknowledge her dark side. Not a triple goddess, but four aspects must be taken into psyche and culture: the young growing moon, the full mature moon, the aging crone-like moon, and the dark, dead moon necessary for there to be rebirth.

Circe said, "if you have learned anything while you have been here on Aiaia, you will know that the Goddess is one and single like the moon. And like the moon she has four aspects, not just three. Name them for me..." His thoughts were moving quickly now. Was Eris also an aspect of the Goddess, the turbulent dark shadow cast by Hera's bounty, Aphrodite's beauty, Athena's wisdom...

"Perhaps the story isn't about the gods at all?" she suggested. "Perhaps it's a story about men and the choices that

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men make for themselves? About who they deeply are, I mean, and how they intend to live their lives, and what values they mean to serve. And if that is so, why do you think the dark aspect of the Goddess should have been left out of the count? (*The Return from Troy* 339-40)

Odysseus learns that his culture is suffering from a missing fourth factor in the psyche and that it is the dark feminine. Circe's question is an interesting one. Why has the dark aspect of the goddess been ignored? Probably the best person to answer it is Beatrice from *Much Ado About Nothing*. For she at the start of the play best represents the missing feminine element transmuted into a positive playful energy. When the patriarchal nature of her society overwhelms her, and her only way to resist is to fight in "kill Claudio," she slides into that terrifying hollow darkness suffered by Cassandra and Clytemnestra. Fortunately, something in her play saves her from deathliness and engineers her rebirth.

In essence patriarchal societies repress the dark feminine because to allow it to be symbolised would allow all those drawing on feminine energies to have healthful access to their own dark power. Patriarchal societies cannot allow women to symbolise power, even for themselves. Yet by denying darkness to the feminine, they remove from the daylight world the positive energies of the dark in the fertility of dark earth, rebirth, and darkness as what is hidden, mysterious. Moreover, the dark feminine, if too severely repressed returns in figures of inhuman vengeance in witches or sexuality used for cruel ends. Above all, the missing fourth as the dark feminine is an ingredient of war as Jung knew well.

Jung and the Missing Fourth

To Jung the Christian myth had failed because it failed to keep the peace. Two world wars in his lifetime convinced him of the perilous weakness of the European soul. Moreover, the collective breakdown that is war, was mirrored in his consulting room by the psychic pain of his patients. He decided that the move from three to four in Christian symbolism should become a key ingredient of the re-animation of Christian myth. After all, Jung's reading of the bible in *Answer to Job* culminates in the human psyche failing to contain the vast energies of its own 'other.' What is on the one hand, European populations turning away from Christian belief, is on the other hand, to Jung, a general failure to come to terms with God as Self. Psychic energy unredeemed by individuation becomes black and inhuman. Modern man has put his 'faith' in matter and so matter becomes his dark god: the result is the splitting of matter in the creation of nuclear weapons and a threatened apocalypse. To Jung, a conservative with revolutionary ideas, Europe is irretrievably bound up with Christian myth after centuries of it engraving the soul.

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So it will either have to subject the myth to a psychic rebirth and learn to know God as Self (or vice versa), or, it will live out the myth *unconsciously* and enact the bible's prediction of apocalypse in the release of dark energy as weapons of mass destruction.

So *Answer to Job* is Jung's conversion of myth as tragedy (living the apocalypse) in the death of hubristic man, to a story of psychic rebirth. Significantly, the revival of the feminine in Christian myth that *Job* seeks, has clear echoes of *Much Ado About Nothing*. First of all, it is worth noting how much *Job*'s development of the feminine as 'character' owes to Jung's sense of the dark feminine as the missing fourth. He realises that the absence of the feminine in the Christian Trinity has serious consequences for the treatment of nature.

Creation in the sense of "matter" is not included in the Trinity formula, at any rate not explicitly. In these circumstances there are only two possibilities: either the material world is real... or it is unreal, a mere illusion... (CW11 par. 290)

One way that Jung felt that the Catholic Church was trying to overcome the exclusion of the feminine and matter from the divine was the proclamation in his lifetime of the divine Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Like Christ, Mary did not lie in a grave after her death. Her special relationship to God means that she also ascended into heaven. However, she is fortunately not quite like Christ being a thoroughly human woman and so signifying something important for humanity.

The *Assumptio Mariae* paves the way not only for the divinity of the Theotokos... but also for the quaternity. At the same time, matter is included in the metaphysical realm, together with the corrupting principle of the cosmos, evil... (CW11 par. 252)

The feminine addition to the masculine Trinity allows matter and even the devil to be included in the sacred. For Jung argues that matter and devil become allied because both constitute a principle of resistance to the godhead (ibid.). Without such a resistance in the cosmos, no possibility of even relative autonomy of the individual consciousness would exist (ibid.). On the other hand, a masculine Trinity leaves the feminine position to the opposing position of darkness, evil and matter. Jung's recuperation of the dark feminine as the fourth is liable to get stuck in the gender politics of traditional Christianity. Of course, with Jung's God/Self re-membered as intrinsically fluid as to gender, there is space for Sophia and Yahweh to *play* their divine genders flexibly. Jung portrays a theological situation where it is *possible* to redeem the dark feminine, yet his mode of social comedy that fixates on Yahweh's marital problems also restricts the representation of gender in the divine.

Jung's very precise attempt to mend the Christian myth is to restore through psychology the missing fourth factor in the godhead. His conservatism is very

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evident in his adherence to a project of restoration. He is content with the *masculine* Trinity bequeathed by European culture and is uninterested in unearthing – literally! – the feminine triple goddess of the moon or earth that came before the Christian adaptation of the sky father gods of early patriarchal warrior societies. In effect, Jung is proposing a very moderate re-aligning of the two great creation myths fashioning western consciousness. The oldest creation myth is that of the Earth Mother, nature as sacred. ‘She’ stands for matter, body, procreation, many voices i.e. animism, and here, comedy with its accommodation of many perspectives. Culturally, the Earth Mother religions were replaced by the sky father, a monotheistic deity who creates the world as separate from himself and so stands for separation, transcendence, spirit, reason and knowledge as separate from matter and body. Both creation myths are needed for healthy consciousness. Unfortunately, the dominance of sky father has created the problem of the dark feminine, so promoting war. *Much Ado*, Jung and Clarke’s texts are all the result of, and attempts to, ameliorate the too great occlusion of the feminine. There is no danger of Jung going too far!

Clarke’s *Troy* novels very carefully explore what has been lost as cultures moved to the warrior gods such as Zeus with his thunderbolt, as opposed to the ancient *fourfold* Mother Goddess of the earth. Typically Jung recognises, like Clarke, that the warrior god culture has gone too far! Unlike Clarke, Jung seeks the mother and earth and darkness, found deeply repressed in modernity’s unconscious, only as a way of *saving* the masculine dominated status quo. The reason that Jung is so ambivalent about the feminine, is that he wants it to remain the dark fourth, to remain the unconscious function in the service of the other three in his quaternity. There needs to be a limited *cultivation* of unconscious earth so that matter ceases to be so evil and apocalyptic. But Jung does not go as far as Shakespeare in bringing the dark feminine into the sunshine. For Shakespeare’s quaternity enacts what Jung later sees as a key symbolism, the marriage quaternion.

Much Ado About Nothing and the Missing Fourth

Much Ado About Nothing ends with a dance incorporating the two reconciled couples. Apparently the dark feminine fourth has been recovered. In fact, she has been disinterred. Hero says little when Claudio denounces her for sexual impropriety on her wedding day. She denies the charge and then falls into a dead faint. It is the Friar, perhaps significantly a representative of the Christian church, who suggests that she fall into darkness as death. Hero’s friends will pretend she is dead. Benedick intelligently puts his finger on the problem.

Benedick: Two of them have the very bent of honour;
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,

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The practice lives in John the Bastard,
Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies.
(Act 4, sc. 1, l. 184-7)

His character assessment is correct. Don John is behind the trick played on Claudio. Yet where it seems obvious to us that detective work is called for, what actually happens is more conversant with Claudio's so-called 'honour.' Benedick, a potential detective if ever there was one, accepts the charge of the dark feminine. He challenges Claudio to a duel to the death, on behalf of Hero and Beatrice. Here we see clearly the myth that is failing to work. The myth of the hero has become estranged from the 'other.' Perhaps more accurately, the myth of the hero has become too masculine, hyper-masculine by the corrupting effects of war. So since the hero is too masculine, his other is feminine, trapped into darkness for its long suppression. Unsurprisingly, one aspect of the feminine that is severely awry is sexuality. So Don John is not only villain but Bastard. He fights his noble brother because his birth excludes him from recognition and power. Claudio demonstrates sexual insecurity more than once. Twice Don John gets him to believe that Hero cares for another. The myth of the hero has atrophied in this culture into a hyper-masculine cult of honour that is dangerously askew from its 'other' as femininity, sexuality and procreation.

So Hero goes into the dark as a feigning of death. And Beatrice embraces the dark in her despair that she has no way but through the debased masculine warrior code to defend her cousin. Benedick wants to rescue the situation, but he is engrossed in the wrong symbolism, the warrior hero. Who can be a detective in a culture that does not recognise them? It can only be a fool!

Comedy and healing the dark feminine

[W]hat your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have
brought to light...
(Act 5, sc. 1, l. 221-3)

In different ways Jung and Shakespeare and Clarke use comedy to embrace the dark feminine, to make it less black and more body, so re-member that it is the source of rebirth. In *Much Ado About Nothing* the foolishness of Dogberry stumbles on the truth of the villainy of Don John. Comedy seems to fear the dark less than tragedy. We see Dogberry and the watch patrol at night and seize upon malefactors. In particular we witness a comic revelation of truth that allows things to be said that could not otherwise be uttered. As Dogberry says of himself: 'O, that I had been writ down an ass!' (Act 4, sc 2, l. 83-4), so condemning himself in writing in a way he would not have done had he not been an ass! So comedy is another way of getting at the truth. It can smuggle in a detecting function to a world whose prime myth does not include it. Comedy *accommodates* more perspectives, more voices than many other genres.

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So in *Much Ado About Nothing* death becomes rebirth. Claudio and his friends are forced to pay homage to the dark feminine as death. They are then given the comic bounty of comedy as Hero is given to them in the guise of an-other woman almost identical to her self. Hero at the end of the play suggestively remains 'other.' She rises from the dead retaining an atmosphere of darkness. Crucially, Shakespeare is invoking the ritual power of drama here. Hero *in the play* does not really die, just as a boy actor is not really killed every time his character dies on stage. So Hero's rising from the dead takes the play into *divine* comedy, the sacred dimension of the genre that goes beyond the death of tragedy into the full wheel of fortune and rebirth. What is not stated is the astounding possibility evoked by Hero's name. Could there be in the comic fertility of *Much Ado* a complete revolution of the hero myth to 'accommodate' a woman hero, a sacred figure who is Christ-like in her unjust death, yet happily reunited with her beloved in resurrection?

Beatrice is less comfortable at the end of the play. She returns to her creative attempt to hold the dark feminine in playful aggression with Benedick. However, the company is against her in wanting the quaternity to be complete in a way that only allows a limited free movement in the prescribed steps of dancing. Finally Benedick says: (kissing her) 'Peace I will stop your mouth' (Act 5, sc. 4, l. 97). Heterosexual romance, while celebrating the body in dancing, is still functioning here to silence the woman. This is not a solution to the problem of the dark feminine. Rather *Much Ado About Nothing* is an exercise in how comedy, with its greater depths of loyalty to the feminine goddess as body, earth and rebirth, may narrowly avoid the social splintering of tragedy.

Jung's *Answer to Job* is a generically sophisticated re-writing of a failing myth as a comic myth. Marital comedy is the register of in-corporation of the feminine. God's problems begin when he forgets Sophia, his wisdom and feminine 'other', 'a friend and playmate from the beginning of the world' (CW11, p. 391, para. 617). The use of the word 'playmate' signals something about the quality of this relationship with the feminine. A lightness, a creative energy, and especially an *equality*, are suggested by 'playmate'. Here truly was a *divine comedy* and the consequences of its loss are comedy of a more discordant kind. Yahweh's forgetting of one feminine consort allows him to take another bride in Israel. Such marital irregularity is mirrored in man as Adam conveniently ignores first wife, Lilith for Eve. When the result is two pairs of sons, Satan and Christ for Yahweh, Cain and Abel for Adam, a number of comic mistakings and ludicrous situations ensue.

Whether Eve was as troublesome a wife for Adam as the Children of Israel... were for Yahweh, is equally dark to us. At any rate the

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family life of our first parents was not all beer and skittles: their first two sons are a typical pair of hostile brothers... (CW11 par. 619)

At the bottom of Yahweh's marriage with Israel is a perfectionist intention which excludes that kind of relatedness we know as "Eros." (CW11 par. 621)

As Jung admits with Old Testament narratives, the nuptials of Yahweh and Israel make too masculine a union (CW11 par. 619). Masculinity minimises Eros because that quality of feeling and connection is characteristic of the Earth Mother. As with Shakespearean comedy, the solution to rivalries and fractured social codes is relationship, embodied and enacted as a rite of marriage. In other texts, Jung describes the marriage of the masculine modern consciousness with the generative psyche as a beautiful union of man and anima. In *Job* he takes the other half of the equation, the dark feminine and describes the necessary marriage with darkness.

Everything now depends on man: immense power of destruction is given into his hand, and the question is whether he can resist the will to use it, and can temper his will with the spirit of love and wisdom. (CW11 par. 745)

Of course, had Jung followed up his evacuation of the loss of the dark feminine to modern culture through symbolism being colonised by patriarchy, he might have found himself having to recommend greater female participation in society. Instead he leaves the rescue of the feminine to the evolution of a new masculine hero, one who can embrace the goddess as Eros as well as the god as Logos.

All three writers end their war texts in marriage in the comic mode, despite the lingering darkness. *The Return from Troy* does not appear particularly comic. However, I would argue that the novel draws on deep resources of comedy to show the potential for healing a world cracked open by war. These resources are threefold: the move of the myth complex from epic poetry to novel, the role that marriage plays, and the insistence on plurality in envisioning events.

For the shift from epic to novel is to change the balance between sky father and earth mother consciousness. Epic promotes the hero as hyper-masculine warrior; one who defines himself by suppressing the 'other.' 'He' is an emblem of separation, discrimination and logos. On the other hand, the novel is a bundle, a container with many voices and points of view. The novel is animistic, incarnating the connection and plurality of the goddess. Hence the novel's greater adherence to compromise, necessity, death and rebirth: it is intrinsically comic whether it contains jokes or satire or not.

Crucially, Clarke shows that one of the most important qualities of the comic novel is that it can portray marriage as two voices, not one and 'his' other. In the

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return of Odysseus and the culmination of a long reconciliation with Penelope, marriage does its divine comedy work in healing the community.

But when Odysseus and Penelope came out of their chamber together and joined the people who were dancing in the soft air of the night outside, everyone who was gathered there instantly sensed how their world had been renewed. (481)

Novels are loyal to death as well as life. Perhaps ending the story with the delights of this re-union is in danger of giving the reader a 'happy ending' to war. Rather this particular novel seeks to enhance the reader's psychic realisation of painful and divisive forces. As the world that fought the Trojan War falls apart, Odysseus with Penelope is able to keep his island kingdom safe. However, his adventures overseas return to him in tragi-comic mode. He is killed on the beach by a young man on a ship who then announces that he has come to seek Odysseus, his father (483). The novel ends with Penelope's description of how Odysseus came to be at peace, in marriage and at home, suggesting that after such a fulfilment of her marriage, she can survive her loss (485).

Concluding Remarks

Comedy is about survival. It offers strategies for compromise, for relating differences to each other, for living through opposing points of view. All three writers, Shakespeare, Jung and Clarke, use comedy to explore conflict and also to try to remedy the psyche of war. They all identify a failure of a myth as the cause of the psychic and social collapse into war. Each text uses generic strategies to try to re-balance the forms of consciousness sponsored by goddess and god. Such a shift allows the emergence of another kind of a hero, one who could be woman or man. With femininity so long repressed that nature now wears the face of vengeance, this new hero will be lover of the earth and of humans as part of her.

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