

Archetypes for Healing Trauma

By Kara Huntermoon



I found a massage practice that accepted my health insurance. At last! I could finally address the chronic pain lodged in my body.

As a farmer, I work physically hard, often long hours. But I trace the pain back to trauma from sexual assaults and domestic violence in my teens and early 20s.

I scheduled massages with several of the women practitioners in the group practice. No men. I didn't want men touching me.

After several months of massages, the female therapists were all booked—but the men had openings. I did some encouraging self-talk: “Kara, you are 45 years old! You can use your voice. If you don't like what they are doing, you can say something. What's more, these are professionals. Massage is their livelihood. If you tell them to stop, and they ignore you, and you make a fuss about it, they will lose their license! So go get a massage.”

Surprisingly, I loved the massage that day. I had been telling the women “more pressure, please,” without results. This man had the strength to get at the tension in the deeper tissue layers. I wept on the table, a deep healing cry about the ways I still limited myself unnecessarily.

Several months later, my self-care practice included weekly massages with two skilled male massage therapists. One notable day, Andrew worked on some chronic tension in my shoulders and neck. I cried as I heard the voice of my young adult self: “I didn't see it coming!” The muscles in my neck spoke of a long-standing terror that someone would hurt me as I had been hurt before—as I had been hurt when I didn't expect it. I had to be vigilant! Wasn't that what protected me? (I believe integration and learning is what actually protects me, but it takes time to update my body and nervous system.)

I heard the voices of female archetypes speaking to me as waves of integration washed through me:

The Maiden said, “I am going to love as if nobody would ever violate me.”

The Mother said, “I am going to protect you, because people will try to violate you.”

The Crone said, “I will remember, when you get hurt, that you are still whole.”

The Queen said, “I will transform violence into love.”

I realized that all four archetypes are necessary for an integrated and mature female power. In fact, I already had a profound experience with turning violence into love, when I chose to keep a child conceived by rape in my early 20s.

The archetypes need to be balanced: Too much Maiden energy, and I will not protect myself adequately. Too much Mother, and I will limit myself unnecessarily. I need the Crone to remember that I can survive the inevitable hurts of life, and the Queen to find my own power after the pain.

These archetypes come from an ancient Greek story that was first told at least 3,000 years ago. I've developed a retelling of this ancestral story, with a modern spin in the tradition of my Pagan lesbian feminist mentors. (That version appears in the digital version of this issue, as well as online at gen-us.net/persephone.)

Thank you, women of SisterSpirit in Portland, Oregon, and women of We'Moon, for guiding me on this healing mythological path when I was a teenager in the 1990s.

To continue reading, go to pages 62-65 in this issue's digital version, or visit gen-us.net/persephone.

Kara Huntermoon has an intergenerational commitment to Oregon's Southern Willamette Valley bioregion, where she lives in community and teaches Permaculture. If you want more, check out her new Substack about Ecological Integration: karahuntermoon.substack.com.



Photos by Kara Huntermoon