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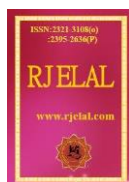
THE WILD WOMAN ARCHETYPE IN *THE OUTFRUN* BY AMY LIPTROT

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Abstract

In this paper Amy Liptrot's award winning book *The Outrun* will be analysed through the theory of archetypes by the Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung which was further enumerated by the Jungian scholar Clarissa Pinkola Estés in her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, as she developed the theory of the Wild Woman Archetype and demonstrated several examples of the same in this book. *The Outrun* is a memoir of Liptrot where she recounts her addiction to alcohol and her journey in order to surface out of it, through her immersion in the wild and her strong will to heal. The *Outrun* will be studied with the perspective of the Wild Woman Archetype in the character of Amy Liptrot and how she came to embrace this aspect of her personality and through it was able to set a balance in her life, which had become thoroughly unbalanced and wasteful because of her alcoholism.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Feminism, Environment Studies, Green Studies, British Literature, Memoir.

INTRODUCTION

Archetype is described in *The Oxford English Dictionary* as "a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors, and supposed to be present in the collective unconscious." (OED, 40) Carl Jung, the psychoanalyst, defined the four essential archetypes but there can be endless archetypes that can be used to define an individual. These four archetypes are, the persona, the shadow, the anima/animus, and the self. Jung believed that the human mind retained a part of consciousness emanating from his ancestors, which are inclusive of the archetypes. Archetype can be defined as an attribute of a person that can be a defining factor to his personality. An archetype can be realised in a person depending on several factors inclusive of societal, cultural and personal influences. While a

person may be a sum total of several archetypes but there can be one or two archetypes that would be the defining factors of an individual's personality.

Of the four archetypes defined by Jung the Persona is the archetype where an individual projects an image of himself to fit in the society and also this image is also representative of how he wishes to be perceived in society. It is synonymous with wearing a mask where an individual actually wears a mask and does not reveal his true nature. The shadow archetype is an attribute which is found in the unconscious, it is representative of all the negative things, things that are not easily accepted in society. It is in other words the dark side of an individual's personality. These can be inclusive of one's desires, negative qualities like avarice, sloth,

lustfulness, hatred, aggression and so on. The anima/animus is representative of an individual's gender roles in society. While men and women have both masculine or feminine attributes in them but because of social conditioning they have to behave according to the assigned roles of gender in society. The Self is the sum of the conscious and the unconscious inclusive of the ego. Jung believe to have a rounded personality one must have a balance between the conscious and the unconscious. Jung acknowledged that these four archetypes could be expanded to twelve but that was not the limit, there could be many more archetypes. In Jung's theory "the archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear." (Jung, 4)

Based on these archetypes Clarissa Pinkola Estés, a Jungian psychologist, developed the theory of the Wild Woman Archetype, which is well represented in her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, where through examples and case studies she studies and demonstrates this concept. According to Estés the Wild Woman Archetype represents the instinctive, wild and intuitive aspects of femininity which over time have been suppressed by society, because of which the woman has lost this capacity of being in touch with her higher self, that is rooted in nature and the wilderness. In Jungian terms of archetype, she has been made to behave in a persona that is detrimental to her true self. She has to wear the masks that the society approves of and discard her true self thus making her a victim of unbalanced life as her unconscious and the conscious lose synchronisation. The gender roles also constrict her from living the life in tune with her wild self, that in the perspective of society are more masculine roles. The western society is also governed by the Biblical notions of feminine roles and woman's place in society second to man, stemming from the idea that Eve was created from the rib of Adam to dispel his loneliness. The modern notions stemming from feminist ideology and primitive notions where woman was seen as someone in tune with nature and the wild, who was

a huntress and a healer bring this wild woman archetype to the centre stage. It gives woman the prominent and wholesome place that she deserves in society as opposed to the marginalised space she has been granted by the patriarchal society. These same women who when were found to be in direct link with the force and power of nature and the wilderness were often treated as witches and enchantress and were burnt at stake to suppress their powerfulness which was a threat to men and the basis of patriarchal society.

The Wild Woman Archetype not only gives woman a centre-stage but also gives her an edge over men as through her personality of a huntress and a healer she becomes superior to men. She is the direct descendent of Mother Earth, of Mother Nature. Man and his masculinity become pale in comparison to this forceful and powerful image of a woman that is representative of freedom and liberation. Estés emphasises that women needs must connect to their wild archetype which they have been made to surrender because of societal conditioning. Once they are able to do this they will be able to channelise their innate power and by striking a balance between their conscious and the unconscious they will be able to live a balanced and wholesome life. She says, "A healthy woman is much like a wolf: robust, chock-full, strong life force, life-giving, territorially aware, inventive, loyal, roving. Yet, separation from the wildish nature causes a woman's personality to become meager, thin, ghostly, spectral. We are not meant to be puny with frail hair and inability to leap up, inability to chase, to birth, to create a life. When women's lives are in stasis, or filled with ennui, it is always time for the wildish woman to emerge; it is time for the creating function of the psyche to flood the delta." (Estés, 15-16) A woman with wild woman archetype will be courageous, bold, spontaneous, sensual, creative and would have a profound connection with nature. Looking at this through ecofeminist point of view she would be an ideal woman. A woman who would not only be empowered herself but would also protect and empower nature and environment, thus, she would be a woman who is the need of the hour in

the contemporary world in order to save the world from a suffocating death.

#### THE WILD WOMAN ARCHETYPE IN *THE OUTRUN*

*The Outrun* by Amy Liptrot published in 2016 that went on to win the Wainwright Prize in 2016 and 2017 PEN/Ackerley Prize, is a memoir that documents Liptrot's struggle with alcoholism and how through spending time in nature and self-reflection she was able to overcome it. The book can be seen through the perspective of the Wild Woman Archetype as Amy Liptrot's character is studied through the purview of aspects associated with the wild woman archetype. While Amy Liptrot is in London she gets involved with the night scene of partying and boozing. She develops the tendency of drinking compulsively even in her teenage years while back home in Orkney, remote island in Scotland. Her father has had a difficult life as a manic depressive and her mother has overtly religious leanings, which both negatively impact Liptrot. Eventually the parents get divorced and start living apart which subconsciously affects Liptrot. Liptrot has aversion to religion because of her mother's imposition of it on her in early years of her life and also because she disapproved of theological restrictions and manipulations that hinder an individual to live a free and liberated life. When she is in London she becomes so afflicted with alcoholism that she ends up doing a lot of inappropriate and guilt-inducing things, which eventually results in the deterioration of her mental state. Her boyfriend breaks-up with her, she gets hit and almost gets raped by a cab driver, she behaves in the most deplorable ways under the influence of alcohol and drinks so uncontrollably that she doesn't know where to put a stop to the last drink.

Liptrot is strong in will and realises that there is no way she can continue living such a life and must do everything in her power and through external help to overcome alcoholism. She joins Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group that through its twelve step programme helps in de-addiction. But what truly brings her out of alcoholism is her immersion of the self in nature and wilderness of Orkney. She decides on moving back to Orkney and spends time with her

mother in the mainland and at her father's farm. She feels in tune with the wilderness of Orkney and the pastoralism of her father's lifestyle. While in Orkney and her time in isolation at Papay she can be seen to embrace her feminine nature of the Wild Woman Archetype as she becomes empowered by immersing herself in the wilderness. Beginning with her aversion to religion and its myopic worldview, Liptrot can be seen breaking free from the conventional ideology that is widely prevalent in society and at the same time she is rebelling against the established notions of Christianity, which through feminist point of view has subdued women and have treated them as the second sex with the overburdening references of Eve being created second to Adam from his ribs in order to please him and give him company, also Eve being painted black as a culprit that seduced Adam into eating the forbidden fruit and thus resulting in the Fall of Man. Woman, thus being punished into endless pain of menstruation and taking the burden of child-birth and the pains associated with it. By not believing in Christianity, Liptrot rejects all these notions of female subjugation.

Liptrot's will to surface out of alcoholism takes immense courage that is again a trait of the Wild Woman Archetype. She has the capacity to heal out of a dark and dreary place that is detrimental to her mental and physical health. She goes to rehab, attends meetings of AA, immerses herself in the wild and all it takes to work upon herself to surface out. It is easy to give in to temptation and get back to drinking but very difficult to keep afloat in the deep waters of alcoholism. To completely give up alcohol and remain totally sober is a very hard task which a non-alcoholic may not understand. Liptrot describes how often she had the temptation to give in to the urge to drink but she resisted and eventually came out victorious.

The most important trait of the Wild Woman Archetype is an individual's ability to connect with nature and be in tune with the wild aspect of it. Wilderness plays the most important role in Liptrot's journey out of alcoholism. Her move to Orkney is a journey into interiority where she is consciously able to self-assess herself in the pastoral and wild

environment. In the urbanity of London she became a lost soul but here she is embracing her wild nature and is bringing a balance between the external and the internal, between the conscious and the unconscious. The urge to move out of the island in Liptrot was because as a teenager and young-blooded she felt constricted by the claustrophobic and all too familiar environment of the island. She desired glamour and the fast paced life of a city as opposed to the slow-paced and unglamorous life of the island. She felt that a city would give her enough space and freedom to explore her talents and desires. But moving to London she felt even more constricted as the population density was amazingly crazy and the environment was suffocating, her dependency on alcohol thus became compulsive as the urban environment didn't really suit her mentally. She finds herself completely lonely in such a crowded place as London. She has no companionship, no love, hardly any friends and in her mind, there is an echo of Orkney. She feels she belongs there rather than in London.

Liptrot describes her own situation in similar terms as of a wrecked boat. She went astray to such a great extent, where she felt completely broken and battered. It was all because of her alcoholism, but she blamed it on her break up. She started behaving in very strange ways, alcoholism made her a weak person, who was unable to take any responsibilities and was constantly behaving in ways that were completely unacceptable in society. When she stayed alone, the whole place used to be messed up and used to stink of alcohol. when she stayed with flatmates, then she was constantly overstepping the mark by ending up eating their food, drinking their booze and also asking for money. Her alcoholism had reached such levels, where she really needed help, people talked to her about her drinking problem and tried helping her, but she had reached the stage where she self-pitied herself and thus drank even more in her own misery. Important aspect of this depressive state of Liptrot was that she did not wish to be in such a mental state, she herself wanted to get out of it, but due to alcoholism it became an obsessive compulsive behaviour in her. Being in a

disconnection with nature makes her lose balance thoroughly.

While exploring one of the uninhabited islands in Orkney, Liptrot feels a sense of freedom, she is the only person and the island seems to belong to her, she feels like a Viking conqueror who becomes the Lord of the island. This sense of freedom is uplifting for her. The vast expanse of land, ocean and sky with few humans to interact, the whole scenario becomes therapeutic and healing for her. She becomes exploratory. The island has otherworldliness in it and the stories regarding mythical beasts seem to be true. The island is completely taken over by the birds and the seals, who are now the rightful owners of the island. Amidst all this she feels connected and wholesome which again brings her Wild Woman Archetype to surface. Wilderness becomes not only wholesome and sufficient in itself, but it also has the capacity to make a mentally sick person wholesome again. It only depends on how an individual perceives and accepts it. If the person opens himself to the healing capacity of the wild, he has the potential to become wholesome again, that is what happens to Liptrot as she being a woman has the inherent wild woman archetype in her that is lying dormant but being in the wilderness it gets awakened in her.

Liptrot, once back in the farm, relives her childhood, she does every thing that is required to be done on the farm, the hardest of works, the messiest of works. When she was a child in the farm, she was very much involved in the ongoings of the farm work when both her parents were together. Now that they have separated, she helps her father in the farm. She is fairly descriptive of different kinds of work that are practised on the farm. The sheep has to be looked after, that is no mean feat. It requires a lot of work and effort. The littering sheep has to be monitored as some of them find it difficult to give birth. Then the lambs are to be cared for, they must be protected for they are vulnerable. Liptrot becomes re-tuned to the farm life, even after a long gap and a really contrasting life she led in London. It is interesting to note that she comes out of the depths of her depressed mind by getting involved in the physical activity of the farm. By getting involved

in things like lambing, she gets a kind of a purposefulness in life.

Liptrot gets so involved in the life and environment of Orkney that she does not wish to go back to London to find work, instead she starts looking for work in the islands and lands up an unexpected job where she has to document the corncrake birds, that are endangered. This work gives her the opportunity to travel every nook and corner of the islands and thus it becomes an immersive experience for her where she is able to imbibe the feeling of the place. She becomes even more connected to the wilderness and natural world of the island. This is in sheer contrast to the life she led in London. Because of this job, she travels through the length and breadth of the island at night, thus becoming familiar with what it looks like at night. By getting involved in this project of counting and tracing the corncrake birds gives Liptrot a sense of purposefulness.

The point to be noted here is that by returning to the island Liptrot has actually made a life changing decision which through her constant involvement and interaction with the wilderness and pastoral life has been extremely therapeutic and healing balm to her soul. She says, "I've caught a goose, a hare and a teenager in my headlights. I caught the full moon in my wing mirror. I drove to the edge of the cliff, trying to get closer to the sky, looking out to smaller islands, with their lighthouses glowing, flashes of colour in the dark, reflected on Scapa Flow. I share the night with cats – their eyes shining in the dykes – voles and hedgehogs." (Liptrot, 127) She becomes closer to the wilderness and natural world than to people. She also goes on to compare herself to corncrakes, they are finding it really hard to survive in changing times and Liptrot is also trying to surface out of her alcoholism. Liptrot, while on these nocturnal navigations soon found out to enjoy each and every moment, she becomes joyful in these moments of aloneness. She seems to be connected to the natural surroundings, she is much more at peace in being alone as compared to when she was in the crowded spaces of London, in night, clubs and parties.

Liptrot has found peace in isolation and she moves to even remoter location than the mainland Orkney, the Papa Westray island, also known as Papay, it is very small island with only seventy inhabitants. Liptrot has a strong will to transform herself, this isolation, gives her the space to introspect and also develop reliance on herself to be strong enough to not give in to drinking again. She has gone through a phase where after drinking too much, she felt extremely lonely and wanted to get in touch with people, just for the sake of dispelling loneliness. She has been developing resilience since she moved to Orkney. She has gradually become stronger and has come to accept her aloneness as something positive, her commitment to move to Papay for four months in winter reflects this. By moving to live alone in this sparsely populated island she has moved a step further in her recovery from alcoholism. Thus one can argue that more than any rehab induced therapy, the therapy of nature and wilderness has helped in healing Liptrot. Here in Papay, Liptrot is not working and she is living completely alone which gives her ample time to introspect and also look at her life in retrospect which brings to the surface all the bad memories to the forefront and she has to deal with them anew by acceptance and resilience.

While Liptrot was dealing with alcoholism and her breakup she went through an even bad phase as one night she was attacked by her cab driver who assaulted her and tried to rape her. The scars from the incident had healed to a great extent, but the mental scars remained. Liptrot had gone through a deep trauma both inflicted by her own alcoholism and the attempted rape by the cab driver. She says, "My centre of gravity has moved north. I've been thinking more about Shetland, Iceland and Faroe. I am still sometimes shocked by everything that happened, that I was in such dangerous situations, that I ended up in rehab, that I haven't drunk alcohol for twenty months, two weeks and four days and that this is how it feels. I'm back here, on these windy rocks, looking for hope in my imagination and my surroundings." (Liptrot, 149) The Rose Cottage becomes her refuge and shelter,



protecting her from herself and the ills of the world. The wilderness has indeed made her very strong.

Papay gives Liptrot refuge but as she goes walking to explore the island with the Papay Walking Committee. Liptrot can be said to be temperamentally more well suited to the life in the island than the life in London, as she seems to be in tune with her surroundings much better, she is thoroughly immersed in observing and reading the night sky, she has great knowledge about the technical aspect of the night sky, the planets and the constellation, the meteors and the shooting stars. She immerses herself in the magical experience of the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights. The experiences of observing both the Aurora Borealis and the night sky is immersive which can be equated to meditation, which she has been recommended but is unable to practice. It is again therapeutic and can bring an individual out of depression or alcoholism as it can give an individual a diversion and a purpose to live.

Liptrot uses internet and mobile quite mindfully in order to enhance her life experience. She uses apps that aid her about things around her like the sky map app that gives her better understanding in studying the night sky, she uses Facebook in order to become more aware about birds and fish that are visiting the island and their movements. She also uses an app that records menstrual cycle and connects to the cycles of the moon, she also records intensity of the sound of the wind and storm and also the sounds of breaking waves. All of this makes her more aware of herself and her immediate surroundings.

Liptrot comes to life with swimming. She has been an enthusiastic swimmer throughout her life and whenever she gets an opportunity she plunges into water. Hydrotherapy has also been used to treat alcoholism and through swimming and being in water Liptrot creates a treatment for herself. The coldness of water is soothing and therapeutic.

She reaches the conclusion that the elevated state induced by alcohol was similar to the manic state of mind and the depressive stage was the hangover and the guilt that stemmed from drinking.

Liptrot is rather happy to discover that she reached self analytical conclusion what possibly could have been the reason of her alcoholism and she is proud that it happened when she was out there in nature, looking at the waves of the ocean. She could not find an articulate answer in therapy sessions or with AA meetings but out there in the wilderness of the waves, while sitting on a rock. This goes to show that she is very much in tune with nature and has been able to use the wilderness as therapeutic energy to understand her own psyche better and in the process heal herself from all the negative mental states and habits that were detrimental in living a balanced and happy life. She says, "I stand up, alert, from my stone seat: I've made a breakthrough – stirred by the energy of the sea and the wind – in understanding my own behaviour. I didn't find it in a therapist's office, or by conscientiously working through the programme, or talking to Dee, but outdoors, watching the waves."(Liptrot, 214) This emphasises her individualism and tuning with the wild.

In AA's healing programme, there are twelve steps one of which asks whether one believes in higher power than oneself which would help in restoring oneself to sanity. Liptrot would have been sceptical of this earlier because she was weary of the idea of Christian God, but she confesses that she does believe in a higher power than herself specially after witnessing the force and energy that drives in the form of natural elements like wind and water, and what these elements can do combined. She does not believe in God, but she certainly believes in the power of nature and wilderness. Liptrot is also seen to acknowledge the positive influence and healing power of her isolation in Orkney and the wilderness of the place. She feels that there is also guiding spirit that leads birds to faraway places and then back again to where they migrated from without having any external aid of navigation like the humans.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Liptrot describes in detail how in tune she feels with earth and its movements and elements by saying, "In grandiose moments, high on fresh air and

freedom on the hill, I study my personal geology. My body is a continent. Forces are at work in the night. A bruxist, I grind my teeth in my sleep, like tectonic plates. When I blink the sun flickers, my breath pushes the clouds across the sky and the waves roll into the shore in time with my beating heart. Lightning strikes every time I sneeze, and when I orgasm, there's an earthquake. The islands' headlands rise above the sea, like my limbs in the bathtub, my freckles are famous landmarks and my tears rivers. My lovers are tectonic plates and stone cathedrals."(Liptrot, 219) This comparison is a beautiful study of the body as intrinsically representative of the earth and can in many ways be validation of the philosophy that the body is made out of the earth will return to the earth, an inherently spiritual idea supported by logic and science.

Liptrot aligns herself to the forces of nature and feels in tune with the energy around her. She says, "The forces that I grew up with are being utilised in unexpected ways. Recovery is making use of something once thought worthless. I might have been washed-up but I can be renewed. In these two years I have put my energy into searching for elusive corncrakes, Merry Dancers and rare cloud; into swimming in cold seas, running naked around stone circles, sailing to abandoned islands, flying on tiny planes, coming back home."(Liptrot, 276) This also shows her fierce wild spirit and also her absorption into the natural elements around her, her being becoming the part of a larger consciousness and spirit of the universe.

Thus, the journey of Amy Liptrot in order to heal herself by her own strong will and immersing herself in the wilderness makes her an epitome of Wild Woman Archetype where she is able to shed all the masks and baggage of social conditioning and as a powerful single woman she finds her higher intuitive self that is creative, sensual, bold and completely in tune with the Universe as she constantly immerses herself all that it has to offer, studying the night sky, observing aurora borealis and swimming underwater. She is an assimilation of the new and the primitive woman that is timeless in her wisdom through her connection with the wild.

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