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Seminar

15 July 2021

Swansea, Wales, UK

*Presents*

*Creative Writing Exercises with H Raven Rose*

‘Harley Quinn's

Tattoos and Other Stories of Women with Ink’ **­**

**‘Harley Quinn's Tattoos and Other Stories of Women with Ink’**

Carl Jung has written much about symbols as archetypal forces and wrote about and was guided by symbols throughout his life. From childhood, stones had symbolic meaning for him. In his book, *Man and His Symbols*, he wrote:

*The stone symbolized something permanent that can never be lost or dissolved, something eternal that some have compared to the mystical experience of God within one’s own soul.*

*It symbolizes what is perhaps the simplest and deepest experience, the experience of something eternal that man can have in those moments when he feels immortal and unalterable.*

Symbols in narrative or life can reflect and contain the unknown qualities of our psyche and experiences. Relating to symbols, becoming conscious of their meaning, and including them in your stories or other writing, will unlock a new dimension of creative expression and writing and way of viewing experiencing your life, writing life, the world, and your work.

Writing symbolically will also change your work for the reader; you can powerfully impact a reader by using symbols, which are a form of alchemy that works on the psyche and unconscious. The Applied Jung Centre, in their The Alchemy of Symbols Course, says that, “Symbols hold within them secrets and the promise of a new life.”

A new life is exactly what most characters end up with once they’ve completed their hero or heroine’s journey.

Let’s do a writing exercise to open to a powerful symbol.

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**Ink as Archetypal Force in Narrative**

**Tattoo as Symbol**

Exercise #1

TASK - Identifying a Tattoo Story Symbol

The following exercise is designed to help you discover a tattoo symbol meaningful to your psyche and a character or story in your unconscious.

From a Jungian or Depth Psychology perspective, a symbol can be an archetypal force for change in a person or a character’s heroic journey.

There is power for you, the writer, when you align meaningful archetypal symbols with the story that you are writing.

Know that these symbols are already within you, in your unconscious, or Annwyn, meaning the Welsh otherworld that is right here, imaginally adjacent to ordinary reality.

So, you don’t need to work at this intellectually.

Explore and allow your psyche to take you somewhere new and old. Because, despite its novelty, this place has been right there in the depths of your imagination all along.

Reflect on a story that you are writing or that is coming to mind at this moment. Imagine imagery, or certain symbols or motifs, or a theme or certain emotional events, from that story.

~follow the writing exercise instructions on the next page~

Identifying a Tattoo Story Symbol EXERCISE

On a piece of paper or digitally, capture the elements of that story that come to mind as you think about it.

Once you have done this, reflect on the following:

* What is the key theme of the story as represented as an image?
* Imagine a character from this story. Are you thinking about the main character or another character, alive or dead?
* What is the telos of this story (where is it going)?
* Think about inner or outer obstacles which the character is facing, which prevents them from achieving their desires. Allow a symbol that represents this obstacle or obstacle to emerge in your mind. Don’t consciously choose an image; allow it to appear spontaneously. Take the first thing that pops in without judging it as stupid, wrong, or banal, and capture that in words and images or otherwise.
* Write about the image or draw the symbol as if it were a tattoo. Where would this symbol as body art, or ink, appear on your character? Perhaps you see your character considering a tattoo, the symbol, or maybe the ink is on the character or someone else, a supporting or another character, and is influencing or otherwise affecting the character in your mind. What feeling does the tattoo symbol evoke in your character? Explore and write about the objective and subjective meanings of the symbol.
* Imagine your character interacting with this symbol in some way. What feeling does the symbol evoke in your character? If the symbol is a tattoo, does the tattoo purely exist in the story to reveal character, or does it pertain to story events, dialogue, or even plot? If you don’t know, allow your mind to return to the image, scene, and character and write down everything that comes forth when you do so.

TIME: 15 minutes

**Tattoo as Narrative Element**

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Resources

*Royalty free clip art: http://www.clker.com/clipart-celtic-knot-4.html*

*http://www.clker.com/clipart-9873.html*

*http://www.clker.com/cliparts/i/a/d/E/B/S/swan-silhouette-md.png*

**A tattoo as story symbol may:**

* **Represent or reveal theme**
* **Be used to evoke a concept or mood**
* **Reveal character/serve as characterization**
* **Convey abstract concepts/morals/ideals**
* **Contain the seed of character transformation**
* **Help you find story energy or inspiration**
* **Reveal mystical, poetic, symbolic vision**
* **Evoke magical, mythological meaning**
* **Be a clue or otherwise pertain to a plot point**

**Written on the Body/Written on the Page**

Exercise #2

TASK - Developing a Tattoo Story Symbol

The following exercise is designed to help you further develop a tattoo symbol meaningful to your story, character, and psyche.

Remember, there is great power for the writer who aligns meaningful archetypal symbols with the story and characters they are developing or writing.

As a reminder, these symbols are already within you, in your unconscious, what you can think of as Annwyn meaning the psyche equivalent of the Welsh otherworld that is right here, imaginally adjacent to ordinary reality.

So, you don’t need to strain mentally or work at this.

Rather, unfold into this place. This practice is more about looking upside down and out the back of your consciousness or brain, via the occipital lobe, if you need a physical map point.

Imagine you are looking out the back of your head through an imaginal window located there. Drift into this window. Allow your creative self and your psyche to take you into or investigate this place that is both new as well as a place that has been right there all along.

Reflect on the tattoo symbol related to the story that you are writing you thought of earlier or whatever is coming to mind at this moment. Imagine imagery, symbols or motifs, or a theme or certain emotional events from that story.

~follow the writing exercise instructions on the next page~

Developing a Tattoo Story Symbol EXERCISE

On a piece of paper or digitally write down, sketch, or otherwise make notes about the following:

* Imagine a scene from your story where there will be a revelation involving the symbol, the tattoo, that you thought of previously (or a new one). The secret is dramatic. It’s up to you what it might be. If the revelation is a secret, it will cause strong emotion, embarrassment, or something else, for one or more characters.
* Start writing an account of the revelation from the POV (Point of View) of someone trying to keep the information a secret. Alternatively, write about someone who doesn’t know anything and is innocent about what is happening but has a burning desire to get to the bottom of things. Write from any of these characters’ thoughts and feelings.
* Try writing those elements into the scene if your story is speculative fiction, fantasy, or incorporates mystical or mythical elements. A story symbol might change, even if it is a tattoo, and become something different in the course of narrative events, and thereby change the character in some profound way.
* Tattoos may wear away, a tattooed body part might be lost, or a character’s tattoo symbol might be inked over with a new tattoo. A character may have a tattoo that has deep meaning to them or others, yet they may be the only person who knows about it.
* In contrast, if the scene is about someone who does not yet have a tattoo, you could write about that. Do they want a tattoo? Are they being tattooed against their will? Has a character been marked or branded in some way?
* Imagine the tattoo as a character or symbol of something profound. What does it mean? What is happening to the symbol? How is the symbol changing the wearer, and how might the wearer change the tattoo?
* If events, scenes, or dialogue, are not quickly appearing for you, write about or sketch the darkness you usually see in your mind’s eyes. Invite images, story fragments, or any other narrative bits to appear, then capture them.

TIME: 15 minutes

**THANK YOU!**

*Your necklace may break, the fau tree may burst, but my tattooing is indestructible. It is an everlasting gem that you will take into your grave.*

~Verse from a traditional tattoo artist's song

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