



Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*: A Buried Anima in an Amnesic Mind

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Abstract

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This article studies the anima archetype of the protagonist in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*. It shows that the memory has a great impact on the possession of a healthy or at least an unchangeable anima. The article uses the individuation theory of Carl Jung focusing mainly on the notions of archetypes particularly the one of the anima. The presence of the absence of the memory is shown in this study to be a game changer. On the other hand, amnesia is exposed to be a phenomenon which can change the self, the life and, thus the destiny of the amnesic person. This article discusses briefly the definitions of the important terms that will come across the reader every now and then. The result and discussions are left to the end of the article where Jung's theory is applied on the novel showing mainly the metamorphosis of Axl's anima. This article exposes anima as one of the mysterious abilities of the unconscious mind and its role in defining the shape and the type of the human relationships.

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1. introduction

The Buried Giant (2016) is the last and most controversial novel written by Ishiguro and it is the novel for which he won the Nobel Prize of literature in 2017. Yet, as it is the case with the Nobel Prize winning novels in general and Ishiguro's novels in particular, a lot of clamour and debate is raised about *The Buried Giant*.

Kazuo Ishiguro is a British novelist who was born in Nagasaki, Japan in 1954. He moved to England at the age of five with his family. Although they had intended to go back to Japan, Ishiguro's family continued to live in Britain. In 1978, Ishiguro graduated from the University of Kent at Canterbury with a B.A in Philosophy (Parkes, 2001, p. 11). In 1980, he received his M.A and started writing some short stories and television scripts. In 1982, he wrote his first novel *A Pale View of Hills* which gained him worldwide fame (p.12). He was awarded the honorary doctorate from the University of Kent and East Anglia in 1990 and 1995 respectively and the French decoration Chevaliers des Orders des Arts et des Letters in 1998 (p.14).

The story takes place in the post-Arthurian Britain and it revolves chiefly around a couple, Axl and Beatrice who take a journey to visit their son in another

village. Yet, as the novel progresses, it gets clearer that Axl and Beatrice can barely remember anything including their son, the reason he left or the village he currently lives in. Indeed, after reading few pages, the reader finds out that everyone in this land suffers from an unjustifiable amnesia. As the couple proceed in their journey, they learn that such a phenomenon is caused by the imaginative breath of a she-dragon which is guarded by an old and well-respected warrior named Sir Gawain. Master Wistan, on the other hand, is a young and extravagant warrior who is entrusted with the task of killing Querig the she-dragon, allowing thus the people of the village to retrieve all their memories. Nevertheless, this was not a delightful event as it superficially seems. Axl and Beatrice remember that their son is dead and that they had an old and long dispute. People, moreover, remember a bloody war that took place between the Britons and the Saxons in the past and which, after the death of the dragon, will launch again.

In fact, *The Buried Giant* seems like a novel which respects the basic and the interesting elements of fantasy. Indeed, fantasy is believed widely to be a means of escapism, or put differently, a genre which enable people to escape from the real world and to enjoy a world of art without

being compelled to analyse it or simply think about it: “escape is one of the three fundamental functions of fantasy identified by J.J.Tolkien’s essay “On Fairy-Stories” which defends the notion of escapism against the pejorative connotations frequently attached to it” (Stableford, 2009, p. 136).

Yet, this does not seem to be the case with *The Buried Giant* as the novel transfers a powerful message about the eternal struggle and the duality of memory and forgetfulness.

It should be noted, however, that certain critics consider the novel as a myth or a historical fiction,

Fantasy and historical fiction and myth here run together with the Matter of Britain, in a novel that’s easy to admire, to respect and to enjoy, but difficult to love ... Ishiguro is not afraid to tackle huge, personal themes, nor to use myths, history and the fantastic as the tools to do it. *The Buried Giant* is an exceptional novel, and I suspect my inability to fall in love with it, much as I wanted to, came from my conviction

that there was an allegory waiting like an ogre in the mist. (Hodson, 2016, p. 57)

In fact, this article will not study the genre of the novel but it will focus, on examining the animus of Axl, the protagonist, and its relation to memory and amnesia. The article will depict the effect of forgetfulness on the people of the village in general and on Axl in particular. The analysis, hence, will depend on evidences from the novel as well as others from the critics. In this chapter, memory is discussed as a frustrating tool which, even though, enables Axl to reach his real self destroys his ideal relation with his wife Beatrice and makes him disdain himself.

This fact is going to be discussed using the individuation theory of Carl Jung, tackling thus, the animus. The characters of *The Buried Giant* in general and Axl the protagonist in particular know that they are amnesic and are fully aware that the flashes which tend to pop up in their minds from time to time are their own memories. They tend as well, mainly the protagonist, to change this status through tracking the reason which in this case is the dragon, and erasing it. Yet, the protagonist is having a journey through his unconsciousness which will enable him to ultimately reach his real self. Effectively, through his journey to his son’s village,

Axl is wandering in his own unconsciousness coming upon scattered pieces of his memories that will lead him at the end to face the reality of himself. Therefore, this article aims at answering the question: does the animus or archetype or differently put the image of a certain female in a male's mind change if he becomes amnesic?

2.Literature Review:

2.1 Jung's Theory:

Jung's theory of individuation is based on certain concepts that should be defined and understood. The first concept is individuation itself. According to Jung, in order to be mentally sound, people have vigorous access to the different part of their selves. But, unfortunately, most people do not know how to do that and, consequently, they become unaware of the different elements of their psyches. Here, actually, comes the role of the individuation process. Through such process, people should gather all the parts of their true selves. This is could be done by realizing what their dreams and daydream images are telling them and by believing in their uniqueness. "Individuation means becoming a single, homogenous being, and in so far as individuality embraces or innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. However

self should not be perceived as the ego. The ego, for Jung, the ego is "the center of the unconscious, the world of time and space" (Gibson, Lathrop, Stern, 1991, p. 65). Differently said it is the conscious part of the mind. Thus, ego is considered as a part of the self and it depends on it.

On the other hand, there is the concept of the unconscious which has been debated by many philosophers and psychologists. Jung's teacher, Freud, defined the unconscious as "the gathering place of forgotten and replaced contents" (Jung, 1972, p. 3). Jung argued that the unconscious could be both personal and collective. The personal unconscious contains "autonomous complexes" and "disturbing factors that disrupt conscious control and act like true disturbers of peace" (p. 230). Thus, the personal unconscious includes the different suppressed believes and memories that belong to a certain individual regarding his own experience.

The collective unconscious, on the other hand, "is not individual but universal-- it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals" (Jung, 1972, p. 4). Hence, the collective unconscious is shared by all the people around the world and it originates from the experiences of the ancestors. So, when dealing with certain notions of the external

world, the ancestors developed given experiences and images that are reflected in people's myths, legends, folktales...etc. Those images, indeed, do not have contents, however, through practice and with time, they developed contents and they become known as archetypes. The archetypes are original images related to all universal themes familiar to all people. Their place is in the unconscious and they date back to distant times. The frames of the archetypes are universal but their tenors are personal. In his book, *A Study Guide for Psychologists and Their Theories for Students: Carl Jung*, Gale Cengage Learning claims that: "in Jung's words, archetypes are by definition, factors and motifs that arrange the psychic elements into certain images" (2017, p. 26). Jung, also, adds that "toward the end of his life, Jung strengthened the connection between emotions and archetypes by redefining the archetypes as innate releasing mechanisms linked to universal human emotions" (p.26).

Mostly, the anima and the animus archetypes are what follow the persona and the shadow archetypes. Anima is the feminine side of the man without which, he becomes lazy and rigid. Generally, the image of the woman in a man's unconscious is a projection of his mother's one. That's why men are unconsciously

attracted to women who either correspond to their mothers' images or, in some cases, are in the extreme opposite of them

Every man carries within him the eternal image of woman, not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definitive feminine image. This image is fundamentally unconscious, an hereditary factor of primordial origin engraved in the living organic system, an imprint or "archetype" ...since this image is unconscious, it is always unconsciously projected upon the person of the beloved, and is one of the chief reasons for passionate attraction or aversion. (Jung, 1972, p. 198)

Hence, most of the women, to whom a particular man is attracted, are different projections of his mother or caregiver's images. However, this attraction could be positive which is translated in the love affection or negative coming out as an extreme hatred. A man with no relation to his feminine side is an unstable man and is a cruel or immatured one.

According to Jung, the anima goes through four stages in its development:

Eve, Helen, The Virgin Marry and Sophia. The first stage is Eve. In this stage, the man is subject of the mother archetype. Put differently, he cannot be detached from the need of a mother who portrays the archetypal image of a mother as being care, security and love provisioner “ earth is purely biological; woman is equated with the mother and only represents something fertilized (Jung, 1972, p. 174).

The second stage, Helen, portrays an ideal woman who fulfills all the unconscious flawless expectations of a man. A man who sticks to this stage is immature and dependent. However, at least, on an aesthetic and romantic level woman, in this stage, “has already acquired some value as an individual” (Jung 174).

The third stage is portrayed by the religious figure of the Virgin Marry. Throughout this stage, the man can develop a mature and friendly relationship with women. He is, now, independent and aware of his needs and desires. Thus, in this stage, personal love could be transformed into “spiritual devotion that gives rise to intuition” (Khan, 2004, p. 97).

The fourth stage, Sophia, takes the anima to a philosophical and spiritual extension. The man, now, can bring the images of the unconscious anima to consciousness. Wisdom is, generally, what welcomes men when reaching this stage.

For Jung, all men go throughout this stages and it is the psyche which is in charge of moving from a stage to another. Such a move could be difficult, sometimes, as the psyche tends to stick to what is already known for it.

In fact, there are no clear details about Axl’s relationships neither with the outsiders nor with his family members. No one of his family is ever mentioned. The only relationship depicted is the one he has with Beatrice. Being a loving and a kind husband, Axl does not seem to have a problematic anima, yet when digging deeper things start taking another turn.

3. Anima

To sink further in the unconscious of Axl, it would be beneficial to have a brief definition of amnesia. In her book, *Introduction to Psychology*, Alicia S. Bustos defines amnesia as “a loss of memory, either total or partial, for the past events in a person’s life. Amnesia caused by repression is psychological ... amnesia may also be caused by cerebral shock such as may occur in a head injury” (1999, p.162). She adds that: “in psychological amnesia, the person suddenly represses almost everything about self ... he uses forgetting as a sort of unconscious defense mechanism against some painful or guilt-producing memory” (1999, p.162). On his turn, Jeffery S. Nevid argues that “the

normal occurrence of amnesia" takes place "during infancy and early childhood" (2009, p. 237). In the case of the novel, Axl is amnesic due to a sort of a curse who hit his complete village when he is quite adult, which then may hint to the fact that such amnesia is imposed on the characters. Yet, what is important is to study whether this amnesia, being normal or imposed, affects the true self of the protagonist, using the anima as a part of this self.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Axl's Anima:

It 's notably important to mention at first, that there's no direct reference to Axl's mother, yet the image of the mother portrayed throughout the novel is a bit confusing. The first mother that is introduced to the reader is Edwin's mother. As it's aforementioned, Edwin is believed to be the alter ego of Axl and thus any depiction of his mother will be taken as a depiction of Axl's one.

When examined closely, the relationship between Edwin -who is believed to be an alter ego of Axl- and his mother is frustrating. Edwin's mother is not portrayed in the text in terms of attitude, behaviour or physical appearance nor does it seem that Edwin carries a portray of her in his mind. This might be due to his traumatic attitude that makes him burry the details of the people or the

situations deeply in his unconsciousness. But what does make a child suppress and burry the image he has of his mother further in his mind, or differently put, what makes the memory of Edwin's mother traumatic in the first place?

Edwin is raised by his aunt. He has never mentioned his father, yet he is aware that his mother is in a constant travel, the reason for which it's so difficult for them to reunite:

His aunt had always been good to him, but if she now wanted to curse him, Edwin did not care. Not long ago she had tried to get Edwin to address her as 'mother', but he had never done so. For he knew his real mother was travelling. His real mother would not shriek at him like that, and have to be dragged away by Elder Ivor. And this morning, in the barn, he had heard his real mother's voice. (Ishiguro, 2016, p.92)

In spite of never reuniting, Edwin believes that she can hear the voice of his mother in his dreams or sometimes when he is awake:

It had been his mother's voice without doubt, the same voice that had

called to him in the barn. ‘Find the strength for me, Edwin. Find the strength and come rescue me come rescue me. Come rescue me’ (p. 202). Actually, whenever he hears the voice of his mother, he is asked to come and rescue her, it’s not though mentioned what he needs to rescue her from. Yet, it can be assumed that he needs to rescue her from his attitude towards her or the way he feels for her. Edwin who is reminded every now and then to rescue his mother doesn’t seem to be convinced about the necessity to rescue her: “she is just travelling. She wouldn’t want me to ...” (p. 206). Nevertheless, Edwin cannot ignore the pleats of his mother to get rescued : “she had been calling all the while the warrior had been speaking. ‘ Will you not find the strength for me, Edwin? Are you too young after all? Will you not find the strength for me, Edwin ? did you not promise me that day you would?’ (p. 242). So, finally, he decides to go for her help:

‘very well, warrior, I promise it. But now I hear my mother calling, and surely we’ve stayed in this gloomy place too long.’

‘Let’s go to her, then. But be prepared in case we come too late for her rescue.’

‘what can you mean warrior? How that can ever be, for I hear her call even now.’

‘then let’s hasten to her call. Just know one thing, young comrade. When the hour’s too late for rescue, it’s early enough for revenge.’(p. 264)

Effectively, Edwin seems to live in a struggle between his feelings about his mother’s eligibility to get rescued and his urge to take revenge. He is torn between his longing for his mother’s love and his feelings of shame and guilt towards her.

In a remarkable scene, Edwin has a lengthy conversation with a girl lying with tied hands on the floor:

She was lying on her back in the rough grass, her torso twisted to one side. She was a few years older than him- fifteen or sixteen- and her eyes were fixed on him without fear. It took a while to realize her odd posture had to do with her hands being tied under her body. The flattened grass around her marked the area where, by pushing with her legs, she had been sliding about

in her struggles. Her cloth
smoke, tied at the waist, was
discoloured- perhaps
soaked- all along one side,
and both her legs, unusually
dark-skinned, bore fresh
scratches from the thistles.

It occurred to him she was
an apparition or a sprite, but
when she spoke her voice
had no echo to it.

‘What do you want? Why
have you come?’

Recovering himself, Edwin
said: ‘If you like, I could
help you.’

‘These knots aren’t difficult.
They just tied me more
tightly than usual.’

Only now did he notice her
face and neck were covered
in perspiration. Even as she
spoke, her hands, under her
back, were busily
struggling.

‘Are you hurt?’

‘Not hurt, but a beetle
landed on my knee just now.
It clung on and bit me.
There’ll be a swelling now.
I can see you’re still too

much of a child to help me.
It doesn’t matter, I’ll
manage myself.’(pp. 203-
204)

It seems that Edwin has a persuasion that
his mother is forced to travel and this is
what creates his duality. He tends to feel
guilty for judging her for something she is
obliged to do. He thinks, also, that he may
be the cause of such obligation, the thing
that makes him eager to untie her knot or
in other words to rescue her:

‘I could help, Edwin said.

‘I’m good with knots.’

‘You’re just a child.’

‘I’m not. I’m nearly twelve.’

‘They’ll come back soon. If
you find you’ve untied me,
they’ll beat you.’

‘Are they grown-ups?’

‘They think they are, but
they’re just boys. Older than
you though and there’s three
of them. They’d like
nothing better than to beat
you. They’ll force your head
into that muddy water until
you pass out. I’ve watched
them do it before.’

‘Are they from the village?’

‘The village?’ She looked at him with contempt. ‘Your village?’ We pass village after village every day. What do we care about your village? They may come back soon, then you’ll be in trouble.’

‘I’m not afraid. I could free you if you like.’

‘I always free myself.’ She twisted again.

‘Why did they tie you?’

‘Why, I suppose so they could watch. Watch me try to get free. But they’re gone now, to steal food.’ Then she said: ‘I thought you villagers worked all day. Why does your mother let you wander?’

‘I’m allowed because I finished three corners by myself already today.’ Then he added: ‘my real mother is not in the village anymore.’

‘Where’s she gone?’

‘I don’t know. She was taken. I live with my aunt now.’

‘When I was a child like you.’ She said, ‘I lived in a village. Now I travel’

‘Who do you travel with?’

‘Oh...with them.’ (pp. 204-205)

It becomes clear, thus, that this is the picture of Edwin/Axl’s anima; a helpless woman ‘travelling’ or, put differently, forming relationships with distinct men.

Before heading further, it’s essential to speak about Axl’s relationship with Beatrice, his wife. It’s worth noticing that the relationship between Axl and Beatrice is the only relationship that is depicted prolongeably. As it was mentioned earlier, Axl is taken for a kind hearted husband who cares for the comfort and the happiness of his wife. He doesn’t call her by her name instead he calls her ‘princess’ and he expresses his love and gratitude for having her each now and then:

‘Forgive me, princess. It must be this mood here is affecting me.’

But Beatrice had become tearful. ‘No need to talk so harshly.’ She muttered almost to herself.

Rising, Axl made his way to her rocking chair and

crouching slightly, held her closely to his chest. 'I'm sorry princess.' (p. 66)

Nevertheless, he cannot prevent himself from having a feeling which "troubled him" when he saw her once smiling for a soldier who has been kind to her. He cannot, yet recall if she used always to be as such or not (p. 149).

Actually, there's a hint to the fact that the couple were once separated in the past. When getting prepared to cross a river using a boat, Beatrice kept begging her husband not to leave her alone:

'Axl,' Beatrice whispered, 'let's not separate; let's go together on foot, slow though it may be.'

'walking's beyond us now, princess. We both need warmth and food, and this river will carry us swiftly to our son's welcome.'

'please, Axl. I don't want us to separate.'

'but this man says he'll truss our two baskets together, and it'll be as good as we're arm in arm.' Then turning to the boatkeeper, he said: 'I'm grateful to you, sir. We'll do

as you suggest. Please tie the baskets tightly, so there's no chance a swift tide will move us apart.'

'The danger isn't in the river's speed, friend, but its slowness. It's easy to get caught in the weeds near the bank and move no further. Yet I'll lend you a strong staff to push with, so you'll have little to fear.'

As the boatkeeper went to the edge of his jetty and began to busy himself with rope, Beatrice whispered: 'Axl, please let's not parted.'

'We're not to be parted, princess. Look how he makes his knots to keep us together.' (p. 245)

Verily, Beatrice experiences a sudden sensation or more precisely a flash of memory where she remembers being separated from her husband in the past:

'Axl, I thought maybe you'd left me again.'

'Why would I leave you, princess? And the man's

tied our vessels so carefully together.’

‘I don’t know if it’s a thing dreamt of or remembered. But I sw myself just then, standing in our chamber in the dead of night—I think I was standing that way because you’d gone and left me, Axl. Maybe this fur the man’s put over me reminds me of that one then, for I was holding it to myself while I stood there—Yet, I believe the reason was that you’d gone away, Axl.’ (pp. 246-247)

Indee, Axl who doesn’t seem to remember anything about separation gets aware when the she-dragon is killed that his wife left him for another man before being reunited again: “if she convicts herself for the first part of it, there’s plenty to lay at my door for the next. For it’s sure there was a small moment she was unfaithful to me. It may be, boatman I did something to drive her to the arms of another man” (p. 339).

Therefore, what seems to gather Edwin’s mother and Axl’s wife is one trait: unfaithfulness. In spite of burying this fact deeply in his unconsciousness and acting as though he had totally forgotten about it,

Wistan/Axl’s urge to kill the she-dragon or, differently stated, the unfaithful facet of his Mother and wife shows another fact. Axl doesn’t seem to accept his wife the way she is after she committed an unforgiveable mistake as it’s the case with Edwin who feels guilty for his mother helplessness and wrath over her unfaithfulness.

4.2. A Female Dragon:

It’s strikingly noticeable that the dragon whose breath causes the villagers to sink into oblivion is a female dragon. Well, the notion of dragons and monsters exists in different myths and fairytales around the world. But, the idea of a female dragon is remarkably rare. This may remind the reader of one of the oldest and most famous writings in English literature, the one known as Beowulf. The dangerous monster that Beowulf could slaughter at the end of the epic is a female monster. Furthermore, in Christianity there is a celebration about one of the important Christian saints known as St. George. This latter was able to slay a dragon which picked a girl to devour each day. Yet, what’s weird is the fact that such a dragon was portrayed in many paintings as a female:

I noticed that there was something odd about the dragon, Dr. Riches explains

to Three Monkeys Online. It appeared to be a female dragon, as it had an obvious orifice which seemed to equate to female genitalia. My initial thought was that this was the work of a 1960s permissive society restorer, or that it had been done as some kind of joke. I imagined a falling out between the carver and the head of the workshop. Perhaps this was the very last panel that had been carved, and it would have been too late to change it. As far as I knew at the time, it was a unique representation, but after I shared this information with various colleagues one of them came forward with another example that she had just come across, an image of St George and another apparently female dragon from a Dutch manuscript of around the same date. (Lawless, p. 2)

According to Lawless, the article's writer from which the quotation above is taken, St. George and the dragon stand for

chastity and sexuality or more broadly between good and evil:

It popularity seems to lie in the fact that it's such a useful motif, because it can be interpreted very simply as good overcoming evil—The whole argument here is that St. George represents chastity and the dragon represents untrammelled female sexuality, and hence when he overcomes the dragon, it seems to be suggesting that female sexuality is only acceptable under certain circumstances, such as when it is confined within the limits of marriage.(p. 6)

In fact, there is intertextuality in the text of Adam and Eve. The act of eating the apple makes of Adam and Eve sinful especially Eve, according to Christianity:

Of course there is a strong tradition of associating female sexuality with sin and evil. One only needs to look to the book of Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve to realise this. An extraordinary engraving by

Lucas Cranach the Elder, created in the early sixteenth century, couldn't be clearer about this. That image is, I think, demonstrating why the feminised dragon is a logical move, Riches explains. Because the serpent has been given a voice, which is clear in the Biblical description of the episode, it has been shown with a partly human body, and then the next step along is to make it female. There is a lot of evidence that for medieval and early modern people evil is strongly associated with women and their sexuality, and the sexualised femininity of this serpent is very apparent . It's a great image because you've got the serpent effectively being a mirror image of Eve, and it's really underlining who the one at fault is here: Eve is understood as far more culpable than Adam. (Lawless, p. 11)

Hence, the image of slaying the dragon revolves around the idea of limiting the

female sexuality what makes this image problematic, though, is the alliance of femininity with motherhood. However, according to Riches who is quoted in the same article, "it all depends on who the mother is" (as cited in Lawless, p. 15). So, when having a good mother, children are going to be good children while the children of an evil mother will inevitably be evil. Therefore, by killing the she-dragon, Axl is aiming at killing the bad side of his mother or, more precisely, the side which made of her an unfaithful woman.

4.3. Inevitable Separation:

There's another implication of a future separation between Axl and his wife depicted in the story of an old woman who made apart from her husband after they both agreed on crossing a river separately. She accuses a boatman of tricking her and her husband into crossing the river each on their own:

He came to where my husband and I were standing on the rocks and tied his boat. And to this day I don't know how he did it, but somehow he tricked us. We were too trusting. With the island so near, this boatman took away my husband and left me waiting on the shore,

after forty years and more of our being husband and wife and hardly a day apart. I can't think how he did it. His voice must have put us in a dream, because before I knew it he was rowing off with my husband and I was still on land. Even then, I didn't believe it. For who could suspect such cruelty from a boatman? So I waited. I said to myself, it's simply that the boat cannot take more than one passenger at a time, for the water was unsettled that day, and the sky almost as dark as it is now. I stood there on the rock and watched the boat getting smaller and then a speck. And still I waited, and in time the speck grew larger and it was the boatman coming back to me. I could soon see his head as smooth as a pebble, now with no passenger left in his boat. And I imagined it was my turn and I would soon be with my beloved again. But when he came to where I was waiting, and tied his

rope to the pole, he shook his head and refused to take me across. (Ishiguro, 2016, pp. 41-42)

The boatman, on the other hand, denies completely the woman's accusation claiming that when her husband traversed the river she could not reunite with him, mainly because their love is not strong: "Occasionally a couple may be permitted to cross to the island together, but this is rare. It requires an unusually strong bond of love between them" (p. 43). Axl and Beatrice who are about to cross the river do not have such a strong love bond between them chiefly because of Beatrice who has being once unfaithful to Axl's and this latter's inability to forgive her even if seems as such, esulting, thus, in an inevitable separation. From this point, it becomes clear that the events that are taking place in the novel stand as flashbacks of Axl.

Actually, there are multiple references to women here and there throughout the text yet neither is fully depicted nor are they related to goodness wholly. If one of them is good then she must be a deceiver or has been long forgotten. Revolving again around the idea that Axl is incapable of fully remembering his mother's features or seeing the good side of her, he remembered a woman with

a long red hair who used to cure and help people in their village. Yet no one can remember such a woman, not even Beatrice:

To take an instance, one that had bothered Axl for some time: he was sure that not so long ago, there had been in their midst a woman with long red hair- a woman regarded as crucial to their village. Whenever anyone injured themselves or fell sick, it had been this red-haired woman, so skilled at healing, who was immediately sent for. Yet now this same woman was no longer to be found anywhere, and no one seemed to wonder what had occurred, or even to express regret at her absence. When one morning Axl had mentioned the matter to three neighbours while working with them to break up the frosted field, their response told him that they genuinely had no idea what he was talking about. One of them had even paused in his work in an effort to

remember but had ended by shaking his head. 'Must have been along time ago,' he had said.

'Neither have I any memory of such a women,' Beatrice had said to him. (pp. 7-8)

It makes it, so, more evident that this woman exists only in Axl's mind and she can be the portrait of his mother suppressed in his uncounscious long ago.

When it comes to Axl's memories of women, things get confusing and shattered. He tends to remember different women of a different age that no one seem to know or to recall. In another incident, Axl tells his wife the story of a little girl whose name is Marta. Marta was lost and found by Axl himself but no one of the villagers noticed her gone or come back:

He followed her in, anticipating the relief and joy her appearance would cause. And to be frank, it had occurred to him that by coming in with her, he would get a little of the credit for her safe return. But as they entered the Great Chamber the villagers were still so engrossed in their quarrel over the

shepherds only a few of them even bothered to look their way. Marta's mother did come away from the crowd long enough to say to the child: 'So here you are! Don't you be wandering off that way! How often must I tell you?' before turning her attention back to the arguments raging around the fire. (p.12)

In fact, Axl's relationship to women seems really problematic. He appears lost between the different physical and emotional features of different women. The journey itself that he takes to find his son is because of a woman. Beatrice was speaking to an old woman who has convinced her to travel to her son's village:

'You've long set your heart against it, Axl, I know. But it's time now to think on it anew. There's a journey we must go on, and no more delay.'

'A journey, princess? What sort of journey?'

'A journey to our son's village. It's not far, Husband, we know that even with our slow steps,

it's a few days' walk at most, a little way east beyond the Great Plain. And the spring will soon be upon us.'

'We might go on such a trip, certainly princess. Was there something that stranger said just now got you thinking of it?'

'it's been a thing in my thoughts a long time, Axl, though it's what that poor woman said just now makes me wish to delay no further. Our son awaits us in the village. How much longer must we keep him waiting.'
(p.19)

Effectively, it becomes clear that there are reflections of both: his mother and his wife who he labeled as unfaithful and it's after separating from his wife that he aims at redeeming what happened not in reality, though, but in his unconsciousness.

Examining another instance, Sir Gawain, Axl's third alter ego, met a group of widows in his way to the she-dragon. The widows stand as a symbol of danger and grief. Yet these widows are such because their husbands were not dead but lost:

If you ask why I wander, knights, I'll happily tell you. When the boatman put to me his questions, my beloved already in the boat and reaching out to help me in, I found my most treasured memories robbed from me. I didn't know then but know now, Querig's breath was the thief robbed me, the very creature you were to have slain long ago.'

'How can you know this, mistress?' I demanded, no longer able to hide my consternation. For how can it be such vagabonds know a secret so well guarded? To which the civil one then smiles strangely and says, 'we're widows, knight. There's little can be hidden from us now.' (pp. 225-226)

Once again, there's an implication to a poor love bond and unfaithfulness. Killing Querig, the she dragon, though, did not only reveal the reality about the unfaithfulness of Axl's wife but Also the reality about his self.

5. Conclusion

Effectively, at the end the couple is separated and the events of the novel are the creation of Axl's imagination. Because he cannot handle the idea that he has lost his wife and son, Axl creates a story in his mind where he takes a journey to his son's village. Thus, Axl is in fact taking this journey throughout his unconsciousness using his memories. Since Axl's self is traumatic, he creates a distorted environment where everybody is amnesic. However it's only Axl who is indeed amnesic after suppressing deeply all his traumatic memories in his unconsciousness. Nevertheless, at the end of his journey, Axl can overcome his amnesia and finds out his true self and this makes him able to cross the three last stages of Freeman.

Yet, being aware of his true self does not seem beneficial in Axl's case. He has now to live with a pain that he could have overcome if he did not retrieve his memories. The memory in this novel is not discussed as a blessing yet it is portrayed as a giant who would rather remain forever buried.

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