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Puddi Kullberg

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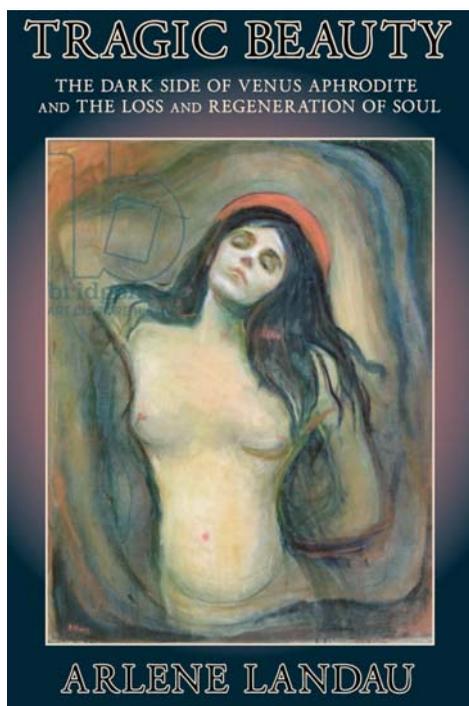
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# The Turquoise and Diamond Ring

PUDDI KULLBERG

Review of: Arlene Diane Landau, *Tragic Beauty: The Dark Side of Venus Aphrodite and the Loss and Regeneration of Soul*, New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2011.



Arlene Landau's father once gave her a turquoise and diamond ring that had belonged to an Egyptian princess. A combination of turquoise and diamonds is unusual. It juxtaposes a common semiprecious opaque stone—turquoise—with a most precious, transparent, translucent, reflective gem—a diamond. Nowadays, in America, when we think of turquoise, the Southwest and Native

American jewelry of turquoise and silver come to mind. It doesn't occur to us that turquoise has been mined and used by the Egyptians since the First Dynasty in 3000 BCE.

In many ways *Tragic Beauty* is like a turquoise and diamond ring. It juxtaposes common and extraordinary, ancient and current, opaque and translucent. Its subject matter is both in and beyond time as are princesses and precious gifts given from a father to his beautiful daughter. *Tragic Beauty* passes the gift on to us, its readers.

## Venus Aphrodite the Madonna

The cover of the book catches your eye. Here is a raven-haired, sensuous, sumptuous, naked female body, oddly lit and posed. Lit from within or without? Posed for what? And what about the red of the halo that is echoed in the young woman's nipples and belly button? For that is what it is, a halo. These questions are raised when one ponders the image, Edvard Munch's *Madonna*.

Yes, he of *The Scream* gives us this provocative image of a *Madonna*. This clearly erotic image revealed to be a *Madonna* muddles my composure. What are the implications here? That the author chose this masterpiece for her cover is indicative of the quality, nature, and promise of the writing that follows.

How does *Tragic Beauty* speak and what tales does it tell? It speaks from an intelligent sophistication of thought and taste that allows us intimate glimpses into the hearts, minds, and souls of Aphrodite women, in general, and this singular Aphrodite woman, this intrepid Jungian analyst, [Arlene Landau](#), in particular. The tales it tells are those of Aphrodite-identified women in thrall to the goddess's powerful archetypal energies as well as tales of those who dare to break out of her spell to

relate to the great golden goddess rather than be at her mercy.

## How Does She Speak?

One of the reasons this book is so captivating is the actual writing style itself. Its language is deceptively simple, not esoteric, arcane, or pedantic. You won't find jargon here. Then again, don't equate deceptively simple with simplistic. Words have clearly been chosen with care. The author uses everyday words and phrases that affect the nervous system: words like "bitter," phrases like "to my delight," "I suffered," "the emptiness of the pursuit engulfed me," "I offer a drop of sweet dew."

Conversely, the breadth of the author's vocabulary is sometimes surprising. For example, do you know what *morganatic* means? Landau also uses strings of adjectives where one or several of them takes you by surprise. Of course Sophia is wisdom. But "Sophia is an emblem of wisdom, morbidity, alienation and soul" (91). Morbidity. Really? What does she mean by that? I wondered as she skillfully drew me further into the dark side of Sophia.

Arlene Landau is a scholar whose writing is like the writing of good science writers, those talented at translating esoteric science into clear meaning for nonscientific readers. Landau's topic, can one whose nature has been imprinted by the goddess of love find a satisfactory *merely* human existence, is complex, intricate, and multifaceted. She renders it completely accessible and understandable. Her writing sounds clear as a bell from the classics to the modern, alchemy to the consulting room.

Also, as we are brought behind the scenes, Landau never resorts to the lurid or voyeuristic, though the shocking events she sometimes describes could easily have been cast in that light. We are moved by seeing into actual lives

of real women where dizzying juxtapositions abide—the sublime and the tragic, thrilling excitement and promise accompanied by mind numbing boredom, anxiety, and sometimes harrowing suffering.

Each chapter is accessible, alive; each chapter vital on its own. That satisfies a reader like me who seldom reads nonfiction books in chapter order and often browses through the text or table of contents to begin with the chapter whose title most grabs me. As I reread *Tragic Beauty* to write this review, I started with Chapter 7, "Aging, Sophia, and Aphrodite's Soul," drawn by my own aging.

To whet your appetite and reveal more specifically what awaits you, here are the chapter titles for *Tragic Beauty*: "Who Is Aphrodite? Aphrodite's Story: Films and Novels"; "Aphrodite in the Spotlight—Actresses, Celebrities, and the Dark Side of Hollywood"; "The Classical Aphrodite and Her Sisters"; "Understanding Aphrodite with the Help of Jung"; "Aphrodite in Analysis"; "Aging, Sophia, and Aphrodite's Soul"; and "Aphrodite's Gift."

The chapter titles speak for themselves. But I do want to let you know, if perhaps you love alchemy as I do, that Chapter 5, "Understanding Aphrodite with the Help of Jung," uses the *Rosarium* series to chronicle and illustrate what can destroy a Venus woman—constantly, indiscriminately falling in love:

For the Aphrodite-identified woman who is naively persuaded by the uniqueness of her own life, the *Rosarium* pictures represent a potentially sobering and educative example of the male and female human being living out the ancient, ubiquitous, endlessly repeating and thus, utterly predictable pattern of emotion, fantasy, language, and behaviors associated with the experience of "falling in love" (56–57)

## Who Is She and What Tales Does She Tell?

From Hesiod and Homer's poems, Landau offers us insights into the nature of Aphrodite. Aphrodite personified and encouraged "coy girlishness, an ability to inspire intense feelings of desire and love, and the delight of indulging in pleasure" (36). She is "laughter-loving" (36). Right alongside this joy, she is also described as coercive and a trickster, using "a petulant tempestuousness to fool other gods and humans into doing her bidding" (37).

An Aphrodite woman embodies the image of desire. Everyone wants to be with her. She is alluring, compelling, enchanting, evoking the erotic passions of the archetypal realm with which she is identified. She may or may not be objectively beautiful, but you will know her because she exerts a force field, a pull. To be with her promises utopia, eternal joy, and light. This light side of a Venus Aphrodite life is a tale many women imagine themselves living vicariously.

However, "the ideal of beauty often obscures the dark, death-like side of Aphrodite," relates Landau (6). Early on the goddess of love was also known as "she upon the graves" (6). "In classical literature she embodied the pleasure of passionate love but also the irrational and often destructive forces that can accompany that passion" (39). Often envied by her sisters, an Aphrodite-identified woman may destroy herself and others in her orbit. She and her followers are mesmerized by the Olympian fusion, participation mystique of the power of love and beauty. The pull can lure those in its spell away from reality into miasmas of addiction, multiple cosmetic surgeries, crushing debt, unremitting pursuit of the next love affair, and the concomitant repetitive despair of abandonment.

Landau uses examples from literature and film, from her patients in her analytic practice, and from her own personal experience to bring Aphrodite-in-the-world to life. Landau reveals that she, as one imprinted by Aphrodite, is twice saved. At age twelve she found literature, and at age twenty-four she found a Jungian analyst. She had been to therapy before but had never been asked about her dreams. Getting involved with dreams opened up a whole unique, intriguing, and influential world. Dreams became, as [Whitmont and Perera](#) called them, *A Portal to the Source* (1992), for Landau. Then later, when her analyst told her the story of *Sleeping Beauty*

and how one day my animus, my inner man rather than some flesh-and-blood man, would kiss me (metaphorically) and redeem me, and that then I could pursue a course that had meaning to me—I was blown away by the archetypal hit. I felt hooked up to the eternal; it was an experience of a religious nature. (67)

Within six months, she went back to college and eventually became a Jungian analyst and a mythologist.

A tale that I find particularly poignant is one Landau shares from her own life. Brought up in Beverley Hills, Landau was drawn into the entertainment business, as a dancer and an aspiring actress. One of her jobs was that of the stand-in. The stand-in literally stands in place of the actor so the crew can light the set. "One stands there hour after hour, day after day, year after year—a fill-in, an object that only stands for the real thing" (26). Can you feel the ultimate despair in this? Here is where Landau eventually uttered, "the emptiness of the pursuit engulfed me" (25). For after all, like the stand-in, the Aphrodite-identified woman is not and can never be the great goddess Herself.

This book is one of the clearest tales of “individuation” that I have read. It goes to the whole(ness) of the Jungian endeavor, which is too often caricaturized. I was at a lecture where the presenter, a somewhat well-known depth psychological personage, affirmed the way to your shadow was this: make a list of all the things you don’t like about other people. Now, voilà, that is your shadow. I cringed within and squirmed in my seat at the oversimplification. Landau’s work draws you into the shadowy underworld and sometimes makes you cringe and squirm, but never from oversimplification. Her work is nuanced, detailed (“the devil is in the details”) and in service to the gritty reality of a life lived in the shadow of Aphrodite.

The tales of Aphrodite women included in *Tragic Beauty* are those of souls cast in a formidable archetypal mold. Can the woman find her particular self? A Venus/Aphrodite woman can be too hot to approach and/or so easily dismissed. Some survive and even thrive. Some do not. Landau tells us, “Women who embody the Aphrodite archetype have much less choice in how they behave or react than they, or others, imagine” (8).

### From Tragedy into Life

The hope here is that a Venus Aphrodite woman can choose to come into herself and into the limited human realm, that she can incarnate into the imperfect yet still glorious human being that she is. Individuation is the preferred goal here. Individuation is “the psychological process that makes a human being an ‘individual,’ a unique, indivisible unit. . . Individuation, as Jung perceives it, involves a realization of inner wholeness through the progressive and conscious experience of the psyche’s contents, including the anima and animus” (57). And “it is through

becoming an individual, not a caricature of the ancient goddess Aphrodite, that one develops integrity” (90).

While the psychological conundrums of each Aphrodite woman will vary, there are underlying similarities that Landau discusses, including autoeroticism, abandonment, and a void in place of access to her own soul and the soul of the world.

Nathan Schwartz-Salant’s *Narcissism and Character Transformation* (1982) comes to mind. Schwartz-Salant talks about how Narcissus gazed into the pool and saw only his alluring reflection. Schwartz-Salant wants those who walk the archetypal Narcissus path to peer beyond the reflection, look through the surface of the water to what is beneath. Perhaps the Self and one’s particular self can be found underneath the surface.

How alike are Narcissus and the Aphrodite woman. Indeed, Landau informs us of the autoerotic in possessed Aphrodite women. “They may appear to be relating—especially to the men who pursue them—but in actuality they relate to their own idealized selves. The men are useful to them only as they mirror and support the glorious, irresistible Aphrodite self-image” (22).

Like Schwartz-Salant, Landau prompts looking within, beneath and beyond the surface of an Aphrodite-identified life. Often what is beneath the surface is an abandoned, terribly lonely, orphaned, and despairing child. Landau proposes that, if not mortally wounded by overwhelming trauma, an Aphrodite woman can get beyond the repetitive self-negating destruction she inflicts on herself and others because she is in thrall to archetypal energies. Landau offers hope that beneath and beyond the pain and suffering lies access to a genuine joy, that of Homer’s “laughter-loving” Aphrodite. Perhaps the Aphrodite woman can claim a turquoise and diamond ring of her

own. It would fit her and her alone, just as the glass slipper precisely fit only Cinderella.

As I mentioned earlier, Landau offers examples of how this process can be accomplished, or not, from literature and from stories of her patients and her own personal experience. As analyst, she takes us into the intimacy of the analytic encounter with several patients wherein, like the subtitle to *Tragic Beauty* suggests, the lost soul can be found and, furthermore, regenerated. The Aphrodite-identified woman can emerge out of the possession of the archetypal realm into her own more specific and particular, albeit limited, human nature.

Additionally, as part of the analytic process, Landau asserts that an Aphrodite-identified woman needs to change in the way of expanding the narrow, confining purview of her realm, the pursuit of love and beauty.

Aphrodite is the most vulnerable of the goddesses—because she is the most focused on love relationships, in which impulse, loss, and suffering are built-in components. As the most resistant to transformation, with little capacity to relate to other archetypal qualities, she is the most doomed from birth . . . it is very hard for her to focus on any other aspect of herself or the world at large. (66)

So it becomes imperative that she learns to integrate aspects of other goddesses to survive the shadow side of love.

Landau elucidates some of the qualities involved: Hestia, deep, individual reflection; Demeter, bountiful maternity; Persephone, youthful and yet Queen of the Underworld; Artemis, access to solitude and wildness; Athena, warrior. Landau wryly puts it this way—while Aphrodite remains ensnared in her world of love and its machinations, “Artemis can go into the woods, Hestia can sit by the hearth and write in her journal, Athena can plan a battle or become a lawyer,

and Hera can stay married and be a wife and partner” (65). Let’s get Aphrodite down from Olympus and off to visit and play with and learn more from her sisters.

Ultimately, what is called for, Landau reiterates in several places, is *consciousness*. Then the author seems to consider more deeply and says that consciousness is only a partial answer to the question of possible change. Landau goes on to name *humility* as a necessary ingredient for real integration in this specific individuation process. “When one is cursed or blessed with the archetype of Aphrodite, one is inflated—large. But all glory is fleeting, and one must know when the party is over. The full answer may be *reflective* humility” (66).

## In Conclusion

Landau says it best: “This book is in honor of—not an attack on—Aphrodite, and points to both a love and a healthy fear of the ambivalent power of the goddess. I offer a drop of sweet dew, to help humanize the women who are afflicted by her power” (100).

I highly recommend you put this book on your “must-read” list. Like its author and her goddess, it captivates and inspires. After all, as Landau quotes Hillman, “Psyche serves in the temple of Aphrodite. Aphrodite is what makes something light up so you want it. She’s the touch of beauty” (1).

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PUDDI KULLBERG, MA, LPC, is a Jungian analyst in private practice in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She is a member of the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts (IRSJA) and a founding member of the Boulder Association of Jungian Analysts (BAJA). *Correspondence:* 1301 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, #300, Colorado Springs, CO 80905. E-mail: [puddi.kullberg@gmail.com](mailto:puddi.kullberg@gmail.com).

#### ABSTRACT

*Tragic Beauty: The Dark Side of Venus Aphrodite and the Loss and Regeneration of Soul* is a deeply moving explication of the compelling, golden, and erotic nature of Aphrodite Venus women. Arlene Diane Landau uses personal experience (she is Los Angeles born and bred), myth, film, literature, classical and Jungian traditions along with clinical vignettes to reveal her topic. Landau knows firsthand the overwhelming power of the archetype of the goddess of love. She lyrically and unflinchingly tells how one can live with or die from the Aphrodite energy. Reflection, steadfastness, intelligence, and courage are attributes that need to be present for a woman to relate to rather than identify with or be possessed by Venus Aphrodite. Unexpectedly, joy is also essential. Some survive and thrive; others do not.

#### KEY WORDS

alchemy, Aphrodite, archetype, beauty, individuation, Jung, love, shadow, soul, Venus, wholeness

## The Ariadne's Thread of *The Red Book*

CARLOS BYINGTON

Review of: Maria Helena Mandacarú Guerra, *The Love Drama of C. G. Jung: As Revealed in His Life and in His Red Book*, Toronto: Inner City Books, 2014.

Few people had seen, read, or studied *The Red Book* before its publication in 2009. The secrecy and illusiveness that preceded publication contributed to the fascination it

exerted on the public, both within and outside of the Jungian community. The main symbols associated with it were stimulated by Jung's separation from Freud and his vision of bloodied Europe, which he had in 1913 and which he himself associated with a possible schizophrenic breakdown (Jung 1961/1989, 175). (Jung's fear of a psychotic breakdown associated with his vision was allayed by Jung himself when he had news of World War I in August 1914. He wrote to Mircea Eliade that this terrible event gave him much personal relief: "Nobody was happier than I. Now I was sure that no schizophrenia was threatening me" [McGuire and Hull 1977, 201]). Guerra, however, introduces a new perspective, considering *The Red Book* the result of a personal love drama lived by Jung. He was married to Emma when he fell in love with Toni Wolff, and he wanted to live with both women.

Geniuses can arouse a range of reactions from great and esteemed admiration to diminished status and even aversion in the collective and, with Jung, that was certainly the case. He himself was ambivalent and unsure whether his was creativity or fragile mental health. This might partially explain why he was reluctant to publish his *Red Book*. It is also likely that Jung's reluctance to publish *The Red Book* during his lifetime was that the meaning of the symbols was deeply intimate (Shamdasani 2009, 221). In this respect, it is important to know that Toni Wolff was the only person who knew the contents of *The Red Book* until World War I broke out and that she was against its publication (214). For Jung, a likely difficulty with this book was the originality of expressing a "scientific work"—for he always considered himself a scientist—in a pictorial style with archetypal images. Would this style