

The Matrix and the Intruder

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Abstract

This paper is a reflection on the relations between an individual and the different groups to whom he belongs during the course of his life. The aim of this paper is to describe these relations in the terms of the paradigm of a matrix and an intruder. We believe that this interpretation can shed an interesting light on the individual development. It can also provide a key of interpretation of some fundamental life events that may be of help for therapists. The two roles are distinct, but in time an individual can assume either or even both at the same time. We argue that this duality could be the expression of the opposing poles of a Jungian archetype. We also elaborate on the relations of this archetype with the septenary model of the psyche of the Swiss psychoanalyst Charles Baudouin and the schizo-paranoid and depressive phases described by Melany Klein. We conclude with a reference to Etruscan and early Roman art in relation to the emptiness of the matrix role and the existential solitude of man.

Keywords

Matrix, Intruder, Jungian Archetypes, Psychoanalysis, Baudouin Septenary

1. Introduction

We all were the intruder, a matrix first maternal, then familial, and finally social welcomed, for the best or for the worse, subject to certain conditions. Let's say that roles—we use this term even if it does not convey the full idea of the incarnation of the nature of intruder or matrix in our flesh and soul—of intruders and matrix alternate according to the situations and the successive moments of our life: we are, first, the intruder in the matrix-womb of our mother and in the matrix-family of the couple who conceived us, to become matrix ourselves dur-

ing the course of our existence. And often we are the matrix and the intruder at the same time.

The alternations between the opposites poles of intruder and matrix suggest us that we are dealing with a Jungian archetype (Jung, 1954), which is characterized by two opposite but indissoluble polarities, as the male-female Rebis, the Senex-Puer, the Old Sage-Old Monkey, Mother-Death etc. (see Stevens, 2006). We propose that the intruder-matrix is the archetype that is “constellated” whenever we activate the concept of container-content, protector-protected, invader-host. This is in essence analogous to the duality of the male archetype (the intruder) and feminine (the container), or Ch’ien, *the creative* and K’un *the receptive* in I-Ching (Wilhelm & Baynes, 1950).

2. The First Matrixes

Even if maternal love is often presented—even idealized—as unconditional, the complex paths of motherhood negate the gift of life to a fairly large number of individuals that nature or culture eliminates with involuntary, accidental or voluntary abortions. The mother is also, sometimes, the abortionist, and the intruder’s journey into existence is very quickly terminated. Strictly speaking, there is almost nothing unconditional in the maternal posture. The situation of this intruder, which we all have been at the onset of our life, is not so reassuring because if this first matrix of ours does not want us, it is all over before it begins.

A little more reassuring is the situation nine months later, because if we got that far, there is a good enough chance for the maternal matrix to welcome us as a baby, perhaps not quite desired or planned at first, but now endowed with greater existential weight and physical, emotional and contractual presence. And even if we are abandoned, often we manage to survive. This is already something.

The intruder needs some internal and external safety to survive, internal because he has to feel safe, external because he has to be (relatively) safe. This situation of dependence continues throughout life. Strictly speaking, the so-called innocent and blissful childhood is, in fact, where the individual has more to fear from the external environment because it is entrusted to the good will of the mother, and more generally of the parents, in a state of perfect impotence.

We can even say that the less secure the outside world, the more the interior one compensates with the reassuring certainty of the parents’ supposedly unconditional love or the child power to control it. This is what we call narcissism (Freud, 1914), a homeostatic device to counter the state of extreme dependence of childhood. And the confidence in the parents’ unconditional love is a certainty often defended and maintained against all odds and, at times, against evidence itself. This is not to say that all parents are abusive, but rather that the childhood condition is by definition a risky one, often marked by extreme sensitivity, overwhelming fears or imperfect health. Moreover, the more intelligent the child, the more he will realize the instability of life and of his life in particular. He will also realize that the love of the parents is not so unconditional and that

to earn it one must face toils, sacrifices and exercises of good will. This is where the intruder is confronted with his developing superego and the desire-duty to please the parents.

3. Baudouin's Septenary

We would like at this point briefly describe the theory of the *septenary* elaborated by the Swiss psychoanalyst Charles Baudouin (Baudouin, 1950). In his theory, Baudouin introduces a scheme “of the seven partners of the self” that includes the three Freudian instances (Freud, 1923) of the Id (called by Baudouin the Primitive), the Ego and the Super-ego, the three Jungian instances (Jung, 1951) of the Persona, Shadow and Self (both centre and container of all), plus one instance introduced by Baudouin, the *Automat* (Figure 1). On their opposition, agreement or complementarity depends the ever-shifting balance of the psychic system. We could extend the concept of *septenary* to describe the confrontation between the individual and the “others”, or, in other words, between the intruder and the matrix.

According to Baudouin, the Automat is the first instance in our development that contains the basic psychological functions common to all animals, in particular repetition behaviour, pure instinct and the “reactive arc” of experimental psychology (sensation-perception-reaction). These functions are repetitive and therefore reassuring; hence the term Automat. But they enter into conflict with the Primitive (called the Id by Freud), which aims at pleasure, aliveness and freedom. The outside world reacts to this tendency in the child, who develops a Persona, or mask, to show only what pleases others in order to remain accepted by the group. Between the Persona and the Primitive, therefore, tensions arise, leading to inner feelings of chaos. Thus develops a sort of mediator, the Ego, who chooses between the two and often feels compelled to repress parts of the self (usually the Primitive) into the Shadow (Jung's term for the unconscious), where many of our animal instincts are relegated, to join with deep layers of the psyche common to all humans and animals. However, these vital aspects of our

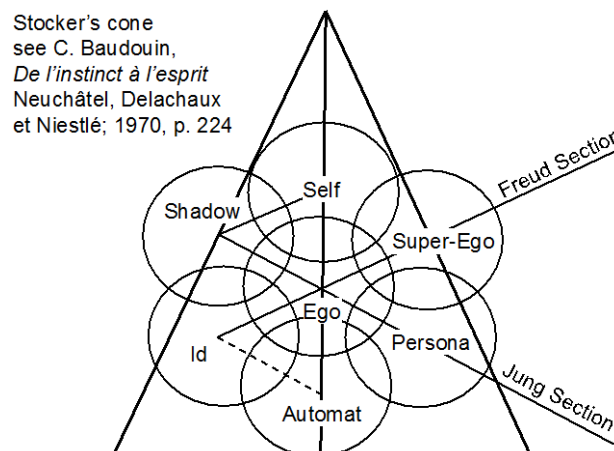


Figure 1. The seven instances of the self, according to Charles Baudouin.

fundamental nature refuse to remain silent, and clamour for expression, creating tensions and often leading to nightmares at this stage of our development. To maintain order, the psyche develops a Superego (comparable to a sort of conscience) to keep the unacceptable tendencies in their place. The entire process, always filled with tensions then a new balance, leads a healthy psyche to a gradual capacity to integrate the warring parts of this inner world. This process, called Individuation by Jung, entails the actualisation of the whole being, which Baudouin, after Jung, calls the Self. The closed, repressive morality of the Superego is replaced in the Self by an open, more inclusive sense of what is good. The Self represents that, towards which our most natural unfolding tends, a transcendental movement, never achieved, but always in the direction of our most profound psychic tendencies. In Baudouin's schema, mental illness derives from a breakdown of the harmonious and dialectic relations between these seven instances due to a problem which has occurred during their ontogenetic development.

By considering the Instances of Baudouin, we have the persona coming just after the primitive. In this conception of development and psychic dynamics—where development is a step-by-step process and dynamics a “dance” of the various instances in relation with one another—the social mask endeavours to contain the child's playful and spontaneous impulses by keeping him on right path of the law (Baudouin, 1950, Chapter 3, [Betrisey, 2018](#)).

Is it true that the persona comes so early in our life? Is it the pressure of social propriety before the fear/desire to please parents that finally contains the unbridled energy of the child and the primitive that we all have been, and that still inhabits us? ([Galli Carminati & Carminati, 2018a](#)). We would be tempted to say “who cares?”, after all our parents had in mind the rules of behaviour and the limits imposed by the group when educating us from our earliest childhood. Whether directly or “by ricochet” via the mediation of our parents, the social rule, as they had lived and integrated it in their own education and then in their own lives—which does not necessarily coincide in times of rapid change—trained and moulded us as well, to make social life possible ([Galli Carminati & Carminati, 2018b](#)).

That is why in a previous study we proposed to modify the ontogenesis of Baudouin's *septenary* and swap the emergence of the persona—closely related to the “social mask”, its very etymology, (*per sonare*, resonate through) indicating the masks of the Greek theatre—with the one of the superego, which we consider antecedent and in connection with the parental imagos ([Galli Carminati & Carminati, 2018c](#)).

The appearance of the persona should follow the formation of the shadow, rather than precede it, because it is the shadow which hides behind the social mask, being generated by the superego, which in turns creates the persona from the depths of the family trinity.

4. The School Years

The family matrix is a school of obedience, if we do what the parents want, we

are a good son, otherwise we are quickly a problem child of whom the father talks very little and the mother too much.

But the intruder is still young, he must leave the inside of the parents' house to prove himself at school, another uncomfortable matrix. There are friends, teachers, books, homework, in short, an arsenal of encounters to manage and hurdles to overcome. One must be good enough both at school time and play time, duties often contradictory between *Carletto* (the often unpleasant "first of the class") and *Pierino* (the dunce who amuses the friends): there are the pros and cons in both situations, it is better to blend in the mass to be a good intruder, not too embarrassing, not too loud, not too much, in short.

The school matrix is a school of moderation and levelling, that is, of social adaptation. The school experience lasts a long time and covers a relatively long span of years in a human life. It accompanies us from early childhood to youth through what is defined as adolescence. It is perhaps here that we encounter the first emergence of "multiple matrices". The complexity of the relations between family and school and their evolution in the socio-cultural context are in themselves an argument of great relevance. We are also witnessing a proliferation of matrices with the spread of "social media". The "friends" of Facebook, Snapchat and so on are also a matrix and the fact that it is "dematerialized" does not make its effects less relevant. One could also think about the role of a matrix (sub-group) as an intruder in another matrix, but this could be the subject of another contribution.

It is often during adolescence that the first crisis of loyalty between matrices appears, if we can express it in this way. The intruder seeks to find a matrix other than that of the family, other than that of the school, in a noisily disturbing or subtly critical manner according to his personality and vital force. It also depends on the intruder's acquired ability to find a balance between the importance of the matrix and the process of individuation. Sometimes, a compromise attitude towards the demands of the context may seem "mature", but in reality, it may hide a great conformism that delays or impedes the distancing of the subject from the family and school matrices.

According to the outcome of school and college, a new, highly desired but equally threatening matrix faces the intruder: the professional world. The professions will probably be more than one, since today it is very rare to do the same work throughout one's life. As we hypothesised in a previous work (Galli Carminati & Carminati, 2018d), the workplace, in spite of all its virile symbolisms of arena, competition and other male paraphernalia, is symbolically the feeding mother, or her opposite, the starving mother who causes famine. We have elaborated this concept in a chapter of *Le Petit Bonheur* (op cit., chapter *Mobbing and maternal imago, a two-brain reflection. A blue-sky discussion on therapeutic situations*¹.) where, while discussing the effects of mobbing, we have identified the relation with the employer with the one with mother:

¹Original in French: *Mobbing et imago maternelle, une réflexion à deux cerveaux. Digression très libre sur des situations thérapeutiques.*

“In fact I realized, with a certain surprise, that probably this deep destabilization that comes from the breakdown of the relationship with the famous workplace-institution concerns less the connection with the ‘law’ than the memory of the primary frustration: ‘I’m not going to feed you anymore’, which is the bond with the mother, real or fantasized for the toddler that forever we remain in our unconscious”.

5. The Intruder Becomes the Matrix

The next transition—not always timewise because one can be in a couple before entering the professional world—is marriage, or nowadays, living-together. Here the intruder seeks the matrix of the couple and then, often, of his new family. It is in this context that the intruder-matrix relationship becomes more complex and sometimes entangled: the other wants to find in us the matrix what we ourselves seek in her. Even more strongly the children, by definition, look to us for the matrix, until adolescence makes this quest of theirs more complex and tormented.

The conception and birth of children are the moments in which we really identify ourselves with the matrix, and this is perhaps the reason why having children raises so many issues in our society where we have the means to avoid conception or to legally terminate the pregnancy. The recurrent reflection on the fact that children are noisy, annoying and expensive, that they give no satisfaction and that it is wiser not to have any, while having a certain root in reality, shows especially the doubts and reticence to embark on a much more complex phase of our life, where we must change our role and become ourselves the matrix, the one that welcomes the intruder. We therefore accept the solitude of the container which has only the void behind itself, that is to say, basically, nothing but death.

With this decision we consent to an act that, fantasmatically, triggers for us too the tragic (in the Nietzschean sense, that is crudely realistic) cycle leading to our end. In reality this happens anyway and well beyond our will and actions, with or without children, but somehow we often cherish the illusion that if we do not trigger this mechanism, our time will remain suspended... In any case time passes, and we arrive at the dreaded and longed for moment, where we leave the arena of the so-called active life and start to reduce our activity, from one day to another for those employed or perhaps more gradually in the case of the liberal professions.

Retirement... how many people have thought about it (or done their best not to think about it) without ever coming to form a precise idea... Symbolically we live it as a goodbye to active life, and this farewell acquires the meaning of a farewell to life itself. There is a telescoping of time and it is difficult, really very difficult, to find a perspective, to progress, step by step, towards it and then into old age. The temptation to put an end to it before time ends us is sometimes overwhelming. The only way to escape this anguish is often to look myopically at

our immediate present. We all go through this, and yet, the years of old age, if well managed may be long and surprisingly full of satisfaction and action. For many this transition is marked by the discomfiting sensation of not being a matrix any longer, but only an intruder, sometimes “useless” and unwelcome by, and excluded from, the social matrix. We no longer are “active participants” in society, with the helm of our life in our hands (or better, have the illusion to) and we feel ourselves becoming a burden. The soothing reasoning that we have well deserved our retirement and the accompanying social benefits remains a “reasoning” and it is sometimes not felt in our unconscious depths.

Mobbing can give us the same vertigo of loss of control (Galli Carminati & Carminati, 2018d). After decades of feeling a well-oiled cog, or even an important actor of the corporate body, of “our” firm or “our institution”, we suddenly are pushed more or less rapidly and irremediably into a (very) peripheral position.

6. The Senile Years

A patient told us the story of his family reunions along the years. We start on the left side of the dinner table as babies, among infants, strollers and young parents. Then we move a little more toward the center, the place of teenagers and other young people to then move again to the center of the table with the mature parents and the adults in the prime of life. We then slide to the right of the table, retiree still very healthy, but soon we move further down with the aging grandparents, and then again great-grandparents with their rollators and wheelchairs, to finally not be at table at all... For him this was his parable of life.

Old age is a very uncertain and unstable period of our life, adolescence in comparison is a long quiet river. We ignore its duration, or the conditions of our life once there. When young(er) we may perceive senility as a monotonous decline. In reality we are a very different person in our expectations and abilities at 70, 80, 90 and, if we get there, 100 or more, also depending on our health, that of our spouse and children, the laws that regulate the care we receive and our pension funds, with the constant reminder of our increased transiency and fragility.

We become “a burden to others” and we should have the decency to leave the scene... to choose to die with dignity, that is to say, quickly and cleanly. This pressure on the intruder is sometimes direct, sometimes more insidious: retirement homes cost a lot and the money that should have gone to the offspring risks to be spent for one own’s survival: it is unfortunate. The “dear” intruder now costs “dearly” to the matrix.

If the intruder succumbs to the social pressure and he is taken by a Stockholm syndrome, he ends up agreeing with the social matrix and decide to end his own life. He may even be serene in the face of death and, according to “complex mechanisms of identification and survival”², decide to forgo his last days or years in favour of others. This may mean a lonely suicide or, where the law allows it, de-

²See for instance https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm_syndrome.

parting with a nice music in the background and a euthanizing cocktail with (hopefully) fast effect.

Certainly, there are also “old bags” that have no care for the “good” of the social matrix and who go by “intruder I was born, intruder I’m going to die, I have been a pain all along my life, I’m not going to stop now”. You see these old people who “hold on”, go shopping bent in half, using their rollator as an “urban weapon”. If they can no longer stay at home, they have no qualms costing a fortune to the community, their insurer or their heirs’ capital in retirement benefits and medical expenses. With nothing to lose, they often end up becoming almost unmanageable, in a whirlwind of stubbornness and tyrannies. Indeed, we admire these existential “resistance fighters”, even if sometimes they could be very obnoxious.

7. A Message from the Past

We were discussing about this eternal cyclical intruder-matrix opposition with one of the Baudouin Institute didactician³. We evoked the alternation between the disruptive role of the intruder and the homeostatic one of the container, which is reminiscent of the dialectical counterpoint identified by M. Klein (1946) between the schizo-paranoid position of the intruder and the depressive one of the matrix. We were at this time “intruders” preparing our “divergence”—if not complete separation—from the “matrix” Institute that had trained us as psychoanalysts.

In view of the origins of this teacher, we had evoked the Etruscan statue of the orator (see **Figure 2**) who harangues the crowd, recalling the comment of Argan (2018), where the author senses void and loneliness expressed by the sculpture: “... a dignity already Roman, but invaded by the disquietude and melancholy of the late Etruscan culture”. The body is leaning slightly forward, the folds of the toga escaping in the opposite direction, the figure being pulled back by a mysterious force; and already he was on the point of disappearing—with a look and gesture that seem to leave rather than exhort—in the dark region of nothingness (See **Appendix 1**).

We also spoke of the Apollo of Veio (see **Figure 3**) with this same step forward, an almost precipitated unbalance in his so human attempt to escape the void. We have spoken at length, discussed and argued about our need to leave and create a psychoanalytic matrix elsewhere, with the regrets of unloved intruders who decide to cross the looking-glass and become that lonely womb that leans forward to flee the void.

But back to the archetype... What is strange of the matrix role is that, precisely, behind it there is only nothingness. Would it have been better, perhaps, to remain an unloved intruder, accepting slight and compromise with an indifferent or rejecting matrix, without crossing the line?

When we become a womb, we know that once the cycle is spun there is death and we decide to face it. So much the better, one would like to say, life goes on,

³Institut International de Psychanalyse Charles Baudouin, <https://www.institut-baudouin.com>.



Figure 2. “Lost wax” bronze statue of the artist (Arringatore), Pila (Perugia, Italy), 1st century BC (Photo by DEA/G.Nimatallah/De Agostini/Getty Images).



Figure 3. Comparison of the speaker and Apulu (Apollo of Veii), 510-500 BCE. Painted Etruscan terracotta. National Museum of Villa Giulia, Rome.

the wheel turns, it is essentially and always a question of time. But when we say this, when we become matrix and have children or create an association of people to share our ideas, or in some other way “leave our mark” in the social or

corporate world, we are constantly reminded that our creations grow and we fade. In order to accept all this, the diminution of our energy, the constant struggle to spare it by managing retirement, the decline in old age and the dependence on others, the process of mourning must be started and lived through. In essence, once matrix, we must accept our own death, even if, at the same time we tell ourselves soothing fables and we rock ourselves with the comforting illusion of our eternity. It is not forbidden to dream, but only if we know that it is just a dream.

8. Conclusion

In this contribution we have identified an existential polarity between containers and contained that we have named matrix and intruder. We have discussed how this polarity could be the expression of a Jungian archetype and we have sketched how it evolves from conception to childhood to maturity and old age. We believe that this may provide an interesting key for psychoanalysts and practitioners to interpret some delicate passages in life and express them to their patients in these terms in order to help them. We think that this concept has also interesting application to professional and academic life.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1

It is interesting to report here in extenso the comments of C.G. Argan on this statue.

Note 1.

The Etruscan, industrialist or merchant who has the concrete feeling of practical life, gets lost before the emptiness of death. He tries to fill it with images, the empty forms of oneself, of the things of the world; but the same forms that move and live in the context of infinite relationships of which the world is made, remain immovable and immutable in the empty space of the beyond. Everything is seen from the point of view of the dead, in an inverted perspective, with a “passion for life” that can no longer be satisfied and that does not admit choices: there is no longer the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad, everything is equally meaningful. The tares, the evils, the deformities are still signs of life, concrete signs of existence: objects of regret, even, for the one over whom looms the unbearable threat of not being anymore (Argan, 2018: p. 68).

Note 2.

Etruscan portraiture is the first non-celebratory, commemorative, interpretative portraiture: therefore, it can be said to be truly realistic. There is no psychological research; there is no judgment in these portraits: qualities and defects are reduced to the lowest common denominator of the vital sign, the proof of existence. Therefore, Etruscan art, despite its relationship with classicism, is clearly anti-classical: in classical art the appearance changes and the substance remains, for the Etruscan the substance no longer exists, the appearance becomes substantial. It can be seen in one of the later masterpieces, the bronze statue of the haranguer, of a dignity already Roman, but with the disquietude and melancholy of the late Etruscan culture. The body is slightly leaning forward, the folds of the toga escaping in the opposite direction, as the figure was drawn back by a mysterious force; and already it was about to disappear—with that look and that gesture that seem to leave rather than exhort—in the dark region of nothingness. Testaments of the “passion for life”, of the concrete sense of the value of things are the forms full of animation that the Etruscans have given to the furnishings of their homes, to the ornaments of their people: creating a high-level ceramic, a refined goldsmithery, precious metal furnishings, small bronze sculptures etc. Perhaps it was precisely in the Etruscan civilization that art was conceived for the first time as a supreme, metaphysical moment of technology and human labour (Argan, 2018: p. 69).

About the sentence “There is no psychological research, there is no judgment in these portraits”, it seems to us that if judgement is absent, nevertheless the depth of that empty gaze cannot be rendered without a deep psychological awareness. This psychological depth, if it does not concern the single subject, still touches the human condition of finitude.