

“Projections, Archetypes and Femininity: The Anima in Bull Durham”

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“I believe in the church of baseball. I've tried all the major religions and most of the minor ones. I've worshipped Buddha, Allah, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, trees, mushrooms and Isadorah Duncan. I know things. For instance, there are 108 beads in a Catholic rosary and there are 108 stitches in a baseball. When I learned that I gave Jesus a chance. But it just didn't work out between us. The Lord laid too much guilt on me. I prefer metaphysics to theology. You see there's no guilt in baseball and it's never boring ... which makes it like sex. There's never been a baseball player slept with me who didn't have the best year of his career. Makin' love is like hittin' a baseball, you just gotta relax and concentrate. Besides I'd never sleep with a ballplayer hitting under 250, unless he had a lot of RBIs or was a great glove man up the middle. You see there's a certain amount of life and wisdom I give these boys. I can expand their minds. Sometimes when I got a ballplayer alone, I'll just read Emily Dickinson or Walt Whitman to 'im. And the guys are so sweet, they always stay and listen. Of course, a guy'll listen to anything if he thinks it's foreplay. I make them feel confident and they make me feel safe, and pretty. Of course, what I give them lasts a lifetime. What they give me lasts 142 games. Sometimes it seems like a bad trade, but bad trades are a part of baseball. Who can forget Frank Robinson for Milt Pappas for god's sake. It's a long season and you gotta trust it. I've tried 'em all, I really have and the only church that truly feeds the soul, day in, day out is the church of baseball”.

The foregoing is Susan Sarandon's (alias Annie Savoy's) opening soliloquy in the early scenes of the film, "Bill Durham" released in the Summer of 1988 at the same time as "Who Framed Roger

Rabbit." The two films are enchanting, even serendipitous since both "Bull Durham" and "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" are centred on the theme of animation, the former in a psychological sense, the latter in the context of cartoon-animation. Never a real fan of baseball, I am absolutely enamoured of its literature and the levels of meaning the game and its metaphors seem to carry and convey. And "Bull Durham," this little sleeper of a literate, romantic comedy has intrigued me ever since I saw it in 1988, and in every subsequent viewing it seems to offer more and more meaning. It is entirely possible that "Bull Durham" is a marvellous spoof of New Age mysticism. For the purposes of this paper, I choose to see it as ripe with interpretive possibilities.

"Bull Durham" the movie is literally *projected* onto a screen. Its essence is about baseball and love/relationships. What I project onto the movie stems from or arises in my learning from Jungian Psychology. In particular, Jung postulated that the unconscious forces of the psyche are the driving powers in human character, personality and behaviour. Human gender, while biologically determined, Jung believed was also *animated* or enlivened by unconscious archetypes, the most central of which are the animus or "masculine" aspects within the psyche of a woman, and the "anima" or "feminine" qualities within a man. Thus, ideal or stereotypic qualities of masculine to feminine might include: world-oriented to family-oriented; tasks to relationships preference; doing to being; assertive to receptive and so forth. As men, for example, we *project* ideal feminine qualities, our internal ideal qualities, onto a woman/women. Falling in love might be perceived as one man's anima falling in love with a woman's animus. He looks into her mirror of the ideal woman and falls in love with his own projections of femininity and vice versa. The chameleon effect is a case in point. True love or true relationship involves years and years of withdrawing those projections to see and appreciate who each other really is and of integrating one's own "feminine" qualities as a man and "masculine" qualities as a woman into one's whole

being. Jung maintained that we spend most or all of our lives casting and catching projections of qualities and characteristics with all the people we encounter. There is a lot to be learned from "Bull Durham" about the integration or recognition of the feminine, feeling side of men in baseball, the same "feminine" side from which spring the creative arts. In fact, if I were to subtitle the movie, it would be: "Bull Durham: The Rose Goes in the Front, Big Guy."

In the film's opening credits, just prior to Annie's "church of baseball" speech, baseball's cultural roots are sentimentally portrayed in black and white complete with a tribute to 'Babe' (an interesting "feminine" nickname!) Ruth. As Annie renders her soliloquy, the camera pans her home which itself appears as some kind of baseball shrine complete with baseball pictures, trophies and memorabilia. We finally see her applying lipstick at her dressing table and then, as her speech winds down, we watch her sashay through the streets and into the Durham Bulls' ballpark just as Bill Haley and the Comets' music, "Rock Around the Clock" ushers us into the ballpark, the true church of baseball. Significantly, Annie narrates the whole film. Thus, we have a woman sermonizing about the male domain of baseball. The "Bull Durham" title suggests there might be a macho male character Bull Durham. Annie is a part-time English teacher, full-time baseball groupie, perhaps even a "tramp" (whose projection?) because of her seasonal promiscuity even though she envisions her morality in different fashion when she declares:

Despite my rejection of most Judeo-Christian ethics, I am, within the framework of the baseball season, monogamous.

Annie Savoy, her last name possibly an allusion to the hotel of the same name or to the French savoir (to know) which might suggest she is some kind of baseball-angel (saviour?), or even its self-proclaimed Muse (like most 'baseball Armies') with her goddess-like qualities and her inspirational speeches. I find her almost witchy, an aging groupie who is sometimes overstated as a character. She can also be perceived as the voice of feminine wisdom, a Sophia

brought to the sport of baseball. "She sees baseball as a religion and herself as its high priestess," as one New York Times film critic declared. If she is its high priestess, she presides over a small, North Carolina altar. Instead, she seems to be an injection or concretization of the feminine, feeling side of men in baseball. She knows the macho side of men too well. When Kevin Costner as the veteran catcher Crash Davis, recruited to "mature" the young pitching phenom Tim Robbins as Ebby Calvin "Nuke" LaLoosh, is challenged to fight Nuke in the alley behind a bar, Annie states:

"Oh, don't be such guys ... I love a little macho male bondin'. I think it's sweet, I do, even if it is probably latent homosexuality bein' re-channelled, I'm all for re-channellin', so who cares, right?"

Annie understands men, at least baseball players, most of whom are really adolescent boys masquerading as men, and she has a sense of her own empowerment as a woman. When Millie, a local "nymphette" who has "gone down on half the North Carolina league" says she "got lured" into making love in the locker room with "Nuke," the young pitcher, Annie emphatically retorts to Millie that women are too strong and powerful to get lured and she prods Millie to repeat after her, "I did not get lured. I accept full responsibility for my actions." Everyone, not just Millie gets lured by their projections but Annie's wisdom is in her recognition of the maturity that comes with accepting responsibility for one's actions. As Abraham Lincoln is purported to have said, "After forty, a man is responsible for his own face."

Ron Shelton, the movie's director, puts every character and most plot threads into the first ballpark scene after Annie enters her "church." We are treated to the goofy antics of Max Patkin, the Clown Prince of Baseball whose in and out hip movements mirror Ebby's love-making gestures in the immediately preceding scene. Every church, like every kingdom needs its Fool; baseball is no exception to this rule. The Bulls' mascot is paraded before us as the spectators are

panned as is the obligatory players' wives section. We meet Larry, the coach, and Skip, the manager, and most of the central players such as Ebby who literally consummates his projections with Millie, the female sports announcer, and finally the "player to be named later," veteran catcher, Crash Davis whom "the organization" has brought down to train LaLoosh, the young pitcher with "a million dollar arm and 5-cent head." LaLoosh or "Nuke" (a "regular nuclear meltdown," as Annie proclaims him, because of his preoccupation with getting laid), or "Meat," as Crash names him, is raw power, every tutor's dream, and he's tutored by both Annie and Crash. From this opening scene forward, the three major characters, Annie, Crash and Nuke are interwoven throughout what the reviewers labelled "a major league romance in a minor league town" and "a film with Spring fever, a giddy, playful look at life in baseball's minor leagues."

Early in the film, Nuke is shown in an interview wherein he's asked how it feels to win. Living down to his 5-cent head characterization, he responds that it was "out there, a major rush, I mean out there, tubular in a major kind of way." On one road-trip, Crash teaches Nuke the fine art of giving an interview by having Nuke write down and memorize the classic cliches:

"We got to play one day at a time."

"I'm just happy to be here, hope I can help the ball club." and

"I just want to give it my best shot and, the good Lord willing, things will work out."

Timeless and honoured, these cliches reverberate through baseball. But it's the transition in Nuke's character that is significant. Near the end of the movie, "Nuke" now in "the Show" is shown in full blossom giving an interview to a female reporter whom he compliments. Then he recites Crash's cliches with *feeling* and adds some of his Durham Bulls' coach's baseball wisdom:

This is a very simple game. You throw the ball, you catch the ball, you hit the ball. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, sometimes it rains ... Think about it!

The words are emblematic of the process by which Nuke is seasoned by Crash and Annie.

All three characters are foils for each other but it's Crash who serves to keep everyone's feet on terra firma. In particular, he knows, as does Annie, how the thinking, rational, logical side of a man can interfere with performance. In the alley-fight scene with Nuke, Crash dares Nuke to throw a fastball at his chest from close range. Nuke declines momentarily until Crash eggs him on with, "You're not gonna hit me because you're startin' to think about it already." Nuke fires the ball, misses him by several feet and then Crash gives him corny but true lesson number one, "Don't think, it can only hurt the ball club". Indeed, thinking without feeling, living in one's head without heart or feeling is sport's and *sportsmen's* domain.

Crash loves baseball and he knows his own heart, the right side of his brain, his own creative juices as it were. When Annie is trying to choose either Crash or Nuke to be her lover-boy for the season, Crash challenges her right to choose and her declaration that choice is an illusion, a matter of "quantum physics, molecular attraction and timin'." The following dialogue ensues while Nuke sits in stunned silence:

Crash: After 12 years in the minors, I don't try out. Besides, I don't believe in quantum physics when it comes to matters of the heart.

Annie: What do you believe in then?

Crash: Well, I believe in the soul, the cock, the pussy, the small of a woman's back, the hangin' curve ball, high fibre, good scotch, that the novels of Susan Sontag are

self-indulgent, overrated crap; I believe Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone; I believe there ought to be a constitutional amendment outlawing astro turf and the designated hitter. I believe in the sweet spot, soft core pornography, opening your presents Christmas morning rather than Christmas Eve, and I believe in long, slow, deep, soft, wet kisses that last 3 days.

Costner's delivery of these lines has limited heart-felt impact (although the irony of the reversal of his Oswald theory in the later movie, JFK is not lost to current audiences), but the words are intended to be right from the heart, not the left brain. Crash leaves, recognizing that he's not "interested in a woman who's interested in that boy [Nuke]" and he bids goodnight to Ebby with, "See ya at the yard, Meat." The veteran catcher knows his own masculinity and that Annie has some work to do in casting off her projections onto boy baseball players.

Annie needs to come to her own self-realization, but in the meantime, like Crash, she knows she has to get Nuke out of his head, out of out-thinking himself. As she says to Nuke while he's ripping off his clothes to "fuck," "When you know how to make love, then you'll know how to pitch." That is, when he learns to integrate his feeling with his thinking side, he'll be more complete. And here we're reminded of Millie-the-nymphette's description of Nuke's love-making skills: "He fucks like he pitches, sorta all over the place." So Annie ties Nuke's wrists to the bedposts and reads "I sing the body electric" from *Leaves of Grass* to him:

Annie:

You ever heard about Walt

Whitman?

Nuke:

Who's he play for?

Annie:

He sort of pitches for the Cosmic

All-Stars.

The theme of being in one's head becomes the central one in the movie. At one point, when Crash comes in for his at-bat, we overhear his inner voice say to him, "You're thinkin' too much Crash, you're thinkin' too much. Get out of your fuckin' head." This theme of staying in your feelings is expressed in several scenes. For example, when José, a Trinidadian outfielder, is bouncing chicken bones along the length of his bat, he tells another player that it takes the "curse off the bat":

Other Player:

What are you a goddamn witch?

José:

Yes, a switch-hitting witch.

Player: Would it help me?

José:

If you believe in voodoo.

and when the player begs Jose to have Jose touch the player's bat with the chicken bones just once, José declares "That's not belief, man, that's desperation." Interestingly, as Crash goes up for his next at bat, he holds out the end of his bat to José who rubs the chicken bone mojo on it. The implication is that Crash is a believer. Similarly, as Crash nurtures Nuke on the mound while Nuke is wild with his fastball, Crash says, "Stop trying to strike everybody out! Strikeouts are boring. Besides that, they're fascist," ("Throw the ball into the dirt every once in a while, it's more democratic") and he tells Nuke to "have some fun out here, this game's fun" and, "Listen, don't hold the ball so hard, okay, it's an egg, hold it like an egg." Nuke reasons *in his head* that "I'm the one drivin' the Porsche, aren't I" and that an old man like

Crash "don't know nothin' about fun." Nuke *thinks* he wants to "announce his presence" by "throwing heat" (fastballs) contrary to Crash's signals. Indeed, several scenes in the movie spotlight Nuke pawing the mound with his foot in the same fashion as a young, angry bull paws the dirt with his hoof. Here then, is the young bull of Durham. Crash responds to Nuke's self inflation by telling the batter a fastball is coming. The batter hits a home run and out on the mound, Nuke whimpers, "I held it like an egg." To which Crash replies, "Yeah, well he scrambled it, didn't he. You havin' fun yet?" Nuke gets the message and says to himself:

"Don't think, just throw..."

As he does so. He throws marvellously and in amazement, interrogates himself:

"God, that was beautiful ... what'd I do?"

To me, this is the turning point in the film. Nuke is awakening to the feeling side of himself.

Annie and Crash both know about the feeling, feminine side. Annie seems capable of tutoring boys about feelings but afraid somehow of sharing her feelings with a man like Crash. She knows what Nuke needs so she gives Nuke one of her black garter belts to wear while he's pitching on a 12-day roadtrip. She states:

"You been pitchin' out of the wrong side of your brain. These are to help you put things on the right side."

As she finishes saying this, we hear the lyrics and the music to, "Try a Little Tenderness." The road-trip is a disaster of performance; Nuke thinks about wearing the garter belt, but doesn't and only Crash of all the team's players plays well. The point of intrigue here is that Crash does well

because he knows himself and respects the game (something he tells Nuke that Nuke does not do), and he has fun, he *plays*. In the latter regard, near the end of the disastrous roadtrip, Crash knows the players need a break, a refreshment, some fun. So, he bets his teammates he can get a rain-out. That night they go to the ballpark, beer in hand. Crash turns the sprinklers on and they all run the bases, sliding in the mud, having fun, laughing at themselves and their engineered rain-out while the music plays, "Last night I got loaded on a bottle of gin, but I *feel* all right." The action and the lyrics support the feeling-side theme.

Nuke has a nightmare-dream on the bus trip home that he is pitching in slow motion while he's wearing only socks, spikes, hat, jockstrap and the vaunted black garter belt. Dreams, of course, are critical to Jungian psychology; dreams inform the conscious world, if they are listened to. Everyone in the ballpark is laughing so hard they're crying. Laughter in the form of ridicule is irreverent in sport and certainly most men have great difficulty being laughed at or laughing at themselves. Crash comforts Nuke as a father might and when they return, Annie teaches Nuke about his chakras, his energy centres, and "breathing through your eyelids" and how to pitch "fully integrated" into his feelings. In the next scene, Crash finds Nuke hiding behind some lockers trying on the garter belt. Nuke tells Crash Annie's theory about the belt keeping him in touch with his feelings and Crash understands fully. As Crash steps away from Nuke, Crash adjusts the belt half a turn at the waist and says, confidently, "The rose goes in the front, big guy."

Nuke, faltering somewhat, goes on a winning streak and learns not to out-think himself. The Bulls have their best summer ever, but Nuke vows not to have sex with Annie because of superstition, and Crash tells him not to mess with a winning streak. Annie becomes very angry and announces, as narrator, "I *need* a man!" For Annie, this is a turning point, for it seems from

here on in that she's finished being a baseball/ sexual/ feeling tutor to a new boy-man every season. She *knows* she needs a man. In her quest for a man, she tries the easy way out and attempts to seduce Nuke, but Nuke has learned about discipline and self control from Crash and Nuke gives a wonderfully comic speech about recognizing the siren in a woman:

Nuke: The other day Crash called a woman's pussy ... Well you know how the hair is in kind of a V-shape? ... Well, he called it the Bermuda Triangle. A man can get lost in there and never be heard from again.

How many men, athletes and others, do "get lost in there" by literally plugging in to women's feelings instead of their own?

Well, Annie is stymied, out of her power, no longer in control. She storms into Crash's house and tries, in her anger, to overwhelm him, with words such as Blake's, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," but she's no match for Crash who deflects her words and her anger from his position securely behind his ironing board doing his ironing (a gender role iron-y, almost literally). He is fully confident even in this typically feminine role and he handles her perfectly by reflecting back to her own words about belief systems, ritual and magic.

In the final scenes of the movie, we are treated to several scenes of tenderness, relationship and integration. One scene involves a discussion on the mound during a game where the central issue is what to buy Millie for her wedding present; in another, Annie prepares her house for a man when Nuke arrives, finds out he's called up to "the Show" and he returns the garter belt to Annie while kissing her once softly; there's a wedding on the ballfield that unites Millie, the physical and ethereal nymphette with the spiritual-religious Jimmy; and a scene wherein Crash offers Nuke parting advice about playing in the big leagues:

"Look Nuke, these big league hitters are gonna light you up like a pinball machine for a while. Don't worry about it. You be cocky and arrogant even when you're gettin' beat. That's the secret. You gotta play this game with fear and arrogance."

Crash's job is finished; the Bulls' manager lets him go and after walking the streets, Crash ends up at Annie's for a marathon session of passionate dancing and love-making complete with a Nuke-Annie reversal with Annie's wrists tied to the bed while Crash skilfully and softly paints her toenails. Crash knows he has to finish the season and his career and he is within reach of a minor league record that only he and Annie know about. Thus his quest to break the record falls short of vanity or fame and rises to the level of self-completion. As Annie, the narrator quotes at the very moment she feels he has hit his "dinger," "Full many a flower's born to blush unseen. And waste its sweetness on the desert air." Crash returns to her front porch and on her swing in the rain tells her, "I quit ... I hung 'em up" and Annie replies, "I'm quittin' too. I mean boys, not baseball." The veteran catcher tells her he might take a job as manager and Annie launches into one of her metaphysical, "non linear thinkin'" speeches which Crash interrupts by saying he wants to hear all of her theories but right now he doesn't want to think about anything: Crash: I just wanna

Annie: I can do that too.

The movie closes with Annie the narrator quoting Walt Whitman on baseball followed by Ring Lardner's "You could look it up," and the final scene shows Annie and Crash dancing to Joe Cocker's "A Woman Loves a Man,"

"It still remains a mystery to me ... why she can't make up her mind ... why he just has to stay ... Well, it's too much to understand ... still a man loves a woman and a

woman loves a man ... she does what she can do, he does the best he can."

Perhaps the movie ends on a positive note about life after baseball, life at mid-life. My own view is that both the themes of opportunities at mid-life and the integration of femininity/ feeling into sport work well together. Annie might be a kind of Pygmalion reversal in that she creates the ball players she sleeps with; however, I suggest she helps them to integrate their own creativity (symbolized by the rose-decorated garter belt), with their more traditional, masculine skills. But she cannot do so without Crash, the veteran baseball player, the "old warrior" and the master (magician, in Jungian terms) of the baseball field. The communication, the game of catch between the pitcher (Nuke) and the catcher (Crash) is relational and is the essence (the 'feminine' 'being') of baseball (a point underscored in Philip Goldberg's marvellous baseball novel, *This Is Next Year*). Both Annie and Crash *crash* at the end of the movie. That is, while they both contribute to Nuke's generativity, they are also relativized- their egos are deflated when they both retreat from baseball which Jungians perceive as a kind of eternal youth symbol (puer aeternus). Thus Nuke snorts and roars around in his red (great colour for a young Bull!) Porsche while Annie transports herself in an ageless Volvo and Crash finally transforms himself after driving off in his Mustang convertible. If Annie is priestess, then Crash is a priest at this church of baseball. The rose does go in the front, big guy, and the lesson for sport alone justifies Bull Durham.