

**FESTSCHRIFT
FOR
ALEXANDER LOWEN**

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Que Vive L'Amour

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After reading a book by Alexander Lowen, Arthur came to consult me. He was a mathematics teacher in a Catholic secondary school. Professionally, he was quite successful, but he was without any social relations and he felt lonely. Every weekend he would go to stay with his mother, a widow, in a small, remote farm in Brittany; here he would regularly see his younger sister who was single and his older sister, also a widow, who had a little boy. During the week he lived alone in a flat. His landlady who lived above him, kept an eye on him, assuring a certain presence in his life.

At the age of 30, he didn't have any sexual relations, but he felt a desire for his young male pupils and occasionally masturbated thinking about them.

Physically, he was quite a good-looking man; shy and rather stiff, with a touch of masochism about his shoulders, and deep-set eyes full of sadness and fear. When stressed, his physical symptoms consisted of dry coughing and stomach disorder.

Straightaway, I felt friendly toward this intelligent and sensitive man. As he came from a rural Breton background, it was quite easy for me to identify with him and to discover a common background with his education.

In the beginning of the analysis, it was possible to loosen his rib-cage stiffness through breathing, moving and using his voice. His voice had been unknown to him up to then as it was so held back.

The fear he felt of his father, a failure and an alcoholic farmer

whom he expected to find hanging in the barn at any time, appeared quickly.

Later, the sudden death of his brother-in-law and the consequent despair of his sister, reinforced his inhibition to live, to feel, and to open up. He felt as if fate was hanging over him. His feelings for his mother were ambivalent, but he had set himself the task of bringing her comfort as well as to be "the man" and the consoler of these three women who relied on him. Of course, his self-esteem was nil apart from his professional image as a teacher.

After the first year of bioenergetic analysis when many childhood feelings (fear, anger, etc.) came out, he decided to leave the old landlady's place to find his own flat. He modestly settled and fitted the flat with things he had chosen for himself, thus creating his own place—a new "differentiated" identity.

The second year he lived in the most profound sadness and solitude tinged with despair. Yet, during that period of time, he established some good contacts with his male colleagues and went away on skiing holidays where he dared to speak to and dance with women. He realized they were quite attracted to him, but he put an end to the relationships because of the fright and shyness which took hold of him again. All this was worked through during the analysis, particularly his alternating between withdrawing into his ivory tower and abandoning himself to the appeal of women. From time to time he dreamt about making love with me, which I didn't know how to treat as my own adolescent and adult homosexuality came out. "I had to cope with it," as we say in Brittany.

During the third year, on a skiing holiday, Arthur met a woman he fell in love with at first sight. He didn't know how to deal with his feeling, and he was torn between desire and fear (withdrawal). I encouraged him to keep in touch with and to write to her. Finally, they arranged a meeting, just the two of them; they were both virgins. They were madly in love with each other. He was quite worried (obsessional) by the fact that she was very demanding and that he didn't have enough erections. The next session he came with the following dream:

The sea is calm, the sand soft and the sky is blue. Two heavy birds are voluptuously flying and radiating with life. They are slowly and naturally moving with suppleness. One of them decides to fly higher and the second goes to meet it. They are flying together, they feel comfortable. Suddenly, I see two threatening vultures coming closer and one of them tries to suffocate one of the birds. The bird is going to fall. It falls in the sand. From above, the second bird, its partner, shouts for it to hide. The bird manages to hide in a bush beside a path. It felt safe, warm. It gives up. I'm happy for it.

In commenting on the dream, Arthur said that sometimes he felt as if he was suffocating in his powerful love relationship and that occasionally, he felt like sleeping in a separate bed.

The themes of the dream are, I suggested, taking flight, falling, the intimacy of the "love birds" and the love nest. With the help of these suggestions, Arthur started to work on the stool with the recurrent issue of suffocation (mother, social environment, dependent family), linked to a chronic tension of the throat. His voice, throat and diaphragm started opening. I suggested he do some taking flight exercises — jumping from the floor. At first, the movement was heavy with high tension in the ankles. Little by little, the movement and the breathing became coordinated. Then Arthur lay on the mattress breathing regularly and freely with an integrated movement of the pelvis, and with a feeling of total abandon and well-being. I reminded him of the end of the dream.

The session ended with Arthur talking about his difficulty combining the deep love he felt for his friend and his need from time to time to be alone and breathe freely; in other words, his struggle to reconcile the warmth of the nest (feelings, sex), and the feeling of his own flight.

He finished his analysis a few months later. He was still in love!

Arthur came to see me having read a book written by Al Lowen. At several stages of his therapy, I had the feeling that Al's way of behaving, doing and teaching accompanied me. Thank you, Al, for this good work; I dedicate this piece of it to you.