

Victims, Martyrs, Crusaders: Archetypal Figures in News Stories about Falun Gong

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ABSTRACT: This research explores the characterisation of individuals and groups in Falun Gong news stories through a lens of archetype analysis. Longitudinal data was used to reveal changes to people's identities. Practitioners are depicted primarily as victims and martyrs and secondarily as crusaders, warriors, and avengers. However, the 2006 allegations of organ harvesting mark a turning point in the narrative where members' identities are infantilised. While the depictions benefit Western advocates and a minority of zealous practitioners, everyday practitioners do not benefit. They are cast in the role of helpless, wounded, constantly embattled, crusading and avenging victims who have to be rescued by the superior Western world. To transform the narrative, protagonists could bring forward another archetype—one that does not depend on dualisms of good and evil or superiority and inferiority.

KEYWORDS: Jung, archetype, media, spiritual, falun, China.

Introduction

The conflict between Falun Gong and the Chinese Communist party has been an ongoing drama since the 1990s. What began as a story about a new stretching exercise class has escalated into a religious epic. Practitioners have been tortured, spies have defected, people have set themselves on fire, media outlets have been sued, stories of organ thefts have surfaced, the Vatican has been accused of a cover-up, and millions of dollars have been spent on law suits and investigations.

The quest to understand the deeper forces behind the drama has been an open challenge for researchers. My aim is to explore the universal behaviour patterns in the stories by identifying and discussing archetypal figures in the accounts. I begin by outlining research on archetypes and why they are a promising way of

understanding spiritual movements. This section is followed by a summary of the influences that shape the media narratives. Then I outline my method. After detailing the archetypal figures in the results, I discuss how they change over time and who benefits from the depictions. In my conclusion I suggest ways of limiting the destructive potential of the archetypes' shadow sides.

Archetypal Figures

Psychologist Carl Jung first employed the term “archetype” to refer to deep patterns in the human psyche, and he identified many archetypal figures, including hero, earth mother, trickster and wise old man (1959b). For Jung, these figures are more than characters; they are energies rooted deeply in the psyche, ready to spring into action in the form of images and emotions (1959a, 1964). While Jung's metaphysical explanation for these forces has been debated (e.g., Adamski, 2011; Neher, 1996), scholars have used them to provide an analytical framework in diverse fields including theology (Slusser, 1986), landscapes (Antill, 2015), advertising (Walle, 1986), and law (LaLlave & Gutheil, 2012).

Archetypal figures are common in news stories because elements of modern journalism are conducive to them. Most news is produced in instalments so there is time to see how people respond to different challenges. The journalistic requirements—first-hand material, fast-paced narrative, spontaneous quotations, public interest, fearless disclosure, credible information, unposed photographs—guide writers towards conveying the essence of the characters. The emphasis on balance and getting both sides of a story highlights differences between protagonists, with polarisations enhancing the story-telling effect. Audiences also benefit by getting information in easily digestible and involving ways.

While the study of media archetypes focuses primarily on the actual story, the question of “Who benefits from the narrative?” is vital to understanding them. For example, Winch's (2005) research on the archetype of Osama bin Ladin suggests the United States inflated him into a genius to explain its embarrassing intelligence failure. Similarly, Lule's (2001) study of Mother Teresa shows how the depiction of her as the archetypal (white) good mother saving pathetic Indians was a way of denying that Western colonialism and Catholic opposition to birth control contributed to the poverty. The issue of political agendas is especially relevant to Falun Gong as it has become an anti-Communist movement controlled from outside China.

News stories about Falun Gong may be particularly suited to archetypal analysis because archetypes are “quasi-spiritual,” in other words they resemble spiritual experiences (Neher, 1996, p. 83). Although Jung never went to China, he studied Chinese philosophical classics and said the West could learn much from them (Liang, 2012). The influence of eastern spirituality can be seen in his (1959a) description of archetypes: they unite people in a universal essence and involve internal invisible energies that are experienced as presences and recognised

by their feeling-tones. It is these feeling-tones that could increase understanding of why audiences resonate (or do not resonate) with people in the media. Their importance is supported by a curious finding in Herzog and Galvin's (1992) research on animal archetypes in the media—that the tabloid press shed a more accurate light on human feelings and behaviour than a careful scientific study did.

Perhaps the strongest reason why archetypes are a helpful lens for studying Falun Gong is that, as Meadow (1992) notes, people can transform religious conflicts by understanding and modifying the dominant archetypes. According to Jung (1959), all archetypes have beneficial and shadow sides. For example, the judge archetype brings justice, but may be over-critical and fault-finding, while the devil archetype is destructive, but also has a side of goodness that can be reached. As the non-beneficial side is unconscious, we do not recognise its energies as our own and project them onto enemies. Inevitably, the repressed energies rise and we become the thing we fight the most (McGuire & Hull, 1977). By recognising projections and bringing other archetypal figures to the fore, people can take action in a more enlightened way.

Despite these benefits, the analysis of archetypes also has weaknesses. First, Jung's descriptions of the archetypal figures are imprecise. The most searing criticism comes from philosopher Walter Kaufmann who states: "Jung's rather loose talk of archetypes opened up a new game for scholars that one could play without being very scholarly" (1992, p. 369). Subsequent to Kaufmann, the archetypal figures have been more precisely discussed, for example in volumes of the *International Journal of Jungian Studies*. The second potential weakness is reductionism and the risk of stereotyping. Even so, in the case of Falun Gong, talented writers (such as Pulitzer Prize-winning Ian Johnson and investigative journalist Ethan Gutmann) have empathetically told practitioners' stories, and their narratives lend themselves to sensitive interpretations.

Influences on the Narratives

As the question of "Who benefits from the narratives?" will be addressed in the analysis, it is useful to discuss the ideological, political and financial influences that shape the stories. The starting point is the leader's directions to practitioners.

Li Hongzhi's Instructions

Li Hongzhi teaches that the earth is the "garbage dump of the universe" and will soon be destroyed (Li, 1996, chap. 3, par. 4). The only hope lies in the "fa"—his spiritual philosophy. Therefore he urges practitioners to defend the "fa" whenever it is criticised, a task known as truth clarification (Li, 1998a, 1998b). Consequently, his followers protest unfavourable news coverage. Another influence on media articles is Li's instructions to practitioners in 2002. He advises against discussing "high level things" with "ordinary people" and counsels them to lie ("tell them

that we're just doing exercises" (Li 2002, p. 21). Li also directs members to get sympathy from the public by talking about the persecution, with the hidden intention of later converting them (Li 2002, 2003).

Chinese Media

Chinese media are controlled by the Communist Party, although the level of control is less for politically safe and socially useful news (Lee, 2000). When Falun Gong arose in 1992, it was safe to write positive material about the movement, but critical investigations were risky because journalists are expected to facilitate social stability. Between 1996 and mid-1999, members carried out 307 protests against Chinese media outlets that published unfavourable material about them (Zhao, 2003). These protests involved crowds of practitioners (often comprising more than a thousand people) who surrounded media buildings and harassed journalists and officials with phone calls, in some instances targeting their homes (Xia & Hua, 1999; Zhao, 2003). Falun Gong's control over the narrative was removed in 1999 when the Communist Party outlawed the movement and crushed its protests. During the crackdown, the Department of Propaganda launched a media offensive against Li and his followers. The negative publicity continues to this day, although fewer articles are published.

Western Media

In contrast to Chinese media, the top Western newspapers are owned by a small number of millionaires and corporations and are relatively free from political interference (Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova, & Shleifer, 2003; Media Reform Coalition, 2014). On the whole, journalists give Falun Gong favourable coverage, surpassing the treatment given to other religious movements (Kavan, 2005). Even so, for practitioners steeped in a tradition of censored news, any mention of critical views about them is provocative. They have made complaints, brought lawsuits, harassed writers, and manipulated Wikipedia so enquirers get Falun Gong-slanted information (Kavan, 2008 and personal communications from editors). It is likely that some media outlets avoid publishing about Falun Gong because of potential harassment (e.g., Woodham, 2008). Foreign correspondents in China may also feel pressured to sidestep Falun Gong as the Communist Party can refuse to give them visas. The Party can also ban a publication in China, as it did in 2001 when Time magazine featured an article on Falun Gong.

Falun Gong Media

Some Western news stories, such as the organ harvesting allegations, have come from Falun Gong-linked media, including the *Epoch Times*, New Dynasty television, and Sound of Hope radio. A controversial issue is whether the United States funds these sources. The money trail runs through Freedom House, a partially

government-funded organisation that has been critiqued for helping subvert foreign countries under the pretence of human rights protections (Herman & Brodhead, 1984). Freedom House and its former director, the late Mark Palmer, created Friends of Falun Gong, which transmits funds to the *Epoch Times*, New Dynasty television, and Sound of Hope radio, as well as the Global Centre to Quit the Communist Party (Inland Revenue Service, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014–2016; *GuideStar*, 2017). Additional evidence of United States financial support of Falun Gong is the \$1.5 million the State Department offered the Falun Gong-affiliated Global Internet Freedom Consortium in 2010 (Pomfret, 2010).

Method

The research was conducted in two stages. First, a list was created of potentially relevant archetypal figures that might describe the way key protagonists are portrayed (see Table 1). The list was based on my understanding of Falun Gong and the media from previous research.

In the second stage, 200 articles from between January 1999 and March 2017 were selected from Factiva database—180 from Western media and 20 from China. The lower number for Chinese articles reflects the smaller number of articles on Falun Gong published by the Chinese news agency Xinhua.¹ Factiva provides print-media articles, plus a small number of transcripts from radio and television. The database does not include *Epoch Times* articles unless they are picked up by other media.

I used searches for the most relevant articles each year, plus key word searches of main events. Articles were selected on the basis that they: (1) included a narrative in which Falun Gong was central to the story, (2) were original, rather than composed of duplicated content, (3) covered all highly publicised events, and (4) included a range of people. For the Western articles, a further criterion was to represent a range of countries, including Europe, United States, and the Pacific. These criteria were based on the assumptions that original stories on public events were more likely to be infused with archetypes, and that varied times, places and characters would provide richer material. Google searches were used to locate articles before Falun Gong was banned and two well-known *Time* magazine articles that were not on Factiva. Forty-four photographs that accompanied the major news stories were also sourced from Google.

During earlier research I had exercised with Falun Gong practitioners for over a year, and therefore it was necessary to include an outsider's perspective in the

¹Approximately 13 percent of articles about Falun Gong refer to Xinhua. Factiva database shows that of the 38,125 articles that have been written on Falun Gong (including unpublished newswires) 4,986 contain the word "Xinhua." The Xinhua articles include ones published in China, re-publications in the West, and Western articles that mention Xinhua.

Table 1: Archetypal figures and their shadow sides

Descriptor	Characteristic	Shadow Side
Addict	Wants a substance, practice or person intensely.	Feels powerless against inner forces.
Advocate	Comes to the defence of others.	Advocates false causes, commits for personal gain.
Avenger	Rights wrongs.	Becomes vigilante.
Creator	Expresses in appealing ways.	Has too many ideas to be able to accomplish them.
Crusader	Seeks to eradicate perceived evil.	Attacks, colonises, and subjugates others.
Devil figure	Spreads evil.	Has a good heart buried beneath.
Disciple	Receives guidance from spiritual master.	Blindly loyal, needy and dependent.
Explorer	Leaves to explore the unknown.	Abandons loved ones and commitments.
Herald	Calls people to action.	Lies or misleads.
Hero	Triumphs over adversity.	Likes to be admired.
Innocent	Intends no harm.	Obeys when loyalty is undeserved.
Lover	Passionately devoted to a person, cause or interest.	Becomes obsessed and easily manipulated.
Magician	Moves energy to transform situations.	Uses power manipulatively.
Martyr	Sacrifices for a cause.	Induces guilt to position themselves as superior.
Mentor	Teaches or counsels heroes.	Has own agenda, gives inaccurate advice.
Mystic	Accesses transcendent states of consciousness.	Loses link with reality.
Orphan	Wants another to rescue him/her.	Falls into victim mentality.
Outcast	Banished for a real or imagined crime.	Criticises others extensively.
Ruler	Holds ultimate authority.	Tyrant that destroys creative elements.
Saboteur	Finds weakest link and covertly damages.	Creates chaos and failure.
Sage	Provides insights and knowledge.	Impractical and overcritical.
Seeker	Goes on a quest to find new paths.	Over-focuses on self-improvement without accomplishing anything.
Shape-shifter	Changes appearances, mood or behaviour to delay protagonists.	Brings more danger than a known enemy, e.g., the femme fatale.
Trickster	Plays tricks and profits from the ensuing conflict.	Becomes the object of hate or ridicule.
Victim	Subjected to trials and tribulations.	Drains people's emotional energy.
Warrior	Fights adversity with strength.	Treats others as something to be changed or broken.

coding. A qualified researcher who was relatively unfamiliar with Falun Gong independently co-coded the articles. To increase resonance with readers' experiences of the texts, the criterion for identifying archetypal figures was the dominant feeling of the characters' core experiences at first-read. This criterion helped ensure the archetypes were genuinely embedded in the story, rather than artefacts of intellectual scrutiny. Of the archetypal figures identified in the texts, there was 91 percent agreement; however, there was only 59 percent agreement about the photographs. The varying photograph interpretations are given in the results.

Results

The Chinese Media

The pre-1998 Chinese articles were in summary form (in Lou, 2012 and Penny, 2012). The earliest ones portray Li Hongzhi as the sage and magician archetypes, wisely prescribing exercises that result in seeming miracles. Practitioners are depicted as the seeker and disciple archetypes who are inspired by Li to do good deeds. Some claim to have been healed, such as housewife Xie Xiufen who exclaims "I can stand up!" as she walks after sixteen years of being paralysed (Lou, 2012, para 7).

As the Chinese negative coverage begins, Li shifts to the trickster archetype, deceiving his followers and causing mental health problems. The archetypes continue after the crackdown, sometimes embellished by the devil archetype. Li is described as a "demon" who stretches out his "sinister hands" and "bewitches," "hoodwinks," and "poisons" followers (Xinhua 1999b, 1999c, 2001a, 2001d). He secretly goes to doctors while discouraging practitioners from medical treatment, and uses their money to visit casinos and live in opulence (Xinhua 1999a, 1999d). While his followers suffer, he enjoys trips to brothels, including a Thailand brothel where he took "twin baths . . . to relish in the sex services" (Xinhua, 1999d, para. 7).

The Chinese media characterise practitioners using the victim and addict archetypes—they are Li's "cannon fodder, sacrificial victims" (Xinhua, 2001b) who have fallen under the master's spell and cannot escape his "evil clutches" (Xinhua, 2001d). Activist members are referred to as "diehards" who try to "sabotage" Chinese achievements (Xinhua, 2000), evoking the saboteur archetype. Chinese authorities ridicule practitioners who might imagine themselves as spiritual warriors. They are "ants trying to topple a giant tree [and] ridiculously overrate themselves" (Xinhua, 2001b, para. 12).

The Chinese government portrays itself using the positive aspects of the ruler archetype. The Party has ultimate authority and its actions maintain order so people can live productive and secure lives. By self-report, these actions involve caring, educating and rescuing followers with "patient" and "meticulous" help (Xinhua 2001c). In two articles, China is referred to as the "mother" who has

been betrayed by Falun Gong, and the public are urged to safeguard her dignity (Xinhua, 1999e and 2000). The ‘great mother’ archetype, although evident in hindsight, was not on the list of expected figures.

Western Media

When the West picked up the story, journalists continued to depict China as the ruler archetype, but their interpretations were more nuanced. Some highlighted the historical context, noting Chinese traumatic memories of social disturbances during the Cultural Revolution. Others focused on the shadow side of the ruler: the evil tyrant. *Time* magazine’s (2001) cover picture for its story “Crushing Falun Gong” showed a Chinese man being held on the ground by two police officers, one of whom has his foot on the man’s head. The image evokes memories of Orwell’s 1984: “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever.” (Orwell, 1961, p. 267).

Li Hongzhi

Li Hongzhi’s primary role is the herald: the one who calls people to action and is crucial to bringing out the story. He also plays the roles of mystic and hero (Bartholet, 1999; Hornik, 2001). Even so, the dominant archetype is the shape-shifter: the character who leaves people wondering if he really is who he seems to be. Is he a “cult leader or a benign teacher?” asks the BBC (1999). “Why is Beijing so scared of a dumpy spiritual guru?” asks *Newsweek* (Liu, Bartholet, & Pappa, 1999). The International Herald Tribune quotes an anecdote from Li’s childhood that suggests he is either divine or deluded. According to the story, Li slipped into a Buddhist monastery to steal some fruit, and a monk caught him. The monk was about to punish Li when gazing at him he saw a divine quality and proclaimed: “You are the one for whom we have been waiting” (Pfaff, 1999).

Like the shape-shifter, Li is paradoxical. The juxtaposition of his and practitioners’ statements (sometimes within an article, but mostly between articles) increases the mystery. In his interview for *Time* magazine Li implies he might be mistaken for a God and talks of his apocalyptic visions that aliens are infiltrating human minds to replace humans (Dowell, 1999). Subsequently, when Li stopped giving interviews, journalists searched his online writings and discovered more apocalyptic rhetoric and phantasmagorical statements (Hutchinson, 2002; Smith, 2001). Yet practitioners claimed to have little or no knowledge of these beliefs, often responding to questions with humble comments like “I try to be a good person” (Hutchinson, 2002). One reporter noted that several practitioners she interviewed had never heard of Li (Kelleher, 2001).

The photographs further suggest Li shifts between identities. In *Asia Week’s* (1999–2000) illustration, he wears a golden outfit and sits in the lotus position with people’s faces swirling around him, evoking the mystic and magician

archetypes. In other photographs he wears a dark suit, which I interpreted as the ruler archetype, while the second coder formed the impression of a merchant.

In the same manner, Li is central and peripheral, sometimes visible and at other times elusive. He speaks at Falun Gong conferences, but lives in hiding. The intrigue is heightened when practitioners say the Chinese Government has ordered hit squads to assassinate him (Carlson, 2000; Rees, 2001). Li's elusiveness continues to this day. He is presumed to be residing in Dragon Springs, New York, but a server delivering a subpoena was told he did not live there (Kilgannon, 2016).

Practitioners

Table 2 shows the archetypal figures that were identified in the written descriptions of practitioners. They are grouped into clusters because, as Hillman (1997) notes, archetypes interweave with one another, sometimes even dissolving into another. As can be seen, practitioners were primarily depicted as victims and martyrs, as well as orphans, outcasts, and innocents. There was a secondary cluster of crusader, warrior, avenger, and saboteur figures, which accounted for almost a third of the archetypes. Seeker, disciple and creator figures occur infrequently. No descriptions evoking explorer, lover, hero, mentor or mystic figures were identified, although two of the photographs were interpreted as mystic archetypes.

Table 2: Archetypal Figures of Falun Gong Practitioners in Texts of Western Media Articles. Media articles: n=182. Archetypal figures: n=346

Archetypal Figure	Percentage of Total Figures	Percentages For Clusters
Victim	32.3	60.29
Martyr	23.1	
Orphan	3.17	
Outcast	0.86	
Innocent	0.86	
Crusader	15.3	30.9
Warrior	8.38	
Avenger	5.78	
Saboteur	1.44	
Disciple	3.46	8.66
Seeker	2.89	
Creator	2.31	

Victims, Martyrs, Orphans, Outcasts, and Innocents. Victims were differentiated from martyrs by whether they were complicit in their suffering or wanted to be

rescued from it. Stories of those who repeatedly witnessed to the faith knowing the consequences were clearly martyr narratives. Ian Johnson's graphic description of practitioner Chen Zixiu's death is a poignant example:

The day before Chen Zixiu died, her captors again demanded that she renounce her faith in Falun Dafa. Barely conscious after repeated jolts from a cattle prod, the 58-year-old stubbornly shook her head.

Enraged, the local officials ordered Ms. Chen to run barefoot in the snow. Two days of torture had left her legs bruised and her short black hair matted with pus and blood, said cellmates and other prisoners who witnessed the incident. She crawled outside, vomited and collapsed. She never regained consciousness, and died on Feb. 21. (Johnson, 2000, paras. 1 & 2)

At the other end of the continuum, stories about practitioners who are traumatised by having loved ones imprisoned in China fell into the victim category. True to the archetype, they feel the pain deeply: "Our brothers and sisters inside the mainland are the suffering body. We are the mouth screaming" (*Newsweek* staff, 2001).

The stories that fell in between the extremes were mostly categorised as victim ones because the reasons for imprisonment were often subsumed by the prevailing victim tone. However, both victim and martyr stories share commonalities. They typically begin with reference to the good reputations and employment positions practitioners had before the persecution. A recurring theme is incredulity at the Communist party's brutal response to their activities, described as "the breaking of a butterfly on a wheel" (McDonald, 2004) and the equivalent of "George Bush outlawing yoga and sentencing those who use it to death" (Gill, 2004).

From 2006, stories of mass victimisation appear with Kilgour and Matas's report of organ harvesting, which became a cause célèbre for practitioners wanting a boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Journalists outline the report's allegations that 6,000 practitioners were sent to a secret concentration camp at Sujiatun hospital, where three-quarters of them had their organs removed and their bodies were thrown into a boiler, some while still alive (Gutmann, 2008; Keown, 2013; McGregor, 2007). One reporter visited the hospital and found no evidence (McGregor, 2007) and Chinese dissident Harry Wu's investigation concluded that the key witness had fabricated the evidence (York, 2006).²

The alleged organ harvesting generates more victims and archetypes. For readers who trust the story, the unconscious practitioners become innocents, and when their bodies are thrown into the burner, they become outcasts. Practitioners

²Wu spent nineteen years in Chinese labour camps and fifteen years gathering evidence on the harvesting of organs from executed Chinese prisoners. Additionally, United States officials twice visited Sujiatun hospital, but found no evidence supporting the claims. For a summary of investigations, see Refugee Review Tribunal (2007).

in China are reduced to orphans in need of rescue as they could be kidnapped and killed for their organs. “Any day, any time, any moment . . . if they need someone with the blood type they’ll come get you immediately,” one practitioner says (Cressman, 2016). For those who distrust the story, there is a new type of victim—the manufactured victim who has been created by the narrative. The mythic nature of his or her identity is amplified by photographs of protesters using fake blood to enact scenes and the way the victim numbers increase as the story is retold—up to 90,000 in 2016 (Dean, 2016).

Crusader, Warrior, Avenger, Saboteur. While martyrs and victims sacrifice themselves (or are sacrificed by others), warriors, crusaders, avengers, and saboteurs aim to damage—or at least neutralise—the enemy. The warrior descriptor was most prominent after the Zhongnanhai protest when journalists associated Falun Gong with martial arts and alluded to the Boxer rebellion. Here reporters describe practitioners as noble resisters “armed only with their faith” (MacLeod, 2001). At this stage, the archetype seems to benefit Falun Gong: “People are asking what kind of power can resist the power of the Party” says one practitioner (Pomfret, 2000).

After 2001, the crusader archetype predominates. Members conduct a vigorous movement to advance the cause and eradicate what they perceive to be evil. They sponsor a campaign to get Li nominated for a Nobel Prize, engage in vigils outside Chinese embassies, and stage protests in front of the United Nations and other heavily trafficked sites (Fowlie, 2006; Ramirez, 2004; Smith, 2001). Several of their campaigns spark controversy, for example practitioners distribute fliers with pictures of mutilated bodies at a children’s Santa parade and allegedly march down the streets and disrupt fund-raising efforts after the Sichuan earthquake (Hollander, 2012; Hume, 2008; Kilgannon, 2011). The crusader archetype sometimes fuses with the saboteur archetype. Practitioners hijack the airways of Changchun’s cable TV network and broadcast Falun Gong messages (Page, 2002) and put Falun Gong slogans on Chinese banknotes and circulate them, making the money unusable (*Vancouver Sun*, 2009).

The avenger takes the warrior and crusader archetypes to a new level and carries out reprisals. This figure mainly arose in reports of lawsuits, including the one against CISCO for helping build China’s firewall (Clark, 2011). Other examples involve public shaming, such as practitioner Wang Wenyi’s “Evil people die early” outburst during Chinese President Hu Jiantao’s speech on the White House lawn (Vallely & Coonan, 2006). Practitioners also shame people online, and Hutchinson (2002) relates that they directed him to a book on a Falun Gong website describing former President Jiang Zemin as an “unconscionable paedophile.”

Disciples, Seekers, Creators. With two exceptions, practitioners who were classified as disciple, seeker and creator figures also evoked archetypes from

the victim, martyr cluster.³ For example, creative practitioners draw pictures of mutilated, blood-stained detainees and compose songs lamenting Communist tyranny (Goad, 2005). Events sometimes begin positively with the odds in the practitioner's favour, but they invariably end as victim narratives. In this vein, actor practitioner Anastasia Lin wins Miss World Canada, but pageant organisers allegedly silence her, officials harass her father in China, and she becomes an outcast (Jacobs, 2016). Similarly, practitioners organise Shen Yun dance performances, but the show is cancelled in Korea and they lose money (Yuhas, 2016).

The alternation of archetypes may partly explain why the second coder and I interpreted group photographs of practitioners differently. Another factor is the human tendency to identify with people in the images. From my experience doing the exercises, I coded practitioners as spiritual warriors when they were standing in protests. However, the other coder noted the disciple archetype, observing the practitioners' older ages and the way they obediently stood in formation wearing Falun Gong attire.

Other Figures

A myriad of advocates and shapeshifters play additional roles. The advocate archetype is especially noticeable after 2006 when former parliamentarian David Kilgour, lawyer David Matas, and journalist Ethan Gutmann allege organ harvesting crimes. They also act as heralds summoning people to action.

The second group of supplementary figures consists of shape-shifters. Initially they appear in stories about networks of Chinese spies who secretly watch, photograph and kidnap practitioners (Cooper, 2005; Kerin, 2005). Later there are also non-believers impersonating practitioners to get refugee status (Semple, Goldstein, & Singer, 2014). The intrigue takes another turn with the allegations that military personnel, security agents, government officials, and medical professionals are involved in organ harvesting (Glavin, 2016). Practitioners' enactments show doctors and nurses as secret psychopaths—white-coated devil figures with Josef Mengele connotations. Even the Vatican and Transplantation Society are purportedly engaged in the “cover up” (Ide, 2017).

Analysis

The irony of news stories about Falun Gong is that Western journalists, rather than Li, assume the quasi-religious role of spiritual leaders.⁴ Like gurus, they shape

³One exception is an interview with practitioner Sterling Campbell who was the late David Bowie's drummer, and the other a journalist's account of her visit to a group of “arm wavers” (Gill, 2004; Ridley, 1999).

⁴The description of the media's role as “quasi religious” is made by Knott, Poole, & Taira, 2013, p. 37.

confusing events and traumatic experiences into coherent forms for the purpose of shedding light. To use a metaphor of T. S. Eliot's, they turn "blood into ink" (Eliot, 1933, p. 154). As Falun Gong media and Western advocates respond to this "ink" with more stories, the protagonists' identities are constructed.

Archetypal Figures

The trickster archetype that the Chinese media uses to portray Li is the same as the con-artist character that Western media often uses to depict leaders of new religious movements. However, Li's rhetoric and elusiveness evoke ambivalence in the West, and the dominant portrayal is of a shape-shifter. The figures differ only slightly—whereas the trickster plays outrageous tricks and profits from the ensuing trouble, the shape-shifter is more secret and mysterious. Both figures put people's lives into turmoil.

Given that the stories are about government persecution, it is appropriate that Western media adopted China's self-depiction as the archetypal ruler, but focused on its tyrannical shadow side. The tyrant figure is also consistent with the way Western journalists tend to portray Communist leadership (Herman & Chomsky 1988; Parenti, 1993). Even so, several articles contain alternative viewpoints. The increasing tolerance may be because Xinhua sent newswires giving its version of the story, and also because ISIS has replaced Communism in the media as the embodiment of evil.

As Falun Gong fosters its identity as victim (Zhao, 2003) and victim narratives are often used to explain spiritual movements (Wright & Palmer, 2016), it is not surprising that Western and Chinese media portrayed practitioners this way. In contrast, Jungian theory tends to identify followers of gurus with the orphan archetype who desperately seeks to be rescued (Pearson, 1986). The orphan characterisation was absent in the early media articles, and there was little evidence that practitioners' involvement with Falun Gong was sparked by emotional neediness. The Chinese stories before the crackdown give the impression that practitioners did the exercises so they could become better Communists.

An unusual element in the narrative is the plethora of Chinese shape-shifting figures, especially secret agents. These figures link with the Chinese military strategy of using hidden, deceptive and unorthodox methods during conflict (for example, Sun Tzu, 2016). The author of a leaked document from China's Department of Public Security describes secret forces as the "crucial magic weapon" in the battle against illegal religious organisations in China (Hudson Institute, 2002, p. 55). These mysterious forces play a vital role in reducing cognitive dissonance over organ harvesting claims as any contrary evidence is explained by secret cover-ups.

Fluidity of Archetypes

The finding that almost every narrative turned into a martyr or victim one, even when the odds seemed in the practitioner's favour, lends itself to several interpretations. One possibility is that Western advocates and Falun Gong public relations people believe that stories of suffering are the best way to get Western media attention. Such a belief could explain the cases where practitioners baited people and used the resulting rejection to create tales about discrimination and suffering. However, in many cases practitioners seemed to have unconsciously interpreted all human interactions through a lens of suffering. This interpretation could be rooted in Li's (2003b) teaching that when people spiritually cultivate, negative things happen to them. Another consideration is that practitioners' repeated exposure to painful stories of torture predisposes them to what McCann and Pearlman (1990) call "vicarious traumatization," and this influences their experiences.

The martyr, victim cluster of archetypes and the crusading, avenging, warrior cluster are the yin and yang sides of each other. Traditionally, the yin (passive female victim) and the yang (active male warrior) are interconnected and give rise to each other. While crusading and avenging activities provoke negative responses that result in more suffering, they provide victims and martyrs with relief from the spiritual requirement to radiate compassion when traumatised. These seemingly opposite archetypal clusters have several qualities in common—practitioners are loyal to the cause, they are determined, they are often brave, and they persist in difficult times. Their shadow sides are similar too. They drain people's energies, objectify the enemy, turn everything into a conflict, force people to take sides, position themselves as superior, and have a compulsive need for others to recognise their struggle.

The interplay between archetypes sheds light on why Falun Gong stories are not in the media as often as Li and advocates hoped. First, the overall narrative reverses the universally popular hero story where the individual begins as the underdog but rises to triumph over impossible odds. Instead, practitioners begin as respected seekers and disciples but descend into trials and tribulations, and the stories close with them pleading for outside rescue. As Pearson (1986) observes, any ending in which good does not triumph disempowers people because it undermines the major belief system that people can affect their worlds. This understanding of human nature may help explain Lemish's (2009) finding that when numbers of Falun Gong deaths in custody increased, the number of articles on Falun Gong in the Associated Press decreased.

The changes within the victim and warrior clusters are shaped by Western advocates who narrate the organ harvesting stories. These stories have been disseminated by Falun Gong media, endorsed by Freedom House, and picked up

by Western media. The allegations mark a turning point in the Falun Gong narrative where the archetypal figures are infantilised. The brave, unarmed martyrs who stepped unflinchingly into danger at Tiananmen Square and held their own under torture are reduced to helpless innocents and orphans in need of rescue. Similarly, the principled spiritual warriors who refused to be intimidated during the crackdown regress into crusaders and avengers, treating others as tools for their own purposes. The master narrative—that practitioners have got themselves into dire straits and need to be rescued—is similar to the storyline Xinhua used to justify ‘re-educating’ and hospitalising them.

Who Benefits?

Western governments walk a tightrope between reaping benefits from Falun Gong’s story and retaining credibility about backing it. The victim stories advantage Western governments by detracting from their own injustices and implying they are potential saviours in a world of darkness and repression. However, the arena of human rights becomes muddied when the United States funds organisations that disseminate atrocity stories about China even though these stories are not supported by its own investigations.

The impact on China has similarly been mixed. The Communist Party’s reputation has been damaged by the evil tyrant image and stories of it violently repressing unarmed meditators. Even so, there is a risk that the most brutal stories and photographs strengthen the Party’s power by serving as warnings to those who might follow in Falun Gong’s footsteps. Additionally, Falun Gong’s repeated victim archetype feeds the Party’s depiction of practitioners as “ants trying to topple a giant tree” (Xinhua, 2001b, para. 12).

The benefits to Li are difficult to assess because it is not known how much he controls Falun Gong or whether his inner circle has taken over. Nor is it known whether he cares about other people’s impressions of him. He has received fame and notoriety and several accolades, although these pale next to his self-perception as the most powerful being in the universe (Li, 1998c, 2003a). His tactic of using persecution stories to entice converts has been unsuccessful because, as Pearson (1986) notes, humans have a distaste for suffering and are often suspicious of victim and martyr archetypes. The West in particular does not especially value self-abnegation.

Those who benefit most from the narrative are the advocates and more extreme members of Falun Gong who lead the organ harvesting allegations. They appear as fear vendors, sensationalizing stories of risk and leaving practitioners frightened they could be snatched at any moment for their organs. Several researchers have noted how fear-mongering human rights stories benefit advocates and politicians (Glassner, 1999; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Lule, 2001). They acquire resources, money from non-governmental organisations, reputations as “experts,” publicity

for themselves as champions of justice, and access to national and international stages. They also get to involve themselves in emotional dramas without experiencing any suffering. However, as Thornton (2008) observes, Westerners who champion these types of causes risk losing credibility if the evidence turns out to be false.

Those who benefit least are the millions of everyday practitioners, whose suffering has become currency for the political and career gains of advocates and extreme members. Practitioners do not perceive themselves as victims and are adamant they do not wish to be portrayed in this way (Kavan, 2008). The depictions belittle their inner strength and independence and degrade them, changing their identities into helpless, wounded, constantly embattled, crusading and avenging victims who have to be rescued by the superior Western world. They have the impossible task of trying to persuade people that “Falun Gong is good” when the dominant story is more painful than good, and they are expected to proclaim “truth, compassion and forbearance” while zealous members aggressively bait, disrupt and avenge.

The narrative is especially unhelpful to practitioners inside China. They have little hope of protection, relief or reconciliation while Falun Gong is depicted as a movement receiving money, leadership and advocacy from foreign political advocates. In extreme circumstances they could be charged with treason. Consequently, many practitioners inside China have converted to Christianity (Yang, 2012).

Limitations of the Research

There are three main limitations of the textual analysis. First, there are the recognised restrictions of generalising from a sample of articles. Also, the English versions of Xinhua’s articles may not have conveyed the semantic nuances of the originals. Additionally, the decision to code only archetypes that were genuinely embedded in the texts meant that subtle traces of archetypes were not discussed, and these could have given a richer picture.

Regarding photographs, the discussion is exploratory and the data is tentative. It would be interesting to research further insider/outsider differences in interpretation because photographs are difficult to ignore and may influence whether outsiders decide to read articles about Falun Gong in the first place.

Conclusion

The research intention was to understand the universal behaviour patterns in Falun Gong news stories. The story that unfolded was a non-hero narrative with almost every story ending in victimhood.

The value of archetypal analysis is that it can show a way forward when situations seem intractable. On the basis of the findings, I hypothesise that the

likelihood of Falun Gong and China creating a mutually-beneficial outcome will be positively related to whether one or both parties brings to the fore another archetype that does not depend on dualisms of good and evil or superiority and inferiority. For example, practitioners—whose unwavering dedication to their faith is unquestioned even by the Communist Party—could advantageously bring to the fore creator, healer or mystic archetypes over the victim, martyr and crusader ones that cannot survive without an enemy. China—source of many original discoveries from acupuncture to fireworks—could profitably communicate more its explorer archetype instead of the hierarchical archetypes of ruler and mother that invite resistance.

Finally, Jung's observation that we become what we fight the most is worth considering further. The dynamic between Falun Gong and the Chinese Communist Party resembles the Israeli and Palestinian conflict where each side sees the other as the source of its own negative identity (described by Kelman, 1999). According to Jungians, these negative identities, or shadow sides, are projections, born of past collective trauma. We can limit their destructive potential by acknowledging that the enemy's unfavourable traits are within us as well as outside of us (Singer, 2004). For Falun Gong, this acknowledgement would require a reinterpretation of Li's truth clarification doctrine into an internal exercise of understanding and transforming the self, rather than an exercise in proclaiming victimhood and shaming opponents.

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