“O TELL ME, POET, WHAT YOU DO. – I PRAISE.”
A JUNGIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE MYTH OF ORPHEUS

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree, or qualification thereof, or for any other university or institute of learning.

I declare that this thesis is my independent work. All sources and literature are cited and included.

I also hereby acknowledge that my thesis will be made publicly available pursuant to Section 47b of Act No. 552/2005 Coll. and AAU's internal regulations.

Dzhannet Zhangalova

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Paul Valery wrote, “A work is never completed except by some accidents such as weariness, satisfaction, the need to deliver, or death: for, in relation to who or what is making it, it can only be one stage in a series of inner transformations.”

I would like to dedicate this work to the people who continue to witness and support these inner transformations with patience and with much-needed humour: my family, my friends, and my partner An.

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ABSTRACT

“O tell me, poet, what you do. – I praise.”
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by

Dzhannet Zhangalova

“‘O tell me, poet, what you do. – I praise.’ A Jungian Interpretation of the Myth of Orpheus” takes its initial cue from C.G. Jung’s emphasis on the importance of myth to the understanding of the human psyche, as well as the human condition, and examines the myth of Orpheus from the point of view of analytical psychology. Taking into account the criticisms and limitations of Jung’s writings, the interpretation of the myth of Orpheus is undertaken based on a theoretical framework assembled of the contributions of post-Jungian thinkers such as Murray Stein and Polly Young-Eisendrath, among others. Framed within such central concepts of analytical psychology as individuation and the Self, Orpheus’ journey to the underworld is interpreted as an attempt at encountering the collective unconscious through the anima complex. Ultimately, the poet’s katabasis is interpreted as a failure of individuation, though, in itself, an instructive one.

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Introduction

German poet and philosopher Friedrich Holderlin identified his time as one in which the gods have departed. Almost two centuries after the poet's death, we live with mere traces of the divine. Suffocated by postmodern jadedness, how do we find meaning in such a world? Analytical psychologist Carl Gustav Jung may not come immediately to mind as the bearer of answers. Yet, as a scholar who devoted his life to understanding the human soul and its aspirations for meaning, his thought offers valuable insight. In the following pages, we will apply this insight to the myth of another poet – Orpheus, that poet of poets *par excellence*.

Holderlin identified the greatest task of the poet to consist in discerning "a trace of the fugitive gods," "those who were once / With us, and who'll return when the time is right."[1] There were plenty of religious people in the world in his lifetime and there still are today, so we must assume that Holderlin did not speak of deities literally. Rather, he spoke of the holy, and the poet's task in seeing it in the world. As Martin Heidegger interprets the lines above, "To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world's night utters the holy."[2]

Whereas the poet may be uniquely positioned to perform this task, the impulse to seek the holy and the divine remains within all of us in the form of a desire to give meaning to life. Jung believed that the human psyche is a dynamic entity engaged in meaning making and that it speaks in myth. In his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* he wrote, "What we are to our inward vision, and what man appears to be *sub specie aeternitatis*, can only be expressed by way of myth."[3] As we focus our attention on the myth Orpheus, as told by Ovid, we will interpret the poet's descent into the underworld in terms of a distinctly Jungian search for meaning. To this end, the work will be structured into two parts, with the interpretation of the myth of Orpheus following the detailed outline of the Jungian theoretical framework.

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[1] Friedrich Holderlin, "Bread and Wine," in *Poems of Friedrich Holderlin,* Friedrich Holderlin, trans. James Mitchell, (San Francisco: Ithuriel's Spear, 2004): 14-5.

[2] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2013), 92.

The theoretical foundation for this work will be comprised of key Jungian concepts revised and updated by such prominent post-Jungians as Polly Young-Eisendrath and Murray Stein, among others. The process of individuation will be presented as a teleological model of life-long psychological development and will function as a frame for our understanding of Orpheus' mythical journey. A key element of the second transitional period of this process, that of engaging with the archetype of Other and integrating the anima/animus complex will be emphasised. In the interpretative part of the work, the myth of Orpheus will be treated as a symbolic representation of engaging with the anima complex, and the pitfalls of the process will be demonstrated. We will argue that the myth of Orpheus presents us with an example of a failed attempt at integrating the anima complex, and of an unsuccessful individuation.

Despite our interpretation of his attempts as failed, as a mortal that sets out on a perilous journey to the underworld, Orpheus presents us with a perfect image of the challenges that one inevitably encounters in the process of integrating one's anima/animus complex. It is true that an individual's search for meaning does not come with a blueprint, but the tale of the poet is certainly instructive even in its failure, and points to the dangers as well as the possibilities concealed along the long and winding path of individuation.

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[3] Carl Gustav Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 1989), 3.

Chapter One: Assembling the Theoretical Apparatus

Before we proceed with our interpretation of the myth of Orpheus we must first outline the theoretical tools that will be used for such an interpretation. In this particular case, we find ourselves needing to qualify our theoretical framework before adopting it. When one thinks of Carl Gustav Jung, several associations make themselves readily available: his relationship to Freud that ended in a public split;[4] his most popularized (and often bastardized) concepts of the collective unconscious and archetypes, and their popularized applications to fairy tales;[5] his proclivity for the esoteric and the occult;[6] his eclectic, and sometimes obscure, references and interest in mythology. Arguably a less academically incorporated thinker than his one-time mentor and fellow psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud,[7] Jung appears as somewhat of a fringe figure.[8]

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[4] The relationship between Freud and Jung has engendered much interest in the biographers of both men. Their voluminous correspondence was compiled in *The Freud/Jung Letters*, published by Princeton University Press. Among the many straightforward accounts of the two men's relationship, John Kerr's "*The Devil's Elixirs,* Jung's 'Theology' and The Dissolution of Freud's 'Poisoning Complex'" (in *Jung in contexts: A reader,* edited by Paul Bishop, published by Routledge) stands out for its focus on the role that E.T.A. Hoffman's novel *The Devil's Elixir* played in the formation and dissolution of the friendship of Freud and Jung, as well as in the development psychoanalysis and analytical psychology.

[5] Jung's name and analytical psychology are so readily associated with fairytales in large part thanks one Jung's most renowned students, Marie-Louise von Franz, whose notable works include *Archetypal Patterns in Fairytales* and *The Shadow and Evil in Fairytales,* among others.

[6] Interest in the occult was widespread at the time, and Jung wrote his medical dissertation, *On the Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena* (1903), based on the séances performed by his cousin, Helen Preiswerk.

[7] A list of prominent Freudian thinkers in academia includes Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Donald Winnicot and Luce Irigaray, to name a few.

[8] Luke Hockley, for instance, points to the lack of Jungian perspectives on film media and offers just such a perspective in his *Frames of Mind: A Post-Jungian Look at Cinema, Television and Technology* (2007, published by

When one digs deeper to find an explanation for this state of affairs, several valid criticisms arise. Whilst we do not here have the space to address these criticisms one by one, our choice of secondary sources will reveal that we have taken them into consideration.

All worthwhile ideas, and especially ones heavily associated with one particular thinker, must be challenged, revised and re-constituted in different forms to avoid fossilizing into dogmatic teaching. The theory of analytical psychology, as established by Jung is by no means an exception to this rule and is especially vulnerable to criticism. This criticism appropriately points to the necessity of continuously revising the discipline and challenging even its most fundamental concepts and premises. To Jung's credit, much of the potential for updating his work already resides within his thought, and is made easier by his ceaseless habit of elaborating his writings. Many contemporary Jungian theorists and therapists, who see the value of Jung's work to various branches of the humanities, are engaged in just such endeavours of revision and elaboration.[9] It is with the help of some of these post-Jungian thinkers, such as Murray Stein, Polly Young-Eisendrath and Warren Colman, among others, that we will assemble the theoretical apparatus we require in order to interpret the myth of Orpheus.

Intellect.) In his turn, Paul Bishop wrote and edited a series of books on Jung, shedding light on the thinkers that influenced his thought in order to bring out the philosophical dimensions and implications of Analytical Psychology (see *The Dionysian Self: C.G. Jung's Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1995) or *Analytical Psychology and German Classical Aesthetics: Goethe, Schiller, and Jung* (2008.))

[9] Some notable post-Jungian thinkers include: James Hillman, Susan Rowland, Lucy Huskinson, and Andrew Samuels.

Part One: Myth and the Collective Unconscious

> Unfortunately, the mythic side of man is given short shrift nowadays. He can no longer create fables. As a result, a great deal escapes him; for it is important and salutary to speak also of incomprehensible things.
>
> - C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

Psychological reinterpretation of the meaning of myth

A dictionary definition of the word myth is as follows: "an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts."[10] Anyone who has ever found themselves fascinated by the stories of Dionysus, Psyche or Gilgamesh will surely attest that this definition does not speak either to the fantastical character of these stories or to their ability to fascinate their audiences without an end in sight. Myths possess the distinguished quality of capturing the human imagination. By "capturing" we here mean a two-fold function performed by myth: that of captivating generations of audiences; and that of articulating and expressing the human condition in unexpected but insightful ways.

If myths are to be described as "stories," they are Ur-stories, in the sense of being original and prototypical. Myths proliferated all over the world, with many of the stories from different ends of the world bearing striking – and puzzling! – similarities in content, thematic concerns and symbols. According to Jung, this betrayed if not the existence of a universal God, then at least the universality of the structures of the human mind. Myths appear timeless to us not because of their content, which, on the narrative surface, is often difficult to relate to literally,

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[10] "Meaning of 'myth' in in the English Dictionary," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed May 20th, 2018, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/myth.

(and sometimes altogether impenetrable,) but because of their ability to speak to our nature and to the nature of our minds.

As recently as in the nineteenth century, however, anthropological theories of myth presented a different evaluation of their usefulness. Myths and the need for them were regarded as primitive. This is in part because, understood predominantly as stories that explained and defined the physical world, myths were rendered obsolete by scientific and technological advances.[11] If such an opposition between science and myth were established, choosing the latter over the former would betray certain backwardness in attitude.[12]

But myth was also regarded as an obsolete stage in the progressive development towards a more sophisticated human civilisation. For instance, the father of cultural anthropology, Edward Burnett Tylor developed an evolutionary theory of culture in his seminal two-volume *Primitive Culture* (1871). One of the central arguments that were put forth in this work was that the culture of nineteenth-century England, in which he lived, was a development from an earlier, more rudimentary culture. The evidence for this argument was to be found in “relics of an earlier time” such as “persistent myths, folklore, games, proverbs … far removed from their original source.”[13] These relics he termed “survivals,” and regarded them as expressions of earlier primitive stages of cultural development that survived into the present day. As such, these survivals supported his understanding of culture as a “cumulative social legacy.”[14] The presence of these elements of primitive culture were not necessarily welcome, as Tylor’s cultural anthropology was one predicated upon the concept of the ceaseless evolution of culture towards progress, and progress consisted as much of new developments as of eliminating old beliefs and practices that obstructed the way to the future.[15]

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[11] Robert A. Segal, “Bringing myth back to the world: the future of myth in Jungian psychology,” In *Dreaming the Myth Onwards: New directions in Jungian therapy and thought,* ed. Lucy Huskinson (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 91.

[12] Ibid., 91.

[13] Idus L. Murphree, “The Evolutionary Anthropologists: The Progress of Mankind: The Concepts of Progress and Culture in the Thought of John Lubbock, Edward B. Tylor, and Lewis H. Morgan,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 105, no. 3 (June 27, 1961): 286.

The twentieth century saw the introduction of crucial changes to such conceptions of myth and its relation to science. The task that a new generation of scholars faced was to reinterpret our understanding of myth so that it wouldn’t be relegated to the thankless function of explaining the physical world (why does it rain? what caused the draught? how did the continents come to be?) or testifying to more primitive stages of our collective development as a species. Rather, the range of functions of myth was expanded to include psychological concerns.

It is in response to the nineteenth-century conception of myth and its function that both Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung advanced their own theories, elevating myth to a much higher status and placing it squarely within the human mind. As Robert Segal puts it, with Freud and Jung myth began to function “as a means of encountering not the world but the unconscious.”[16] In a radical departure from the nineteenth-century interpretation of myth, both Freud and Jung deemed “the subject matter of myth the human mind and the function of myth the experience of that mind.”[17]

Jung the analytical psychologist is often distinguished, by laymen, therapists and academics alike, for his extensive and in-depth knowledge of world myths. However, one must acknowledge the role of Sigmund Freud in making such the psychological approach to myth a possibility in the first place. Among the many of Freud's contributions to the understanding of the human psyche, Jung singled out those that had direct relation to myth. Thus, Jung greatly admired Freud for his insightful and bold assertion that "an individual conflict, which he calls the incest fantasy, lies at the root of that monumental drama of the ancient world, the Oedipus legend." [18] To Jung, this insight was of profound importance for if we allow ourselves to process it, then "the gulf that separates our age from antiquity is bridged over, and we realize with astonishment that Oedipus is still alive for us. … [this realization] teaches us that there is an identity of fundamental human conflicts which is independent of time and place."[19]

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[14] Ibid., 278.

[15] Ibid., 267.

[16] Segal, 94.

[17] Ibid., 92.

Similarly, Jung proposed to approach myth as a source of insight into the universal structure of the human psyche. Rather than a consciously constructed narrative that explained various natural phenomena, myth was theorized by Jung to be an expression of the unconscious: "the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious … Just as the constellations were projected into the heavens, similar figures were projected into legends and fairytales or upon historical persons."[20] But how exactly do myths reflect the collective unconscious?

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[18] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Bollingen Series XX), Volume 5: Symbols of Transformation,* ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler, R.F.C. Hull, R.F.C., (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1990), 3.

[19] Ibid., 4.

[20] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Bollingen Series XX), Volume 8:The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche,* ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler and R.F.C. Hull, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), 205.

The collective unconscious

What drove Jung throughout his career was the desire to understand the structure of the psyche and map it “from its highest to its lowest dimensions, its closest to its farthest reaches.”[21] As he studied the manifold expressions of the unconscious through the dreams and fantasies of his patients, he posited the existence of structures that were common to all humans, not just peculiar to any given individual. In a much-cited dream, to Jung appeared a house with several floors, each adorned in a different style: “a long uninhabited ground floor in medieval style, then the Roman cellar, and finally the prehistoric cave” together “constituted a kind of structural diagram of the human psyche.”[22] Arriving as a culmination of efforts to understand the structure of the psyche, this dream assisted Jung in developing a broader understanding of the unconscious as something more than a repository of repressed childhood material and forbidden sexual content, along with the debris of day-to-day interactions. It appeared to him that the unconscious that was individual to each human being was only one layer, and a rather thin one at that, of the human psyche. Something “of an altogether impersonal nature” appeared to exist beneath the personal unconscious.[23] This, the deepest layer of the psyche he termed the *collective unconscious.*

This is not to say that each one of us carries the history of humanity stored as a compressed artefact in the remote parts of our unconscious. Nor is the collective unconscious merely a part of our unconscious conditioned by events or experiences in which we partake as a group of people, and which we process and absorb in the form of social norms, political assumptions or cultural influences peculiar to each generation. On the contrary, Jung insisted on the idea that "the human psyche … is not simply a product of the Zeitgeist, but is a thing of far greater constancy and immutability."[24] The historical aspect of the collective unconscious thus needs to be understood not as a repository of historical experience, but rather as a structure that was developed over the span of human existence. Jung wrote,

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[21] Murray Stein, *Jung’s Map of the Soul: An Introduction* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open court, 1998), 73.

[22] Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 161.

[23] Ibid., 161.

> Man "possesses" many things which he has never acquired but has inherited from his ancestors. He is not born as a tabula rasa, he is merely born unconscious. But he brings with him systems that are organized and ready to function in a specifically human way, and these he owes to millions of years of human development.[25]

According to Jung, just as all human beings exhibit variations peculiar to their individual brains, while still sharing a general brain structure which was developed over years of human evolution, we also share the same structure of the psyche which does not preclude us from developing, from early infancy, in psychologically idiosyncratic ways.

Between the years 1909 and 1912, Jung undertook an interesting project: he began analysing writings, fantasies and dreams of one Miss Frank Miller, whose case was published in a book by Jung's fellow analyst, Gustav Flournoy.[26] Having never met the patient or advised on her case, Jung was curious to test out his theories on the general patterns and structural commonalities of the psyche shared by all humans. In order to assist his interpretation of the Miller fantasies, Jung drew on fairytales, folklore, myths, and mystical and religious imagery. The ease with which these materials lent themselves to comparisons with Miss Miller's fantasies was striking. Jung began to wonder "why this woman had spontaneously produced images and themes resembling those of Egyptian mythology, of the aboriginal tribes of Australia, and of the native peoples of America."[27] If the dream of the many-levelled house provided him with a structural map of the psyche, the case of Miss Miller began to substantiate the theory with evidence.

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[24] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Bollingen Series XX), Volume 15: Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature,* ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler and R.F.C. Hull, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 57.

[25] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Bollingen Series XX), Volume 4: Freud and Psychoanalysis,* trans. R.F.C. Hull, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), 315.

[26] The detailed analysis of the Frank Miller case is published in Jung's *Symbols of Transformation* (Bollingen Series XX, published by Princeton University Press, 1977.)

Archetypes

The work on the Miller fantasies also proved crucial to the formation of another important concept of analytical psychology: archetypes. Through his comparative approach to Miss Miller's dreams and fantasies and the mythical narratives of the world, Jung began outlining the archetype of the hero. Overcoming numerous obstacles, the hero's essential task, in Jungian terms, is to emerge from a state of psychological infantilism and abandon defensive wishful thinking and fantasy in favour of engaging with the realities of the world. As such, the hero is tasked with "creating consciousness": that is, emerging from its original undifferentiated unconscious state.[28] This challenge was by no means particular to Jung's age or even new; in fact, if "humans had not been able to take up this challenge, they would have been doomed eons ago."[29] Thus, already in the earliest stages of Jung's thinking on archetypes, he conceived of them as akin to instincts, much like in the above relation of the archetype of the hero on a quest towards consciousness to the instinct for survival and self-preservation.

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[27] Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul, 76.*

[28] Ibid*., 75.*

[29] Ibid*., 75.*

The concept of archetypes is indispensible to analytical psychology, as it allowed Jung to define the limits of the psyche. However, most descriptions and discussions of archetypes often omit their relation to instincts when, in fact, Jung theorized that it was *both* archetypes and instincts that formed the content of the collective unconscious. The association of archetypes and instincts reflects Jung's belief in the interrelatedness of body and mind. Even though human behaviour is less determined by instinct than animal behaviour, we are still beholden to physiological processes determined by our biological make-up. Thirst, hunger, hormonal fluctuations, the sex drive are all rooted in our biology and often occasion compulsive behaviour. Taking these bodily processes into account, Jung theorized a part of the psyche that is somatic.[30]

Nevertheless, the somatic part of the psyche does not completely over-determine our behaviour. For instance, we may be hungry but we are able to make a choice on how soon we act to satisfy this instinctual need, which kind of food we will consume, and how much of it. As Jung explains it, "the psyche is an emancipation of function from its instinctual form and so from the compulsiveness which, as sole determinant of the function, causes it to harden into a mechanism."[31] Thus, while possessing great power, instincts cannot claim full domain of the human psyche. We can see that Jung strives to posit an understanding of the psyche that is neither wholly mental nor wholly physical. Setting a limit to biological determinism, Jung argues that there is a point at which "instincts lose their influence as movers of the will," and we can begin to speak of the mental aspects of the psyche.[32] It is at this point that will is exercised on the basis of mental factors rather than instinctual ones.

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[30] Ibid*., 79.*

[31] Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, 240-1.

Still, Jung did not believe that psychic life was neatly divided into these two areas, that of instinctual drives and that of mental forms. If instincts function with great precision it is "because they are guided by images and shaped by patterns."[33] It is these patterns that Jung designates as archetypes and connects them to instincts in a mutually beneficial relationship: instincts function with the guiding help of archetypal patterns and images that provide them with meaning, whilst archetypes, in turn, are powered by the physical energy generated by instincts.[34]

Whilst we can never experience either instincts or archetypes directly, we are all familiar with their representations in our consciousness. We experience urges and are able to identify what they are, we dream and fantasize and are sometimes overwhelmed by the power of our mental images. According to Jung, these experiences reach our consciousness as a result of the archetypal and the instinctual functions of our psyche coming together "in the unconsciousness, where they struggle with one another, intermingle, and unite to form units of energy and motivation." [35] Much of the processes occurring in the human psyche, then, are a matter of balancing these two distinct pulls of the instinctual and the archetypal. The dangers that face consciousness are then twofold: of being overwhelmed by the power of instinctual drives or of being possessed by archetypal images and forces (which Jung identifies as happening in psychosis).[36]

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[32] Ibid., 242

[33] Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul, 81.*

[34] Ibid.*, 81.*

[35] Ibid.*, 84.*

[36] Ibid.*, 83.*

Even though archetypes may appear as the tamer of the two forces merely through being opposed to instincts, they often do operate like instincts and are capable of moving a person to action and even of engendering physical reactions (as can be seen in psychosomatic disorders). If one experiences an instinct, like hunger, as a physical need, archetypes are more often experienced as “big ideas and visions.”[37]

The ego experiences archetypal content as profound, overwhelming, and as transcending the limits of his person. Above all, the experience is accompanied by a sense of import, of meaningfulness. One only needs to think of the numerous political and military campaigns throughout human history that were organized around powerful ideas of nationhood, belonging, loyal sacrifices for one’s country, idyllic hope (utopia on earth or paradise in the afterlife), of virtue (however defined,) of fighting the enemy (who are fundamentally not like us.) Swept up by the current of these archetypal images, the ego will devise all sorts of logical explanations for beliefs and behaviours nothing short of irrational. Devising an explanation for such often-observed phenomena, Jung wrote:

> With more foreboding than real knowledge, most people feel afraid of the menacing power that lies fettered in each of us, only waiting for the magic word to release it from the spell. This magic word, which always ends in “ism,” works most successfully with those who have the least access to their interior selves and have strayed the furthest from their instinctual roots into the truly chaotic world of collective consciousness.[38]

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[37] Ibid., *82.*

[38] Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, 267-8.

Personal myths

Understanding the nature and power of archetypes brings us back to considerations of myths. It is noteworthy that Jung emphasized the usefulness of archetypes in providing psychological explanations for religious beliefs and behaviours. He writes that "archetypes have, when they appear, a distinctly numinous character which can only be described as 'spiritual', if 'magical' is too strong a word."[39] In fact, he went as far as to say that the "essential content of all mythologies and all religions and all isms is archetypal."[40] If we return to the analogy of myths as constellations, projected by our ancestors into the skies, we are finally able to comprehend Jung's reverence for myths as enduring stories repeating the world over in different iterations. These stories are charged with powerful archetypal imagery that resonates with audiences because they connect to myths on the level of the common collective unconscious, on the level of psychic energy that profoundly shapes their own experiences. As such, it is not surprising that Jung placed great importance on the individual narratives of his patients as their individual myths.

One of the most important experiences that shaped Jung's understanding of the human psyche came from what he called his apprenticeship years at the Burgholzli psychiatric clinic.[41] There, Jung encountered the psyche plagued by psychosis. His main goal during these years was to understand "what actually takes place in the mentally ill."[42] Exposed to the seemingly disjointed psychotic fantasies relayed to him by his patients, Jung was struck by their resemblance to religious and mythical material. By taking the erratic products of the unconscious seriously, Jung was able to alleviate the symptoms of individual patients. This, in turn, led to the realization that "paranoid ideas and hallucinations contain a germ of meaning. A personality, a life history, a pattern of hopes and desires lie behind the psychosis."[43]

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[39] Ibid., 267.

[40] Ibid., 268.

[41] Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* 114.

[42] Ibid., 114.

The overwhelming and obscure fantasies, images and symbols produced by mind afflicted by psychosis are a result of the person's ego consciousness being swallowed up in the collective unconscious. In such a case, the individual myth of the person, the production of which necessitates the strong involvement of the ego, can be simply drowned out. In such cases, discovering the meaningful connections that were obscured by the apparent incoherence of psychotic and schizophrenic outbursts, Jung came to believe that "the crucial thing is the story."[44] Certainly, clinical diagnosis is indispensable, but identifying the particular mental illness that a patient suffers from helps the doctor much more directly than it does the patient. To put it in Jung's own words:

> therapy only really begins after the investigation of [the patient's] wholly personal story. It is the patient's secret, the rock against which he is shattered. If I know his secret story, I have a key to the treatment. … In therapy the problem is always the whole person, never the symptom alone. We must ask questions which challenge the whole personality.[45]

Even though Jung's goal at Burgholzli was to study and understand the mentally ill, his work there allowed him to acquire knowledge and insight, the significance of which would reach far beyond the walls of the clinic. Jung discovered that “a general psychology of the personality lies concealed within psychosis, and that even here we come upon the old human conflicts.”[46] Rather than identifying something categorically alien or abnormal in the psyche of the mentally ill, Jung concluded that, in fact, “we encounter the substratum of our own natures.”[47] As Don Fredericksen put it, “the religious mystic, visionary artist, and psychotic touch the same level of the psyche, but with varying accounts.”[48] The difference lies in how these expressions of the unconscious are brought to consciousness and whether or not they are processed and integrated. Just like the fantasies of Jung’s psychotic or schizophrenic patients, the dreams, fantasies and unconscious projections of any human being contain meaning in them and shape and express the person’s “story.”

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[43] Ibid., 127.

[44] Ibid., 124.

[45] Ibid., 117. Jung also wrote of the necessity of tailoring one's approach to patients, as he sometimes adopted a Freudian or Adlerian approach in order to suit the individual patient's case.

It is thanks to Jung’s insistence on knowing the “personal story” that we can so easily associate his name with mythology. When it came to his patients at Burgholzli, the extraction of this personal story was not an easy task. Much too often, Jung’s patients would communicate in language that appeared nonsensical at worst and highly symbolic at best. For this reason, Jung writes, “as early as 1909, I realized I could not treat latent psychoses if I did not understand their symbolism. It was then that I began to study mythology.”[49] Thus, Jung would come to be distinguished by his readiness to incorporate myth as aid both in his clinical and theoretical work.

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[46] Ibid., 127.

[47] Ibid., 127.

[48] Don Fredericksen, “Two Aspects of a Jungian Perspective Upon Film: Jung and Freud; The Psychology of Types,” *Journal of the University Film Association, Vol. 32*, No. 1/2, (Winter-Spring 1980): 52.

[49] Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* 131.

There are many ways he utilized myth to deepen our understanding of the human psyche. Interpreted symbolically,[50] myth afforded Jung a glimpse into the wealth of human experience ever subsisting in the human psyche in the form of archetypes in the collective unconscious. As we saw earlier, as an invaluable repository of archetypal material, myths formed the basis for a comparative approach his clinical and theoretical work. As such, myths tended to complement the strictly medical and psychological understanding and treatment of mental illness. Finally, as a template of sorts, mythical tales pointed to the ways in which one can understand, evaluate and correct the course of a personal narrative in order to give meaning to one's life.[51] In fact, as a template for understanding and constructing one's story, myth proves especially helpful in the challenging process of individuation, which we will discuss below.

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[50] Jung understood a symbol to be something, for which an adequate articulation does not exist, which cannot yet be fully understood, but can be experienced as a symbol.

[51] Jung is a prime example of the use of myth as a template for one's story. His *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* is prefaced with the following words: "Thus it is that I have now undertaken, in my eighty-third year, to tell my personal myth. I can only make direct statements, only 'tell stories.' Whether or not the stories are 'true' is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is my fable, my truth."

Part Two: Individuation as a Process of Personal Myth-Making

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

- C. P. Cavafy, "Ithaca"

Jung had a conception of human life as bearing a teleological character. For him, the stages into which we conventionally organize human life – childhood, youth, adulthood, maturity in old age – were not to be dismissed as simplistic, but respected and examined as bearing wisdom. To give expression to the life-long process of psychological development, Jung coined the term *individuation.* Put simply, individuation is "the capacity for wholeness and evolved consciousness" in an individual as well as the process of pursuing said wholeness.[52] When a person enters Jungian analysis, the therapist will evaluate where along the process of individuation that person is, and will assess their capacity for further development. Jungian analyst Murray Stein describes this assessment the following way:

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[52] Murray Stein, "Individuation," in *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology Theory, Practice and Applications*, ed. Renos K. Papadopoulos (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 197.

> The assessment of individuation describes a person's conscious and unconscious assumptions and attitudes: about the basis and sources of identity and sense of self worth, about the quality and meaning of relationships to other people and to the world at large, about the energy (or the absence of it) poured into personal striving and ambition, about the objects of desire and passions that lead a person into the highways and byways of life, about the focus of life's meaning.[53]

Thus, a patient entering Jungian analysis can expect the aim of his analysis to consist in promoting individuation by addressing and resolving the challenges of psychological development that a person has faced in the past or faces in the present. The pursuit of individuation is aimed at the realisation of what Jung termed the Self, and identified as “the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning.”[54] At the culmination of the process of individuation, at which point a person arrives at “a new centering of the total personality, a virtual centre,” they can be said to have arrived at an experience of the Self.[55] But before we go any further, we must outline the stages of the process of individuation.

Jung posited two general stages of psychological development, which were later expanded into three by his student and psychologist Erich Neumann.[56] Murray Stein further characterizes the three stages the following way: “containment/nurturance,” “adapting/adjusting” and "centering/integrating."[57] Passing from one stage to another is a gradual and often laborious process, as a person is confronted with the necessity of undergoing change and and adapting to new circumstances. The two periods of transition between these three stages are critical and more or less correspond to what one would commonly recognise as a crisis of adolescence and a mid-life crisis. These stages of development are not clearly separated, and they do, in fact, bleed into each other. Passing through to another stage of one's development does not mean that one will never again encounter the challenges of the previous one. As Stein puts it, "the features of each [phase] continue, but in a less predominant way, as a person makes the passage through a whole lifetime."[58]

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[53] Ibid., 198.

[54] Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* 199.

[55] Warren Colman, “The Self,” in *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology: Theory, Practice and Applications,* ed. Renos K. Papadopoulos, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 156.

[56] Stein, “Individuation,” 198.

The first, containment phase of psychological development, is considered maternal because the "containing environment is constructed socially and psychologically on the model of a womb."[59] The womb functions as the archetypal symbol of nurture, and in this first stage the human being is dependent on the care of others, of their immediate family and their society, for basic survival: food, shelter, physical and emotional support and education, among other things. In this sense, it is not only the mother that functions as the nurturer, but any caretaker (male or female), teachers, community, institutions (school, university, church, etc.) as long as they perform the symbolic "mothering" function of providing the individual with a suitable protective environment as he develops and struggles to acquire independence.[60] This period lasts from a person's birth to anywhere between their adolescence to well into their adult years, depending on individual and socio-cultural circumstances. Throughout the containment stage of development,

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[57] Ibid., 199.

[58] Ibid., 199.

[59] Ibid., 200.

[60] Ibid., 201.

"testing and challenging of physical and psychological boundaries continues" as the people around the individual create a safe enough environment for this testing to occur without damage to the emerging ego.[61] If these conditions are not provided, an individual may develop "primitive and massive defences of the self, which [may] cut the person off from important developments and relationships later in life."[62]

As the individual enters the stage of adaptation and adjustment, they encounter the first crisis of individuation. If the first stage was characterized by the mothering attitude of containment, now the individual can be said, symbolically, to enter the realm of the father.[63] In this stage, the individual relies on the support, care, and nurturing they have received to confront the so-called "real world." A person learns to make decisions and bear responsibility for these decisions, including unforeseen or undesired consequences that they are powerless to control. In practical terms, demands are placed on the individual to secure their financial independence, to build and sustain personal and professional relationships, to fulfil their role in society as well as to negotiate a myriad of social expectations.

If, in this stage, the individual recognizes the uncertainty inherent to human existence, and at the same time learns to approach their many challenges with a sense of being equal to them, then he or she can be said to have successfully passed to the second stage of individuation. If, however, the person finds themselves incapable of surmounting the obstacles they face and withdraws into a state of wish fulfilment, in which reality threatens to disintegrate their fantasy of omnipotence, then we are confronted with infantilism that will preclude them from emerging from the symbolic womb of the first stage. In reality, of course, these divisions are not as clear-cut and the different attitudes are not mutually exclusive: a person may be able to maintain healthy personal relationships, but prove incapable of taking responsibility for securing their own livelihood; conversely, a person who appears to be professionally successful within their chosen career path may still find themselves beholden to the wishes of their parents to the point of being incapable of making independent decisions about other aspects of their life. Despite these nuances, the stages outlined above still remain useful for measuring psychological development.

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[61] Ibid., 204.

[62] Ibid., 201.

[63] Although this may sound similar to Jacques Lacan's concept of the Name-of-the-Father, it is important to note for Lacan the "realm of the father" is entered much earlier, with the acquisition of language.

As the stage of so-called "reality-testing," the second stage of development can be regarded as a stage of conformity. However, this stage "is often entered, paradoxically enough, by violent acts of adolescent rebellion," as "the adolescent breaks out of the parental container."[64] As they grow older, however, some people will begin to question the very rules they have been taught to follow and the obligations they have had to take on. They will begin to reflect on the meaning of the sacrifices that they've had to make in an effort to fit into the "real" world they were once so impatient to enter. An attempt is made to evaluate one's life and often this attempt yields disappointment or regret. Unrealised potential, failed relationships, illness, and loss can all bring these considerations into focus. The third stage of development, then, is characterized by an effort to enter "slowly and often painfully into a process of becoming born anew as a whole and integrated individual."[65]

If the second stage of development requires adaptation more than anything – adopting a suitable identity that will allow one to function as smoothly as possible in their milieu – then the third stage of development consists of withdrawing from this identity. As this process commences, "the ego, which has taken on this persona and largely identified with it, begins to draw away and create a distinction between a true inner self and the social self that has been dominant."[66] The main demand of this stage of individuation is for the integration of the whole personality. Parts of the psyche, which were previously devalued or repressed in the necessary effort of constructing a specific identity, may re-surface and demand to be reconciled. As Stein puts it, "a strong need arises to join the opposites of persona (good person) and shadow (bad person), of masculine and feminine, of child and adult, of right brain and left brain, of thinking and feeling, of introversion and extraversion."[67] Recognising the existence of these disparate parts of oneself and the effort of integrating them makes the complexity of an individual human personality even clearer. This, in turn, leads to a greater understanding and acceptance of the complexity of the world and of other human beings in it.

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[64] Stein, "Individuation," 210.

[65] Ibid., 210.

As was mentioned earlier, the crowning achievement of the process of individuation is the attainment of the Self. Considering the brief description of the third stage of individuation above, it is not surprising that Jung began to articulate the concept of the Self after his intellectual separation from and the severance of his relationship with Freud, which he experienced as a profound crisis both in professional and personal terms. Withdrawing from many of his professional obligations, Jung retired into a period of contemplation. During this period Jung's concept of the Self emerged as a result of his own attempts to enter into a conversation with his unconscious through self-reflection, practicing active imagination through writing and drawing.

In 1927, Jung had a dream that proved crucial to his articulation of the concept and to the understanding of its importance for his work. In the dream, the city of Liverpool appeared to Jung as a mandala: "In the centre [of the square] was a round pool and in the middle of it a small island. … On it stood a single tree, a magnolia. It was as though the tree stood in the sunlight and was at the same time the source of light."[68] Though it would be erroneous to argue that the concept came to Jung out of nowhere in his dream, the influence of this dream image of the Self can be seen in the following definition of the concept: "the Self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious."[69] Thus, the Self is the centre of the psyche the same way that the ego is the centre of the conscious portion of the psyche. Unlike the ego, however, the Self also encapsulates the totality of the psyche, both the conscious and the unconscious. As such, the Self is the "supraordinate totality" to the ego and is not to be identified with it in terms of its function.[70]

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[66] Ibid., 210.

[67] Ibid., 212.

In the last stage of individuation, when a person is engaged in the effort of reconciling the tensions within his psyche, he is, in effect, attempting to attain to this experience of the Self, a totality that subsumes within it the different structures of the psyche. Characterized by a kind of centering pull and the experience of the Self is accompanied by "deeply satisfying sense of an ineffable and inviolable core to the personality."[71] If this sounds religious, it should come as no surprise. Much of the symbolic experience that preceded Jung's theoretical articulation of this concept was mystical in nature, aexperience that is transcendent, much like a religious experience or an experience of taking psychedelic drugs is. Jungian analyst Warren Colman writes,

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[68] Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* 198.

[69] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 12: Psychology and Alchemy,* ed. Gerhard Adler, trans. R.F.C. Hull, (Routledge: London, 2010), 41.

[70] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Bollingen Series XX), Volume 9: Part II: Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self,* ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler, R.F.C. Hull, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 211.

[71] Warren Colman, "The Self," in *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology: Theory, Practice and Applications,* ed. Renos K. Papadopoulos, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 158.

> the nature of … numinous, mystical experiences … produce a sense of wholeness (totality) which is unarguable and self-validating. … The idea that mystical experience is the result of a shift in centre from the ego (which is the centre of consciousness) to the self (which is the centre of conscious and unconscious) is actually one of his most brilliantly original insights, offering an explanation of the very unexplainable quality of such experiences.[72]

The positing of the experience of the Self as the end goal of individuation is, by no means, a call for a kind of dissolution of the ego in a religious experience of transcendence of this earthly life. Consciousness (ego) plays as crucial a role in the process of individuation as does the Self. In fact, without the ego emerging from a state of non-differentiation in early infancy, there would be no process of individuation to speak of. In the quest for the attainment of the Self, the ego, then acts as a sort of midwife.[73] Jung conceived of individuation as a struggle for greater consciousness of oneself, of the unknown parts of one's psyche, of the world at large and one's place in it. The crucial part of the struggle unfolds as an engagement between the agent of human consciousness (the ego) and the forces of the personal and collective unconscious. This engagement with the unconscious is made possible with the help of one's anima or animus complexes.

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[72] Ibid., 157.

[73] Ibid., 160.

Part Three: Anima/Animus as Other

Jung postulated that certain complex formations mediate an individual's relationship to the outside world, as well as to the world within. The persona complex, for instance, mediates the relationship between the ego and the outside world. Jung described it as "a compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to be. He takes a name, earns a title, exercises a function, he is this or that."[74] The anima/animus complex, on the other hand, mediates the ego's relationship to the unconscious. One can experience this complex either as constellated into a figure in a dream, or through projecting it onto people around them, especially onto a romantic partner.

Jung first articulated the concept of anima as an archetype particular to the male psyche, and later developed the concept of animus as its counterpart in the female psyche. Jung theorized the anima as the archetype of Eros/the feminine in men and animus as the archetype of Logos/the masculine in women. This identification of the feminine with Eros and the masculine with Logos tellingly reflects the socio-cultural gender bias of Jung's time. Nevertheless, the postulate that there are "feminine" aspects to men and "masculine" aspects to women, without the development of which neither can be considered wholesome personalities, was an advanced way of thinking about these matters. In a certain sense, it placed "women and the feminine aspects of the psyche on equal footing with men and the masculine" by "incorporating 'feminine' qualities as essential to mental health."[75]

In other senses, however, Jung contributed to the perpetuation of the stereotype of the feminine as identified with connectedness in relationships, emotional (over)expressiveness, closeness to nature, and receptivity; and the masculine as characterized by autonomy, rationality, mastery over nature, and action. If these original formulations of anima and animus are accepted at face value and adopted as interpretative frameworks in the humanities, they would be certainly dismissed as antiquated. Susan Rowland identified this issue specifically in Jungian literary criticism: "Traditional Jungian criticism quickly lapses into essentialism on gender which enables some Jungian critics to attack feminism for betraying the essential feminine nature of women."[76] Revised by feminist post-Jungian thinkers, however, Jung's conception of anima and animus can still prove valuable to us.

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[74] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Bollingen Series XX), Volume 7: Two Essays in Analytical Psychology,* ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler and R.F.C. Hull, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), 217.

[75] Sherry Salman, "The creative psyche: Jung's major contributions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung,* ed. Polly Young-Eisendrath, Terence Dawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 65.

In effect, Jung developed a theory of a "contrasexual personality," which we can describe as a personality that develops alongside our adopted gender personality. Studies in gender and sociology reveal to us that from a very early age children are treated differently based on their sex and grow into a gendered personality that is predicated on valuing certain behaviours, traits and activities over and against others. In terms of analytical psychology, when "we identify with one gender, we develop an unconscious complex around the Other."[77] Subjectively constructed on the basis of socio-cultural articulations of gender, this image of the Other will become what we define ourselves against.

If these aspects of ourselves, designated as Other and censored in expression, are allowed to emerge, then whatever stereotypical conceptions of gender we possess will be immediately shattered. Of course, this is precisely what makes it difficult to allow such expression. Polly

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[76] Susan Rowland, *C. G. Jung and Literary Theory: The Challenge from Fiction,* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), 4.

[77] Polly Young-Eisendrath, *Gender & Desire: Uncursing Pandora* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press,1997), 26.

Young-Eisendrath, for instance, writes of her young male patients who struggle with those aspects of their personality that are considered feminine or weak such as tenderness, a nurturing attitude or emotional vulnerability. Such struggles to redefine what it means to be a man or a woman on one's own terms are commonplace. They reveal to us those qualities, which have been relegated to the position of Other and demand to be reintegrated. Here we see the emergence of anima or animus as "a psychological complex rather than as an archetype," a significant revision of Jung's conception of anima/animus.[78]

Jung's designation of anima/animus as archetypes derived from his experience of the anima as numinous. Experiences of an archetypal image, according to Jung, are accompanied by an overwhelming feeling of both fascination and unease, eliciting a strong reaction, regardless of whether or not it's a favourable one. Jung's own initial reaction to the image of his anima, which he named Salome, was that of deep mistrust and rejection.[79] It is the concentration of strong feeling around this image in himself and in his patients that led Jung to the conception of anima and animus as archetypes. However, as we were able to gather from Polly Young-Eisendrath's revision of Jung's theory, anima and animus can be more favourably thought of as complexes that constellate around the more generalized archetype of Other. Jung theorized the complex to be "a cluster of associations around an archetypal core of emotional arousal, uniting the personal and the collective unconscious."[80] Kast further defines complexes as "generalised, internalised episodic relationship patterns which always imply an emotionally toned collision between a significant other and the ego as it is at any given time."[81] Thus, the Other is an archetype around which numerous complexes, such as anima, animus, and shadow, among others, form.

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[78] Ibid., 37.

[79] Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 181.*

[80] Polly Young-Eisendrath, 37.

Thus successfully overcoming the original problematic articulation of these concepts, Young-Eisendrath's archetype of Other still allows us to retain the usefulness of Jung's principle of contrasexuality. As long as a person is brought up in a society among other human beings, they will inevitably be directed into a certain gendered articulation of their personality that goes along with their sexual identity. The contrasexual complex that constellates alongside this development will remain dormant in one's unconscious. This other self, existing within us, and perhaps rarely expressed, can be accessed through anima/animus. How exactly does this occur?

One of Jung's crucial insights is the conception of "the opposite sex as a projection-making factor."[82] Put simply, we see in persons of the opposite sex, especially if we are attracted to them, aspects of our own personality that we may be entirely unaware of or that we feel uncomfortable in expressing. This happens especially when we idealize or devalue these people. For instance, a girl brought up in a traditional social environment, which values women for their obedience, patience and reticence, will form ideas of an opposite. As a matter of idealization, she may consider men to be typically rebellious, dynamic, bold (what she may long to be); she will also likely develop an image of men as incapable of cooperation, impatient and brutish (what she may proudly distinguish herself as not being). As a young woman, she may find herself projecting these images of the opposite as fantasies and as fears onto the members of the opposite sex. Such an approach helps us understand that much of what we attribute to others, be it positive or negative, resides in ourselves in the form of an anima or animus complex and will likely find a way to make its presence known.

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[81] Verena Kast, "Anima/Animus," in *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology: Theory, Practice and Applications,* ed. Renos K. Papadopoulos, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 127.

[82] Ibid., 32.

One of Jung's most positive contributions to analytical psychology is the conception of the psyche as dynamic and self-regulating, in effect striving for a balance of psychic energy. Therefore, when the contrasexual complexes of anima and animus make themselves known through projections in interpersonal relationships, dreams or therapy, we can think of them as warning signs, as indications of an imbalance within the psyche that needs to be addressed. In fact, Jung often wrote of integrating the anima or animus as an effort to return a person's psychic energies to themselves. In the case of the young woman from the previous example, the task of therapy would be to "dissolve the projections, in order to restore their contents to the individual who has involuntarily lost them by projecting them outside [herself]."[83] This would entail making the woman aware of her projections as indications of her fears of and desires for qualities she believes herself incapable of possessing because they have been assigned to the Other. The goal of analysis would be to enable the woman to integrate aspects of her personality and make them serve her rather than continue allowing the unconscious complexes to limit and negatively affect her life.

As contrasexual complexes, we can think of the anima and animus as glimpses of potentiality. By seeing their manifestations in our projections and our dreams, we can "encounter some of the darkest and most exciting aspects of the psyche."[84] More than that, by "withdrawing contrasexual projections and claiming them as part of the self," we widen our realm of possible experiences and ways of relating to our fellow human beings.[85] This insight into the transformational potential that lies in our relationship to the other sex marks a unique contribution on Jung's part. As has been mentioned before, however, an individual's relationship to their anima/animus complex, is mostly unconscious and an important part of the work of therapy is to bring this relationship to consciousness.

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[83] Carl Gustav Jung, *Four Archetypes,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 18.

[84] Young-Eisendrath, 42.

A sort of "compromise formation between the individual and the unconscious world," the anima/animus functions as "a bridge, or a door, leading to the images of the collective unconscious" that establishes "a connection with the depths of the psyche."[86] We have already established that Jung views a connection with the collective unconscious to be of potential great help to the individual in achieving a balanced personality. As a psychic formation facilitating this connection, the anima/animus complex, therefore, is highly valuable to the human psyche and indispensable to the process of individuation. After Young-Eisendrath's re-working of anima and animus as complexes rather than archetypes, we can utilize the developed archetype of the Other to express the function that Jung previously ascribed to the anima/animus as archetypes. That is, the archetype of the Other can be said regulate not only one's relationships with other people (especially romantic partnerships), but also "relations between the ego and the inner world of fantasies."[87] It is here that we find our interpretative entry point to the myth of Orpheus.

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[85] Ibid., 46.

[86] Kast, 115.

[87] Ibid., 127.

Chapter Two: Setting in Motion.

The Myth of Orpheus as a Tale of Failed Individuation

Part One: The Myth

The myth of Orpheus certainly occupies an important place in Western mythology, and has contributed to shaping far more than just the image of art and the artist in Western thought. As American art historian Kaja Silverman suggests, we need only to look at the proliferation of Orphic imagery and symbolism in the history of Western culture:

> [the myth of Orpheus] was allegorically assimilated by paganism, Christianity, courtly love, Neoplatonism, humanism, romanticism, modernism, and even postmodernism. It provides the storyline for the first three operas, and [paintings by] Eugene Delacroix, Camille Corot, Gustave Moreau, and Jean Delville. The myth was the launching pad for Jean Cocteau's Orphic Trilogy, two of Balanchine's ballets …. and a number of Max Beckmann's lithographs. …. John Ashbery, Muriel Rukeyser, Margaret Atwood, and Adrienne Rich have all written poems about it, and it still forms a central—albeit unacknowledged—part of our psychic reality.[88]

A well-known mythical character, the first mention of Orpheus originally appeared in the 6th century BC in the work of the poet Ibycus of Rhegium.[89] Since then, Orpheus has enjoyed a long and lustrous existence in stories that would disappear and re-appear in various permutations throughout the centuries. The two most well known versions of the myth of Orpheus have come down to us through Virgil's fourth book of *Georgics* and Ovid's tenth and eleventh books of

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[88] Kaja Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 5.

[89] Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 399.

Metamorphoses. Our own interpretation of the myth here will be based on Ovid's version of the myth. Considering how influential the myth Orpheus has been in the history of Western thought, providing yet another interpretation of the myth seems like a daunting task, and perhaps even redundant. Still, we must concede that the abundance of interpretations testifies to the durability of the story and its wealth of meaning, for in this writer it finds yet another captured mind.

Orpheus and Eurydice: Loss and Libidinal Regression

Besides the passing remarks that inform us that Orpheus is a native of Thrace and that he is the son of Apollo, Ovid does not bother to provide us with much of an "origin story" for this revered poet. Of his skill we know that no human, animal or plant could resist being enchanted by his famous lyre, and that even the gods admired this "poet of the hour."[90] Without any "establishing shots," Ovid's tenth book begins with the arrival of the god of marriage ceremonies, Hymen, to the wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice. Immediately, an ill omen arises: the fires of Hymen's torch are "guttered out / In coiling smoke that filled the eyes of tears."[91] Tragedy does not wait long to strike and the very next morning Eurydice is bitten by a venomous snake while taking a stroll through a meadow. Despite the previous foreboding lines, the deadly bite of the snake is so unexpectedly accidental that Eurydice is described as having "stumbled into Death."[92] Understandably, Orpheus is grief-stricken and inconsolable.

As we know, the anima complex that constellates around the archetype of the Other makes its presence known in romantic interpersonal relationships by way of projection, often characterized by idealization or devaluation. We do not wish here to anthropomorphize a psychological concept and to designate Eurydice as Orpheus' anima complex/figure. Rather, we will think here of Orpheus' passionate love for Eurydice and her sudden death as drawing out his anima complex constellated around the archetype of the Other. Understanding Jung's theory of libido will support such an interpretation.

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[90] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), 269.

[91] Ibid., 269.

[92] Ibid., 269.

Jung had a different conception of libido rather than Freud: he defined it as not exclusively sexual. In Jung, libido refers to psychic energy, which is distributed among the various components of the psyche. This distribution is not set in stone, and changes and adapts according to the circumstances of the person's life as well as their mental state. We can see examples of such movement in Jung's concepts of the progression and regression of libido.

When a person devotes their will and effort to facing the challenges of the world by acquiring new skills, pursuing their goals or creating new relationships, we can speak of the progression of libido. Here psychic energy is being utilised and directed by ego-consciousness. The opposite can happen: a person who has lost a close relative, suffered crushing failure at work or feels consistently undervalued by their partner may become apathetic and lethargic, perhaps even depressed. When this happens, a person can feel as if stuck in limbo, paralyzed and unable to reconcile inner conflicts. It feels natural to wish to withdraw from the demands and responsibilities of being a member of society. In Jungian terms, we would describe this as a regression of libido.[93] In such cases, the psychic energy that is not being directed by ego-consciousness into various endeavors does not simply disappear into thin air. Rather, libido is "drained out of consciousness and returned to the unconscious."[94] By being withdrawn into the unconscious, this psychic energy "activates complexes."[95]

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[93] Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul,* 66.

[94] Ibid., 66.

In Orpheus' case, we see that the tragic loss of his young bride is a torment. He is thrown off balance and cannot find peace. The libidinal energy, withdrawn from his daily pursuits, is returned to the unconscious and activates his anima complex. From Jung's privileged valuation of anima/animus we know that it is "the psychological image of the psychopomp or guide, which brings us into relation with the contents of the objective psyche.[96] As such, libidinal regression may be experienced negatively, but actually carries with it great potential for development. As the person withdraws from the world, they are confronted with ambivalence, unresolved conflicts, repressed feelings. This may, in turn, help them face these un-addressed issues and prepare them for a better adaptation to the world. In Orpheus' case, the experience of loss and grief activates his anima complex and leads him to a confrontation with the unconscious, and it remains to be seen whether it is a fruitful one. Thus, overcome by grief at the untimely death of his beloved, Orpheus resolves to descend into the underworld and rescue his wife.

The first mortal to ever embark on this treacherous journey, he masterfully appeals his case to Persephone and Hades, the king and queen of the underworld, in song.[97] Neither a curious guest nor a hero, Orpheus declares himself a poet in love, charming the king and queen as well as the inhabitants of Tartarus with his mournful song. Overwhelmed by Eros ("A god called Love had greater strength than I"), he quickly makes of the entire underworld his captivated and sympathetic audience. In fact, not one creature remains indifferent to Orpheus' song, as we are told that "Ixion's wheel stopped short," "Vultures gave up their feast on Tityus' liver," "the raging Furies / Grew sobbing-wet with tears" and even "Sisyphus sat down upon his stone."[98] Entirely out of his element, Orpheus still manages to mesmerize with his matchless voice and his wish to retrieve Eurydice is granted with one important – and peculiar – caveat: as he takes Eurydice back to the world of day, "He must not turn his head to look behind him."[99] In a manner that appears to us inevitable (Cocteau's Orpheus utters "It *had* to happen!")[100] Orpheus turns around and loses Eurydice again, in what Ovid describes as "her second death."[101]

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[95] Ibid., 66

[96] Salman, 65.

[97] Hades, the god of the underworld, abducted Persephone from the world of day. Together, they rule the kingdom of the underworld.

Idealisation and the fatal backward glance

Why did Orpheus turn back? It is around this question that the uncanny (and the numinous) of Orpheus' story gathers itself: why did he turn back? It is, indeed, the very same question that captured the imaginations of so many painters, writers and poets. Was it mere human frailty? Like many of us, Orpheus overcomes seemingly insurmountable challenges on the way to his goal only to lose everything he has worked for in one moment of foolish impatience. Was it hubris? Perhaps, having faced death itself, Orpheus arrogantly imagined himself invincible. Was it defiance? When one has charmed the gods and gained their favour, the only greater display of power remaining is to throw their gifts in their face. Was it fear of mundane love? One can imagine that to a man as gifted and daring as Orpheus the prospect of a peaceful domestic union with his beloved might appear dull. Along these lines a frightening question creeps in – did Orpheus will Eurydice's death? Finally, Jean Cocteau puts perhaps the most important question in the mouth of the character Heurtebise in his *Orpheus*, when the poet is confronted with a categorical: “Is it Eurydice you wish to find or Death?”[102]

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[98] Ovid, 270-1.

[99] Ibid., 271.

[100] Jean Cocteau, *Orphee,* (France: Andre Paulve Film and Films du Palais Royal, 1950).

[101] Ovid, 271.

Ovid gives a somewhat unsatisfying answer: Orpheus was worried that Eurydice might have gotten lost, so he only wanted to ensure that she was following him. Instead of presenting this as a sign of mistrust, however, Ovid writes that even this fatal glance “spoke his love.”[103] In fact, Ovid’s Eurydice couldn’t even bring herself to blame Orpheus for “Was not his greatest fault great love for her?”[104] Thus, Ovid attempts to persuade us that Orpheus’ greatest flaw was that he loved too much. This may have been the case, but one cannot help but ask the question – did he love *well*?

As was mentioned earlier, Ovid spends no time telling us how the two met, nor are we made privy to any details of the couple’s period of courtship, if there was one. The story of these two begins immediately with the wedding. Though we learn very little about Eurydice from Ovid, we know enough to see that Orpheus’ image of her is highly idealized: “A girl whose thoughts were innocent and gay,” she is a child whose life was cut too swiftly.[105] It seems, then, that Orpheus is infatuated with a bride he hardly knows. Still, while appealing his case to Hades and Persephone, the poet boldly declares that if his wish to return Eurydice to life is not granted, then Hades can claim “two deaths in one” as he shall remain in Tartarus with his beloved.[106] After his fatal backward glance, Orpheus’ pleas to cross the Styx once again to attempt to retrieve Eurydice the second time go un-answered and he is denied entry to the underworld. He does not, however, act on his declaration to grant Tartarus a second death, his own.

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[102] Cocteau, *Orphee,* 1950. Heurtebise is both the companion to Death, who is a female character in the film, and to Orpheus, as he escorts the poet to the underworld.

[103] Ovid., 271.

[104] Ibid., 271.

[105] Ibid., 270.

[106] Ibid., 270.

Certainly, this is not to claim that Orpheus' grief is any less valid or that suicide to be united with Eurydice would have been the *real* proof of his feelings and his devotion. Rather, this is to point out that the relationship of the poet and his bride was that of young love, driven by passion, naïve and idealistic. Because of Eurydice's tragic and untimely death this couple is not even allowed the time and experience to move past this initial idealised stage of the relationship to recognise how much of the attraction was a matter of projecting one's anima/animus complex onto each other.

Jean Cocteau problematizes this relationship in his cinematic interpretation of the myth by making his Orpheus into a poet, who is somewhat jaded by his fame and reputation, and is beginning to be stifled by his domestic life. The Orpheus and Eurydice of the silver screen fight like a real married couple, and, at one point, Eurydice's attempt to tell her husband that she is pregnant is cut off by his brusque "Leave me alone. I want to sleep!"[107] Such is not the case with Ovid's Orpheus, and one might even argue that this further exacerbates the poet's grief as he has lost not only his partner, but also an ideal object of affection, an image untainted by any mundane marital experiences.

The poet's descent into the underworld was a descent into the unconscious, an attempt at bringing his anima complex to consciousness by engaging with the archetype of the Other. Instead, as he emerges from this encounter without having attained that which he sought, he experiences the grief of Eurydice's death all over again. This second loss immobilizes him as he stands, petrified: "The man was paralyzed and fear ran through him / Until his very body turned to stone."[108] Despite the fact that Orpheus returned to the world of day, even if it was without Eurydice, it seems that a part of him remained in Tartarus, split off from his conscious personality. Consumed by his sorrow, our poet goes "melancholy-mad" and refuses to eat or drink. After a week of this, in a final gesture of withdrawal from the world, he decides to retreat into the mountains of Haemus.

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[107] Cocteau, *Orphee,* 1950.

In his re-telling of the myth, poet Rainer Maria Rilke presents Orpheus' descent and mission as rather a disturbance to Eurydice. In Rilke's poem, the young woman has already passed on to another state: "She was no more the woman of flaxen hair / who sometimes resonated in the poet's songs, / no more the odor and island of the wide bed, / and that man's possession no more."[109] She does not seem interested in returning to life, and is not at all perturbed by Orpheus' forbidden glance. If Ovid's Eurydice glides "into deeper darkness," disappearing immediately out of sight, as if drawn back into the abyss by some force pulling on her from below,[110] Rilke's Eurydice walks away on her own, stepping "unsure, slowly, without impatience."[111]

Despite these differences in detail, however, Rilke renders the monumental grief of Orpheus as clearly as Ovid. Here, too, Orpheus' grief is described as being so powerful and devastating that it drives him to withdrawing from the world:

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[108] Ibid., 271.

[109] Rainer Maria Rilke, "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes." *The Essential Rilke,* ed. and trans. Galway Kinnel, Hannah Liebmann, (New York: Ecco, An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), 23.

[110] Ovid., 271.

[111] Rilke, 25.

> The one so loved that a single lyre
> raised more lament than lamenting women ever did;
> and that from the lament a world arose in which
> everything was there again: woods and valley
> and path and village, field and river and animal,
> and around this lament-world, just as
> around the other earth, a sun
> and a starry silent heaven turned,
> a lament-heaven of disordered stars –:
> This one so loved.[112]

Overwhelmed by grief, Orpheus encounters his anima complex and it leads him to the world of the unconscious, populated by gods and mythical creatures. Even there, however, he uses his voice and his lyre to try to give shape and form to the ultimate unknown – death itself. Yet, despite his bold declarations of love and sweeping gestures, he fails to bring his anima complex to the light of consciousness and integrate aspects of his personality relegated to the Other. At a crucial moment he cannot keep his promise not to look back and is drawn back into the world of the collective unconscious. Undifferentiated and un-integrated, Orpheus' anima complex takes possession of him, as we will see so remarkably demonstrated by what follows.

Wishful thinking: withdrawal into the womb

After the failure to differentiate his anima complex and bring it to the realm of consciousness, Orpheus becomes possessed, so to speak, by his anima. He is so affected by his grief that he refuses to sleep with women and teaches Thracian men the art of homosexuality. Ovid speculates that it might be because of his fear of another loss or because of his fidelity to the memory of Eurydice that Orpheus directs his attention to men. Ironically, in these relationships we still see Orpheus valuing the same qualities that made him enamoured of Eurydice, for he teaches the men of Thrace that "Such love affairs renewed their early vigour, / The innocence of youth, the flowers of spring."[113] Although this shift in sexual preference is drastic, it does not seem to point to any change in Orpheus' attitude. In fact, it appears that he is trying to re-create his relationship with Eurydice but in what he perceives to be a more distanced way, one that would save him the pain of loss and grief. This distancing from the world and from intimacy in relationships is soon taken further.

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[112] Rilke, 21.

One day as he takes a stroll through the hills of Haemus, Orpheus chances upon a lovely meadow and wants to rest, but finds no shade to protect him. Sitting down to play his lyre, he immediately summons all manner of trees, which come crowding to provide him with the needed respite from the sun. If we are to consider Orpheus' state at this time in terms of the process of individuation outlined earlier, it seems that the poet found himself incapable of dealing with the challenges of the world (unrealised hopes, loss, mourning, grief) that characterise the second – adaptation – stage of individuation. As a result, he regresses back into the containment/nurturance stage of development, characterised by the symbolism of the womb. The containing circle of the trees prevents the light of consciousness (ego) from entering the shadows that envelop Orpheus. Then, in this "lament-heaven of disordered stars"[114] of his own making, safely contained in nature's own womb, Orpheus begins to sing and the trees that envelop him become his audience, too.

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[113] Ovid., 272. Upon her first introduction to the reader, Eurydice is described as "walking carelessly through sun-swept grasses, / Like Spring herself."

[114] Rilke, 21.

What follows is Ovid’s skilful employment of narrative structuring, as the voice of mourning Orpheus introduces us to the stories of Apollo and Cyparissus, Ganymede, Apollo and Hyacinthus, Pygmalion and Galatea, Cinyras and Myrrha, Venus and Adonis, and, finally, of Atalanta. These stories make up the rest of the tenth book of *Metamorphoses*. One look at this list of mythological characters is enough to notice that Orpheus here sings of love. As he declares,

From Jove, as well as my maternal Muse
…
I ask a lighter touch, a softer strain.
My theme is pretty boys whom gods desire,
Of girls who could not sleep unless they sinned –
All paid the price of loving far too well.[115]

While we do not have the space to go into the details of each of these stories, some of these tales present us with a better understanding of Orpheus’ state of mind.

The first tale Orpheus tells is uncannily similar to his own fate. Apollo’s lover Cyparissus accidentally kills his beloved pet deer, and Apollo exhausts all attempts to console him. Cyparissus sees no end to his sorrow and declares that all he wishes to do is to cry forever. Apollo obliges this request and turns the youth into a beautiful tree “whose shapely topmost branches / Stared at the stars across the circling night.”[116] Perhaps most consoling of all for Orpheus, Apollo declares that the cypress tree henceforth shall “share grief with others” and “shall stand wherever mourners are.”[117] The similarity to Orpheus’ own tragically accidental loss of a lover is so striking that one cannot help but think of this rendition of Cyparissus' story as the poet's attempt to find some consolation in his grief.[118]

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[115] Ibid., 274.

[116] Ibid., 274.

[117] Ibid., 274.

In the story of Apollo and Hyacinthus, too, a discus, thrown in play by Apollo strikes his young lover dead. Powerless to bring Hyacinthus back, Apollo's mournful song is strangely similar to Orpheus':

> … my hand your murderer,
> And yet its crime was meeting yours at play.
> Was that a crime? Or was my love to blame –
> The guilt that follows love that loves too much?[119]

Orpheus here uses tales of his father's tragic lovers to make sense of what happened. His role in Eurydice's second demise preoccupies him, as he tries to process his guilt. His examination, however, does not move past his petrified initial reaction: he loved too much and this love cost his bride her (second chance at) life.

The story that follows these two is that of Pygmalion, who fell in love with his own statue and prayed to Venus so she might bring the ivory girl alive. His wish granted, Pygmalion saw that "ivory had turned to wax / And wax to life, yielding, yet quick with breath."[120] In contrast to the preceding tales, this one appears to sing of the triumph of love. This is not surprising: Galatea's name is not even mentioned in Ovid's version, as the woman is so clearly wholly Pygmalion's imagination that one hesitates to call this "love" at all. The wish-fulfilment aspect of this tale is undeniable, as Orpheus perhaps imagines his version of a perfect love, a union blessed and protected by Venus herself. As John Heath puts it, in the story of Pygmalion and Galatea, "we listen to a disenchanted and failed bard create a tale of an enchanted and triumphant artist."[121]

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[118] The tale of young Ganymede abducted by Zeus to be his cup-bearer at Mount Olympus resembles that of the abduction of Persephone, once again reflecting Orpheus' own life.

[119] Ovid, 276.

[120] Ibid., 279.

The very next tale, however, shatters this childish fantasy. Myrrha, Pygmalion's great granddaughter, falls in love with her father, Cinyras. Orpheus' introduction of this story is somewhat perversely gleeful, as he warns fathers and daughters to stop listening if they are too sensitive. For those who do stay to listen to the tale, he offers it as a "fatal warning."[122] The tale is, indeed, unsavoury. With the help of her nurse, Myrrha manages to trick her father and spends several nights in his bed. When Cinyras finally finds out what he's done, he goes "wild with horror" and tries to kill Myrrha.[123] Cursed by the gods and unable to ever return home, Myrrha, heavy with child, pleads to the skies to be made "a thing that neither lives nor dies," and is turned into the myrrh tree.[124]

What is notable here is that after attempting to relate his grief to his father's loss of lovers, Orpheus moves on to a wish-fulfilment fantasy of Pygmalion and Galatea. This fantasy, then, is followed by a tale of incest, of Myrrha and Cinyras. Of such tales Jung wrote, "there lie at the root of the regressive longing, which Freud conceives as 'infantile fixation' or the 'incest wish,' a specific value and a specific need which are made explicit in myths."[125] As Paul Bishop puts it, Jung moved analytical psychology "away from the biological mother as the object of incestual desire and towards the Faustian Mothers as the symbol of a spiritual desire for rebirth."[126] In a major diversion from Freud's theory, Jung interpreted the incest wish symbolically, rather than literally. As such, in Jungian thought, dreams of incestuous relationships or mythological tales of incest often point to a person's inability to gain independence from their parents and their parental complexes. Stuck in the first stage of individuation, such individuals are not able to leave the nurturing sphere of the home (literally or metaphorically) and cling to fantasies of wholesomeness, afraid to step out into the world.

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[121] John Heath, "The Stupor of Orpheus: Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,'" *The Classical Journal,* Vol.91, No. 4 (April-May 1996): 370.

[122] Ovid, 280.

[123] Ibid., 285.

[124] Ibid., 285.

[125] Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, 233.

Dionysian dismemberment: dissolving in the collective unconscious

In Orpheus' case, the fact that he is telling this story after his unsuccessful attempt to integrate his anima complex shows us that the wish-fulfilment fantasies and tales of incestuous love are a result of his failure to deal with the contents of the unconscious. Jung identified this particular kind of failure as "identification with the collective psyche."[127] Since the eruption of unconscious content of the collective psyche in the form of dreams, visions and fantasies carries strong numinous energy with it, it has the power to overwhelm the conscious mind, but also to lend a strong source of psychic energy. Identifying with the collective unconscious, then, would be a way to maintain a "newly won connection with the primal source of life."[128] One way this identification would manifest itself is through the incest wish. "'Longing for the mother,' the nostalgia for the source from which we came," this wish is essentially a desire to return to a kind of non-differentiated state of being before the division of subject and object, when one experienced the omnipotence of infancy.[129] It seems, then, that all the tales told by Orpheus are reflective of his own state as he gathers the trees around him to be enveloped in a kind of motherly womb to let his fantasy roam free in wish-fulfilment.

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[126] Paul Bishop, *Carl Jung* (Critical Lives series), (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2014), 130.

[127] Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology,* 232.

[128] Ibid., 233.

But things wouldn't be so bad if Orpheus' failure to integrate his anima complex resulted only in a withdrawal from the world. Instead, he suffers a gruesome death that we here can only interpret as a kind of overwhelming eruption of the collective unconscious that completely overpowers the poet. Despite Orpheus' attempt to create a protective circle of trees around him, a group of raging Maenads saw him from afar and decided to attack him. "Look at the pretty boy who will not have us!" they cried and "tossed a spear aimed at his mouth."[130] The Maenads know that the only power Orpheus possesses against them (in fact, his only power at all) emerges from his mouth – his poetry and song. They are right to do so, too, for Orpheus puts up a defence: the spear fell at the poet's feet, and even the stones these women threw fell short of their target – such was the power of the poet to manipulate the world around him with song. Still, "The clattering tympanum soon won their way / Above the poet's music; spears found their aim, / And stones turned red, streaked by the singer's blood."[131]

Interestingly, the very ability (his voice) that enabled Orpheus to charm the creatures of Tartarus, the very power of creation that enabled the poet to navigate his descent into the collective unconscious is attacked first, and the poet is stripped of his only real defence. Jung's theory on psychological types might be of help in interpreting the meaning of this detail in the myth of Orpheus.

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[129] Ibid., 385.

[130] Ovid, 297.

[131] Ibid., 297.

Jung posited that humans generally exhibit two attitude-types (introverted and extraverted) and further elaborated this by four function-types (thinking, feeling, sensation, intuition).[132] Whilst attitude-types reflect the orientation of a person's libido (outward in extroversion and inward in introversion), the function-types provide a range of functions with the help of which individuals can adapt to and interact with the world around them. Jung further argues that not all of these functions will be developed to the same degree in a given individual. Rather, "one or the other function predominates, in both strength and development."[133] What is crucial here is Jung's insight that alongside a dominant, differentiated function, there exists an inferior, undifferentiated function (i.e., a predominantly thinking type will have an undifferentiated feeling function). The person's inferior function is the "one least open to conscious control," but is also the one "closest to the unconscious," providing an excellent entry point to encountering unconscious contents of one's psyche.[134]

In Orpheus' case, his identity is wholly cantered around his ability as a poet. He lived by his artistry, his ability to create and enchant the world with his art. Not only was poetry his main function in society, but it was also his main strength – quite literally, he could manipulate the objects in the world around him to his will with song. Without necessarily having to identify Orpheus' psychological type, we can safely say that his artistry was tied to his superior function. Conversely, his weakest function would have to be associated with his anima complex. It is this complex, once activated, that led him to the underworld; failure to bring the complex to consciousness and a subsequent attempt to withdraw from dealing with it altogether eventually erupted like a watershed in the attack of a group of crazed women. No wonder, then, that his strongest function – his ability to create, to give form to chaos, which helped him the most along his journey – was lost first. The trees, birds, snakes and animals that had been gathered around Orpheus abandoned him the moment his song ceased and he was left to the mercy of the Maenads.

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[132] Carl Gustav Jung, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Bollingen Series XX), Volume 6: Psychological Types,* ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler, R.F.C. Hull, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 466.

[133] Ibid., 487.

[134] Fredericksen, 54.

Ovid's description of Orpheus's death is nothing short of macabre. "Stoned, beaten, and smeared with hardened clay," the poet still remained alive.[135] Looking for "deadlier weapons" than the tree branches and spears they'd been using up to then, the Maenads rushed the oxen pulling the ploughs in a nearby peasant field.[136] Having ripped the oxen apart, they tore out their horns. Then,

> Armed with this gear they charged on Orpheus
> Who bared his breast to them to cry for mercy
> (A prayer that never went unheard before);
> They leaped on him to beat him into earth.
> Then, O by Jupiter, through those same lips,
> Lips that enchanted beasts, and dying rocks and trees,
> His soul escaped in his last breath
> To weave invisibly in waves of air.[137]

This crazed display did not end here. After all of nature began sobbing for the passing of the poet, the Maenads dismembered his body, tearing "arm from shoulder, knee from thigh."[138] By some miracle, the poet's head and lyre were preserved, and, caught by the current of the river Hebrus, were carried to the shores of Lesbos. There, a wild snake was poised to bite the poet's head, but his father Apollo was quick to petrify the snake and protect what remained of his son.

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[135] Ovid., 298.

[136] Ibid., 298.

[137] Ibid., 298.

Following this lucky intervention on Apollo's part, Ovid gives the tale of Orpheus a somewhat ambivalent ending:

> The poet's shade stepped down from earth to Hades;
> …
> There Orpheus took his Eurydice, put arms around her
> Folding her to rest. Today they walk together,
> Side by side – or if they wish, he follows her, she, him,
> But as they move, however they may go,
> Orpheus may not turn a backward look at her.[139]

Although we might delight at the reunion of lovers who were separated so unfairly, the fact that Orpheus is still not able to gaze backward at Eurydice maintains the essential sense of unease that accompanied our first encounter with this strange caveat. Like the final shot of the actually already deceased passengers of the ship all reunited at a ball in their best dressing gowns at the end of James Cameron's *Titanic,* this "happy ending" would feel like yet another wish-fulfilment fantasy if it were not for the little detail of Orpheus still not being able to look back at this bride. The re-appearance of this backward gaze gives us the impression of a sinister repetition in the manner of Freud's famous "return of the repressed." Thus, instead of taking this ending for what it is, we return to the episode just before it, when Orpheus' head and lyre are said to have arrived at Lesbos.

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[138] Ibid., 298.

[139] Ibid., 299.

It is not surprising that all that survived of Orpheus were his head and his lyre: after all, it is that which distinguished him among others, and which saved him from peril many a time. In another reference to the beginning of the tale, we find it notable that this floating head was almost bitten by a snake but saved the very last moment (if only Eurydice had been this lucky!). That Apollo is the one to interfere is significant. It seems that Ovid here attempts to balance the uncontrolled outpouring of the Maenads' Dionysian[140] forces by returning the poet to the land of his father, a source of order. In this sense, we can think of Apollo as the force for the conscious ego and of Dionysian forces as the unchartered waters of the collected unconscious.[141]

Part Two: An Alternate Ending

In *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* Joseph Campbell makes an observation that there is a stage in every hero's journey when he returns home from his adventure, and does so with some kind of newfound knowledge or, very often, a gift to the world (be it Prometheus bringing fire to humans or the Buddha sharing the paths to attaining nirvana.)[142] This is especially true of many stories of katabasis, when the hero descends into the world below and emerges from the perilous journey, having wrestled some kind of boon, by way of many trials, from the creatures of the underworld. Unlike many of these stories, however, Orpheus' katabasis ends without any obvious gains of such kind. One inevitably wonders, then, what a successful journey to the underworld would have looked like. Certainly, in this scenario Orpheus would have returned to daylight with Eurydice.

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[140] Maenads were the female companions of the god Dionysus.

[141] It is true that the distinction between Apollo and Dionysus was most popularly articulated by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), whereby the term Apollonian came to mean order, rationality and serenity against the Dionysian chaos, irrationality and orgiastic feeling. It would therefore be anachronistic to apply these distinctions to the myth of Orpheus and ascribe intention of such an opposition to Ovid's writing. Instead, we interpret Apollo's intervention on the basis on his relation to Orpheus as a father, as symbolically representing that stage of individuation when a person gains independence and awareness of themselves, and the stage which is most dominated by the persona rather than one's engagement with animus/anima.

[142] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 179.

We are here reminded of Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, in which our protagonist, Joel, signs up for a service to have his ex-girlfriend, Clementine, permanently erased from his memory. The professionals arrive at Joel's house, he is put under and the process of erasure begins. We are treated to surrealistic dreamscapes of Joel's memories, as he realises that he, in fact, would like to preserve the memory of this relationship. Joel tries his hardest to wake up or to outrun the inevitable as Clementine keeps disappearing, just like Eurydice, over and over again. Finally, Joel takes Clementine to his childhood memories, to intimate, embarrassing parts of his life she was not present for, in a desperate attempt to hide her from the extremely efficient "erasure men." In the end, Joel may have failed to stop the process, but he mysteriously ends up meeting Clementine the very next day after she's been erased from his memory. In an emotionally charged scene, they find out that they've erased each other. Despite uncomfortable revelation of their previous failed relationship, they decide that it's worth another attempt.

While we cannot go into greater detail here, we could interpret the story of Joel and Clementine as a story of a successful integration of the anima complex.[143] Much like Orpheus, Joel descends into the unknown world of his unconscious. Guided by the anima figure that appears in the form of his girlfriend, Joel is forced to face his fear of intimacy, his insecurities about being a father, his failures as a partner, and, finally, his unease with his own masculinity. Confronting all of these rejected aspects of his life and his personality, Joel is able to overcome his emotional impotence. He re-experiences his relationship anew through his memories and this makes him a different man, with each new challenge his personality appears more wholesome, he is less afraid of expressing those aspects of himself he had always hid before. At the end of the film, it is Joel who insists on trying again and he does so with a vulnerability, of which we could not have imagined the "old" Joel being capable. But that is only Joel.[144] What of Orpheus?

Orpheus fails to move beyond the second stage of individuation. He may have developed strong ego-consciousness, but his tragic loss and his grief make him regress to the first, mothering, stage of individuation. Moreover, upon his confrontation with the collective unconscious, he failed to bring his anima complex to consciousness. Instead, he withdraws from the world and allows his ego to be overwhelmed by the collective unconscious.

Jung warned of the two dangers inherent to any attempt of encountering the collective unconscious. One was the "regressive restoration of the persona" and the other "the identification with the collective psyche."[145] We mentioned earlier that Orpheus fell prey to the latter danger, that of identifying with the collective psyche and completely dissolving one's ego in it, effectively withdrawing from the world. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that both of these two dangers are "at bottom, alienations of the self, ways of divesting the self of its reality in favour of an external role or in favour of an imagined meaning."[146] What happens in both cases is that the individual becomes dominated by the collective: either by the pressures of socio-cultural norms or by the "suggestive power of primordial images."[147] The pursuit of individuation, however, is aimed at the realisation of the Self, and therefore must be weary of and must move beyond these dangers.

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[143] Alternatively, for an insightful Freudian analysis of the film as a work of trauma and mourning, see "The return of the erased: Memory and forgetfulness in *Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind* (2004)" by Havi Carel in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 88:4, 2007.

[144] Other notable successful examples of the integration of anima/animus include Federico Fellini's *8½* (1963)*,* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust, Part Two* (1832), or Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* (1998) among others.

Even if the Self pre-exists as a kind of potentiality, it is not given that we will experience it. Even though it contains both the conscious and the unconscious, the conscious aspect of our psyche (the ego) emerges long before the existence of the Self is realized. Thus, even if one does experience the Self as the totality of the psyche, it is not without the help of the ego as a sort of mid-wife.[148] In Orpheus, for instance, we can see an example of a process of individuation gone awry, stopping short of reaching the experience of the Self. As Orpheus withdraws into nature, consoling himself with fantasy and wish-fulfilment, he becomes less and less involved in the world, that is, in the world of ego-consciousness. The mid-wife that was supposed to assist in Orpheus' journey to the realisation of the Self was overwhelmed by the collective unconscious and could no longer serve its purpose.

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[145] Jung, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology,* 224, 232.
[146] Ibid., 238.
[147] Ibid., 240.
[148] Colman, 160.

Conclusion

In all the stories of love told by Orpheus after his withdrawal into the mountains, there is an element of transformation: Cyparissus is turned into the cypress tree; Hyacinthus is turned into a hyacinth; Adonis's body is turned into anemones. While it maybe the mythical characters that undergo transformations, in all of these instances, these metamorphoses are perceived as providing relief to those they left behind. Apollo finds comfort in the fact that the cypress tree weeps with all mourners, and across the petals of the hyacinth he inscribes his grief. With Adonis's body turning into anemones, Venus declares, "My sorrow shall have tribute to its own."[149] Out of the tragedy of unexpected loss grows something more enduring, something that immortalizes this loss whilst at the same time providing comfort to all future mourners.

Fate was not kind enough to gift Orpheus with such closure. Granted, Orpheus is a talented musician, but he is still a mere mortal: he cannot make his beloved turn into a beautiful flower or a tree that reaches toward the skies. Having lost her twice, once by chance and once by his tragic mistake, it seems that Orpheus has nothing remaining of his bride. The only trick of transformation he is afforded is his song. As we have seen, Orpheus uses his song to mourn, justify, fantasise and escape. This means that we, suddenly, are like the trees that gathered in the meadow to provide Orpheus with much needed shade: a faithful audience, at once attentive and kind, sheltering our poet from the world and from his own sorrow. How are we rewarded for our attention?

In our attempt to give a Jungian interpretation of the myth of Orpheus, we have come to the conclusion that the poet's katabasis, undertaken with the sole goal of retrieving Eurydice, was illustrative in its failure. Namely, we interpreted Orpheus' descent into the underworld as an attempt to integrate the unconscious content of his psyche, occasioned by the traumatic event of the sudden death of his wife. He returns to the world of day a mere shadow, a part of him remaining, petrified and frozen in his tracks, at the spot where Eurydice was withdrawn back into the abyss. Orpheus' behaviour after his return – his rejection of all women, his withdrawal from society, his songs of wish-fulfilment fantasy – all point to libidinal regression. Having been exposed to the collective unconscious, he succumbed to the temptation of dissolving his ego, desiring to return to a state of infantile non-differentiation. This came at a high price, as was made clear by the gruesome nature of his death.

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[149] Ovid, 293.

Although we do not here wish to reduce this myth to the single function of a cautionary tale, we must nevertheless acknowledge its instructiveness in illuminating an important aspect of the process of individuation. Rather, drawing on Jung's reverent attitude towards myth as a glimpse into the collective unconscious, the interpretation offers a consideration of myth as a template for a particular stage in the process of individuation, an opportunity to learn of its perils as well as of its promises. We may not be able to make ourselves immune to the dangers inherent in the encounters with the collective unconscious on the path of individuation, it is a trajectory that is nevertheless worth pursuing.

As director Chantal Akerman succinctly put it, "as soon as you frame something, it's fiction."[150] It was the intention of the author to remain aware of the fact that the interpretation here advanced is a framing of sorts, a fiction that aimed to be truthful and useful above being True. This work opened with a brief remark on the difficulty of discerning the divine in our contemporary times. This question is doubtless one that is embedded within the larger crisis of meaning that the contemporary (post-) postmodern subject finds themselves in. Without entertaining any illusions of possessing the final answers, we here attempted to offer Jung’s concept of individuation and its striving towards the experience of the Self as one possible way of creating a meaningful connection with oneself and with the world one inhabits, and of perhaps even discerning the divine in both.

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[150] Marianne Lambert, *I don't belong anywhere: The Cinema of Chantal Akerman,* (Belgium, France), 2015.

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