THE ODYSSEY – A JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVE: INDIVIDUATION AND MEETING WITH THE ARCHETYPES OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

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ABSTRACT Homer's epic tale of the 20-year return of Odysseus from the Trojan War is investigated with particular reference to Jung's theory of individuation. Odysseus' meetings with 'the anima' in the form of goddesses, sirens and female monsters and his visit to Hades demonstrate the confrontation and humanization of aspects of the archetypal level of the psyche, central to Jung's theories of psychic growth and development. Jung's important ideas of the psychoid level and the transcendent function are explored and linked both to his investigations into medieval alchemy and with findings from contemporary neuroscience. The importance of Jung's constructive method of the interpretation of dreams and myths is shown to be central.

Key words: Jung, post-Jungian, individuation, transcendent function, psychoid, archetype, collective unconscious, neuroscience, symbol, alchemy, psychopath, animus, anima, myth, dreams, symmetry, Odysseus, oedipal, Penelope

As part of the AGIP professional training, trainees are asked to interpret a fairy story or a myth using Freudian, Kleinian and then Jungian theory. When I did this exercise it highlighted for me the particular Jungian and post-Jungian contribution to analytic practice with its emphasis on accompanying the patient on a journey towards 'individuation' – 'a natural process of development that wants to take place anyway' (Beebe *et al*. 2001, p. 238). This is the gradual realization of an ordinary but unique self with the ability to take up a differentiated relationship with both the external world and the inner world of dreams. This is every hero or heroine's journey that, for Jung (1936), 'alone makes sense of life' (para. 330).

As a psychiatrist Jung worked with borderline and psychotic patients from the start of his professional life and his theories emerged partly from these experiences. Freud and Jung were very different men with different contributions. I have found that I need a balance of both of them as a basis for my work. Freud's focus was about establishing a new 'science' that unmasked

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unconscious processes. Jung's focus was about investigating all the manifestations of a psyche that in health was 'self regulating'. Contemporary scientific developments confirm a number of Jung's theories which I will briefly allude to as I go along.

So as I now reflect on elements of *The Odyssey* from a Jungian perspective, I invite you to use Jung's constructive or synthetic method of interpretation (Jung 1917/1926/1943 (paras 121–40) which sees every aspect of a dream, myth or fantasy as representing different aspects of the dreamer or teller of stories.

The Hero's Journey

The Odyssey (Homer 1996) is one of many myths that over thousands of years have told the tale of the hero's journey. Joseph Campbell's classic book *Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 1968) gives many extraordinarily similar examples of the hero's journey in myths and tales from all around the world. How does this come about? Jung is helpful here. He postulated that the unconscious contains both the 'personal unconscious' and the 'collective unconscious'. The collective unconscious contains archetypal patterns of human experience of more than a million years which are manifested in complexes characteristic of all human communities. The contemporary neuroscientist, Damasio, refers to something similar when he writes:

> There is a set of correspondences which has been achieved in the long history of evolution, between the physical characteristics of objects independent to us and the menu of possible responses of the organism. (Damasio 2003, p. 200, quoted in Symington 2006, p. 96)

For Jung, the body and its physical functions have a psychological and spiritual component: movements and chemical changes at the cellular level are experienced as archetypal emotions in the body. These are experienced in the mind as anthropomorphized forms or fantasies.

The archetypes are forms in potential. Jung compared them to the crystalline forms which emerge when water containing certain chemicals grows into the form particular to that chemical element. By analogy, an archetype never exists as a psychic manifestation of any kind, but only as a structure giving rise to a particular kind of psychic imaging when lived experience mates with archetypal: the result of this mating is what Jung calls the 'archetypes of the collective unconscious' (Jung 1934/1954). Jung wrote:

> I had originally held to Freud's view that vestiges of old experiences exist in the unconscious. But my actual experiences of the unconscious, taught me that such contents are not dead, outmoded forms, but belong to our living being. (Jung 1961/1982, p. 197)

Archetypes can manifest themselves as monsters, dragons, witches, devils and gods the world over – they are experienced not only as the raw emotion-

driven material of myth but, more importantly, as the symbolic process that we call dreaming and that is fundamental to the development of the mind. Jung wrote that:

> In matters concerning the psyche I deliberately and consciously gave preference to a dramatic, mythological way of thinking and speaking, because this is not only more expressive but also more exact than an abstract scientific terminology. (Jung 1951a/1959, para. 25)

For Jung the archetype is the mental equivalent to the instinct; psychological development then enables specific connections and attachment. Thus in *The Odyssey* at various points the archetypes, represented by Gods, Goddesses and other mythical beings and forces, trigger events that are part of the human developmental relational journey. The Jungian Michael Fordham (1976) writes about the archetypal expectations or 'predispositions' (p. 6) which we all bring into the world and which need to be appropriately met by real experience for healthy development to occur.

I would like to enter the story of *The Odyssey* at the point where Odysseus has been absent from his home for about 20 years and where the Goddess Athena, in disguise, goes to spur his son Telemachus to assert his authority over the 100 suitors who have ensconced themselves at the palace. They are demanding that one of them marry the Queen Penelope now that her husband will surely not return from the Trojan War. She has been fending them off with the promise that she will only consider a proposal of marriage once she has finished her tapestry. But, since she unpicks by night all the stitches she has made by day, that day will never come.

Psychologically, Telemachus' own burgeoning development activates the gang of young, slothful, greedy and sexually predatory suitors. They represent elements of what Jung called 'the shadow' – infantile and oedipal demands that have been re-ignited by the father's absence. Developmentally these elements must be recognized, faced and overcome. Eurymachus as spokesman for the suitors says: 'We stay and, instead of each seeking a suitable bride, we feed our hopes from day to day on the thought of the incomparable prize for which we are competing' (Homer 1946, Book 2, pp. 200–10).

The Goddess Athena pushes Telemachus to leave his childish ways, separate from his beloved mother, attempt to differentiate himself from the suitors and go off on his own individuating journey to find his father.

Jung declared that an analysis must first deal with the personal, familial complexes of the personal unconscious, such as the oedipal complex, as a necessary part of the journey of individuation (Jung 1917/1926/1943, paras 88–9). But Telemachus' journey of developmental maturation is in contrast with Odysseus' journey which is about the second half of life, which Jung sees as having primarily cultural rather than personal aims.

Odysseus needs to return home and this requires an inner journey which is far longer and more demanding than he could ever have imagined. His personal ego is about to be tempered by the more powerful energies of the archetypal Self which represents the conscious *and* unconscious aspects of the psyche. For Jung, the process of individuation, in health, shifts the person from a focus on ego drives towards an awareness of the interaction between conscious and unconscious processes (Jung 1939).

Odysseus' long, sometimes terrifying, journey after he sets sail from Troy with hundreds of his men ends with him alone, ten years later, left by Phoenician sailors on the shores of his homeland. Goddess Athena now appears and disguises him as a beggar: the cunning hero – something of a Trickster in Jungian archetypal terms – must return without his previous identity and status and somehow change the culture back at home.

Meetings with the Anima

Much of Odysseus' journey up to this point has involved meeting differing facets of the *anima*. This Jungian term for the otherness of the deep unconscious is represented for men by a female form in dreams and fantasies. The anima is very raw, a magnetic 'other' in relation to the personal ego. If she can be met and related to psychologically rather than seduced or raped, the man's vigour and creativity are enhanced. For women this 'other' is represented by the male figure of the *animus* (Jung 1951a/1959).

As well as the wisdom and strategic planning abilities of the archetypal Goddess Athena, Odysseus meets with the sexual but ultimately shallow eternal desire of Calypso who holds his journey up for several years but from whom he is eventually able to move on. More dangerous still are the beguiling singing of the Sirens, the voraciousness of Scylla and the black swirling vortex of Charybdis.

Odysseus' human cunning and resourcefulness coupled with his growing restraint throughout his journey enable him not only to survive these meetings with the anima but also to work more consciously and creatively with her. We see this movement in his relationship with Circe the witch who attempts to turn Odysseus into an animal. Through his strong containment[1] of her impulses, and his subsequent enjoyment of her for over a year, Circe becomes more helpful, more human, more loving. She begins to reveal the underlying *potential* within her nature: she is the one who is able to instruct him about the next leg of his journey. What clinically may be diagnosed as a case of personality disorder or hysteria can also be understood as a purposive communication about the need for the vast potential of the unconscious to be recognized and understood (Mogenson 2003, pp. 20–9).

It is not uncommon for a psychotherapist to experience something like this challenging relationship in the consulting room with patients: those who having been denied the appropriate containment of overwhelming emo-

tional trauma in their early years, or the good enough attachment and attunement from an intimate reflecting relationship with another, may continue to play out and experience their difficult everyday problems and relationships as repetitive, catastrophic, archetypal and never-ending dramas. The psychotherapist is introduced to a world of addictive, paranoid and compulsive emotional states that have not been *humanized* through a benign relationship with a thoughtful mind.

The Jungian analyst Marcus West (2007) warns against the therapist being lured into a merged relationship where the therapist takes over the regulation of these huge emotional states: the maintenance of analytic separateness and containment enables the patient to discover their own capacity for self-regulation. Conflict *and* collaboration are at the heart of the journey of individuation and the playing out of these opposites within the therapeutic *temenos* is a central aspect of the relationship between therapist and patient.

Clinical Example

In order to protect patient confidentiality I want to introduce at a number of points a composite male patient whom I will call David: a highly successful merchant banker in his 40s who responded to an offer of mentoring from his employers with a request for analysis, ostensibly in order to get a more advanced form of personal development. In actual fact David feared that his company were about to discover that he was having a breakdown. He knew he needed immediate help but he had to hide it.

David would be suddenly overwhelmed with crying or would break things in a terrible rage. He was afraid to go to sleep for fear of having yet another nightmare that was about blood and murder and bodies getting hacked to pieces. In his dreams he was terrorized by an ominous tramp who would come to the door and push his way in. The transference and countertransference spoke of extremely negative object relations: I would often feel both angry and as if I was being treated with contempt during sessions. David brought an eerie predator-like presence into the consulting room and became edgy and prudish if I alluded in any way to sexual matters. He dreamed of flushing a little woman down the toilet and was surprised and furious that she found her way out of the U tube – the U representing 'you' as in 'me' the therapist. He was full of contempt towards his wife when she seemed bored and disinterested with him – didn't he buy her everything she wanted? He was taken aback when I refused to see him as a patient if his employers paid his bill. He was bewildered and mocking when I insisted that he signed his own cheques and made his arrangements directly with me rather than leaving his wife to do this by post or email. And then I started to discover that, if he got into a real fix, he would appear to be perfectly charming and reasonable while lying his way out of it.

Confrontation with the Unconscious

Jung compared Odysseus' descent to Hades with his own deliberate experiment to confront the unconscious after his split with Freud. Jung found that he had to do yoga exercises to deal with the powerful emotional states that arose in him – but if he was able to stay with his depths until his storms began to quieten, images, what he called 'living symbols', would start to be produced. When contemplated, these would lead him to the next stage of his journey (Jung 1961/1982, p. 210).

For Jung the true symbol 'is not derived or secondary, it is not symptomatic of something else, it is a true symbol – that is an expression for something real but unknown' (Jung 1966, quoted in Mogenson 2003, p. 193). In contrast with the understanding of symbolic images as 'signs', for example, a sword *is* a penis, which points to a personal complex, Jung saw them as the imagery of the Living Symbol and central to the highest functioning of the human mind.

This seems to be backed up with current scientific research that, according to the neuroscientist Allan Shore, has moved the centre of psychic life:

> *from* Freud's ego, which he located in the 'speech area on the left hand side' (Freud 1923) and the posterior areas of the verbal left hemisphere, *to* the highest levels of the right hemisphere, the locus of the bodily based self system. (cited in Wilkinson 2006, p. 185, my italics)

The Jungian neuropsychologist Margaret Wilkinson suggests that it is the emotional structuring provided by adequate right brain function that enables the reflective functioning of the mind (ibid., p. 11). In terms of symbolic expression she points out that working with metaphor has been shown to light up the greatest number of areas of the brain – therefore aiding new neuronal connections (ibid., p. 29).

Odysseus' descent to the depths, and the personified energies he meets in Hades, are part of a maturation that leads to an understanding of past and future, and a sense that there is a teleological meaning behind the inner journey: it is not merely regressive or pathological – even though it can be very frightening at times.

The automatic and awesome qualities of unconscious processing that are rooted in physical matter are the arena that the psychoanalyst Matte Blanco (1980) so brilliantly investigated in his work on symmetry. For me this is masterfully illustrated by the images of the artist Escher. The deeply mathematical patterning in many of his works and the sense many of his prints and drawings convey – of a two-dimensional plane becoming three-dimensional is, I suggest, illustrative of the archetypal structuring that shapes our bones and divides our cells as well as producing our dreams. However, it is this fundamental repetitive patterning that creates psychological expectations that need to be humanized and 'dimentionalized' through a real life

relationship. As with the dangerous Circe, Odysseus has to placate the spirits of Hades very carefully by feeding them with blood so that they can recover their memory and begin to speak while not overwhelming him.

In health, body, brain and mind work associatively and, although the bridge between psyche and matter, or mind and brain, remains shrouded in mystery, this is the area that contemporary biochemistry and neuroscience are fully engaged with. It is also the location of much of the contemporary analyst's daily clinical work.

Jung has a term for this area: the psychoid:

> Firstly, I use it as an adjective, not a noun; secondly, no psychic quality in the proper sense of the word is implied, but only a 'quasi-psychic' one such as reflex-processes possess; and it is meant to distinguish a category of events from merely vitalistic phenomena on the one hand and from specifically psychic processes on the other. (Jung 1947, para. 368 cited by Addison 2009)

It is the psychoid that comes to mind as I have reflected on a Jungian interpretation of the death of the suitors. This event is something that the whole of *The Odyssey* has been leading towards and which the Goddess Athena, representing the archetype of individuation, has been determined to bring about through her orchestration of Odysseus' long journey home. Back to my patient's journey.

Clinical Example

One of the first changes in David's therapy was that he started to look forward to his dreams and the images that the dreaming process produced. The associative work of both patient and therapist was giving him insight into his long-term emotional difficulties. He became interested in the repetitive violence and bloodiness of his dreams and their sense of getting even, getting revenge. They set off memories and fears from his desolate childhood. As this inner violence was faced and became known about within the analytic relationship, David began to feel more alive and present. His body started to lose some of its awkward heaviness. He found himself more interested in what members of his business team had to contribute and stopped threatening them with the sack if they didn't follow what he said to the letter. He was surprised to be unexpectedly promoted.

However, the situation at home remained stuck. When he was offered a temporary post in America and his wife refused to consider even visiting him with the children he ended up shuttling between the two countries on a weekly basis and secretly setting up a long-term affair with a prostitute half his age – perhaps in revenge against his wife as well as to help stave off his loneliness. Because he paid for this new woman's flat as well as her favours he gave himself a sense that he was in complete control but, like Odysseus

with Calypso, he had become ensnared in a way of relating that after a time began to bore him. It was a breakthrough when he revealed he had been lying to me as well as his wife in all sorts of different ways: a kind of betrayal had been going on for years.

The Death of the Suitors and the Reunification with Penelope

Odysseus has to bring his journey to a mature conclusion so that he can be recognized as the true king and reign in his land. His beggarly disguise, given to him by Athena, means he can experience and contemplate the suitors at first hand and, from a non-omnipotent position. This enables him to resist the desire to confront them immediately without reflection. Odysseus can start to observe the suitors who are obsessed with the concrete excitement of stalking prey and filling the belly. Using Jung's constructive method with dream and myth, we can interpret this as a predator-like, mindless aspect of psyche. The suitors know nothing of mindful human relating. They are continuing to live parasitically off the bounty of the host while showing sadistic contempt towards the stranger, the beggar that Odysseus appears to be. In contrast we are aware of the human restraint and hope that have been required of the central characters in *The Odyssey* – Odysseus, Telemachus and Penelope – who all suffer, in different ways, the agonies of relationship and loss.

Penelope has spent her days weaving and unweaving, waiting and weeping. For me this conveys the sense of a deep maternal, feminine process going on underneath the drama of Odysseus' journey which brings to mind Michael Fordham's beautiful theory of the alternate processes of de-integration and re-integration in infant development (Fordham 1955). Fordham distinguishes de-integration from disintegration which is traumatic and anti-developmental. Penelope does not *disintegrate* over the loss of her husband but does have to suffer to the core in order to facilitate the often painful de-integrating and re-integrating, the opening and closing of psychic processes that are necessary for slow healthy growth. Penelope uses her own type of steadfast resourcefulness and cunning to contain the invasive assaults of the suitors.

Penelope also makes quite sure that Odysseus is who he says he is before joyfully flinging her arms around his neck and welcoming him home. Penelope does not recognize Odysseus at first but coming into relationship with him as a mere beggar and talking with him into the night does produce in her the courage and hope to set the suitors the challenge of stringing and accurately shooting with Odysseus' old special bow. Next day, the suitors all fail even to string the bow but, as soon as Odysseus picks it up, he strings it skilfully and then shoots an arrow straight through twelve axes that have been set up as part of the test. The challenge can only be met by the true king whose identity is now unquestionably established.

It is time for the suitors to die and for the true king to come into his own. It happens in a very bloody, determined way. With Athena's help, over a hundred men are slain by just four men in a sealed-off room. Fighting at Odysseus' side is his son and heir, Telemachus. One could interpret this as father and son, not pitted against each other as in the Oedipus myth, but both, in ways appropriate to the passage of their journey of individuation, needing to kill off their callow, adolescent sexual hunger towards Penelope as mother of Telemachus and as a now much older anima-wife for Odysseus. Revenge is sweet but Jung suggests that a purely reductive interpretation of this nature does not tend to serve the issues that arise in the second half of life: it can devalue and reduce the potential of the necessarily mysterious living symbols that point the way towards individuation.

The Alchemical Process

I want to turn briefly to the interest in alchemy that dominated Jung's mature years. In fact it was only when he had completed his great work *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (Jung 1963) in his 80th year that he felt he had finally been able to complete what his whole journey of individuation had been leading towards. This is a massive opus that translated the work of the medieval alchemists into psychological understanding. Jung realized that most of the pre-scientific experiments of the alchemists were in fact not about making physical gold. They were about the projection of metaphorical images and symbols that typify the different stages of the 'coming together of opposites' in the psyche. This involves the breaking down of crude bloody matter, chaotic animal-like emotion, to release the energy, the potential, that it contains. Through many stages this base energy slowly transforms into 'gold' – into the 'philosophers stone' – into Mind. Each stage of the alchemists' process was represented by pictures of what seemed to be happening. The alchemists used heat to precipitate processes of change within the sealed container or *vas* – which can be depicted as a sealed glass flask or sometimes as an open bath. In a similar way, Jung describes the analytic space as a container which needs to be heated up by the fire of emotion before change can occur. Like analysis the alchemical process has to get down to a cellular, feeling level of blood and passion to make deep change and needs a strong container in which to do this. Jung wrote:

> In psychology one possesses nothing, unless one has experienced it in reality. Hence a purely intellectual insight is not enough, because one knows only the *words* and not the substance of the thing from inside. (Jung 1951b/1959, para. 61, my italics)

There is a well-used image of the transformation of archetypal energy as experienced in the physical world. It is that of the caterpillar that fills itself full of food and then builds its own cocoon (container) in which it dissolves

completely. Out of the soup of its former body the breathtaking beauty of the butterfly finally emerges.[2] If this sort of radical change happens psychologically to a person then what can at first look like a breakdown in fact turns out to be a breakthrough (Field 1996).

In the medieval series of alchemical pictures that Jung uses to illustrate the stages of the psychological process that are required for transformation (Jung 1946/1954), the King and Queen (the opposites) meet, disrobe, get into a 'bath', have intercourse – become as one – and then die. They form a corpse that is half man and half woman. A child-like soul ascends into clouds. Time passes. Rain falls from the clouds and purifies the King/Queen. We are not in the physical universe and the body is not really dead – it is transforming. The soul returns while a crow-type bird with wings meets another bird that is just emerging from the ground. Human and non-human elements are changing. The final uniting symbol is a transformed image of one winged body that unites the energies of King and Queen, sun and moon, light and darkness and that holds crowned snakes in its hands.

This archetypal imagery can be found the world over. In Christianity, for example, it emerges as the death of the King (Christ) who pours out his blood on the cross for all of humankind. His physical body lies in a tomb while his soul descends to hell. He is then 'reborn' in a different dimensional state that, like the drying wings of the butterfly, is very fragile and must not be touched at first. He appears to the faithful and some time later he ascends to heaven from where he returns in a different form into the very cells of the disciples as the Holy Ghost. He changes them forever and becomes the eternal comforter and redeemer in the body and mind who can never 'die' again.

When Odysseus orders the doors of the killing room to be sealed, Homer is giving us an image of a sealed container in which something colossal and inevitable is going to happen. The stage has been set for the reader to contemplate and engage with something that at too surface a level may seem to be merely ghastly and terrible. Yet is there not also a sense of the individual being perhaps becoming able to face and then come to terms with the most primitive, cold-blooded, psychopathic levels of the primitive mind/brain? LeDoux's research into amygdala functioning in the brain shows how connections with the neocortex, developed through human evolution, are bypassed in situations where primitive emotions such as fear are aroused (LeDoux 1998). I suggest this is the scientifically discovered physical component of a major part of the psychological journey. Once the archetypal Athena in Odysseus is revved up to kill he is driven to this inevitable end.

In the case of Odysseus, as with depth-analysis, it is about using the experience of a deep journey to overturn or transform the power of deeply envious and anti-relational mental energies that can erupt into behaviour in the world. In Bion's terms I am referring here to minus *K* (Bion 1962, pp. 95–8). Deep change may be achieved by converting what is implicit and

unknown, through attention to dreams, fantasies and the symbols that arise out of the unconscious, into material for reflection – no matter how difficult or terrifying the fantasies appear to be. The analytic space provides the human equivalent of the alchemical flask or container for this to happen.

Transformation is almost impossible in my experience without facing, and taking responsibility for, huge internal and internalized violence. Just as Odysseus has to become fully involved with the suitors, Jung also asserts the need for the analyst's active, unsentimental participation, rather than a cool observer stance:

> Continual conscious realization of unconscious fantasies, together with active participation in the fantastic events, has the effect firstly of extending the conscious horizon by the inclusion of numerous unconscious contents; secondly of gradually diminishing the dominant influence of the unconscious; and thirdly of bringing about a change of personality. (Jung 1928, para. 358)

Out of the chaos something transformational can occur within the personality that can lead deeper towards the discovery of an inner home – to individuation. And, in the outer world, rather than separating the individual from society, individuation tends to promote human commitment and devotion to the greater cultural aims of the collective. Odysseus will finally be re-united with Penelope as the only true husband for her. What will remain, out of the gory mess, are the loving King and Queen in a transformational relationship that can withstand the test of time. Jung calls this the 'coniunctio'.

Clinical Example

David would go off to foreign countries on work assignments and at the beginning would assume that this would end the therapeutic relationship. He would seek out prostitutes 'at every port' while he was away. He was taken aback that, while knowing all of this, I would continue to find a way of keeping the therapy going and that I was interested in discovering the *meaning* of what he was doing rather than using the aloof stance he had used with me when anything sexual was mentioned.

David managed with difficulty to divorce his wife in a humane way rather than trying to get the best possible deal out of her, but it made him feel very afraid and without his usual 'weapons'. Later, when he dared to feel that he was really falling in love for the first time, he was alarmed to discover how quickly he tried to impose tyrannical and unfeeling control over his new partner. She was 'his territory' and his own untrustworthiness was projected into her. But the transference within the analytic relationship was enabling him to perceive, and then embody, the knowledge that he had for years been killing something raw but real within himself, and was imposing something old, dark and untransformed upon the new.

These days he struggles to be honest about his growing perceptions about himself and finds himself to be very vulnerable as he loses his old armour. He is amazed that he and his partner can survive an argument and manage to talk collaboratively in order to move forward. He starts to question his unending quest for more money and more power in the business world, seeing that this takes him away from people he is growing to care about – his children, his relationship, his therapy. He and I have been tremendously supported in his journey through his dreams and fantasies and the symbols they have produced. The darkness and bloodiness have receded – the tramp has stopped coming to the door. He wonders what will happen next. He still has a long way to go on the journey of the second half of his life but the journey has begun.

The Transcendent Function

Jung urges us to work with the symbols that arise from the meeting of the opposites of consciousness and the unconscious in what he calls the 'transcendent function' (Jung 1916/1957). He warns against diluting these symbols or disassociating from them for they continue to erupt into reality as an integral part of the life and death process. They play a huge part, for good and ill, not only in our personal lives but in history. Each age needs to pay attention to its symbols. We need, as Jung says, to 'dream the myth onwards' (Jung 1940, cited in Huskinson 2008, p. 1). We still seem to be at a stage where bloody revenge is seen to be the only way of relating to violence or difference in many areas of the world and, I think, in the depths of the human psyche too. But the meeting of consciousness with the unconscious can bring radical inner change to the individual and this means very slow evolutionary change to the archetype and therefore the collective.

Odysseus does not end up horrified and beaten by unconscious fate like Oedipus. His many challenges are overcome before his epic journey can end in peace and with the resolution of the embattled state at home. At the end of Homer's epic, 'war-like Athena' paradoxically brings about lasting peace and the old King Laertes, the current king Odysseus and the future king Telemachus are left united together in contrast to the ravaging of generational differences depicted in *Oedipus Rex*.

And now Odysseus has a final journey to make that has a cultural and collective aim as well as a personal one: Tiresius the seer has told him in Hades that, as an act of respect towards Poseidon, and in reparation for the blinding of Poseidon's son Polyphemus at the beginning of his journey, Odysseus must travel overland taking a ship's oar on his shoulder. When he comes to a place where the oar is unrecognized and is thought to be a fan for winnowing grain, he must plant the oar in the land, making sacrifices to the Gods. This, I suggest, is a powerful ending symbol from Homer. It reaches forwards into the future and points to the bringing of surface land and deep

sea together in a final image that represents the unification and the transcendence of opposites required for radical peace.

If the analytic journey goes well enough, it usually, as with Odysseus, takes longer than the traveller expects. However, Jung's work encourages trust in the growth-promoting aspects of metaphorical unconscious processing even with its terrifying aspects. What seems to be important is to stay alive to the mystery of each patient's journey rather than being tempted to clutch at something that is mechanistic, reductive or already known. Jung's own alchemical struggle, and the work of post-Jungians, encourages the psychotherapist to trust the process 'as much as we can stand' and work creatively in the realm of the unknown.

Notes

1. In the sense used by Bion (1962, p. 20) but also evident in Jung's earlier work on alchemy that is referred to later.

2. Thanks to my colleague Mary Hughes for making this link with the killing of the suitors.

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