

***True Detective* and Jung's Four Steps of Transformation**

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True Detective (2014) is an American crime drama, television series created and written by Nic Pizzolatto. The first season, which I focus on in this article, aired on HBO in 2014 and consisted of eight episodes, starring Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson in the leading roles. (The cast also includes Michelle Monaghan, Michael Potts, and Tory Kittles.) The season received widespread critical acclaim and was a candidate for numerous awards. Beyond high production values, great acting and a tightly knit storyline, what sets *True Detective* apart is the brilliantly articulated nihilism of its central protagonist, Rust (Rustin 'Rusty' Cohle), played by McConaughey. In the golden age of television series *True Detective* stands out. It offers the aficionado a contemporary and psychologically astute version of the hero's journey. Taking its cue from films such as *The Road* (Dir. Hillcoat, 2009), *Blindness* (Dir. Meirelles, 2008) and *No Country for Old Men* Ethan (Dir. Cohen and Joel Cohen, 2007) it presents viewers with a hero whose true challenge is to find redemption in a dystopian world.

Jungian theory offers a useful lens through which to focus *True Detective's* mythological themes and developmental structure. The perspective provides an insight into how the series mirrors our human and challenging search for soul (c.f. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung. 1933); more precisely, a relationship to soul and how that relationship acts out, not only intrapsychically - in inner psychic space -

but also, intersubjectively, in our relationships in the world. This analysis utilises two key Jungian concepts to illuminate two dimensions of the series: the theme and the narrative structure. The first concept employed, for thematic analysis, is the 'anima' which is Jung's term for the soul image of the man, while the 'animus' refers to the soul image of women. 'Soul' here does not refer to the eternal soul that lives on beyond this mortal life, but the inner life of the subject (1921: §803 – 811). The narrative structure and development is analysed using Jung's 'Four Steps of Transformation.' This is my own coinage and is taken from Jung's essay *Problems of Modern Psychotherapy* (Jung, 1929) where Jung details the four psychotherapeutic steps or stages in psychoanalysis. These concepts, both uniquely Jungian, offer a valuable perspective not to be accessed without them. This interpretation affords us an insight into the archetypal frame of the narrative as well as the psychodynamic process and transformation of the two main protagonists. The light that such an analysis casts, enlightens not only the series in question but also the concepts themselves. This is a common feature of film analysis that uses psychoanalytic concepts and it is by virtue of such analysis that we embed the theory employed in the cinematic frame and thereby achieve a perspective that would otherwise have eluded us. The dramatis personae of the psychoanalytic concepts themselves reveal meaning in a way that is typically unavailable when encountered as abstracted theory.

The story of *True Detective* is ultimately a hero's journey, one that takes place not only in the world but, more significantly from the psychological perspective, in the inner, subjective space of the series' two protagonists, Rust and Marty (Char. Martin Hart, Woody Harrelson). It is a search for redemption and meaning, in a world

brought to life by Pizolatto and the production team, that reflects Rust's nihilism. A dystopia, devoid of beauty, and oppressive in its perverted character. A world populated by 'shit heels', criminals, monsters, the dim witted and irredeemably naïve, victims, broken dreams, broken hearts and brutish reality. Where innocence is fragile and momentary, before the 'thresher' swallows it up. As the character of Rust comments, "Think of the hubris it must take to yank a soul out of non-existence into this... meat, to force a life into this... thresher. That's... so my daughter, she spared me the sin of being a father' (Rust, episode 2). This is a psychic landscape where, in Jungian parlance, the anima is either broken, lost, perverted, or functions in only her negative aspect; 'Men living in a brutally masculine world' (Christopher Lirette, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_Detective_\(season_1\)#Themes_and_influences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_Detective_(season_1)#Themes_and_influences). [Accessed 113 July 2017](#)); it is a place where Rust's only lifeboat is the function of the animus - of pure, cold, unfeeling, critical, reductive rationality. A world where the possibility of redemption lies in the journey out of the clammy embrace of the dysfunctional, oppressive, anima and through the dark heart of the shadow, to face the mythical monster.

As both a journey to redemption and a journey of transformation, *True Detective* can illuminate, and hopefully educate us. Interestingly Jung was fascinated by another metaphor for change, namely the alchemical process which he regarded as an analogue for the process of transformation. As is apparent in the Four steps to Transformation he describes in psychoanalysis, and their mirroring of the process of transmutation in alchemy. Intriguingly, the storyline of *True Detective* and the narrative journey on which it takes the viewer, also mirror the psychoanalytic-alchemical process of psychological transmutation Jung describes.

The anima

Along with the animus, the anima is among Jung's more controversial concepts, as it is an essentialist and now arguably outmoded framing of gender identity. Jung offers the concepts of the anima (soul) and animus (mind) as being the contra-gender, internal other of men and women respectively. A soul image that compliments and completes the necessarily one-sided, biological and social identity of the subject. As we are now aware however, gender identity, both in its expression in contemporary culture and through the lens of gender studies, appears more fluid and constructive or 'performative' than essential and fixed.

As just suggested, performative gender identity seemingly has a less essential and more constructed relation to biological gender than is suggested by Jung's anima-animus model. The last word on the extent to which gender determines certain essential social, relational and psychological characteristics has yet to be spoken. Even so the insights provided by gender studies challenge Jung's essentialist gender framing. Not wishing to abandon such a key concept in the Jungian universe, post-Jungians have reframed the original idea. In this reframing the archetypal masculine - the animus, and the archetypal feminine - the anima, are uncoupled from their essential relation to biological gender. They are instead understood as archetypal or primordial images of the masculine and feminine, possibly essential, or possibly mimetic, social constructions. Either way, in the practise of Jungian psychotherapy these ideas remain valuable tools (Samules, 1985) and they can also be usefully applied to film analysis (Beebe, 2013).

With the above qualification stated, let us consider briefly the character of the anima. Jung locates the anima (or animus) as the inner attitude or face, turned to the unconscious, or inner world, complementing the face or 'persona' that faces the outer world:

We speak of an inner personality with as much justification as, on the grounds of daily experience, we speak of an outer personality. The inner personality is the way one behaves in relation to one's inner psychic processes; it is the inner attitude - the characteristic face, that is turned towards the unconscious. I call the outer attitude, the outward face, the *persona*; the inner attitude, the inward face, I call the *anima*.

(1921: § 803)

Jung's view of the human being is that, psychologically, both men and women carry within their unconscious an implicit, complimentary and contrasting gender identity to their conscious, biological and explicit gender identity. Personhood then, at least psychologically, inclusive of both the conscious and unconscious self, is androgynous. This idea resonates with the biological fact of the presence of male and female genes in both sexes.

Development of the explicit, conscious gender identity has a corresponding and inverse development of the anima or animus. The relation to the anima, the specific focus of *True Detective*, concerns the subject's faculty to relate, both to himself and others, as well the world around him and in him - the world 'out there' and the world 'in here'. This function of the psyche determines the subject's capacity to relate, feel

and empathise and also his ability to experience value, beauty and meaning. This inner anima image, through the mechanism of unconscious projection, is typically seen by the man as incarnated in the world through women. Such that, typically, the most common way for a man to relate to his own anima is through a relationship with a woman or women. It follows that relationship of men with women is coloured and influenced by the anima image and their relationship to it (1921: § 803-811). This idea is vividly illustrated in the distorted, broken and perverse relationships of the various male characters to women, in the *True Detective*.

The story of *True Detective* focuses on the relation of these stereotypically masculine men to the feminine principle. Both men, Rust and Marty, each in their own way, suffer from a disconnection to the feminine. In Jungian terms, in other words, they experience a disconnection from their anima or soul. Rust's suffering is symbolised by the loss of his daughter, who is killed in a car accident that additionally leads to the end of his marriage. Marty is unable to deal appropriately with the women who are in his life. Rust experiences himself as abandoned by the feminine and Marty is unable to conceptualise a relation to the feminine, beyond that of sexual objectification.

The consequence of this absent or displaced relation to the anima manifests itself symptomatically in both men's lives. Rust descends into cynicism to the point of nihilism, alienation and profound sadness. He is only able to operate in the realm of reason, the masculine function or animus, and is unable to access his feeling function or anima. Rust's feeling function is frozen as a self-defence mechanism to

avoid being annihilated by the immense pain of losing his daughter and wife, an event which he has been unable to assimilate and come to terms with. In Marty's case, his inability to access a more mature relation to the feminine sees him grow ever further apart from his wife and daughters. Marty anaesthetises himself through his chronic alcoholism and indulges in serial infidelities with an increasing desperation as he attempts to reconnect with the feminine.

This displaced and wounded relation to the anima is symbolically represented in the first episode, with the discovery of the primal scene - the body of the murdered Dora Lange which has been elaborately and ritualistically displayed, naked and bound, on her knees in a position of prayer, appealing in vain to an unfeeling, monstrous god. Significantly she is found wearing a set of antlers that Rust later describes as a 'crown'. In other words, she wears a crown of horns. This is a metaphorically significant and presumably unconscious representation of the feminine gender by her killer, who, we can infer from this macabre display, not only tips the hat to some pagan god, but also reveals his inner image of the feminine as a horned, attacking, dangerous and potentially violent creature. She has been left on display by her murderer Errol Childress, known as 'the Lawnmower Man', his professional occupation, and also dubbed 'the Yellow King', by Dora Lange.

Childress is the series' primary antagonist and the monster who the two true detectives set out to capture, or destroy, over the lengthy period of their manhunt. Childress is the sharp edge of the Tuttle Cult, which includes elements of perverted revival belt Christian evangelism, along with ritual paedophilia, torture and murder

within its ambit. In Childress' case this anima wound is so severe that he has descended into criminal insanity. His monstrous self is unmediated by a healthy feeling function. The normal function of empathy and an appreciation of the subjectivity, the inner life, of the other is seemingly absent. His narcissism, will to power and sense of personal inflation, combined with his dysfunctional or absent feeling function, are such that he feels entitled to objectify the 'other', and does so mercilessly with his victims. While the term 'other' has a specific technical reference in Lacanian psychoanalysis (Johnson, 2014) here it is used with reference specifically to 'other people' as a category of relatedness and symbolisation. This is a narrow adoption of the Lacanian 'other' that refers to both the ego itself as other and other egos out there as 'other/s'. In this case it is the anima as an internal and externalised other. Childress does not see other people as sovereign beings worthy of respect and embodying the transcendent principle and his disregard of the other reduces them to an exclusively utilitarian value; in Childress' case his victims are objects that allow him to act out his macabre rituals.

This barbaric display in human portraiture by Childress, symbolically reflects the wounded subjectivity and relationality of the two true detectives, Rust and Marty, who like Childress both display a displaced and wounded relation to the anima and the feminine gender. This is what Rust's and Marty's displaced anima functions can look like in a sufficiently deranged psychology, such as provided by Childress. The seeds of the wound in Childress are collectively carried by Rust and Marty. Rust, with his meaningless universe, devoid of any transcendent principle, and Marty with his sexual objectification of the feminine, converge in Childress. Childress, unfettered by any moral conscience, infers from these principles the 'not illogical' conclusion

that self-gratification and assertion are the supreme good and logical aspirations of human existence. Might is always right.

With the theme in mind, namely the pathological and disconnected relationship to the anima, let us look now at how this dilemma evolves towards a resolution. This narrative evolution can be mapped using Jung's Four Steps of Transformation.

The Four Steps of Transformation and the alchemical metaphor

In an essay titled 'Problems of Modern Psychotherapy', published in 1929 Jung provides the reader with the meta-framework of his analytical psychology, the Four Steps of Transformation: confession, elucidation, education and transformation. (Ibid: §122) This essay is unique in providing a rare bird's eye view of Jung's psychotherapeutic model. Simultaneously it offers the reader an insight into 'Modern Psychotherapy' at the time or, more specifically, the various schools of psychoanalysis that had emerged and the essence of their respective psychotherapeutic approaches. The specific contributions Jung includes come from Josef Breuer, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler and Jung himself. The scope of Jung's ambition in writing this paper is clear. 'I would venture to regard the sum total of all our findings [in the emerging practice of psychotherapy] under the aspect of the four stages' (1929: §122). To the degree that Jung succeeds in his goal of offering us a concise description of the psychotherapeutic approaches of the main schools of psychoanalysis at the time, this essay is of considerable value to the student of psychoanalysis. To the degree that Jung concisely describes his own psychotherapeutic model, the paper is invaluable to the student of Jungian

psychology. Beyond providing such a clear overview of the modes and structure of depth psychology, it also provides a valuable tool for the analyses of narrative development and the *prima facie*, quite mysterious phenomenon of ‘transformation’ in psychology.

Jung associates each step with one of the four main contributors to the psychoanalytic field at the time: confession with Breuer; elucidation with Freud; education with Adler; and transformation with his own school. One should not form the impression that this indexing of the four steps implies that each school is narrowly exclusive in its adoption of just one approach or method. Rather, the more modest claim is made that each school has an area of specialisation and focus. Clearly each practitioner, whilst focusing on a single approach, might well borrow from other approaches in his practice of psychotherapy. The development of these four steps can also be usefully viewed as reflecting the evolution of psychoanalysis from Breuer to Jung, with the final stage, the Jungian approach, encompassing all of the earlier approaches. This framing regards the Jungian approach as a more evolved method than its earlier antecedents, a proposition that remains unchallenged in Jung’s essay. Whilst this article will not challenge this elevation of Jungian psychology above the other schools, the reader should not infer that such a challenge could not be made. Rather the focus here is on the use of the four step model as a tool of narrative film analysis. This is done as it offers an interesting perspective on the film in question and indeed the elegance with which the model can be applied speaks in its favour.

The four steps in Jung's Four Steps of Transformation echo the four stages of Western Alchemy that so inspired Jung and in which he found precedent for much of his psychological theory. The four stages of alchemical transmutation being:

Nigredo: The blackening. This process involves the burning away the dross, seeking the 'Prima Materia', the original, pure, uncorrupted matter. This is symbolic of a rebirth, and fire is a critical element to achieve this. In psychotherapy this stage is represented by facing the Shadow. This stage refers to a blackening of mood, a depression, the 'dark night of the soul'. The process of internal conflict and facing one's undesirable qualities is intense and confrontational. This fire burns away the misconceptions, self-criticism and guilt. It is the death of the previous identity, creating the possibility of the birth of a new self.

Albedo: The whitening or emergence of the soul life. During this phase there is a withdrawal from the world, and intense reflection on the direction and purpose of the individual's life. The soul rises from the psyche and its essence is extracted. At the end of this stage, there is a heightened spiritual awareness and purpose.

Citrinitas: The yellowing or rising of the sun. The rising sun is a symbol of a mystical experience and contains aspects of revelation. It can be in many forms, but is experienced as a vision, a big dream or an intuition of our 'truth'.

Rubedo: The reddening. The spirit that was freed in the previous stage needs to be united with psyche again. The spirit that has been awakened now needs to be expressed appropriately and more authentically in the life and work of the individual. This is the stage of adjustment and re-alignment with authentic goals and purpose (Extracted from, Jung, 1937)

These four stages of alchemical transformation or transubstantiation mirror the four stages of psychotherapeutic transformation in some interesting ways. The rough analog being: the stage of Nigredo with the stage of confession and catharsis; the stage of Albedo with the stage of elucidation or interpretation; the stage of Citrinitas with the stage of education; and the stage of the Rubedo, the ripening, with the final stage of transformation.

The Four Steps in *True Detective*

Confession and Catharsis

Confession as a means of unburdening oneself of one's sins was an established practice in the Catholic Church long before its adoption by psychoanalysis.

Confession as a psychotherapeutic method was introduced into the psychoanalytic method by Breuer and taken up by Freud. The principle behind the practice is the recognition that secrets held by the individual - whether, objectively speaking, virtues or vices - alienate the subject from his community. Whilst the secret remains unspoken, unconfessed and unarticulated, it functions at a lower level of consciousness, clouding the subject's psychology. As Jung puts it, 'All personal

secrets, therefore, have the effect of sin or guilt, whether or not they are, from the standpoint of popular morality, wrongful secrets' (1929: §129).

These secrets or unspoken truths are comparable to the presence of the unconscious and its unconfessed role in the subject's psychology. Confession then, is a way back for the alienated subject to a more fully participative engagement and connection with his community. It is worth noting that such an act of confession is effective even when the secret is shared only with a single individual in the sanctity of the confessional or psychotherapeutic practice. In the case of confession to the psychotherapist, the psychotherapist stands in for the community at large, he or she represents and symbolises the presence of the community. In Lacanian terms we might say that both the priest and psychotherapist, playing the role of master confessor, and representing God and the community respectively, stand in for and symbolise the 'big Other.'

This situation which the two protagonists, Rusty and Mart, face both in their inner worlds and in the Dora Lang case, presents us with the wound, the alchemical Nigredo, the dark night of the soul, the stone in the shoe. This is the constellated content that needs to be 'confessed' and that needs to be engaged with if there is to be the possibility of healing. This is the essential distress and archetypal situation that calls for rehabilitation through transformation. Secrets need to be shared and demons brought out of the shadows into the light of day. The act of confession is played out in the narrative of *True Detective* in two parallel confessionals. The container and set of the story is a confessional. The two detectives each separately

undergo interviews by two other detectives in an interrogation room. These interrogations are filmed. Ostensibly this is for the two detectives, currently assigned to the case - long after Rust and Marty have left the service - to gather background information to assist them with their own investigation. As a dramatic tool employed by Pizzolatto it presents the story as confession which allows the audience to move between the unfolding events of the Dora Lange case and the reflective space of the two protagonists, Rust and Marty. This is the confession of the objective events of the Dora Lange case. The parallel confession takes place in the intersubjective space between Rust and Marty where they confess to each other the wounds they each bear. In the story it is mostly Rust confessing to Marty who acts as the master confessor hearing Rust's confession, albeit with much resistance and protest at times. At one point, unable to bear it anymore, Marty deems the car a 'place of silence'. Rust confesses precisely what Marty has repressed, namely they are living in hell. It is Rust's act of confession that shows Marty the ills that so trouble his own soul and that he desperately attempts to keep repressed.

As it always is with life's most profound challenges, in particular the experience of loss, there is no going back. There is no point of return despite our wish that there were. These situations always demand of us that we move forward - that we obey, in Jungian terms, the teleological imperative (1934: §798). Nothing will bring back Rust's family. And Marty, despite recognising the destructive force he has become in his own family and life, cannot by will alone, transcend his destructiveness. What is required is a coming to consciousness, an awakening, so that the scales that blind them may fall from their eyes. Like all great hero myths, they need to face the dragon, to be faced with a dilemma that takes them beyond their narcissistic, ego-

centred perspectives into a meaningful engagement with the world. Individuation does not happen in isolation, but when we live in the world and engage with the archetypal processes we are called on to enter and grapple with. As is the case with such things, the dilemma is directly related to the wound. Rust and Marty's collective wound is the displaced relation to the feminine. What our two detectives are faced with in the story is a brutal, inhumane serial killer. A beast who preys on the helpless and the vulnerable. A man who has become so inflamed with his own masculine power, that he has quite literally become a monster. He represents in manifest form what lies latent in both our intrepid heroes - a corruption of the masculine principle and its relation to the feminine that, starting at alienation and taken far enough, leads to madness. A condition we are regrettably all too familiar with in the history of the world, with the litany of power-mad dictators and the savagery they have given us in the acting out of their inflated will to power as a corrupted and one-sided relation to the Other. This is also arguably the underlying archetypal issue at play in the total disregard of the biosphere and the ruthless exploitation of all natural resources, including human beings.

Elucidation: the interpretive method

Prima facia confession was seen as offering a complete cure in its initial adoption and application by psychoanalysis. However, Jung offers three problems with confession, which method seen on its own terms could constitute a complete cure of sorts, after which no further treatment should be needed, but is hindered by certain complicating factors. These are firstly the resistance of the patient to make a full confession, to admit previously unconscious content into consciousness. Repression

and resistance often prevail, thwarting a full confession. The other two problems are related, both forms of fixation. The patient having made a confession to the master confessor, in this case the psychotherapist, transfers onto the psychotherapist forming a complicated relationship which frequently proves recalcitrant to dissolution. As Jung summarises:

While the cathartic method restores to the ego such contents as are capable of becoming conscious and should normally be components of the conscious mind, the process of clearing up the transference brings to light contents which are hardly ever capable of becoming conscious in that form. This is the cardinal distinction between the stage of confession and the stage of elucidation.

(1929: §141)

Finally, even in the relatively rare cases, where there is not a transference onto the psychotherapist, the patient frequently becomes fascinated with the 'hinterland' of his own unconscious mind. Such fascination binding him to the unconscious in a way that works contrary to the aim of the psychotherapeutic process, which has as its aim, greater adaptation and, for Jung at least, adherence to the teleological imperative (Jung, 1929: §135 – 138).

This transference which proves 'impervious to conscious correction' is fuelled by unconscious fantasy material. This fantasy material is correctly identified by Freud as being of an incestuous character. That such incestuous fantasy material should remain unconscious is entirely understandable within the social milieu in which we

live. This incest fantasy is, if one accepts the Freudian perspective, which, we should note, Jung is unwilling to accept as axiomatic, however never denying its centrality and relevance, lies at the heart of what, perhaps necessarily, remains unspoken in the confession.

The interpretive method introduced by Freud is about uncovering and understanding what has been unsaid in the confession. Understanding the transference, the unspoken, unconscious: suppressed or repressed, remaining X, which is left over after the confession and is transferred onto the analyst. The method proceeds by the classical technique of psychoanalysis the examination and interpretation of the subject's dream and fantasy material. Examining the associations of the subject, amplifying these within the context of the subject's psychology and interpreting the material that has emerged. (As a sidebar here, such amplification and interpretation, which at the adoption of this method by Freud was focussed on the personal, is amplified into the realm of the collective and archetypal by Jung and the symbolic register by Lacan.)

In *True Detective*, this coming to consciousness, the Albedo, the whitening in alchemical terms, or the very first stages of elucidation in the four step model, is presented with Rust and Marty being assigned to investigate the murder of Dora Lange. In the narrative timeline, this is 1995. Although fortunately not always as dramatic as a murder, there is something valuable to be learnt here: coming to consciousness is usually not pretty. It involves facing something quite ugly and having the courage to look it in the eye. That is what it means to become conscious: not to avert your gaze; not to regress into the uncomfortable comfort of the wound or neurosis. Consciousness imposes the demand for a change in relation - a shift in

perspective and is the first and critical step in the evolutionary process toward transformation.

What our two detectives Rust and Marty have to face when they confront and commit themselves to the investigation of the Dora Lange murder, are their own destructive capacities and symptomatic acting out of their own displaced relations to the feminine, which in each detective, acts out destructively. Marty is destroying or 'murdering' his family with his pubescent sexual attitude and Rust is murdering the whole world with his nihilism.

Two quotations, both from Rust who is so eminently quotable, capture this destructiveness. In the recognition of their own evil, to Marty's question, 'Do you wonder ever if you're a bad man?' Rust answers, 'No. I don't wonder, Marty. World needs bad men. We keep the other bad men from the door.' Although that sounds good in the spirit of machismo parley, upon reflection its obvious logical flaw becomes apparent. The only reason there are bad men at the door, is because bad men exist. In other words, the only reason there is a need to protect against bad men is because there are bad men. They create their own need, a little like the old and bad joke about protection money: the men you are paying to protect you, protect you against themselves. They create their own need.

The second quotation, also from Rust, epitomises his nihilistic attitude, this time in relation to his daughter's death: 'I think about my daughter now, and what she was spared. Sometimes I feel grateful. The doctor said she didn't feel a thing, went

straight into a coma. Then, somewhere in that blackness, she slipped off into another deeper kind. Isn't that a beautiful way to go out, painlessly as a happy child? Trouble with dying later is you've already grown up. The damage is done. It's too late.'

Education: the social reality

The process of re-educating the conscious personality requires the adaptation to social reality and the remedying maladapted behaviour. The intention is help the subject find better and alternative solutions and responses to the social issues that triggered the subject's neurosis. This broadly educative function derives from Adlerian psychology. As Jung notes:

The Adlerian school begins precisely where Freud leaves off; consequently, they meet the needs of the patient who, having come to understand himself, wants to find his way back to normal life... [I]t is characteristic of Adler that he does not expect too much of the understanding, but going beyond that, has clearly recognised the need for social education.... Whereas Freud is investigator and interpreter, Adler is primarily the educator.

(1929: §152)

In *True Detective*, the ongoing process of elucidation, or, in alchemical terms, of Albedo and Citrinitas, takes place over the following seventeen years, a period where Rust and Marty become increasingly committed to finding the monster who is responsible for the murder of Dora Lange and countless others. In this process there is much conflict, to the point where they are completely alienated from each other for

a period of years before they are finally reunited in the determination to complete their mission. The process exposes most of their bullshit for what it is: a facile, narcissistic defence, and each man pays dearly for the shortcomings of his own wound. In essence, they find themselves educated by Freud's reality principle. Neither one of them is able to sustain a relationship and each, in his own way, is obliged to face a life of loneliness and desperation. Even their friendship, which was presumably as close a friendship as either one of them is capable of, breaks down. They are obliged to face the inevitable consequences of their disconnection from the anima and in the process learn to understand themselves and their fallibilities better. They undergo the process of hard-won emotional and psychological maturity.

Transformation: the synthesis of the three previous steps

Transformation is the process of self-education of the analyst himself. As Jung puts it, 'Who can educate others if he himself is uneducated? Who can enlighten others if he is still in the dark about himself? And who can purify others if himself impure...The step from education to self-education is a logical advance that completes the earlier stages' (1929: §169-170). The problem no longer exists out there; it is something within me that needs to be made whole. Transformation as an alchemical process of internal transubstantiation, which, notwithstanding the value of the three prior stages requires something more, something not wholly reducible to method. Transformation requires something intangible that, in the psychotherapeutic context of the analytical couple: analyst and analysand, happens in the transference. It is relational, alchemical and dialectical.

In *True Detective* this transference is acted out in the relationship of Rust and Marty and their extended dialogue. Like any relationship involving transference it is not smooth sailing. Their already challenging relationship boils over into violence after Rust has sex with Marty's wife. This incident causes a rift between the two men that lasts for many years. They finally turn a corner though, after a premature, false dawn is exposed –something that is not uncommon in transformation. Many years before they finally track down the serial killer, Childress, they were misled into believing they had already caught the culprit, which brought great honours on the two of them, but it turned out to be the wrong man - although no less deserving of justice. When they do finally reunite, after a long period of separation, to complete what they had left unfinished, each man discovers within himself a sense of humility and purpose. Their defining purpose becomes tracking this monster and they commit themselves to it absolutely. Their lives are now led in service of the self-archetype and not dictated by their wounds and this process of education is essential for transformation to occur. Of the Self, Jung comments:

I usually describe the supraordinate personality as the 'Self,' thus making a sharp distinction between the ego, which, as is well known, extends only as far as the conscious mind, and the *whole* of the personality, which includes the unconscious as well as the conscious component.

(1941: §315)

Ultimately, both Rust and Marty find redemption in their own way, and one that restores the relation to soul that was the initial presenting condition. Crucially though, this journey to redemption is only made possible by virtue of their relationship and

their shared mission, which is the crucible of their transformation. Both men find this redemption not by going back or even by dealing with the issue in its presenting form, but by reconstructing their identities through this redemptive process which results in profound transformation.

In the final episode and penultimate scene of the series, we encounter Rust and Marty in hospital recovering from their near fatal wounds after their fight to the death with the monster Childress. They emerge victorious, killing Childress, but come very close to paying for this with their own lives. Symbolic of what it takes perhaps, to reconnect with the soul in a soulless dystopian world: only one who is willing to lose his life can gain his life. As the gospel of Mathew puts it, 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it' (Mathew 16:25). With this denouement realised, the longing for reconnection with soul, the displaced relation to anima is, at least temporarily, healed. We see Marty in his hospital bed, having just regained consciousness, surrounded by his ex-wife and his daughters, their love for him evident. He responds to his daughter's inquiry as to how he is, by smiling and protesting that he is well, whilst, simultaneously and incongruously, the tears stream from his eyes in response to the release of deeply pent up pain and fear, and his joy at being alive. (Possibly the single best piece of acting in Woody Harrelson's career.) Later, in the final scene, we find Rust and Marty under the night sky after Marty wheels Rust out of the hospital in his wheelchair. Here Rust speaks for the very first time about his daughter's death with real feeling and with a sense of forgiveness for himself, for fate and for the absent God. His reconnection with his soul being perfectly captured in the shot, the two men together

experiencing a truly soulful connection, after their journey together which transcends words, under the clear, night sky, looking up at the stars.

Conclusion

The narrative development in *True Detective* sounds a note of truth for the viewer, offering something recognisable about the soul's journey to redemption. In so doing, it speaks for the value and archetypal truth of Jung's four step model. The critical acclaim and enthusiastic reception of the series supports this reading. It seems unlikely that when Jung wrote his paper *The Problems of Modern Psychotherapy* in which he describes the four steps to transformation that he intended it to be used for the purposes of mythological or narrative analysis. That noted, its mirroring of the stages of alchemical transmutation would no doubt have been significant for Jung and quite probably influenced his classification of the four steps.

The four steps then, are not only a classification of the various schools of depth psychology, but express something archetypal about the journey to transformation. They also provide a useful frame in which to view the narrative structure of the journey to transformation as a 'hero's journey'. Its ability to illuminate the series *True Detective* allows us a deeper psychological insight into the unfolding events that enriches what we take from what could, at worst, be viewed as pulp fiction, or just another detective story. *True Detective*, in the elegance of its narrative structure as well as its sublime scripting, deserves the title of modern myth. It offers something much needed in a dystopian world: a view of the hero's inner subjective space and his journey of redemption.

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