MIRRORS OF TRANSFORMATION

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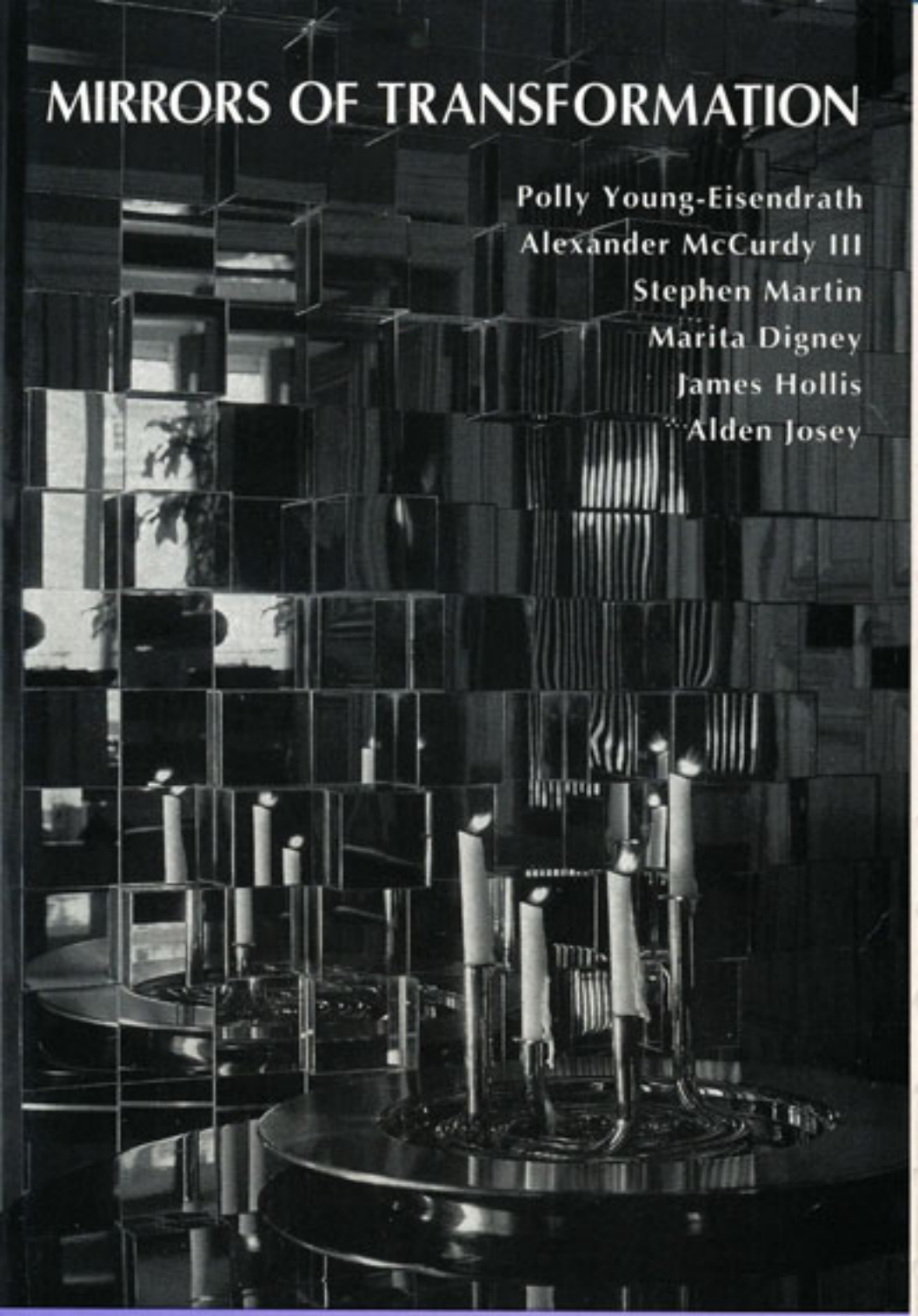

The Self in Relationships

The King and the Corpse: An Ancient Parable for a Modern Predicament

Stephen Martin

This paper represents both a pleasure and a burden. A pleasure because there is no greater contribution, as far as I am concerned, that C. G. Jung has made to the understanding of personal psychological development than his concept of individuation. But it is a burden also because describing individuation is like trying to describe life itself. How are we to make really clear what it means to "become what one most innately is," or to "become completely individual and differentiated from the collective," or to "integrate all the parts of the psyche." Nevertheless, as we are all "individuators," I am going to give it a try, both literally and symbolically, in order to provide some overview of it. Goodness knows we need all the help with our process that we can get. The structure I will follow is simple: I would first like to highlight what I consider to be four important characteristics of individuation, and then explore a teaching story, an Indian fairy tale entitled "The King and the Corpse," that captures something of each.

Jung first introduced the term *individuation* in 1916, in a lecture, "Adaptation, Individuation, Collectivity"

(CW 18, par. 1084-1106), that lay unpublished in hidden archives in Zürich for fifty years. In this paper, he outlined his basic thinking about individuation by saying that in the course of life we sacrifice who and what we really are for the sake of adaptation to the standards, morality and conventions of our home culture.

This adaptation is what one might call the successful navigation of the "first half of life," a period of time when worldly concerns, such as identity formation, career, family and the like take precedence over all others. The price paid for this adaptation is formidable and by nature eventuates in imbalances in psychological life. We cannot develop in one direction without sacrificing others. Most frequently, however, these imbalances coalesce and become problematic at critical transition points, the most famous of which has come to be known now, in user-friendly terms, as "the mid-life crisis."

Even though conformity and adaptation to life and society—or in psychological terms, persona and basic ego development—are necessary evils, sooner or later, who we are, what we must be, what our individual destiny is and what our relationship to the timeless values of life is, become more and more important. Often, whether we like it or not, we are launched on a more conscious process of self-discovery and self-development. In my mind, this is what Jung defined as individuation.

Please note, I am electing to speak of individuation as a conscious endeavor, a task we undertake with eyes open and focused awareness, often in therapy, in creative work, and in meaningful suffering or on spiritual quests. This is to be distinguished from normal "unconscious individuation," or that process of natural psychological evolution that occurs even

if the individual remains for all intent and purposes asleep. It is an open and interesting question whether consciously quickened and experienced individuation differs from "unconscious individuation." I have the impression that they are quite different.

There are four broad characteristics that can orient us in our discussion of individuation. The first, and perhaps the most central, is that in individuation there is an actively experienced dialogue between consciousness and the unconscious, or in other words between our sense of identity, who we are, the "persona/ego" part of us, and the continually emerging unknown within. This dialogue takes place all the time and in every phase of life, as an ongoing discussion to which we are privy, which critiques and comments on what we are feeling, how we are affected by inner and outer events, and what our relationships and responsibilities mean to us and say about us. This dialogue is in fact the basis of psychological-mindedness and is familiar to us all.

At critical times in life, we are often forced to look at this ongoing dialogue more closely and listen to it more attentively. We have to explore more thoroughly the character, the quality and the content of this relationship we have with our hidden selves. The periods when this is demanded are usually emotionally upsetting and involve suffering, a kind of rupture in the finely tuned and consistent fantasy we have of who we are. At such junctures, the entire inner family of complexes, archetypal images, errant feelings and emotions seems to revolt, overthrowing the fragile sovereignty of the "I" in favor of the cacophonous, albeit creative, chaos of unconscious arousal. At important times like this, our dialogue with our unknown selves is the most real reality we have.

Such an unconscious arousal points the way to the sec-

ond characteristic of individuation—the fact that a differentiation of the inner world occurs when we pay active attention to it. Dialoguing with our unknown selves demands, as a rule, the deliberate withdrawal of projections from those around us, and from the world at large. By constantly asking the questions "Who am I in that? Where am I in that? Who is in that?" we quickly appreciate that we are many selves, many different people, part and whole, which formerly had been hidden in our perceptions of and opinions about other people and about life. From an intrapsychic perspective, when conscious individuation is undertaken, we come to realize that our dream and fantasy worlds are alive with part personalities, human and inhuman, animal and vegetable, weird and pedestrian, of which we were unaware. As we take our inner lives seriously, as symbolic of the progress we are making toward becoming who we are destined to be, the truth of the polymorphism within grows, and any notion of being a unified "me" diminishes.

Yet even when we recognize this polymorphism, this "many-ness," we hold onto the notion of our singularity, of our "I-ness." This leads us to the third consideration when thinking about individuation: the paradox of the unity amidst the multiplicity. To the uninitiated, the notion of differentiating the unconscious by giving voice and expressive value to the many parts sounds like an invitation to a dissociative state such as "multiple personality" or worse, to a rollicking case of schizophrenia, or the fragmentation of the personality. This is primarily because of the culturally dominant monotheistic fantasy that health is equivalent to oneness. Granted, any serious reader of Jung would point out the many places where he speaks of the ideal of personal development as becoming "oneself," or "whole," or— god help us—

"integrated," all of which are presided over by what he called the "Self," capital S.

Nevertheless, we also know from him, and from those who followed, that the psyche is plural, populated by the many within, the "little people of our complexes," the gods and goddesses. Who hasn't felt the sense of sublime oneness in the face of nature, or the experience of incredible manyness when confronted with passionate ambivalences? In light of these opposing but equally palpable realities, what are we to make of this paradox? Many have speculated and advanced ingenious explanations, all of which I would like to boil down to a useful working hypothesis: our psyches are born out of a preconscious oneness and differentiate throughout our lives, always shadowed by the unseen yet palpable oneness. In the work of individuation, that oneness, that felt sense that all the parts are somehow connected, comes ever more to the forefront of experience, framing, gathering and relating the many within to each other, thus creating an ongoing experience of unity amidst the multiplicity that is characterized by a profound sense of meaning, destiny and purpose.

This leads me to the fourth and final characteristic. Individuation is a process and not a goal. Often I have asked myself, what does an individuated person look like? Was Jung an example, or some of his long-lived students and colleagues? How could they have been individuated given their flaws, uncertainties, their obvious and sometimes embarrassing humanity? Are individuated persons perfect, don't they "glow in the dark"? The answer to this question is, of course, obvious. No individual arrives at maximum differentiation or achieves a permanent integration of all his/her parts.

Long ago, Heraclitus, the patron pre-Socratic saint of Jungian thought, meant it when he said, "You would not

find out the boundaries of the soul, even by traveling along every path, so deep a measure does it have," and Paul Klee, my patron saint, expressed it in his own way in the 1920s, when he wrote that "becoming is more important than being."

To put it bluntly, the dialogue with the unconscious, the differentiation of our inner worlds, and the evolution of a sense of personal meaning and purpose never cease. Instead, through whatever form of self-reflection or consciousness-making an individual develops, in whatever manner or style that suits, symbols—the fruit of the dialogue and differentiation of which we speak—continue to flower in the form of dreams and fantasies, artwork or creative thought. And by definition, individuation continues to go on. The "doing" is the reward, a doing without end, illuminating endless possibilities of meaning that can continually deepen life and which can lead to the only by-product of individuation that I can see, namely, wisdom. I define this wisdom as the humble certainty that one knows nothing but welcomes all and everything with equal grace. To me, wisdom presides over the gathering of selves that we call individuation by enabling the ego, our "I-ness," to know its place amongst the assembled parts and, rather than feeling displaced or diminished, allows it to feel a partner in the marvelous experience of meaning.

With this fourfold orientation in mind, let me comment on an oft-told and much loved Hindu fairy tale, "The King and the Corpse," which was brought to the attention of Western audiences by Heinrich Zimmer, the great Indologist and friend of Jung. As it unfolds, this story has much to tell us about these four characteristics of individuation.

The King and the Corpse

as told by
HEINRICH ZIMMER*

It was remarkable, the way the king became involved in the adventure. For ten years, every day, there had been appearing in his audience chamber, where he sat in state hearing petitions and dispensing justice, a holy man in the robe of a beggar ascetic, who, without a word, would offer him a fruit. And the royal personage would accept the trifling present, passing it along without an afterthought to his treasurer standing behind the throne. Without making any request, the mendicant would then withdraw and vanish into the crowd of petitioners, having betrayed no sign either of disappointment or of impatience.

Then it happened one day, some ten years after the first appearance of the holy man, that a tame monkey, having escaped from the women's apartments in the inner palace, came bounding into the hall and leaped upon the arm of the throne. The mendicant had just presented his gift, and the king playfully handed it over to the monkey. When the animal bit into it, a valuable jewel dropped out and rolled across the floor.

The king's eyes grew wide. He turned with dignity to the treasurer at his shoulder. "What has become of all the others?" he asked. But the treasurer was unable to say. He had been tossing the unimpressive gifts through an upper, trellised window into the treasure house, not even bothering to unlock the door. And so he excused himself and hurried to the vault. Opening it, he made his way to the part beneath the little window. There, on the floor, lay a mass of rotten fruit in various stages of decay and, amidst this debris of many years, a heap of priceless gems.

The king was pleased, and

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he bestowed the entire heap upon the treasurer. Of a generous spirit, he was not avid for riches, yet his curiosity was aroused. Therefore when the ascetic next morning presented himself, tendering in silence his apparently modest offering, the king refused to accept it unless he would pause awhile and speak. The holy man stated that he wished an interview in private. The king granted the desire, and the mendicant at last presented his request.

What he required, he told the king, was the help of a hero, a truly intrepid man, to assist in an enterprise of magic.

The king was interested in hearing more.

The weapons of true heroes, the magician explained, are renowned in the annals of magic for their peculiar exorcising powers.

The king permitted his petitioner to continue.

The stranger thereupon invited him to come, on the night of the next new moon, to the great funeral ground, where the dead of the city were cremated and the criminals hanged.

The king, undaunted, gave assent; and the ascetic—who bore the appropriate name of "Rich in Patience"—took his leave.

The appointed night arrived: the night of the next new moon. The king, alone, girded on his sword, wrapped himself in a dark mantle, and with muffled countenance set forth on the questionable adventure. As he approached the dreadful burial ground, he became increasingly aware of the tumult of the specters and demons hovering about the uncanny place, feasting upon the dead, and celebrating their horrible carousals. Fearlessly he continued. When he crossed into the burning-area, by the light of the still smoldering funeral pyres his alert eyes half discerned, half guessed, the charred scattering of the blackened skeletons and skulls. His ears throbbed to the hideous uproar of the ghouls.

He proceeded to the rendezvous, and there was his sorcerer, intently drawing a magic circle on the ground.

"Here I am," the king said. "What can I do for you?"

The other hardly lifted his eyes. "Go to the other end of the burning ground," he said, "and you will find the corpse of a hanged man dangling from a tree. Cut it down and bring it here."

The king turned, and crossing again the extensive area, came to a giant tree. The moonless night was illuminated

only by the dim flickering of the exhausted pyres; the goblins made an inhuman din. Yet he was unafraid, and perceiving the hanged man dangling there, he ascended the tree and cut the rope with his sword. When the corpse fell, it gave a moan, as though it had been hurt. The king, thinking there must still be life in it, began to grope over the rigid form. A shrill laugh broke from its throat, and the king realized that the body was inhabited by a ghost.

"What are you laughing at?" he demanded.

The instant he spoke, the corpse flew back to the limb of the tree.

The king ascended and again cut the body down. He lifted it without a word this time, placed it on his shoulder, and began to walk. But he had not taken many steps when the voice in the corpse began to speak. "O King, let me shorten the way for you with a tale," it said. The king did not reply, and so the spirit told its story.

There was, once upon a time, a certain prince who went on a hunting party with a young friend; the friend was the son of the chancellor of the prince's father. And losing touch with their companions, they strolled aimlessly through the forest, until they arrived at a pleasant lake where they paused to rest. The prince saw a beautiful maiden bathing on the farther bank, who, unobserved by her companions, was already making signals to him across the water. He was unable to understand the signs, but the chancellor's son was catching their meaning very well. She had communicated her name, that of her family, and that of the kingdom in which she lived, and was announcing her love. When she turned and vanished into the foliage, the two youths at last got up and ambled home.

Another day, under the pretext of another hunting party, the two friends set off again into the jungle, detached themselves, and went to the town in which the girl lived. They found lodging in the house of an old woman, whom they bribed to serve as messenger. The girl was so cunning that she was able to formulate a reply which the old woman did not recognize as the arrangement of a rendezvous. The signals were deciphered by the clever son of the chancellor. Then, for lunar reasons, the rendezvous had to be postponed, and the girl described, again by signals, how the prince might climb into her father's garden

and ascend to her lofty chamber. He entered, as arranged, through her window, and the two young lovers found delight in each other's arms.

The girl was both passionate and cunning. When she learned that her signals had been deciphered not by the prince but by his friend, she was immediately afraid that her affair would be betrayed, and so she determined to poison the interpreter. He, however, was her match, and had even foreseen that this would come to pass. He had devised a plan that would teach her, once and for all, that he knew how to take care both of himself and of his prince.

The young man disguised himself as a beggar ascetic, persuaded the prince to play the role of the ascetic's pupil, and then, by a clever stratagem, brought the girl into suspicion as a witch. He convinced the king of the country that she had been the cause of the recent sudden death of his infant son, and he produced such proof that she was condemned to a disgraceful death. Exposed naked outside of the town, she was left prey to the beasts of the surrounding jungle. But the moment she was abandoned, the two young men, having procured swift horses for themselves, snatched her up and fled with her to the prince's realm, where she became his bride and future queen. Grief over the disgrace and loss overcame the aged parents of the maid; their hearts broke and they died.

"Now who was guilty of the death of those two?" suddenly demanded the specter in the corpse. "If you know the answer and do not reply, your head will burst into a hundred pieces."

The king believed that he knew the answer, but suspected that if he uttered a word the corpse would go flying back to the tree. Nevertheless, he did not wish his head to explode.

"Neither the maid nor the prince was guilty," he said, "because they were inflamed by the arrows of love. Nor was the son of the chancellor guilty, for he was not acting upon his own responsibility but in the service of his master. The only one guilty was the king of that country, who let such things come to pass within his realm. He did not see through the subtle trick played on the natural grief that he felt for his infant son. He failed to note that the mien of the beggar ascetic was no more than a disguise. He had never taken cognizance of the activities of the two strangers in his capital; he was not even aware

that they were there. Therefore, he is to be judged guilty of failure in his kingly duty, which was to be the all-seeing eye of his kingdom, the all-knowing protector and governor of his folk."

When the last word of the judgment had left the speaker's tongue, the burden, groaning in mock agony, vanished from his back, and he knew that it was hanging again from the arm of the tree. He returned, cut the corpse down, shouldered the load, and tried again.

"My dear sir," said the voice, addressing him anew, "you have encumbered yourself with a difficult and curious charge. Permit me to while the time away for you with a pleasant tale.

"Now, once upon a time there were three young Brahmins who had lived a number of years in the home of their spiritual teacher. All three had fallen in love with their teacher's daughter, and he did not dare to bestow her on any one of them for fear of breaking the others' hearts. But then the maid was stricken with a serious illness and died, and the three young men, equally desperate, committed her body to a funerary pyre. When it had been cremated, the first decided to give vent to his grief by wandering through the world as a beggar ascetic, the second gathered the beloved bones from among the ashes and proceeded with them to a celebrated sanctuary beside the life-giving waters of the holy Ganges, while the third, remaining on the spot, constructed a hermit's hut over the place of the fire, and slept on the ashes of the body of his love.

"Now the one who had decided to roam through the world was one day the witness of an extraordinary event. He saw a man read from a book a magic charm that restored a child to life whose body had already been consumed to ashes. Stealing the book, the young lover hurried back to the cremation scene, and arrived just when the one who had gone to the Ganges also returned, the latter having dipped the bones into the life-giving stream. The skeleton was reassembled among the ashes, the charm was read from the book, and the miracle came to pass. The thrice-beloved arose again, more beautiful than ever. So at once the rivalry was resumed, but more hotly now; for each claimed to have earned the right to her: one having guarded her ashes, one having dipped her bones in the Ganges, and the third

having pronounced the spell.

"And so to whom does she belong?" said the voice in the corpse. "If you know the answer but do not reply, your head will explode."

The king believed he knew, and so was forced to reply. "The one who recalled her to life with the magic spell and had little trouble in doing so is her father," he said, "and the one who rendered the pious service to her bones fulfilled the duty of a son. But the one who slept on the ashes, did not depart from her, and devoted his life to her, may be termed her spouse."

A wise enough judgment—yet the moment it was given, the corpse was gone. Doggedly, the king returned, cut it down, and started again the unrewarding walk. The voice resumed. The king was given another riddle to solve, and again compelled to retrace his path. And so it went, time after time, the unrelenting specter in the corpse spinning tale upon tale of twisted destinies and tangled lives, while the king was driven to and fro. All of life with its joys and horrors was described. And the threads of the fantasies always twisted into knots of right and wrong, tangles of conflicting claims.

There was a story, for example, of the posthumous son of a thief, who was faced by a delicate problem when he went to make an offering to his dead father at a sacred well. His grandmother had been left a widow while still very young; and since her relatives had defrauded her of the inheritance, she had been compelled to go out into the world with only her little daughter. The night of her departure from the village, she came upon a thief who had been impaled and was on the verge of death. In terrible agony, hardly able to breathe, he expressed a desire to marry the little daughter, then and there—with the thought that the marriage would give him spiritual rights over her future son, even though the latter should be engendered by another, and this son then would be eligible to make the offerings due to the soul of a deceased father. In compensation, he would tell where he had concealed a certain stolen treasure.

The marriage was concluded in an informal though binding manner, the thief died, and the mother and daughter had a considerable fortune. The girl fell in love, in due time, with a handsome young Brahmin, and he consented to become her lover but insisted on a payment, because there was a certain courtesan whose fee he wished to be able to pay. The young

woman conceived a son, and following the instructions of a dream, deposited the babe, together with a thousand gold pieces, at the threshold of the palace of a certain king. Now this king, who was without offspring and desirous of an heir to the throne, had happened that very night to dream that a child was about to be deposited at his door. He accepted the sign, and brought up the foundling as his son and heir.

Many years later, when the benevolent king had died, the young prince, incumbent to the throne, went to make an offering to his departed father. He proceeded to a holy well, where the dead were accustomed to stretch forth their hands to receive the proffered gifts. But instead of a single hand, three hands appeared to take his oblation: that of the impaled thief, that of the Brahmin, and that of the king. The prince did not know what to do. Even the priests attending the offering were at a loss. "Well," challenged the specter in the corpse, "into which hand should the prince consign his oblation?"

Again threatened with the explosion of his skull, the king pronounced judgment: "The oblation should be placed in the hand of the thief, for neither the Brahmin who begot the child nor the king who reared him has any valid claim. The Brahmin sold himself. The king received his compensation in the gold pieces. The man who made it possible for the prince to be born was the thief; his treasure paid for both the begetting and the fosterage. Furthermore, the thief had title to the child by marriage." Immediately, the corpse was off, and still another walk brought the king back to the tree.

Then there is that curious tale of the transposed heads, the tale of two lifelong friends and a girl. The maid married one of the two, but the marriage was not particularly happy. Shortly following the wedding, the couple, together with their bachelor friend, set forth on a visit to the parents of the bride. On the way, they came to a sanctuary of the bloodthirsty goddess Kali, and the husband excused himself, for a moment, to go into the temple alone. There, in a sudden excess of emotion, he decided to offer himself to the image as a sacrifice, and, with a keen-edged sacrificial sword that was there, lopped his head from his shoulders and collapsed in a pool of blood. The friend, having waited with the

bride, went into the temple to see what had happened, and when he beheld the sight was inspired to follow suit. At last the bride came in, only to take flight again, intent on hanging herself from the limb of a tree. The voice of the goddess commanded her to halt, however, and sent her back to restore the lives of the two young men by replacing the heads. But because of her distraction, the young woman made the interesting mistake of putting the friend's head on the husband's body, and the husband's on the friend's. "To which now does she belong?" demanded the specter in the corpse, "the one with the husband's body, or the one with the husband's head?"

The king thinks he knows, and, to keep his own head from bursting, gives his answer: "The one with the husband's head; for the head ranks supreme among the members, just as woman among life's delights."

Again the corpse has vanished and again the king is trudging back to the fateful tree.

In all, twenty-four riddles are propounded; and the king can announce a solution to all but the last.

This last concerns the case of a father and son. They were members of a hill tribe of huntsmen, the father a chief. And the two had gone out on a hunting party, when they happened on the footprints of two women. Now the father was a widower and the son as yet unmarried, but the father in his sorrow for his deceased wife had rejected every suggestion that he should rewed. Still, the footmarks were particularly charming: the practiced eyes of the hunters judged that they had been left by a noble mother and daughter, fugitives of some aristocratic house—perhaps even a queen and a princess. The larger prints suggested the beauty of the queen and the smaller ones the fascination of the princess. The son was very much excited. But the father had to be persuaded. What the son proposed was that the father should marry the woman of the larger footprints and himself the smaller, as befitted their rank and age. He had to argue the point for some time, but at last the chieftain acquiesced, and the two took a solemn oath that that was the way it should be.

Then they made haste along the trail. And they came, at length, upon the two unhappy creatures, a queen and princess indeed—just as the tribesmen had suspected—in

anxious flight from a situation that had developed at home when the king had unexpectedly died. But there was this disillusioning complication: the daughter was the one who had the larger feet. According to their oath, therefore, the son would be forced to marry the queen.

Father and son conducted their quarry into their mountain village, and there made wives of them; the daughter became the wife of the chief, and the mother of the son. Then the two women conceived.

"Now just how were the two male children that were born related to each other?" asked the voice of the specter in the corpse. "Precisely what was each to the other, and precisely what were they not?"

The king, carrying his burden, was unable to find any unequivocal term for this complicated relationship. The enigma had at last been found that could strike him dumb. And so he walked along with a remarkably buoyant stride, bemusing the problem in silence. The children would be living paradoxes of interrelationship, both this and that: uncle and nephew, nephew and uncle, at once on the father's side and on the mother's. . . .

Driven back into the problem of his own character and present predicament, he walked in silence, but with an admirable nimbleness of step that seemed heedless of the night's long ordeal. And apparently the specter was impressed, for when the voice spoke again, it was altered to a tone of respect.

"Sir," it said, "you seem cheerful in spite of all this weird tramping back and forth across the funeral ground; you are unafraid. I am pleased by the spectacle of your determination. You may have this corpse, therefore. Take it with you. I am about to quit it."

But this was not the end.

Before taking its departure, the voice warned that the projects of the magician ascetic were of terrible danger to them both; beneath the holy garment of renunciation throbbed a boundless lust for power and blood. The necromancer was about to use the king in a great enterprise of black magic, first as accomplice and then as a living human sacrifice.

"Listen, O King," the specter warned, "listen to what I have to tell you, and, if you value your own good, do exactly as I say.

"That beggar monk is a very dangerous imposter. With his powerful spells he is going

to force me to re-enter this corpse, which he will then use as an idol. What he plans to do is to place it in the center of his magic circle, worship me there as a divinity, and, in the course of the worship, offer you up as the victim. You will be ordered to fall down and do me reverence, first on your knees, then prostrate, in the most slavish attitude of devotion, with your head, hands, and shoulders touching the ground. He will attempt then to decapitate you with a single stroke of your own sword.

"There is only one way to escape. When you are ordered to go down, you must say: 'Please demonstrate this slavish form of prostration, so that I, a king unused to such attitudes, may see how one assumes such a posture of worship.' And when he is lying flat on the ground, strike off his head with a quick cut of the sword. In that instant, all the supernatural power that this sorcerer is trying to conjure from the sphere of the celestials will fall to you. And you will be a potent king indeed!"

The specter, with that, departed and the king proceeded freely on his way. The magician betrayed no impatience at having been forced to wait, but on the contrary seemed filled with admiration that the task should have been accomplished at all. He had used the time to complete the ritual arrangement of his magic circle. It was all marked out with a hideous material gathered from the immediate neighborhood: a kind of paste composed of the whitish meal of ground bones mixed with the blood of dead bodies. And the area was unpleasantly alight with the flickering of wicks burning with corpse fat.

The sorcerer lifted the burden from the king's shoulder, washed it, and decorated it with garlands, as though it were a sacred image, then set it in the center of the magic circle. He summoned the specter by means of a series of potent incantations and compelled it to enter into the prepared body. Then he undertook to pay it worship after the manner of a priest paying worship to a divinity which has been invited to take up residence within a sacred image as an august guest. The time came, presently, for him to make the king go down, first on his knees, then on his face; but when he pronounced the command, his noble acolyte required to be shown how to take the posture. So the terrible monk got down on his knees. The king watched and waited. The monk fell forward, pressing his hands, shoul-

ders and face to the ground, and with a quick slash the king struck off his head. The blood gushed. The king rolled the body over and with another expert blow split the chest. He ripped the heart out and offered it up, together with the head, as an oblation to the specter in the corpse.

Then a mighty sound of jubilation arouse out of the night from every side, from the host of surrounding spirits, souls, and ghouls, lifting a tumult of acclaim to the victor. By his deed he had redeemed the supernatural from the threat of the necromancer, who had been on the very point of reducing them all to slavery and enchantment.

The specter in the corpse lifted its uncanny voice, but now in joy and praise. "What the necromancer sought was absolute power over souls and ghouls," it said, "and over all the spiritual presences of the supernatural domain. That power now shall be yours, O King, when your life on earth is ended. I have tormented you; I shall therefore now make atonement. What do you wish? Announce your desire and it shall be granted."

The king asked, in compensation for his toils during this strangest of all the nights he had ever known, that the twenty-four riddle tales told him by the specter, together with the story of the night itself, should be made known over the whole earth and remain eternally famous among men.

The specter promised. "And furthermore," the voice stated, "not only shall the twenty-four tales be universally celebrated, but even Shiva, the Great God, Overlord of all the Specters and Demons, the Master-Ascetic of the Gods, will himself do them honor. Neither ghosts nor demons shall have any power, whenever and wherever these tales are told. And whoever recites with sincere devotion even a single one of them shall be free from sin."

With this promise the specter abruptly departed; and immediately Shiva, the Lord of the Universe, appeared in glory, attended by a multitude of gods. He gave greeting to the king and serenely thanked him, with high praise, for his deliverance of the powers of the spirit world from the impure hands of the aspiring ascetic. The divinity declared that the cosmic powers now were placed in the service of the king in return for his having prevented their misuse

by the black magician who had been working for universal dominion, that the king would come into full possession of them at the close of his earthly career, and that during his lifetime he would govern the earth. Shiva bestowed upon him, with his own hand, the divine sword "Invincible," which should give him the sovereignty of the world; and then he lifted the veil of ignorance that had been concealing from his consciousness the immortal essence of his human life.

Blessed with this illumination, the king was free to take his leave of the gruesome proving ground. The dawn was breaking as he returned into the spacious halls of his lordly palace, like someone awakening from a night of troubled sleep. . . . During the following years the miraculous fulfillment of the splendor promised came to pass, and his earthly life was enlarged in virtue and glory.

Our story opens with a mighty king dispensing justice impartially and, as we might note, quite unconsciously, for the tale tells us that although every day, for some ten years, an unassuming beggar ascetic made him a "trifling present," this gesture went uninvestigated. Without an afterthought, the king passes on his modest gift to the impersonal machinery of state. As fairy tales are, according to Marie-Louise von Franz, the best way to study the comparative anatomy of the psyche, it is not hard to realize that this king represents the self-centered, self-involved and inflatedly unconscious part of our psyches, the persona-ego that reigns over life as if all were clear, all were in order, and all were sensible and explicable. At the cusp of the first and second half of life, this is who we usually think of ourselves as being, fully secure in the illusion of stable identity. Such a persona-ego is unaware of the mystery hidden within the fruits of daily life and is enthralled instead by the routine performance of

duty and by meeting external expectations. In a word, this king has no conscious relationship to the unconscious, to the unknown parts of himself.

Unfailingly, it is at such unexpected moments, when one is least expecting it, that mischief occurs. The tables are turned and an uncontrolled, uncivilized "animal" part of ourselves, one of those inner inhabitants to whom we pay little attention, escapes its handlers (or our defenses) and forces us to look at what we have disregarded. Kings and royalty have monkeys around (or dwarfs) to parody human virtues and qualities as they scamper lustily and playfully around the courts of our souls. Monkeys are our libertarian, impulsive sides, our emotional selves that recognize only the natural law of curiosity and hunger for experience. When we remain kingly, the mere fruit of life is beneath us, saving ourselves as we do for more sophisticated treats. But to the monkey within, the imp who opens our purses and sometimes our buttons or zippers, these mundane things are indescribably delicious. The dialogue with the unknown is made possible and the jewel within revealed only by the monkey.

Confronted with his oversight, the king comes to know the ascetic "Rich in Patience", and engages in what Jung called the dialogue with the shadow. The king, the most powerful in the world of consciousness—persona-ego personified, if you will—meets his counterpart in the world of the occult, or of unconscious knowledge. In terms of individuation, the king must come to know the ascetic, because until he does so, he will remain unaware of and excluded from his own deeper nature. Before the appearance of the ascetic, it is as if nothing exists but what we, in our egocentricity, can see or touch. Often in therapy one encounters similiar experiences

when the client is forced into a numinous confrontation with an unexpected other, perhaps in the form of an illness, or symptom, or an amorous passion, an other that has been knocking at the door for years. Suddenly all is not what it seems to be, and what once seemed to be under control is no longer. The ascetic becomes the king's guide to his own unknown inner domain, the doorway to his more conscious involvement in his own development. The appearance of the ascetic conforms to the first point of orientation of individuation.

The task set for the king is odd, indeed; it is to enter the realm of the dead, a hellish place of forgotten souls, rotting bodies and sepulchral lights, during the dark night of the new moon. It is as if the king must enter a place of inversion, where he is the servant instead of king, where darkness rules instead of the light of consciousness, where decomposition or regression rather than progression is the norm, and where pandemonium replaces good government. For the king to be in this world is for him to meet the stranger within himself, to meet his own dark potential.

What is fascinating about this tale and marks it as different from other tales that do not, I think, touch the heart of individuation quite as well, has to do with where the heroes and heroines must go. More frequently, the hero or heroine must enter magical lands or jeweled palaces, fascinating, marvelous and indescribably beautiful inner places, in order to propel the narrative onward. This tale is rather more mature, mirroring as it does how our playful lusts or desires can reveal the power and darkness that stands behind appearances. This tale is an underworld journey, a *nekyia* or descent into hell (like that of Inanna).

When one consciously engages the process of individu-

ation, the harmless always reveals our ignorance of the true meaning of life and how critical it is that it be pursued, no matter how frightening or dangerous. Thus it makes perfect sense that the king must enter the funerary grounds which represent the graveyard of lost life, of sins and failings, of the unholy din of life unfulfilled or misunderstood. In a way, the king, who stands for our most coherent sense of ourselves, must enter a period of frightening confrontation with what has died within us, amidst the screams of the personalities and the half-light of smoldering desires within our unconscious world. Is this not the reason why most dreams in depth therapy are unnerving and strange? Is it not because we are forced to go deep in order to redeem our unfulfilled selves?

This confrontation with dead things that is forced upon us by our shadowy guide—that other self who lives another sort of life while we reach for the safety of identity and the security of our place in the world—is most dramatically portrayed in the image of the hanging corpse. What is denied congeals in the body of the corpse, until it finally becomes the housing for the spirit of all that we are not, which eventually bursts upon the scene mockingly, demanding conscious recognition. This spirit symbolizes the possessive power of the unrecognized unconscious, which can emotionally overwhelm conscious life with doubt, anxieties, odd thoughts, and fantasies, unmaking normal everyday life.

What ensues is a marvelous depiction of the dialogue between persona-ego consciousness and an animated inner world. The tale quickly dispels the notion that encountering the unconscious is a passive task, a burden to be borne and endured. On the contrary, this is not so. The moment the king cuts down the corpse, his strange interactive education begins. Instead of riding quietly and obediently on the king's

shoulder, the corpse and its spirit familiar become illuminating tutors. During this long, bizarre night, the spirit within relates to the king twenty-four mind-breaking riddles, life's quintessence if you will, that test his reason and his judgment, those very factors that define his kingship.

What does this tell us about individuation? If the corpse symbolizes our suspended failings, our forgotten and repressed life that we are forced to bypass during our long road to adaptation, the spirit's insoluble stories are dramatic examples of the limitation of our persona-ego vision. For although all through life we may feel that we have made the right decisions, in this underworld where all is inverted and on its head, nothing is so simple. In effect, we are damned if we do, damned if we don't. When confronted with the underside of life, there is no certainty. When forced to see in the half-light of inference and of lost opportunity, reason comes to a full and humiliating stop.

In these tales of confusion, deceit, treachery, possession, desire, devotion, attachment and status—components of normal everyday shadowy reality—the king is forced to confront his own process of reasonable judgment. One has the feeling that no matter what he might answer it would be wrong, for it is only part of the picture. Is not the spirit's true purpose to parade before the king life in all its contrary, idiosyncratic, and ineffable fullness, in order to challenge his smug notion that he has everything under control? In this kingdom, reason and logic, tools of kingship, do not reign. These stories are nothing less than the images of his own inner kingdom, the different parts of himself that cannot be

categorized, adjudicated and assigned to their particular compartments.

Each time that the king attempts an answer—granted, in fear that his head might explode (which we realize is nothing less than the desired end)—the corpse, the weight of our own unconsciousness, is resuspended, forcing him to begin all over again. This chronicity, this seemingly endless drudgery is not unlike the feeling in therapy when one is forced to confront repeatedly the same impossible dilemmas, the same dream, the same passions. The king's haulage is the same as our recognition that we do not get rid of our problems in individuation, that we do not finally "solve" or "resolve" our complexes, but rather must bear them with a different attitude so that they might reveal to us a deeper meaning. For these are stories that challenge consciousness, that force us to realize that all is not what it seems to be and that individuation is a learning process rather than an investment strategy to accrue more and more maturity points. And that we must pursue this process in the solitude of our own hearts, with bravery but not with the fantasies of power, specialness or pride, even if we feel we might burst in the process.

The stories themselves tell us much about unlived life as well. The first seems almost to parody the major elements in the king's own situation, complete with a disguised beggar ascetic. In the second, we see how even high birth does not protect one from blind possession, from the chaos of desire. The thorny issue of worldly and otherworldly lineage are the subject of the third, as is the odd kinship between thief and prince, high and low. And in the fourth, the spirit al-

most taunts the king by presenting him with a riddle of transposed heads, as if to force him to recognize that, contrary to what he may think, "the head ranks supreme among the members." These stories represent "all of life with its joys and horrors," the life of which the king in his infinite wisdom, was entirely unaware. Furthermore, the fact that there are twenty-four stories reiterates that we are dealing with a "lifetime," a full cycle of experience, a second chance, if you will, for the king to learn that he cannot know everything and that he must realize, in silence—as Zimmer says in his commentary on the story—that "everything is in some deep way its opposite." Thus, it is with the final riddle, about the unspeakably complex consequences of judging by misleading appearances, that the king finally wins the corpse and the admiration of the spirit. This reflective silence is the beginning of real wisdom. The king's forfeiture of needing to determine right or wrong, black or white, underscores that individuation is the apprehension of identity within diversity, of the hidden unity in the multiplicity.

At this juncture of the tale, the spirit reveals the ascetic's malevolent intent and enlightens the king as to how to defeat him. By now it is plain that king and magician are mirror images of one another, both ambitious in their own ways, both driven by power; one seemingly for good, the other certainly for ill. Yet when one is unconscious, no matter what the intent, the drive for power destroys rather than creates, inhibits freedom rather than makes way for it. Only when this drive, this desire to control life, is relinquished and when one allows oneself to be guided by the inner world can there be true freedom from perverting life through illusory rationality and self-aggrandizement. Selfishness and self-centeredness must give way to inner centeredness or wisdom.

When we are open to the unconscious, in dialogue with it, and listen to its many voices rather than command them, reflect and discern them rather than judge them, then is the domination of the head overthrown and a way made to glimpse the unity of all life. The crowning expression of this is the king's audience with Lord Shiva once he has vanquished the magician and come to know his mind and heart. Lord Shiva, the creator and destroyer, the transcendental backdrop of all life, reveals to the king that he is indeed one with all, that his victory is a universal one, for upon his individuation rides the well-being of the entire cosmos.

How are we to understand this development in psychological terms? When, in the course of the dialogue with the unconscious, and amidst the eternal differentiation of the inner world and the recognition that inner and outer are mirror reflections of one another, each filled with meaning, when we realize that the opposites of life are secretly one, then can we appreciate the immensity of our apperception, then are we able to feel connected to the larger than life within. Then do all the parts sing in harmony and with one voice. Forearmed with such experience, we may wield the sword "Invincible," the supreme tool of discernment that, like some marvelous talisman, embodies the connection that we have in real time with the timeless world within.

But where is the last aspect of individuation, its nature as process rather than goal? I see this in the king's wish, his desire that these twenty-four stories, together with the fantastic story of this eternal night, be made known all over the earth. Whosoever recites any or all of it with sincere devotion

shall be free from sin. In so desiring, the king links his experience to all humanity and makes it, instead of an end in itself, an opportunity for universal redemption. Others need not literally undergo his trials to accomplish what he has accomplished, but simply know about them, become conscious of them with sincerity and with humility. Then they, too, will, as Zimmer says, move from "pompous egotism through the realm of death and finally to the summit of enlightenment." By giving the story of his journey to all people, the king in effect recognizes that there is no end point, no ownership over consciousness making or individuation and that it goes on co-eternally in all people whenever the deepest layers of life are engaged in a conscious, meaningful way. By making his tale everyone's, the king enables all selves to gather, to share in the process.

From a personal perspective this means that when we as seekers explore our lives most fully, our inner cosmos rejoices in the knowledge that ego-consciousness has joined the psyche as a whole and that a community of selves has been created. And from an outer perspective, only when we undertake this task and become free of unconscious possession and projections, can we finally see and appreciate, that is to say, gather to us, the uniqueness of others, those selves without, in reciprocal, authentic relationship.