

Introduction

Elizabeth Éowyn Nelson

“Your life needs the dark.”

C. G. Jung, *The Red Book* (360)

“Dark times are among the best teachers.”

Richard Rohr, *Simplicity* (52)

Welcome to the 2021 volume of the *Journal of Jungian Scholarly Studies*. Although the board of the Jungian Society for Scholarly Studies wisely chose to cancel the conference planned for July 2020, the editorial team chose to go ahead and publish works of Jungian scholarship and art suited for the spirit of the time that draws upon the spirit of the depths. Such is our task. The breadth of thought and feeling exhibited by our contributing essayists, poets, and visual artists confirms the choice. The 2021 volume includes three long scholarly essays, introduced below, as well as provocative shorter pieces gathered in a section of the journal entitled “Conversations in the Field.” The scope of the conversations is large, extensive, and diverse—as have been our concerns since March of 2020—and we are pleased that the section reflects the thinking of established Jungians as well as new voices. The topics addressed include systemic racism, systemic misogyny, LGBTQ+ concerns, and, of course COVID-19. Two essays on the psychological attitude open and close the Conversations in the Field.

Perhaps the wisdom tradition that is depth psychology was never more necessary than in this year of pandemic and quarantine. At the time of publication, April 2021, COVID-19 is directly responsible for over three million deaths worldwide. Indirectly, that is, as a contributing factor to other morbid conditions, it is responsible for many more. We do not yet have adequate statistics on the economic, institutional, political, and cultural costs of the pandemic, and we have only begun to adumbrate its full effect on soul and mind.

Readers will not be surprised that the theme of the 2021 volume is katabasis, journey through the underworld, and that the two of the three long scholarly essays in the volume address the topic of leadership. The pandemic has revealed great leadership on the world’s stage just as ruthlessly as it has revealed the misguided and dangerous narcissism of putative leaders who seek personal aggrandizement at the expense of collective well-being.

Works on leadership are plentiful. A keyword search on Amazon reveals that there are more than 60,000 published books currently available, to say nothing of the articles, editorials, blogs, and training programs including undergraduate and graduate degrees in leadership. The number of Jungian works is much smaller yet makes a unique theoretical contribution to leadership literature.

The first long essay in the 2021 volume, “C. G. Jung’s Thoughts on the Concepts of Leader and Leadership” by John G. Corlett and Laura F. Chisholm, curates Jung’s ideas by tracing them to their sources in *The Collected Works*, published letters, printed speeches, and transcribed media interviews. Corlett and Chisholm point out that “Jung neither consolidated nor systematized his thinking on leadership. Until now, the disparate elements have existed in a disorganized state, sprinkled across nearly three decades and various volumes.” Adopting an intuitive approach

informed by the authors' interdisciplinary training and professional experience, they organize the excerpts into five key themes: the concepts of the "true" leader, the "so-called" leader, the connection between the achievement of personality and the leader, the link between leadership and the acquisition of prestige, and the influence of the great symbolic principles on the leader. Corlett and Chisholm readily acknowledge "the problematic aspects of Jung's writings" yet propose that "his thoughts on leadership, while situated within a troubling cultural context, can provide valuable touchstones for future scholarly work." I wholeheartedly agree. I predict that the essay will become a classic source for future leadership studies.

The second long essay, by Matthew A. Fike, is an erudite exploration of *King Lear* and *The Red Book* that, placed in conversation with C. G. Jung's thoughts, is a deep meditation on individuation and leadership. Fike's breathtaking scholarship, which grants readers profound insights into both texts, compares and contrasts the katabasis of the aged Lear and the aging Jung. He notes that "various aspects of Jung's self-indictment in *The Red Book* apply to Lear as well," including egocentrism, pride, tyranny, ambition, vanity, self-interest, general recognition, and personal advantage. Fike concludes by stating, "As Lear approaches the end of his life, suffering abides, senility qualifies learning and wisdom, and loss outweighs reconciliation." Indeed, Shakespeare's play dramatizes the old king's enantiodromia, not his individuation. "The depths demand that he [Lear] take a careful look at himself on the way to building a psyche focused inward on love instead of outward on power, pomp, and prestige." This he does, but it is not enough. "Lear's journey is tragic because he does not achieve the ideal—the collapsing of binaries into a new third state." Instead, as Fike asserts, "Lear has become old without becoming wise."

Fike informs us that "Lear's attempt to rule the outer world has resulted in inner poverty." Jung's katabasis, reflected in *The Red Book*, reveals something quite different, the courage to descend. Fike quotes the following passage from *The Red Book* to diagnose Lear, but it stands as a "broader diagnosis and prescription" for anyone aspiring to be a true leader:

One who wants to rise above himself shall climb down and hoist himself onto himself and lug himself to the place of sacrifice. But what must happen to a man until he realizes that outer visible success, [which] he can grasp with his hands, leads him astray. What suffering must be brought upon humanity, until man gives up satisfying his longing for power over his fellow man and forever wanting others to be the same[?] (390–91)

On the need to "climb down" and more, Fike's essay and the essay by Corlett and Chisholm speak to each other about a topic of immense concern in this cultural moment, when "the suffering brought upon humanity" by the pandemic and quarantine has been a collective katabasis. The world is in dire need of true leaders, not so-called leaders. Moreover, the need calls for leadership at many levels, in any situation or moment, when psychological wisdom is wanted: in our personal relationships, at home and at work, and in our communal and political lives. As Corlett and Chisholm tell us, those who aspire to Jung's idea of a "true leader" must devote themselves to individuation. *The Red Book* and *King Lear* dramatize the painful ordeal of becoming a true leader, something that is not apparent, and cannot be apparent, in the scattered fragments on the topic of leadership in Jung's works. In a time of collective katabasis, we need leaders who are unafraid of the dark.

True leadership is not limited to political or cultural elites. Many people influence the lives of others in smaller, quieter, and less public ways. For them, katabasis is still the price of psychological wisdom. No one can travel the path of soul without undergoing the experience of

death, symbolic or literal, and the slower, reflective pace that accompanies death. Soul “remains patiently in the present, close to life” (Moore, xv). Living close to life and to death is an idea that echoes throughout the third long essay in this volume, “Lioness Dreaming: A Somatic Approach to the Animal Ally.” The essay narrates an exceptional, numinous experience with an aging lioness in the South African bush, a landscape in which death is ever present. Meeting the lioness was dreamlike, an encounter with an autonomous Other who was both deeply strange and strangely familiar. The lioness, who now lives in what Australian aboriginals call the dreaming, has become the author’s cherished elder and teacher. Wisdom appears in many places and in many forms.

A personal coda

I recall a profound lesson about pain from my teacher Cherie McCoy more than three decades ago: *The only way out is through*. This statement is the cornerstone of embodied emotional wisdom. It applies to gestation and childbirth, it applies to symbolic birthing processes, and it summarizes every katabasis throughout history. No one gets out of the underworld, netherworld, underland, or the Great Below without going through the entire journey.

As I assumed various leadership roles over time, I learned that aspiring to become a true leader is an ordeal, a process both joyful and painful. Pain has a remarkable ability to concentrate the mind when we imagine it as agony—that is, as an agon or struggle between positions or persons. Then exhausted and bewildered leaders can discard the self-torturing query, *Why am I still here?* and ask the archetypal question, *Who and what am I serving?* In this process I discovered the deeper motivation to continue to lead because I, in turn, was being led by something and someone much more profound. In fact, I was being loved by it and by them.

The figures Jung encountered on the journey he describes in *The Red Book* must have inspired his feelings of awe before the mystery of love that bears all things and endures all things. The editorial staff and I hope that the pieces in this volume of the *Journal of Jungian Scholarly Studies* will inspire a small measure of the same in readers.

Works Cited

- Jung, C. G. *The Red Book: Liber Novus: A Reader’s Edition*. Edited by Sonu Shamdasani, translated by Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani, W. W. Norton, 2009. Philemon Series.
- Moore, Thomas. *Care of the Soul*. HarperCollins, 1992.
- Rohr, Richard. *Simplicity: The Freedom of Letting Go*. Translated by Peter Heinneg, rev. ed., The Crossroad Publishing Company.