Thinking blondes and heroes: interpreting Jungian theory and hero stories for women’s psychology

Beth M. Marlow
University of Wollongong
CHAPTER ONE

Myth as Psychology
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What is that but an old story
that I do not believe nor understand?
But there is a sickness in the world
from such old stories.

And know me now. Pity me.
Who must return from Mercury's
deforming hand, from the magical Gold,
the Fleece to its mereness; free
Thessaly from swarming dreams;
by my own stubborn nature
immune to all infections written here.

(Medea at Kolchis, Duncan, 1965, pp. 18-19).

To take the journey and quest (long the preserve of the male hero) as the theme of a discussion of women's psychology and Jungian theory might seem a perversely regressive approach. Such was my own reaction when the idea first presented itself - so much so that it was promptly dismissed and ignored for a good long time. But it resurfaced, recurred, re-emerged, until I began to include just hints and allusions here and there. Ever so gradually it took over, refocussed and reshaped, until I finally gave in. After all, I thought, all sorts of other wonderful concepts, ideas, stories, have been reclaimed from their androcentric proclivities and turned to valuable service in women's theorisings. So, why not this archetypally masculine narrative as well? At least check it out ... wander through the territory ... explore ... wrestle ... discover ... and, against all odds, maybe even bring back a boon, or two ...
Certainly, the narrative of the hero’s quest has lost none of its popularity in the Western cultural tradition. The theme recurs in the tenuous threads of plot which string together the breathtaking action sequences in modern adventure movies, through to the entirely cerebral struggles for self-enlightenment in modern literary works. And there are, refreshingly, increasing numbers of female equivalents as well. Nor has there been a decline in the interest in real, live, heroes (admittedly mostly male). Politicians, scientists, entertainers, entrepreneurs, sportspeople are all elevated to mythological hero status; they are feted, imitated and scrutinised relentlessly. That they are regularly subjected to “demythologising” only reinforces the importance of heroes in the Western cultural tradition. Whether they are candidates for secular or religious canonisation, their worthiness is rigorously tested, to determine whether their foibles and flaws render them engagingly human (hence even more heroic), or irredeemably tainted (so, unworthy of reverence). In recent times Albert Schweitzer, Marie Curie, Mahatma Gandhi, John F. Kennedy, Albert Einstein, Nelson Mandela, Princess Diana, Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson, Alan Bond, O. J. Simpson, Mother Theresa ... Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung ... the list seems endless ... have all faced their share of acclaim and censure.

*Journeying and Questing with Myth and Story:*

The *process* of writing an academic thesis fits very easily with the metaphor of a quest. First there is the broad search for the topic, then the extended period of research with all its setbacks and successes, resulting in the attainment of the interim goal – the data, the answers. The final goal varies, however, depending on the individual. It may indeed be the research goal, or the completed thesis, the degree awarded, the subsequent employment, the personal satisfaction, or a combination. But in all cases it can be described figuratively as a journey or quest, or in more heroic language, as ... “a
separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return." (Campbell, 1953, p. 35). For this thesis though I want to extend the metaphor explicitly into both the process and content of the thesis, so that it becomes the story of a quest. Like any such story it is not only the destination which is important; all the adventures along the way are an integral part of the narrative. The adventures will be told as semi-narratives, specifically as encounters with mythical figures from the Classical Greek tradition. On this particular quest to discover more about gender constructions in modern Western society, I will describe encounters with the heroes Jason and Oedipus, with Amazons, with the lovers Eros and Psyche, and with Demeter and her daughter Persephone. Then finally with a shift in cultural focus, there will be some references to Christ as hero and symbol of the self.

The metaphor of a journey of exploration into unknown territory is borrowed from the fiction writer Ursula Le Guin (1989) who, like many other writers, says she discovers the people and places of her novels; she terms herself an explorer not an engineer. Perhaps it is disingenuous to claim, at the beginning of a thesis which has been edited and revised, that it represents a process of discovery, the outcomes of which the author is as yet unaware. Such feigned naivety echoes the mythic hero Jason, whose quest I discuss below, and so prefigures nicely the use of myth as exploration of anomalous psychological features. The thesis is more accurately the record of the quest, but since narrative and story are particular concerns in the thesis, this record will be told as a story, rather than as a report, so breaks with the conventions of language and form usually employed in an academic thesis.

But what is the nature of this particular quest, my quest? It began with my fairly typical frustrations, as a woman, with a continuing androcentric bias in much psychological theorising, and my consequent search for possible
alternatives. Attracted to Jungian archetypal theory, I was puzzled that, where many feminists were able to reach beyond the chauvinism of Freud to find value in his theories, fewer feminists seemed prepared to accept the same reappraisal of Jung's work. Yet to me his broad-ranging theories seemed to offer even greater scope for reinterpretations. In any case, like most Jungians, I have always been captivated by a good story. It is not just that stories and myths are entertaining, they also provide a uniquely flexible form of psychological exploration.

As story tellers have known, probably since pre-literate times, and as narrative psychologists have been demonstrating, especially in the therapeutic setting, a good story can elucidate without codifying; it describes without having to be prescriptive. The non-prescriptive explanatory power of narratives, supported by the conceptual framework of Jungian archetypal theory, provided me with the necessary tools to attempt an exploration of a more inclusive psychology of women. My aims can be restated metaphorically in terms of the heroic quest. My use of italics, here, and as introduction and conclusion in the following chapters, is a signal to the reader that I am speaking in my personal voice as "quester", rather than as commentator on the quest.

If I want to find this boon for women's psychology, I'd better find out how quests are done, and what I'll need to take with me. Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece is characteristic. How did Jason do it? To what extent did he succeed? Did the Fleece solve all his problems? Since the answer to the last question is "no", and that is the key to the great myths (no easy happy endings), why am I attracted to these tragic stories? What can the tragedy of Oedipus tell me about truth and falsity, about self-deception, about conscious and unconscious motivations - about the dynamics of the psyche?
But these stories are so masculine. What happens when women battle demons? Can Amazons and warrior goddesses provide a new perspective, or are they simply women behaving like men? How else do women quest? Do they, like heroes of popular culture, fight for their families, for those they love? Psyche didn’t choose to undertake the heroic quest; she was forced into exile, isolation, loss (twice in fact, firstly she was offered as a sacrifice, then she was separated from her lover Eros). How did she cope? Was hers a heroic quest? Demeter and Persephone also knew about descent, loss, searching - for them it seemed to go on interminably. Why? Once I have learned all I can from other heroes, how will I recognise my own goal? Will there be treasure I can bring back as my contribution to a psychology of women? Will it be, simply, predictably, “Know thyself”? Is it the self?

Since, as stated above, this is a thesis, not a thriller, I cannot pretend at this point that I do not know the outcome of my search. I have indeed come to the conclusion that self theories are central, probably the key, to a perspective on psychology which is powerfully descriptive, while retaining a respect for the unique being of the individual person. But theories of self are set about by the demons of self-deception. It is notoriously difficult to distinguish the false from the true, the Grail from any number of other attractive drinking vessels.

Of the many demons and monsters setting traps for the incautious hero, the trickiest seems to be the socially sanctioned ideal of individualism, an ideal of autonomy and self-reliance, cleverly disguised as the unique self, but effectively leading the unwary further away from the goal. The demands and blandishments of individualism are exposed for the shams that they are, wherever they are found to be lurking along the way. Paradoxically good stories, well told fictions, provide effective techniques for exposing the deceptions inherent in a very present, but very restrictive ideal.
Instead of attempting to translate the meaning and implications of metaphors and mythic themes into abstract ideas, what I offer here are the musings, connections, associations I have made when speculating on the ways gender is represented in various stories. I also speculate on alternative interpretations. What I do not attempt, because it inevitably fails, is to then refine or reduce any insights or understandings to a set of definitions. The meanings I extract are personal, so they are inevitably value laden, hence neither scientific nor logical, in the strict academic sense. Nonetheless they enable me to explore the assumptions and implications of gender issues, in surprisingly direct and revealing ways.

**Gendered Psychology:**

The orientation adopted in the thesis is specifically to ways the hero’s journey and quest might elucidate issues of gender, particularly in relation to women’s psychology. I must declare myself interested in gender differences and particularly sympathetic to women’s perspectives. I am using “gender” rather than “sex” as a more extensive description of sexual differences - biological sex and sexual orientation are included, but so is the pervasive social education in the behaviours appropriate for females and males; hence it becomes a multi-layered definition. In the same vein I will use “feminine” and “masculine” to distinguish the broader gendered aspects from the biological “female” and “male”. Gender requirements are not absolutely immutable, there are shifting patterns from age to age and across cultures and classes, but although they vary, they still exist in some form or other. Carl Jung (CW 7, §
296ff)* saw the tendency to be preoccupied with gender as normal and inevitable. Jung's theories will be used as the framework for the exposition of gender as it is constructed in late twentieth century Western society (cross cultural differences would provide a fascinating further development, but they are beyond the scope of this particular enterprise).

The point I most want to communicate is that gender is ubiquitous and also central in human interactions, hence a crucial aspect of human psychology. Gender, that is, what it is to be masculine or feminine, influences almost all our interactions with others; with strangers as well as with those we know, even in the most insignificant of encounters. It is unnerving to meet someone whose gender is ambiguous. It doesn't require the exotic presence of a transvestite - the androgynous modern uniform of T-shirt and jeans can be enough to confuse. Nor is it anything to do directly with having to know a person's biological sex or sexual orientation. The problem is that even our most simple social interactions are subtly influenced by gender. What is accepted as friendly, comradely, even good natured collusion between same gender people, can be read as forward, flirtatious or even harassment with someone of the opposite gender. Paradoxically this can have virtually nothing to do with sexual orientation. I am not only referring to conspicuous behaviours which might be labelled politically correct or inappropriate according to their gender particularity, but to the subtle but pervasive treatment and training we receive from birth onwards which transforms our biological sexuality into fully fledged

* When citing the Collected Works of C. G. Jung, the accepted convention of listing the volume number (CW #) and paragraph number (§ #) will be used, e.g. (CW 7, § 296) refers to (Volume 7, paragraph 296).
masculine or feminine behaviours - the development of gender differences which underlie our need to create rules about gender interactions.

Gender requirements shape all aspects of our lives. Such requirements no doubt help us communicate successfully, but they are also notoriously restrictive and unequal, so feminist perspectives have developed as a response. Feminists have been particularly successful this century in making obvious many of the inequalities, even in eliminating a few. But the old habits are resistant, and there have been counter responses. One justified aspect of the backlash is the claim that even in a patriarchy, many men are also seriously oppressed by gender requirements. One aim of this thesis is to take stock of gender, not as some kind of accounting process where praise or blame can be apportioned, but to unravel some of the complexities and paradoxes. My purpose is to explore some aspects of gender constructions and their implications in order to better understand the assumptions of gender politics, patriarchal or feminist. I won't presume, however, to prescribe what conclusions should be drawn by the reader. Any reassessments I arrive at will be speculative, I am seeking new perspectives on gender - such is my quest.

**Myth and Metaphor:**

Myth, as used here, refers to fictional narratives with familiar and enduring themes, which form part of the lasting cultural heritage of most civilisations. Mircea Eliade (1977) extended the definition and purpose of myths (especially creation myths) to revelations about reality. Eliade (1977, p. 17) continued: “Myths reveal the structure of reality, and the multiple modalities of being in the world. That is why they are the exemplary models for human behaviour; they disclose the true stories, concern themselves with the realities.” Hence, myths can also become explanatory devices for describing aspects of human psychology. The application of myth in the thesis is as a particular type of
metaphor employed to elaborate on the meanings and purposes which people typically attribute to their lives. This may seem closer to the role of literary fiction and a far cry from a carefully formulated scientific psychology (in fact, it is), but it must also be remembered that the explanatory power of metaphor is by no means shunned by scientists.

Explanatory analogies, whether as figures of speech or as structural models are routinely used in scientific speculation and explanation (Harré, 1972). To be effective, the analogies obviously must be apposite, and the chosen explanatory example must be sufficiently familiar to the audience to be meaningful. Clumsy or inappropriate analogies simply obfuscate (D. Mixon, 1979). But even in science, sometimes so little of a subject is understood, that theories are advanced initially as creative imaginings, that is, by a series of metaphors, which are subsequently tested empirically (Harré, 1972).

"Metaphor", like "myth", however remains something of a pariah in science, and especially in scientific psychology. As Theodore Sarbin (1986) has demonstrated, the accepted (though often unacknowledged) root metaphor employed in scientific psychology has been that of "mechanism" - necessary for causal explanations, but extremely restrictive when it comes to discussions of meaning and intentionality. That the "mechanism" metaphor persists in psychology is unfortunate but hardly surprising, given its origins in Enlightenment thinking, its correlates in other disciplines and in common sense analogies. Whatever it is (economic, political or social organisation, interpersonal relationship, the human body, the itinerary for the journey), if "it runs like a well oiled machine" we are seduced into feeling secure and in control, believing we know all that we need to know. However, since meaning and intentionality are central concerns for many psychologists, myself included, it is essential that alternative metaphors gain acceptance in psychological
theories. I have opted for human dramas, narratives, myths as more appropriate and more expansive metaphors.

Metaphors are created to serve similar functions to similes - to explain by comparison - but, by claiming that something “is” something else, they have an immediacy and power not carried by the looser simile form, where something is simply “like” something else (Black, 1979). To claim that we treat modern diseases like our ancestors treated their gods has a similar meaning, but greatly reduced impact to Jung’s (CW 13, § 54) statement that: “The gods have become diseases ...”. In addition metaphors are used purposively (Booth, 1979). They might be used to present a truth, or clarify, or explain, but they are also deliberately used to influence, to sway the audience. It is this association with rhetoric which, I suspect, has most tarnished metaphor’s reputation. Yet that accusation is unwarranted, even self-deluding. If we were sufficiently disciplined never to use metaphor, to speak only of observable facts, we would never move beyond trivia. The derogation of “metaphor”, “myth” and “rhetoric” derives from the irony of transferring, metaphorically, onto the terms themselves, the failed uses to which they have been put. It is inappropriate use which renders metaphor an obfuscation, myth an untruth, and rhetoric a lie.

I will enthusiastically turn to my advantage myth, metaphor and rhetoric, as explanatory devices throughout the thesis. They will work, in as far as the myths and stories are convincing, the metaphors appropriate, and the rhetoric well-grounded. For any story or myth to ring true, it needs to have a basis in reality - the “reality” may be an invented one, but it must be consistent, as writers of fiction are well aware (Gardner, 1977; Le Guin, 1989).

If then, myths are such good metaphors for human experience, why interpret and explain them further? Why not let them stand? I am not interested in the universal application of a single mythic theme to all human
psychology. By assuming that the totality of meaning had been captured, that
the truth had been discovered, the unfortunate result would be a prescriptive
formula which would reduce and petrify both the myth and the underlying form
(archetype) it represents. It might also be just a tad presumptuous. What I am
attempting, then, is exploration, more than explanation. James Hillman (1977)
warned against reducing archetypal forms to ready templates for living,
attempting to find the single, correct myth to live by. Applying myths as
recipes reduces them to yet another form of pop psychology. The task is to
tread the narrow path between the claim of absolute truth, and the shifting
fiction of myth. The surest way is to avoid reducing myth to semantics, or in
Jungian terms, to avoid assuming one has captured the essence, the pure
archetype (Jungian terms are defined more fully below). The viable alternative
is to treat myth as myth does, that is, treat it as a living thing. Individual myths
have their own lives, histories, cultural interactions, and especially
reincarnations at different times and in different contexts. In Robert Duncan’s
(1985, p. 13) terms: “The surety of the myth for the poet has such force that it
operates as a primary reality in itself, having volition.”

A brief digression is necessary to locate fairy stories in the discussion of
myth and metaphor. The term “fairy story” has acquired the connotation of
‘moral tale, suitable for children’ over the past century or so. This narrow and
rather degraded status is to be much regretted, as both C. S. Lewis (1982) and J.
R. R. Tolkien (1975) have so eloquently argued. In creating their own fairy
stories, they have each done much to redeem the form as a folk tale equivalent
of myth. Yet Rollo May (1991) is justified in claiming that the association of
fairy story with moral allegory remains. Since there is a clear, unsubtle,
didactic purpose to the familiar fairy stories of the Western tradition, a
considerable effort is required to disentangle the story from the moral, in order
to explore the themes for their psychological interest. Much more usual are retellings which promote current political or moral messages, as is the case with Barbara Walker's (1996) *Feminist Fairy Tales*. Consequently (while acknowledging that fairy stories are another valid form of metaphorical explanation, very much akin to myth) for purposes of economy, Greek myths will be used throughout the thesis, especially profitable, given their already rich history in Jungian writings. So saying, however, it is necessary to make the further qualification that myth and fairy story are, at heart, not all that different, as is evidenced in the Psyche and Eros myth, (discussed in chapter four), taken from a novel by the second century Roman author, Lucius Apuleius (trans. 1993). It might just as appropriately be called a fairy tale (even to the "happily ever after" ending), except that it does not carry the burden of a moral precept. It was told in the novel to distract and entertain, not to edify.

Popular culture has also reduced mythic forms, especially the hero myth, to formulaic patterns - the young male hero, for example, overcoming impossible odds to save his loved ones, so that they might all live happily ever after. Such stories undoubtedly can make for good entertainment, but they are not "true" or "real" in the sense discussed above. It probably would matter very little, except that the formulaic "false" hero myth fits uncannily well with the pervasive Western ideal of individualism, promoting as it does, autonomous action and especially control over both self and environment.

The myths I will use have been deliberately chosen for their gender content. I have also chosen other stories, usually contemporary, selected for their relation to gender and to the myths, but beyond that they are meant to provide neither a systematic nor comprehensive overview; they are simply my idiosyncratic preferences. Although I will be focusing on the theme of the hero’s journey and quest, I acknowledge that there are other major themes like
love and redemption, themes which are often intertwined. This biased sample paradoxically supports, rather than detracts from, my belief in the power of stories. Representations of gender are multifarious, in fact almost all stories, mythical or otherwise, have gendered characters. I have simply chosen a few which appeal to me personally and also happen to reflect the chosen theme, that is, the theme of the hero's journey and quest.

*Psychology as Narrative:*

People typically make sense of life by inventing and developing stories, narratives. This tendency comes from a combination of self-conscious reflexivity and the sense of time passing: there is a connecting of past and future as people look for a chronological thread which draws past events and experiences together with current circumstances and predictions about the future into a meaningful narrative. In short, people ascribe meaning or sense to their experiences by linking them together as the elements in a story in which the story teller is the leading player, the hero.

The centrality of narrative to human understanding, and its value as explanatory psychology, have been acknowledged and explored in other areas of psychology as well as within the Jungian framework. For instance in discussing social psychology and ultimately psychology generally, Theodore Sarbin (1986, 1997) stressed the fundamental importance of narrative, of story-telling, to the process of making sense of human behaviour. The social philosophy of Rom Harré (1983), especially his work into the linguistic characteristics of narrative, is of seminal interest to social constructionist psychologists. McAdams (1988) claimed that creating and elaborating on narratives and stories are the ways people find meaning in their lives. Both the accuracy and the appropriateness of personal narratives is central to psychotherapy, but Miller Mair (1989) has argued that this way of explaining
the therapeutic relationship needs to be extended to a more general appreciation of the ways in which people use conversation to create their realities. Jerome Bruner (1990, p. 19) stated that psychology should concern itself with meaning, that meaning is culturally based, and that narrative provides the most successful form of interpretation for “situated action”.

To give narrator as “hero” its full meaning, it is necessary to also ascribe agency and choices, intention and purpose, to the player. It does not, indeed cannot, be the invincible heroism of many popular adventure stories; real life just isn’t like that. Rather, it has to do with the courageous heroism of the dogged struggle against difficult, often superior, odds (May, 1976). I am deliberately skirting the psycho-philosophical arguments about the status of human agency or about justifications for the romantic ideal of self as hero. I am simply making a pragmatic assertion that, in the privacy of one’s own mind, when one reflects on past experiences and future goals, one’s life story tends to take the form of a narrative, very often in the form of a journey or quest, and usually with oneself as hero.

As C. S. Lewis (1988) has pointed out however, the experiences themselves and their subsequent interpretation happen in two distinct modes of consciousness. While we are experiencing the event (Lewis uses the example of a toothache) we are fully involved in and preoccupied with the event itself. This, said Lewis, is the “reality” aspect, the thing itself. But once we begin to reflect on the toothache, what it means to experience pain, how we might describe it, we switch to the self-reflective consciousness I referred to above. In the “thinking about” we are inevitably distanced from the thing itself. This alternative consciousness, said Lewis, creates the “truth” aspect. This is how we establish what the experience, the “reality” means.
The unfortunate aspect of this process of awareness is that it is all but impossible to experience the two forms, the experience of "reality" and the reflection on "truth" (the meaning) simultaneously.

Of this tragic dilemma myth is the partial solution. In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction. (Lewis, 1988, pp. 40-41)

This interpretation seems to be implicit in Eliade's (1977, p. 17) statement quoted above: "... [myths] disclose true stories, concern themselves with realities." Broadly speaking myths are included among traditional fictional stories in which classic themes, such as the quest, love stories, revenge stories, redemption tales and creation stories, are given their unique details of plot and character within a specific social context, and tend to pass into the folk history of a given culture. Thus, the journey and quest take a bewildering variety of forms even within a single cultural tradition. For Ulysses it is a journey home, but it is the experiences along the way which are of prime concern. For Jason too the adventures on the journey are important, but like Parsifal seeking the Grail, Jason is driven as well by the quest for the goal, the Golden Fleece. Similarly, the heroes vary in character, Ulysses and Jason wily and opportunistic, Heracles honest and sturdy, Parsifal inept, naive but true. Yet the journey and hero’s quest are both the theme and the focus for the central character in each case. None of the heroes, incidentally, achieve their goals single-handedly. As leaders, Ulysses and Jason, and as central players, Heracles and Parsifal, are reliant on the assistance of many other characters, but again it is characteristic of the Western story-telling style that not only is there a chronological theme but also a central character, as hero.

As I said above, this mirrors our accounts of our personal encounters with the vicissitudes of living. By couching a personal story in classic theme, or by
allowing oneself to be drawn into a well-told story, there can be a degree of overlap between experience and reflection. Then as Lewis (1988) suggested, even when the reflection aspect takes over, as is the case in writing this thesis, the elements of the myth remain as a rich ground for further meaning making. The discoveries and conclusions I propose here remain my personal interpretations of the stories I use; other people will have their own particular musings and arrive at their own conclusions. This is precisely what makes the traditions of myth and story-telling so rich.

**Jungian Theory as Framework:**

Jung (CW 9i) claimed it was not only through familiarity that the themes of myths have such power to engage and move. For him they are manifestations of archetypal forms, that is, culturally and historically specific representations of pre-existing abstract forms, recognised by a psychological process something akin to a race memory which Jung termed the “collective unconscious”.

Mythology is not arbitrary story-telling, the forms or essences which the myth incorporates are real, living entities (CW 11, § 648); the archetypal forms determine the nature of the story as much as the story (or story-teller) determines them. Jung’s theory of archetypes is elaborated in the following chapters, and there is a brief glossary of Jungian terms in Appendix 1.

It is interesting that Lewis (1982, p. 94) claimed that Jung’s contributions in this area were limited because, “Jung, who went furthest, seems to me to produce as his explanation one more myth which affects us in the same way as the rest.” Using Lewis’s own definition cited above, even if all Jung has done is to deliver us another myth, if it is a successful myth, a “true” account, it should go some considerable way in helping to draw together the threads of experience and meaning. Moreover, the use of “myth” or “narrative” as the explanatory metaphor for Jung’s enterprise fits exactly with what I am
attempting in the thesis, namely, an acknowledgment of the story as a favoured (and successful) form of explanations of human actions.

The advantage of Jung’s theory of archetypes in the application of stories to psychology is in the organising framework it offers. Stories come in infinite variety, but there are recurring themes, plots and character types - general categories - just as there are in any form of classification. Archetypal forms provide the underlying broad categorisations, which are typically represented in human interactions with terms such as “Mother”, “Father”, “Child”, “Self”, “Masculine” and “Feminine”. Jung stated:

Archetypes are typical modes of apprehension, and wherever we meet with uniform and regularly recurring modes of apprehension we are dealing with an archetype, no matter whether its mythological character is recognised or not [Jung’s italics]. (CW 8, § 280).

People tend not to encounter or recognise them as purely abstract forms however, but as images, or characters, which have meaning and content specific to a particular cultural heritage: what are recognised are archetypal images, rather than the abstract form or essence. It is more effective, though, to demonstrate, rather than to argue for, the usefulness of archetypes in explaining gender, and the archetypes of the masculine, the feminine and the Self will be explored to that end. Stories provide the means by which the archetypal themes are given context and made explicit, hence my choice of the quest metaphor for the construction of the thesis.

Jung’s is a psychodynamic theory, that is, it proposes an interaction between conscious and unconscious processes, thus providing a means of explaining the complexities, confusions and especially the paradoxes of our accounts of ourselves and our world (CW 8). Psychodynamic theory provides an account of the persistent attraction of habits of understanding, including
understandings of gender and such social ideals as individualism. In the psychodynamic model of psyche there is a continual interaction between conscious and unconscious processes. What is apparently forgotten or repressed still impacts on consciousness in the form of desires, urges, conflicts, and as projections (attributing one's own characteristics to another). In Jung's particular psychodynamic model there is the added aspect of a collective unconscious, consisting of shared social and cultural images and meanings and especially of archetypal meanings. The unconscious, for Jung, is a powerful influence in the psyche, providing its own meanings and intentions. Unlike the unconscious in Freudian theory, it is not inherently dangerous; it can be a source of considerable understanding and personal power. Psychodynamic theory will be discussed further in chapter two.

Some specific archetypal forms are proposed by Jung (CW 7) as organising principles for the human psyche; they are the Persona or mask (the public presentation of the individual), the Shadow (the hidden or unrecognised side), the Anima and Animus (the contrasexual aspects of the psyche) and the Self (a combination of personal and transpersonal identity). Although primarily unconscious, such archetypal forms will shape and influence the personality, but if they are explored consciously they can provide an added wealth of possibilities. The anima and animus concept, or the notion that people have psychological qualities usually associated with the opposite sex, partly realised or latent in their personalities, is particularly useful in exploring gender requirements and differences. For instance the masculine and feminine as traditional images are linked with specific qualities, especially when associated with the opposite sex. The masculine is associated with strength, light, intellect, logic, aggression, and the feminine with gentleness, the dark, emotions, irrationality, nurturance. The lists could go on interminably,
highlighting the habituation people have developed to these traditions and the resulting stereotyping which is so frustrating.

Why is there a need at all, though, to label qualities as masculine or feminine? The short answer is that we have and we do. But the notions of masculine and feminine and their contrasexual aspects, anima (men's images of the feminine associated with their own latent "feminine" aspects) and animus (women's latent "masculine" qualities), are more than labels for particular lists. The qualities associated with each tend to be constellated into images of something, or someone, of a male or female character. The images take on their own lives, become entities in their own right, something not captured by an abstract list of qualities. It is when the images of the feminine or masculine are conjured up as specific women or men, and the characters are given settings and stories, that the hold of the feminine and masculine, the ubiquity and the inexorability of the gender distinctions, become apparent.

Stories are also central to understanding archetypes. Jung (CW 9i, § 271) said the best that can be done is to speculate about the nature of the abstract archetypal forms themselves, but it is possible to learn much about them tangentially through the social and cultural traditions represented in the heritage of stories belonging to particular societies. Western society, on which I will be concentrating, owes much to the Classical tradition. Greek and Roman Classical studies were a standard part of a good education until the last generation or so. Since Jung and Freud were educated in that tradition they both made use of it in their theorising. Thanks to Freud, the Oedipus myth has become an intrinsic part of modern culture, even if the details of Oedipus's story are often hazy. Jung used Greek mythology extensively, and for economy I will do the same. Though less obvious now, the effects of the Classical heritage linger still, as I will show with reference to other more modern stories.
in literature, poetry, drama and films. The themes of the Greek myths persist in modern stories, and indeed some are explicitly retold in modern adaptations.

Adventure stories of a hero's journey to distant and strange places, often to find and bring back a specific treasure, are common in the Western tradition. The Greek myths of Ulysses and Jason, the Biblical Exodus, stories of the Holy Grail, and modern film and television adventures like those of Indiana Jones, Luke Starwalker and the Star Trek crews all fit the theme perfectly. In psychological terms the journey or quest is described as a journey of self-knowledge or self discovery. In specifically Jungian terms it is the quest for the archetypal Self. My particular quest here is a search for knowledge of the feminine, not the feminine as typically portrayed in many adventure stories - the damsel in distress, the femme fatale, the witch - but the woman as hero, as the subject or principal character of the story.

Outline; The Itinerary:

In my quest to discover more about the feminine, I will use encounters with various heroes to explore ways their particular quests might shed light on the feminine and women's psychology. Along with the exploration of the archetypal themes, there will be reassessments of Jung's definitions and explanations of the archetypes, as I attempt to better describe and differentiate the marginalised and shadowy feminine. In order to initially set the groundwork for the Jungian perspective however, I will demonstrate below the mythopoetic technique without attempting to reassess Jung's work at the same time; the proposed adjustments will come in later chapters. Hence I will begin below with reflections on the hero story, with particular reference to Jason and Medea, showing both how Jung's technique works and how classic images of the masculine and feminine (reduced in some popular versions to diminished
and restrictive stereotypes) are also recreated as complex characters in contemporary stories such as in the play *Medea at Kolchis* (Duncan, 1965).

From there, in chapter two, the journey moves only a short distance to Thebes and the Oedipus myth, another hero story, but this time that of a reluctant, tragic hero. This enables the introduction of the implications of a psychodynamic (conscious/unconscious) perspective on psyche - the association of the Oedipus story with Freudian psychoanalysis makes the choice almost inevitable. Moreover personality theories, psychodynamic theories included, have usually been extrapolated from men’s psychological experiences. The use of a traditional male hero like Oedipus to illustrate the psychodynamic process helps make explicit the ways the process is typically oriented towards androcentric social ideals and preferences. Still, in each of these cases male heroes are given centre stage, so it is necessary to develop and expand on the presence of the feminine (this is done in the following chapters).

Amazons (feminists are sometimes referred to as Amazons) seem to offer such an alternative. Chapter three pursues this idea, associating different feminist orientations with different types of fighting women. Some new perspectives emerge, particularly highlighting varieties of feminist theorising. But, just as the familiar stories of Amazons are told as stories of women fighting with or against men, that is, encounters of fighting women with patriarchal societies, feminisms need to be continually alert to the possibility of simply becoming a mirror image of the patriarchal values they set out to question. The marginalisation of the feminine in the hero and Amazon stories (fighting women are definitely atypical in the Western tradition) can be further elaborated by making full use of the anima aspect of the archetypal feminine. Jung (*CW* 7, § 328) defined anima exclusively as men’s images of the feminine, and as such it means women are defined as companions to men
(mothers, lovers, companions) offering support, or as their negative counterparts (witches, Amazons, whores). But in a decidedly patriarchal society it is not only men who inherit such images of the feminine; women too are influenced by them through the collective social preferences. Like James Hillman (1985) then, I propose that anima needs to be reinterpreted as a collective archetype, influencing both women and men, inasmuch as women are also heirs to the predominant patriarchal or masculine consciousness of the Western tradition. Hence modern Western women are more familiar with idealised aspects of the masculine and less familiar with unmediated experiences of the archetypal feminine, than is implied in a notion of simple complementary, balanced contra-sexuality, where men and masculine or women and feminine tend to be conflated. My suggestion is that the notions of archetypal masculine and feminine can help elucidate ways in which traditional, often stereotypical, understandings of gender are an intrinsic part of the preferences and ideals espoused by the shared or collective Western consciousness.

Having encountered stories of men as heroes, with women as their companions in some form or other, then Amazons as possible female counterparts, I move on, in chapter four, to a closer investigation of women and men relating to each other within the context of the Psyche and Eros myth. The redefinition of anima is continued and is accompanied by a redefinition of animus. Jung (CW 7) was often deprecating in his descriptions of animus, in comparison to his enthusiastic and lyrical descriptions of anima. In basic and abstract terms, he labelled the masculine as Logos (word, spirit, intellect) and the feminine as Eros (relatedness, emotionality, nurturance). Although he strongly advocated a balance of the two principles in the psyches of both men and women, he still tended to favour the Logos aspect. By working with the
Psyche and Eros myth, I explore the implications of reclaiming Eros as part of
the masculine principle, based on the very obvious fact that Eros is a male god.
Correspondingly, Psyche (soul or anima) develops from the obliging,
frightened girl into a hero, (even if reluctant) in her own right, as she battles to
regain her lover Eros. The masculine for both men and women then itself
becomes a balance of Logos and Eros. In the process it might even be possible
to reclaim more for Logos as well. In its modern manifestations Logos has
been progressively diminished to represent an increasingly narrow range of
values which are purely intellectual and rational.

The myth of Demeter and Persephone provides an ideal setting for an
exploration of women relating to women, in chapter five. Theirs is a rare story
of women in a self-contained relationship from which the male characters are
very much marginalised. It concerns the core female gender roles of mother,
daughter and wife, but takes as subject, or agent, the woman in those roles.
Demeter as mother provides perspectives on the mother as subject, or central
character. Also uncharacteristically, the myth is cyclical, where most Western
myths are linear stories with a clear beginning, middle and end. It is a myth of
loss and recovery, with an uncertain outcome as to who is mother and who
daughter. Nonetheless the Demeter/Persephone story is no idyll, no easy
answer to rediscovering a comfortable and satisfying version of the feminine.
The sense of loss in the broken mother/daughter relationship is painfully
genuine and the reunion is only possible after considerable compromise and
readjustment.

Feminine and masculine, anima and animus all impact on the psyches of
both women and men, specifically on the individual’s sense of self. On a
psychological journey of self discovery, this would seem to be the goal, the
Grail. But how to know if it is real or illusion? Jung’s theory of Self provides
useful insights in this context, and is explored in chapter six. "Self-concept" and related terms usually refer to conscious self-perceptions, however in a psychodynamic model of psyche it is necessary to take account of unconscious processes as well. Jung’s theory proposes the notion of Self as an archetype. Self in this system is an unconscious ideal form towards which the psyche is drawn; hence it is the goal of the quest. The major difficulty is to determine the nature of the archetypal Self, to distinguish between genuinely expansive possibilities of self-discovery and the restrictions of imposed social ideals. Inevitably, attempts to describe the Self are influenced by the particular social traditions and ideals which I have equated with individualism.

By “individualism” I am referring to an ideal still much in vogue in the West. The individualist is someone who professes a profound respect for personal freedom and autonomy; someone who is capable, dependable, logical and especially, rational. For the individualist, the individual human is primary, so is accorded precedence over community, society and the natural world. Although incorporating admirable qualities, as an ideal, individualism is an oddly contradictory concept. Not only does the ideal set the individual against society - other individuals - but even worse, as a socially sanctioned ideal, it proposes a formula for individual development which is anything but individual (in the sense of individual differences).

Rationality too, as used here, requires a brief comment. Rationality, as applied to logical, analytical argument, is not being criticised. It is when rationality is transferred to the definition of ideal human (as opposed to ideal argument) that it becomes problematical. The ideal is apotheosised in the Man of Reason (Lloyd, 1984). Typically, rationality is set against emotionality. The social requirement that excessive displays of emotion be curbed has progressively narrowed until virtue is found in controlling all emotion. That it
is neither possible nor desirable to be a human being without feeling seems to have slipped past logical arguments advocating the ideal of the rational individualist.

Jung was as much prey to these influences as anyone, but that is not to discredit the utility of his theory, only to comment on some of his interpretations. My chapter on individualism and the self investigates the degree to which individualism is fundamental to Western society and as such continues to promote restrictive, patriarchal ideals. This is the illusion, not the goal, but dangerous because it is convincing and seductive. Following on from Jung’s own choice of Christ as an image of the Self, I develop some other implications of such a masculine heroic ideal to a woman’s sense of self. The combined difficulties of a restricted gendered ideal and the risk of inflation, of imagining oneself a god, show the metaphor of Christ as Self to be both useful in explaining the kinds of ideals and goals we deem culturally appropriate, and at the same time how they can lead us astray.

**In Summary; The Guideposts:**

The thesis has four central interwoven themes, all relating to a psychology of women. The themes are demonstrations of, firstly, stories as psychology; secondly, the usefulness of Jungian theory as framework; thirdly, the ubiquity and persistence of gender differences; and fourthly, the reclaiming of the hero’s quest from its appropriation by the young male hero. Stories are typically employed by lay people as explanations of life events. But unfortunately, too often stories are underestimated by psychologists overly reliant on the credibility of technical terminologies. Stories make good psychology; they describe without being prescriptive. In order to affirm story as psychology, Jungian theory (especially the concepts of psychodynamic psyche, the
collective unconscious and the archetypes of the feminine, the masculine and
the Self) is presented as an underlying rationale.

Specific gender requirements may vary with time and context, but the
subscription to gender differences does seem to be universal. Inappropriate as
some gender requirements may seem, they are also infuriatingly persistent;
neither goodwill nor legislation can easily dispose of them. Change is gradual -
often painfully slow. Recognition of the underlying implications of, and
unconscious attachments to gender habits are necessary first steps. It is towards
this last goal that I am directing the thesis. Since the whole point of the
approach is to open up new possibilities of interpretation, by side-stepping the
restrictions of logical, scientific analysis, the language and form of the thesis
are meant to reflect the chosen alternative approach. I have reached my
(tentative) interpretations and conclusions by doing what I am advocating, that
is, by using stories to discover connections and insights. Nonetheless, for
clarity of communication (and to fulfil the requirements of an academic thesis)
the general tone of the recorded account is, of necessity, more ordered and
sober than the free-wheeling but often fractured discovery process itself. In an
attempt to capture at least some of the feeling of the exploration stage however,
there will be (in italics), as transition passages at the beginning and end of the
following chapters, reflections on anima, soul-searchings. They are looser, less
structured and more personal commentaries, an intermediate stage of
expression between the barely intelligible, stream-of-consciousness of
exploration, and the formal record comprising the body of the thesis. Having
made my foray into the lands of heroes and quests, I am now returned and
telling my tale of what I saw and learned along the way.
Jason and the Hazards of Being a Hero:

At this point it is time to explore in a little more detail the ways in which a myth can be used to elucidate gender. Obviously I have chosen the hero theme as it relates directly to the theme of a quest, but also it presents images of the masculine and feminine familiar to, and dramatises ideals promoted by, Western patriarchal society. The particular myth I will use at this point is the Jason and Medea story. Familiar and classic images of gender make it easy to demonstrate the Jungian approach, particularly the way Jung proposed anima and animus are manifested. This will provide a foundation on which the more complex descriptions of gender and modifications to Jungian theory can be developed later.

If asked about Jason and the Golden Fleece, a typical contemporary response would likely be some reference to Jason and the Argonauts, the young hero and his enthusiastic friends sailing away on an adventurous voyage to a far land, where they managed to capture the magical Fleece. No doubt there are still many older Australians who have affectionate memories of their membership in the ABC radio children’s program, the “Argonauts Club”. The daily exhortation to “Row Argonauts, row!” was a direct appeal to the heroic - to try hard and to achieve, to shine among one’s peers. The same simple heroic theme is presented in popular adventure movies, from the Star Wars and Indiana Jones series to Mad Max and The Last Action Hero. It is impossible to deny their popularity as escapist entertainment, but the appeal relies on uncomplicated extremes in character between hero and enemy and equally clear outcomes with the hero triumphant.

For this exercise I need something less stereotyped, and the details of the Greek myth of Jason and Medea provide just that. Jason, as hero, was certainly energetic and brave, and Medea, his companion and wife, certainly loved him,
but between them they perpetrated appalling crimes in the process of obtaining (stealing) the Fleece. Neither were the other protagonists in the story conspicuously more honourable. I am interested in the less savoury versions for their psychological content. The deeds and consequent tragedies represented are excessive, larger than life, and so are as unreal as the simpler modern hero stories, yet they manage to dramatise familiar human dilemmas and consequently evoke very real human emotions.

Robert Graves (1992) pointed out that the tests or quests undertaken by Jason are typical marriage trials in which the suitor must accomplish seemingly impossible tasks to win the king’s daughter and the throne. However at no point is Jason’s primary purpose love and companionship; any attachment he develops for Medea derives from her usefulness to his main goal. As told by Graves (1992), Jason’s father Aeson, had been usurped as king of Iolcus by his half-brother Pelias, who ensured his accession by killing all relatives except Aeson and his wife, both imprisoned. But the infant Jason was smuggled away, and like Oedipus he grew up in exile. Pelias had been given an oracular warning to beware a man in only one sandal, and of course that is how he encountered and recognised the young man, Jason. Jason demanded Pelias’s abdication, but Pelias dissembled by promising the throne if Jason could rid his country of a curse. Jason was to obtain the Golden Fleece, which was strung in an oak tree, guarded by an ever wakeful, immortal dragon, in the distant kingdom of Colchis: Pelias felt secure in the belief that Jason would fail.

Jason tackled the seemingly impossible task with gusto, commissioning Argos to build a large ship, and engaging the services of the greatest hero-warriors of the time, including Argos, Heracles, Castor, Orpheus and a sole female warrior, Atalanta. The journey to Colchis was eventful, with battles, natural and supernatural disasters, and a falling out between Jason and Heracles
over a rowing contest. But for the purposes of gender exploration I will concentrate on the story from the encounter between Jason and Medea, the daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis. Medea was a semi-divine sorceress with prodigious powers and a matching, chilling determination. Nonetheless she was by no means invulnerable. Jason was the favourite of the goddesses Hera and Athene who prevailed on Aphrodite to help them assist Jason. Consequently Eros, Aphrodite’s mischievous son (to be encountered again in a later chapter) was bribed to make Medea fall for Jason. “...Eros aimed one of his arrows at Medea, and drove it into her heart, up to the feathers” is the unequivocal way Graves (1992, p. 600) described the intervention.

Enraptured, Medea offered her assistance to Jason, if he would promise to marry her, which he did, no doubt with alacrity. She used her magic to help Jason accomplish the next round of seemingly impossible tasks, set this time by Aeëtes, in return for the Fleece. However, also not expecting Jason’s success, Aeëtes went back on his word, so Jason and Medea used cunning and magic to steal the Fleece. In the ensuing flight from Colchis, Medea’s half-brother, Apsyrtus, was murdered and dismembered by Medea and/or Jason (accounts vary according to Graves, 1992) in order to distract the pursuing King Aeëtes. Even the goddess Circe, Medea’s aunt, was so shocked by such savagery she only reluctantly agreed to purify them (Kerenyi, 1991).

The voyage home was every bit as eventful as the voyage out. Then on their return the Argonauts were informed that Pelias had murdered Jason’s parents and new-born brother, so plans were made to raise an army against Pelias. Once again though Medea intervened with her sorcery, this time to trick Pelias’s daughters into murdering him, in the belief they were preparing him for a magical rejuvenation. After all this Jason chose to relinquish the throne to his cousin, Pelias’s son (and one of the Argonauts) and allowed himself to be
exiled in the firm conviction that he was destined for even greater glories. That is just what happened when Medea, as sole heir, was able to claim the Corinthian throne and so Jason became king. Trouble surfaced again ten years later when Jason, concerned that Medea may have poisoned the previous king, decided to divorce her and marry Glauce, daughter of King Creon of Thebes. A case of a small dose of conscience mixed with considerable opportunism it would seem. According to Graves (1992) Medea did not deny the poisoning, but pointed out that Jason had sworn a lifelong commitment to her, and in addition, it was she who was heir to Corinth, not Jason. Jason remained intransigent, so, feigning acquiescence, Medea sent a particularly gruesome wedding gift of a crown and robe to Glauce. When she put them on, Glauce, her father, many courtiers and some of Medea’s children (the gift bearers) were burned to death.

As portrayed in the play Medea by Euripides, Medea also murdered at least two of her children when Jason deserted her (Kerenyi, 1979). Graves (1992) disputed Euripides’s version, but Kerenyi (1979) made a plea for the aptness of Medea as distracted and despairing wife and mother. She finally acknowledges the dreadfulness of the crimes of which she and Jason are guilty, and she wants to obliterate any future for the family. She says;

I hate you
Children of a hateful mother. I curse you
And your father. Let the whole house crash.

(Medea, Euripides, in Kerenyi, 1979, p. 27).

In a historic sense, as both Graves (1992) and Kerenyi (1979) pointed out, later accounts like Euripides’s, of Medea’s murderous tendencies, may reflect social revulsion towards earlier traditions of human sacrifice. The murder and dismemberment of the brother for example, reflects the theme of the ritual
death and rebirth of the king who is child and/or brother, as well as husband, to the queen; a ritual for the changing seasons. But there are psychological implications as well. What is justifiable action in a crisis? Is retaliation against family enemies somehow more culpable than attacking a foreign enemy? What of connivance and deceit? What to do about other people’s broken promises? This is where stories are so rich; the characters and context breathe life into generalised questions like those above. Jason is certainly every bit as enterprising and brave in a crisis as the basic adventure story records, but he is also cunning, untrustworthy and opportunistic. Medea is an especially dark heroine, a sorceress capable of vicious actions. Somehow, parricide (into which she tricks Pelias’s daughters), and the fratricide and infanticide in which she was directly involved, seem worse, more heartless than other murders. Even though we might accept the ideal that all human life is sacred, we tend to qualify it in various ways, including a consideration of the gender of the perpetrators and their relationships to the victims.

As Kerenyi (1979) suggested, Medea represents, and was worshipped as, the dark aspect of Hera, goddess of the family. Such an association does not enable simple moral judgements about this wayward wife and mother. There is no easy dichotomy between Hera, the devoted wife and mother, contrasted against Medea, the family destroyer. Instead, we find Hera, also captivated by Jason, manipulating Medea to aid Jason’s ambitions. Movie heroes may boast of pure motives, but not many of us in the real world can claim the luxury of such certainties. Versions of the mythologems, or archetypal forms reflecting more complex characterisations provide strong psychological components to which we can relate personally, whereas the simple adventure story versions offer sheer escape at best, an “untrue” story at worst.
Jung's archetypal theory and his belief in the union and balance of opposites suggests that it is precisely through such complex and rounded stories that people are able to better distinguish motives, values, beliefs and meanings. One way to approach the problem systematically, in the Jungian paradigm, is to align the archetypal forms with aspects of the personality. This is how Jung explains complexes and neuroses (CW 7; CW 9i). Take as an example the young man, setting out to make his fortune, or to claim his birthright, an energetic young Jason enthusiastically struggling to attain his Golden Fleece. Unless he pays attention to his capacity for excess (to his Shadow), enthusiasm and skill can slide into ruthlessness and deceit. He can even manage to convince himself that what he does is for worthy principles, for community and especially for family (for Hera). This is anima, the archetype of the idealised feminine, at work. In the glow of self-righteousness the unrecognised shadow side of anima enables him to project onto a woman companion or even onto fate or destiny, the more brutal and desperate moves (the Medea aspects), fortuitous as they may be for the attainment of his goal.

For the young woman counterpart, also heir to the same patriarchal tradition, there is a double choice, liberating or schizoid, depending on the perspective. Obviously she could identify with the female characters, and as I have tended to do here, empathise with Medea's desperate plight. But there is still the Hera/Medea dichotomy to consider. With the best will in the world, Medea cannot be regarded as an ideal hero. Additionally in this perspective, the male characters become animus manifestations. There are the controlling, patriarchal kings/fathers and the captivating young heroes who promise escape from repression and boredom. Ultimately though, the hero's demands are as extreme as the patriarch's, and being spellbound by him also leads to excess.
An alternative interpretation enables the woman to identify with Jason in exactly the same way the man does, the result of a shared masculine, patriarchal attitude to the world (a deliberate identification of the man with female characters happens less easily, given the Western preference for traditional masculine values). As the dominant conscious ideal of personal development, individualism as promoted by patriarchy, and typified in the hero myth, is an ideal shared by both men and women. Whatever constitutes the feminine is relegated to second best, to the less familiar or "other". It is much harder for men to clearly identify the archetype of the feminine for what it is (it is almost always present as the unconscious, mysterious, vague anima) than it is for women to access the dominant masculine consciousness. The implications of this viewpoint and the ramifications for anima and animus not being the exclusive preserves of men and women respectively, will be taken up in more detail in later chapters. The two alternatives (identifying with either the female or the male archetype) give women a broader scope, less gender-bound, of role models and ideals, liberating in many ways. The equal rights for women promoted by liberal feminists reflect the identification with the valued masculine ideals. However it can also be alienating for the woman, since both the conscious male ideals and the vague, shadowy, feminine anima are equally foreign, remote from her actual experience of herself as a woman. Of course, to pursue the gender implications fully, it has to be acknowledged that the appeal of ideals in reality is liberating for only a small number of males as well. Most remain locked into habits of subjecting others and being subjected themselves in turn, but very few get to be the kings.

Many of these themes, and others I discuss later in the thesis, are dramatised in a modern context in Robert Duncan's (1965) play, Medea at Kolchis. As with all fine literature, the themes are introduced, demonstrated,
hinted at with art and precision, without descending into pedantry. The play is set in 1904; it is fate that the characters happen to have mythic names. A young poet, Jason, has arrived to meet, and to claim his creative inheritance from the old poet, Arthur. The doctor, Boris, acts as liaison between Jason and Arthur's family. Arthur lives with his sister Edna, and his daughter Medea, in the care of Garrow, the housekeeper and Arthur's mistress. Arthur's most treasured possession is his symbolic fleece. Along with references to the Jason myth, there are reflections from Arthurian legend through Arthur; a medieval association of the Golden Fleece with Christ as the Lamb; references to Elizabethan, Restoration and Chekovian drama; even a passing reference to Sleeping Beauty. Given the Victorian Pre-Raphaelite overtones of the setting in 1904, Duncan has ensured a complex continuity of history and literary allusion, an interweaving of myths, stories and contexts which continue to deliver new treasures after many readings. The action of the play too has a symbolic quality, leaving the audience to decide which scenes are "real" and which "dreams". There are for instance two versions of Arthur's death - a physical attack (a blow or "strike") by Medea, but also strokes - medical paralysis - which Garrow says caused his death at midnight. The play is a particularly rich example of the ways myths can be re-worked to speak to a contemporary audience. As with my preoccupations here, entertaining as the play is, it is not an escapist hero narrative, but rather, explores both the glories and the hazards of escape into fantasy. It self-reflexively looks at role playing, at being an actor.

*Medea At Kolchis* yields some excellent examples of animus and anima personifications. Garrow explains anima projections beautifully, when she says "[m]en who take the earth as their mother, white flowers as their girls, images to wive - what do they know of women?" (Duncan, 1965, p. 25). As heroes,
Arthur and his heir apparent, Jason, can be interpreted as representations of the male psyche, in which case the female characters can be seen as anima manifestations. Edna and Medea are defined by their relationships to Arthur and Jason. Edna a fey, other-worldly creature, not only shares her brother's fantasy world, but breathes life into it and draws life from it, to the extent that she no longer has a reason to survive after Arthur's death. Medea, like her namesake, comes into full life, womanhood, and a fury of desire, as the facilitator of Jason's quest. She is especially useful, not just because of her power and ruthlessness, but also psychologically, because Jason can claim innocence by projecting blame onto her. He proclaims his shock at the proposed attack on her father:

JASON: I can't. It is unnatural. Why he is your father! Don't you see he is a splendid old man? He is greater than I ...

MEDEA: Oh! I'll strike with your hand myself. (Duncan, 1965, p. 41). But he later proceeds to comfort her, knowing she has ensured his accession to Arthur's "throne", while distancing himself from the guilt of her crime.

Garrow, by contrast is very down to earth, an earthy woman. She is the wise old crone, observant, irreverent, often crass. She is a mother, or grandmother figure, even though not in the biological sense; she has played the carer/mother role for Arthur, Edna and Medea, as well as lover to Arthur. Yet she is not confined by the roles, not in the least overawed by the poet's creative genius, Edna's vagaries or even Medea's explosive outbursts. She is too old or too wise to be bothered with affectations. Although as a housekeeper, she has least social prestige of the characters, she is psychologically the most independent.

I referred to Garrow as a mother figure, and "mother" is one of four female types proposed by Toni Wolff, an associate of Jung (Ulanov, 1971). The other
three are Amazon, Hetera (companion) and Median Woman (spiritual guide). Wolff developed these four types as the basis of a psychology of women, but like Demaris Wehr (1988), I see them rather as anima types, descriptive of the various roles women play in men’s lives. That Wolff saw them as women’s psychological types per se clearly demonstrates the extent to which women’s psychology has been defined in terms of its relationship to men and masculine psychology. Paradoxically there is further support here for Jung’s (CW 7) assertion of the telling influence of anima images in the fact that they could be proposed as suitable types for women’s psychological development.

In line with Wolff’s categories, Garrow does represent many of the practical aspects of the “mother”, but she is more as well, both psychologically and also as the “wool gathering” commentator on the action of the play (Duncan, 1965, p. ii). Hence she seems more differentiated from the other characters. Medea by contrast comes alive, is galvanised into action with Jason’s arrival.

Oh! I shall reach the Moon itself in this.

I shall emit a cry that will ring in the ears of men as this cry rings in all the damnd cells of my unbroken body. (Duncan, 1965, p. 30).

With Jason as her principal focus, she weaves spells to capture his affections, and then attacks her father to demonstrate her commitment. She is both Hetera and Amazon, an “animating” lover and intimidating adversary. Edna, drifting in her Arthurian fairy world, is the Median Woman, offering inspiration in the world of the imagination, but ultimately detached and shut out. For all his devotion, Boris (the Doctor) cannot simply love her for what she is - he wants to change her, to save her from herself - and so, says to her: “Now you live entirely in legend.” To which she makes the bleak response: “It’s a confused

In a complementary sense, the male characters also portray animus types. Represented are the intellectually wise, but unworldly, old father/king, Arthur, the determined and supremely self-assured young hero, Jason, and the sober, sensible and practical professional man, the Doctor. All are well educated and intelligent, the two poets creatively so, the Doctor, materially. As such they would represent for Emma Jung (1981), highly developed, so most desirable, animus forms (as opposed to more physical types). Unfortunately though, her assessment has more to do with cultural and class preferences, than with any evidence of psychological maturity. Yet they certainly represent ideals which women (and men) have been encouraged to admire, even to the extent of overlooking their failings. One should cosset and indulge the creative genius, forgiving his impracticality, his arrogance and insensitivity, for the sake of his art. Yet Arthur too recognises the impossibility of fully realising his artistic obsessions: “Yes! As I would be a servant . . . . of the Fleece! Oh Edna! Seventy years there and not there . . . because of this stupid obstruction call’d ‘Arthur!’ (He falls in a stroke from the chair.)” (Duncan, 1965, p. 28). The professional, like the Doctor, may be dull and unromantic, but he is also, oh so, dependable. So as with Wolff’s female types, Emma Jung’s (1981) animus types provide characterisations of male images which have a seductive appeal, the dangers of which can easily be overlooked, given the social approbation accorded the ideal forms.

Not for a moment do I mean to suggest that characters such as those in Medea at Kolchis are no more than anima and animus projections. This is simply one way of interpreting, one level only of the many which can be brought to understandings of the story. The interpretations I am presenting here
are meant to serve as a foundation, or perhaps an elaboration of the characters as they interact in the story. An exploration of Garrow as mother, Jason as hero, or Arthur as patriarch, remains a static and analytical process (in the psychotherapeutic sense) until the characters are considered in context; they act and most importantly they interact with one another. It is Garrow who holds the household together, providing, comforting, and occasionally needling the others. She creates an environment in which the others are able to be themselves. Similarly Arthur is the pivot, the sun around which the others revolve. All the characters are defined by, but also actively influence, the context in which they perform. The context assumes another level, of course, when it involves a performance, as in the case of Duncan’s play, where actors recreate the characters, bringing their particular qualities to the interactions which go to make up the story.

It is significant that I could easily generate as many words about this single aspect of interpretation as Duncan used to create the play itself. To demonstrate something of what I mean by the richness of the text, I will present my comments on one single statement of the play—these being only my responses, just one of many possible interpretations. Early in the play, Jason says to the Doctor, “I’m not responsible for what he [Arthur] makes of my name Jason.” (Duncan, 1965, p. 4). In this disingenuous claim Jason pretends to distance himself from any association with the mythical Jason. He is, he insists, merely a dedicated admirer of Arthur’s poetry, although he is at least honest enough to hope for some material legacy, as self-styled heir to Arthur’s poetic accomplishments. Impressively, in this single statement Duncan has dextrously and succinctly had his Jason convey to the audience fundamental psychological qualities which match the modern Jason with his hypocritical
namesake. In Duncan's own words, Jason "...must always speak from an earnest insincerity" (Duncan, 1965, p. iii).

At least part of Jason's success as a deceiver must come from his capacity for self-delusion. He not only charms others, but himself as well - in Jungian terms, the modern Jason is possessed by the archetypal hero. He is enraptured by the thrill of his quest, sure of his capacity and his right to succeed. He is blind though, to the exploitative tendencies of his hero role. So if I follow the process to its logical close in the context of my own quest, I too need to pay attention to the over-confidence of the hero. Who, or what, could be exploited if I become overenthusiastic in my quest for gender understandings? I certainly do not want to abandon the quest out of a fear of exploiting, but I still need to continually reassess my conclusions. The most obvious dangers at this point seem to be the risks of distorting the stories and myths I employ, or of becoming narrowly prescriptive in the psychological conclusions I make. In both cases there is the danger of reductionism, of "psychologism" - *explaining away* rather than explaining (CW 11, § 749n). Since no neat and simple theory can be devised, the usefulness of the exercise will have to be assessed in terms of its richness of associations and broadening of boundaries.

People make sense of their experiences by telling stories in which events are ordered chronologically, connected in some meaningful way and provide purposeful goals. Meaning and intention, as Jung (*CW* 9i; *CW* 9ii) has repeatedly pointed out, are essential aspects of human psychology. Although meaning and intention must be related to experience, there tends to be a gap between the two modes of consciousness required to appreciate them. C. S. Lewis (1988) suggested that myths, traditional stories which can engage our full attention, provide a method for partially bridging the gap; we are able to simultaneously live the story in imagination while reflecting on its meanings
and implications. The methods and techniques employed in the development of the thesis draw extensively on this approach to meaning making, in order to demonstrate its efficacy as a form of psychological exploration. The content, the subject matter of the thesis, elaborates on the technique.

The myths and their modern interpretations or counterparts provide mirrors, virtual realities, of the imagination, in which are reflected instances of both the experiences and the meanings of being a woman, and how that might relate to socially constructed notions of gender and the feminine. They are complex notions. Investigating some of their intricacies helps explain the difficulties we face in attempting to reinterpret and especially to change our expectations of gender. The whole of the thesis, method and content, is driven by the mythic theme of the hero’s quest, a familiar, even ubiquitous theme, with a long tradition of male heroes, which I am attempting to reinterpret as a creative mode of explanation for women’s experiences as well.