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

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CHAPTER FOUR

Eros as Animus
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Eros as Animus

The complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered. Lightly men talk of saying what they mean. ... When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you'll not talk about joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?

(Lewis, 1976, p. 294).

What happens when the struggle is less obvious, when the woman is not a warrior? What of the reluctant female hero? What would matter most to her? Once engaged in her quest would she be relentless and noble like Oedipus? Would she transform into an Amazon? Much of Psyche's story fits the pattern of the hero's journey, but within the familiar hero framework Psyche was still Psyche and her actions still distinctly her own. So what does it mean to be a reluctant, scared female hero struggling through a lonely private quest?

Searching for the Lost Masculine:

Having travelled with heroes of traditional epics, Jason and Oedipus, and having ventured to the borders and back to meet some of their female equivalents, it is time to explore even further beyond the familiar realms - further into the territory of the gods, or of the unconscious, depending on the
interpretation. The male heroes of the epics have provided focus for explorations of psychodynamic approaches to psyche, and helped highlight the Western preoccupation with a rather limited - disturbingly adolescent - ideal of human psychological development. Warrior women, Amazons, Athene, Artemis, Joan of Arc, unusual as they might be, personify and demonstrate ways in which women as well are affected by the same ideals. The ideal of individualism embraces a good selection of traditional masculine qualities (most conspicuously, rationality, autonomy, action, control), but it still presents only narrow, prescribed possibilities for psychological development. It is time to push the boundaries further still, to trace other, neglected, aspects of the feminine and masculine. Hence, this chapter will focus on the masculine and feminine as they might be applied to aspects of the unconscious masculine, or to the animus, specifically, to Eros as animus. The story of Psyche and Eros will help illustrate my claims, and the anima counterpoint, at the end of the chapter, will be developed with the aid of C. S. Lewis's (1976) remarkable retelling of the Psyche story in Till We Have Faces. The journey leads further into unknown territory, in the sense that to meet heroes is to meet mortal, or at best semi-divine, characters, while to encounter gods and goddesses (more remote, inhuman forms) is representative, in Jungian terms, of encounters with more profoundly unconscious processes. Given such circumscribed requirements of what it is to be male, what has been lost to the masculine is likely to be even more thoroughly repressed than the unrecognised feminine.

A distinction should be made here between men's experiences and women's experiences of notions of the feminine and masculine. To the extent that generalisations can be made (socialisation and prevailing traditions make this possible) the ways women typically experience the feminine can be very different to the ways men experience the feminine. The same is largely true of
the masculine. A fundamental factor is the experience of the opposite gender aspect as other - not I - so that it inevitably assumes qualities of the unknown, strange, exotic. It should be noted though that the sense of otherness is by no means neatly paralleled across genders. The accepted conscious mode of understanding in Western society is predominantly masculine; this is largely true for women as well as men. Moreover it is a very selective range of the masculine, concerned with intellect, rationality, ideas and ideals of the mind, which is highly valued in the West. An implication, though not explicit, from Jung’s (CW 8) discussions of shared conscious orientations, or a collective consciousness, is that, along with a person’s individual gendered consciousness, there comes a collective psychic experience. In Western society the accepted conscious orientation is patriarchal.

It is important to distinguish my use of masculine consciousness, as a product of Western socialisation, from masculine consciousness as a necessary, hierarchical, developmental stage for both men and women, as proposed by Erich Neumann (1973). I do not mean to reify Logos, or masculine consciousness, but rather to allude to the stranglehold it has had as the validated mode of understanding in the West. As members of the accepted social organisation, women share the dominant patriarchal consciousness, although not as completely or as smoothly as most men. For women there arises the double bind of either taking on the masculine consciousness (so apparently sacrificing their femininity), or of adopting a more socially appropriate but less valued feminine consciousness.

I am not suggesting however, that women simply choose a personal conscious style; it is very much a matter of socialisation for both women and men. As a result of exposure to the dominant social values and ideals, women come to know (and absorb) a great deal about the public masculine
consciousness and its complementary unconscious inspirations (concerns and fears which are so often personified in Jungian terms as the feminine, or as the anima). In short, to a considerable extent, women too develop a masculine, Logos centred consciousness with its corresponding anima dominated unconscious. Consequently the masculine is more familiar to women, and the feminine less familiar, than if a straightforward complementarity of a same-sex consciousness balanced by an opposite-sex unconscious applied equally to women and men. If the feminine and masculine represent the extremes of a continuum, women probably know more of the centre ground than most men. Women are also more directly familiar with animus - with the seductions of an entrancing masculine character - than are most men, since both the feminine and its animus counterpoint are so thoroughly circumscribed in the socialisation of males. So, given the typical dialectical mode of understanding favoured in the West, it is ultimately through the feminine that the lost animus can be reclaimed.

My assertion that women experience the collective anima (and men the animus) manifestations admittedly overlaps with the usual understanding of Jung’s (CW 7, § 103n) notion of Shadow (the unconscious, usually negative, qualities of a captivating image or character of the same sex as the experiencing individual). For a man the unappreciated implications of being the hero - a Jason, an Oedipus - of being perhaps arrogant or impetuous, or for a woman the negative consequences of playing the damsel in distress, of being helpless, dependent or controlled, would be examples of Shadow influences. However, even though identifying opposite gender archetypal images as “anima” (for men) and “animus” (for women), contrasted with same gender images as “shadow” might make for neat categorisations, it also underestimates the complexity of the interactions. Given the long history of patriarchy in the
West, patriarchal epistemologies are inevitably accorded preference and credibility. Cultural and social understandings assume an androcentric bias; Western habits of thought have a masculine orientation; in short the collective consciousness of Western society is predominantly a masculine consciousness.

For all of its neat simplicity, Jung’s (CW 9ii) complementarity of anima and animus, as contrasexual aspects of individual psyches, is too limiting. Given that anima and animus represent collective images (archetypes), I have extended the notion to include collective psychic orientations, as have other Jungian writers, including James Hillman (1985), Andrew Samuels (1985) and Verena Kast (1986). This makes for far more complicated, but also far richer and more complete descriptions of psychological experience. The original convenient divisions no longer hold. For Jung, conscious masculine Logos, balanced by an unconscious anima, described the male psyche, while conscious feminine Eros, balanced by unconscious animus, described the female psyche. But once the notion of collective psyche is added the associations can slide in all directions.

Adapting Animus and Anima:

Gendered behaviour and experience have much more to do with socialisation than biology, they are “... clubs that we are made to join” (Young-Eisendrath, 1994, p. 16). But the degree to which they are considered socially successful is inevitably tied to the biological sex of the individual. Masculine and feminine can be loosely defined as the breadth, but also the essence, of gendered experience, that is of living in a particular human society as a woman or man, based on one’s biological sex, but with all the layers of meaning added in the process of socialisation. Hence there is the universal expectation that one is clearly either man or woman (any confusion about biological sex is almost always a cause for social anxiety). But the details and refinements of
the expression of one's femaleness or maleness are heavily influenced by
 cultural mores. The archetypes of the masculine and feminine have more to do
 with the essence, the fundamental pattern, than with the detail, and as such are
 not gender specific, in the sense of masculine referring only to men and
 feminine only to women (Douglas, 1990; Mattoon, 1981). The archetypal
 forms are the referents for the essential qualities and potentialities; they
 represent psychic tendencies which might parallel the physical sex differences.

 It would serve no purpose here to engage in an argument about the degree
to which such theorising is reductive and deterministic. One can argue that
human males and females are radically different physically, if one focuses on
primary and secondary sex characteristics. Or alternatively, by focusing on the
general similarities which distinguish humans from other species, one can
minimise the differences. The same distinctions can be made for human
psychology, not only contrasted with other species, but also among cultures
where the fundamentals of the meanings of gender are often similar, but the
material manifestations vary enormously. Whether or not the innateness of
gendered psychology is under question, while ever humans distinguish between
male and female, there will be some consistent differences in the psychological
development and experiences of women and men on any given culture. So,
although it is important to acknowledge their archetypal significance, I am
describing and using feminine and masculine here as they are typically
represented in the modern Western (mostly white, middle-class) tradition.

Jung’s (CW 9ii) anima and animus theory is a particularly useful starting
point in exploring the persistence of gender requirements. The anima and
animus are the terms Jung used to describe the contrasexual aspects of the
archetypal masculine and feminine. That is, in Jung’s holistic theory women
have unconscious contrasting masculine qualities (animus) and men, feminine
qualities (anima). Typically however, the unconscious masculine and feminine are under-developed and unfamiliar. The anima and animus qualities tend to be experienced as foreign, as "other"; they are often personified as characters, or ideals of the opposite sex, and are sometimes projected onto other people.

There are three notable aspects of Jung's theory of anima and animus relevant to this discussion. Firstly, the distinction between notions of masculine and feminine and the lived reality of men and women facilitates discussion of gender and socialisation; feminine is connected to woman and masculine to man but they are not synonymous. Secondly, the above separation enables Jung to say that both women and men have masculine and feminine qualities; masculine and feminine are predicated on biological differences, but are also complex psychological and social elaborations, often only tenuously connected to their biological bases (CW 9i, § 135, § 511 ff).

Thirdly, Jung claims the contrasexual aspects of the psyche are inferior. This last point needs further elaboration. Jung used "inferior" with two different inflections and both apply in this case. He certainly believed the anima and animus have a tendency to less than admirable effects, especially when unconsciously projected onto other people. But "inferior" for Jung also meant unconscious, and therefore under-developed (CW 10, § 243, § 261). So once recognised and acknowledged, anima and animus can be sources of personal and collective inspiration and empowerment. Of themselves, the archetypes, including the masculine and feminine, are morally neutral, their benefits and disadvantages are a matter of human judgement (CW 9i, § 59; CW 9ii, § 423).

At times, for convenience, Jung labelled the masculine principle "Logos" (Word, mind, spirit) and the feminine principle "Eros" (relatedness). The masculine and Logos are defined as "paternal" and "discrimination and cognition" (CW 9ii, § 29), protective, intellectual and analytical qualities which
I have associated with the valued psychological mode of consciousness in our society, the valued masculine qualities of patriarchy. Feminine and Eros are, for Jung, "the maternal ... connective quality" (CW 9ii, § 29), the caring aspects, valued, though still inferior, as appropriate feminine qualities in patriarchy.

Sometimes Logos and Eros are ascribed to both men's and women's psyches (CW 9ii, § 33), but sometimes they are made gender specific. The following controversial (so, frequently cited) quotation demonstrates both the usefulness (for clarity) and the problems (especially of gender stereotyping) of Jung's formulation:

The animus corresponds to the paternal Logos just as the anima corresponds to the maternal Eros. But I do not wish or intend to give these two intuitive concepts too specific a definition. I use Eros and Logos merely as conceptual aids to describe the fact that women’s consciousness is characterised more by the connective quality of Eros than by the discrimination and cognition associated with Logos. In men, Eros, the function of the relationship, is usually less developed than Logos. In women, on the other hand, Eros is an expression of their true nature, while their Logos is often only a regrettable accident. (CW 9ii, § 29).

In fact the quote points to most of the issues to do with gender and the unconscious which are addressed in this chapter.

Jung was very aware of the psychological limitations of a one sided development of the individual psyche (CW 13, § 455). He also understood the restrictive tendency of the Western preference for analytical and rational consciousness (CW 9ii, § 60). Yet he still allowed himself to make claims that Logos is the "natural" condition for men and Eros for women. I am proposing that Logos and Eros are not biologically determined qualities, but have come to
be used to represent socialised categories which are superimposed on biological sex. Thus Logos can be used interchangeably with my definition of individualism in the ways the two concepts are used currently, and it can cover previous historical versions as well.

Not surprisingly, as a man, Jung was eloquent when describing the nature of anima and soul - "My Lady Soul" (CW 9ii, § 25). Here is the inspirational feminine which demands both satisfaction and homage. Female characters and female forms have long been the anima embodiment of ideals, from lofty, abstract notions like Wisdom (Athene, Sophia), Justice (Themis, Dike) and Beauty (Aphrodite, Artemis), to religious ideals and more pragmatic political orientations such as Britannia and the French Marianne. Inspiration, awe, devotion, fear, big emotions in large proportion are intentionally invoked by these great ladies and their more terrifying sisters including the Terrible Mother, the witch, harpies and murderous water sprites. A collective masculine consciousness has a long cherished and well developed capacity to explore, imagine, fantasise about this feminine other. As participants in the dominant social or collective consciousness, women too are moved by many of these images.

As this is a discussion primarily on animus, it is sufficient to comment here that Jung often used the terms "soul" and "anima" (CW 7, § 297) and even on occasion "unconscious" interchangeably (CW 6, § 420; CW 13, § 62). Even "psyche" is at times blurred with these terms and with "spirit" (CW 9i, § 391), although more typically, Jung uses "psyche" to refer to the entirety of human psychic processes. This is not simply inconsistency, rather it points to the difficulties in attempting descriptions or categorisations of psychic processes which are not directly accessible, and certainly not quantifiable. These are not neat psychic compartments, but rather explanatory devices for complex psychic
experiences. Metaphor and allusion become the only viable forms of expression for elaborating these slippery concepts.

In post-Jungian theory, soul extends beyond anima and the feminine, mapping across the entire unconscious psyche and becoming the focus of psychological development, of “soul-making” (Hillman, 1977). Yet still the numinosity, the compulsion of the demand, the passionate dedication and fascination for a powerful and mysterious unconscious force carry overtones of anima presence in the form of devotion to the Lady, often even overtones of courtly love. So, despite the difficulties of establishing precise definitions and distinctions I maintain that anima (like animus) remains a useful term, capturing something of the inspirational and dangerous qualities of this unconscious psychic connection.

Both anima and animus come in for some damning descriptions when Jung refers to their less appealing manifestations; the anima is emotional, irrational, petulant and the animus is pompous and opinionated such that “... when animus and anima meet, the animus draws his sword of power and the anima ejects her poison of illusion and seduction” (CW 9ii, § 30). Given less attention and less value in Jung’s work, animus is usually associated, at its best, with the Logos principle, with spirit and particularly with the intellectual, rational ideal of the masculine in Western culture. For Jung it is the woman’s unconscious animus which reflects the dominant masculine consciousness, while I maintain that such a simple division into opposites is confounded and complicated by a collective masculine psychic orientation.

Most often, for Jung, the animus tends to have more in common with a Freudian superego, a “...collection of condemnatory judges, ...” or “... an assembly of fathers or dignitaries ...” (CW 7, § 332), than it does with intellectual freedom and clarity. The unfortunate implication is that, as an
inferior function, Logos as animus is so often something of a caricature. When Jung refers to animus as conventional, pompous, inflexible, projected "...upon ‘intellectuals’ and all kinds of ‘heroes’,” (CW 16, § 521), animus seems disappointingly pedestrian in comparison with an inspirational anima.

I suspect that one reason for Jung’s negative descriptions of animus is that the masculine mode of expression has been so successfully overlayed onto what is considered normal human consciousness (female as well as male) it is only when the form is extreme or negative that it is noticed at all. When they expressed Logos well, the women Jung observed seemed simply to be themselves. It was only when the Logos aspects were exaggerated that Jung attributed them to animus. Maybe it can only be via the experiences of women, expressed in their own voices, that more comprehensive explorations of this apparently limited aspect of the unconscious will be made. Quite early in the development of Jungian theory, Emma Jung (1981) and M. Esther Harding (1989), attempted to redress the balance while retaining the essence of Jung’s original formulations. More recently, Verena Kast (1986), Mary Ann Mattoon and Jennette Jones (1987), Polly Young-Eisendrath and Florence Wiedemann (1987) and Claire Douglas (1990) are among those who have reassessed animus and decide that, with appropriate adaptations, it remains a particularly useful concept.

Post-Jungians, like some feminists, have questioned the value of having such contrasexual categories at all, opting rather for the presumed flexibility of a more pluralistic approach, such as favoured by post-modernism (Lauter & Rupprecht, 1985). However, I contend that such categories continue to exist in the way lives are lived in Western society. Issues of gender impact on most interpersonal interactions in Western society, even where theoretically or politically people maintain they should not. Yet consciousness-raising,
education, political action and legislation are making only limited adaptations to these well entrenched habits.

It is well worth exploring the psychological implications of persistent gender requirements. Arguing or imagining them away merely adds an overlay of confusion between what is seen as the preferred option, and what is actual, lived experience. There needs to be a distinction made between proposals for alternative views (such as postmodern pluralism) and descriptions of current experience. It is the latter which I am attempting here and I am doing so by deliberately combining analytical and narrative techniques, and by exploring myths and stories, to provide examples. In such a context I agree with Mattoon and Jones (1987) that the concept of animus is certainly not obsolete. I am, though, arguing for a re-evaluation of the anima/animus theory. This includes the proposal that, since we share a collective psyche, it is reasonable to assume that women, as well as men, experience consciousness as generally Logos dominated and an unconscious often constellation into anima personifications. Equally, animus, as the lost masculine, can also be an aspect of both women’s and men’s unconscious psyches.

To speak in terms of animus and anima enables the personification, lively characterisation, of the masculine and feminine which can lift these notions out of the dry and sterile realm of semantic categorisations. Certainly, when masculine and feminine are expressed as semantic categories, as lists of words, they seem restrictive and arbitrary divisions, too often with the feminine ascribed the least valued attributes. Masculine for instance is traditionally hot, dry, light, strong, hard, rational...; feminine is cold, moist, dark, weak, soft, emotional... . The litany is endless and involves contradictions and exceptions. Feminists have been torn between demonstrating, on one hand, the restrictive
and arbitrary nature of these categories, while on the other hand attempting to _revalue_ what has been traditionally labelled as feminine.

The problem of labelling and categorising (in this case of labelling the feminine as Eros or relatedness) is encapsulated in the single image - the god Eros is *male*. Why does Jung call the archetypal feminine principle the Eros principle and not the Aphrodite principle or the Demeter principle? It is easy enough to see a likely progression from Freudian to Jungian Eros. For Freud, Eros represents sexual energy, the libido, which is unconscious but definitely masculine (Freud, 1988). Then for Jung, libido is extended to encompass psychic energy generally (reclaiming more of the Platonic meaning of Eros as impassioned, directed vitality), but it still remains unconscious. Further, as "unknown" and "other", the unconscious, for Jung, is associated with the feminine. So Eros comes to be equated with the feminine (CW 9ii). However, Jung was fascinated by the personifications we ascribe to archetypal forms, so it puzzles me that he would overlook this strange anomaly and that Jungians continue to use the notion in similar fashion.

There is much more to the masculine than the ideal of discriminating consciousness. Meaning and understanding are not exclusively accessible through rational, analytical skills, nor are they the exclusive prerogative of the masculine. One lost aspect of the masculine, an aspect given little credence in modern Western society until relatively recently, is relatedness. Connectedness, relatedness, maintaining relationships, have been seen as typically feminine, as Jung pointed out. Without any apparent hint of irony, Jung has given the supposed prerogative of women the name of a male god, Eros. The confusion has led me to propose Eros as representing, not feminine relatedness, but masculine relatedness. Hence Eros becomes an aspect of animus, the unconscious, lost masculine.
Personifying Feminine and Masculine: Meeting the Gods:

Obviously, Eros as animus does not account for all of the lost masculine. There is much about the dominant masculine consciousness which also spills over into animus in a broader sense. Western masculine consciousness (Logos) can be personified by the forms of Christ, Apollo or Hermes, each of which provides a unique perspective on Logos. This however, is where personification provides more clarity and precision. Logos, as abstract term, represents the continuing preoccupations with “the word”, but personifications provide the changing historical focus. Christ, for example, as a personification of Logos represents Logos (meaning or understanding) in a spiritual sense, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ...” (John 1.14). This is far removed from the modern scientific and analytical Logos, better represented by a formal, ordered character such as Apollo. Hermes, on the other hand, captures much of the playfulness, the adventurous and clever use of Logos, as “word”, which characterises much post-modern thought. To state the obvious though, meaning and understanding do not have to be masculine. There are also female characters representing meaning, for example Sophia, companion of Yahweh, Athene, goddess of civilised, conventional intelligence, or Athene’s mother, Metis, all personifications of wisdom in its various forms.

Along with the appealing and inspiring qualities of each of these characters though, come the less engaging shadow qualities. If ignored or repressed the shadow side can emerge in animus forms, such as moralistic Christian narrow mindedness, equally straight-laced intellectual Apollonian aestheticism, or the Hermetic affectations in fashionable trends of post-modernism. All of these animus issues are so closely connected to my discussion of the relationships between collective consciousness and individualism, they are further explored in that context, elsewhere, in particular in the chapter on Self.
In its exploration of Eros, this discussion also demonstrates the explanatory power of myth and personification as against the more limiting categories of abstract definitions. Logos and Eros, as used in the quotation from Jung above, are abstract principles, “conceptual aids” (CW 9ii, § 29); the masculine Logos is discriminating consciousness, the feminine Eros is relatedness. The Logos and Eros principles are convenient abbreviations, but can also be misrepresentations. Logos, as word, reason, argument, discrimination, also explains - it makes meaning by abstracting and intellectualising. Personifications such as Christ, Apollo or Hermes can provide more specific, hence more manageable illustrations of Logos, but Logos itself tends toward a more refined intellectual account. When such an orientation is elevated from one possible form of explanation to the only preferred form, Logos can turn other things into its own likeness (as in reducing Eros into an abstract principle). As an abstract principle, Eros conveys very little of the experience of relationship. The analytical, discriminating function of Logos pares away so much, it risks destroying some of the meaning of its subject of interest. Hence Eros undergoes an unexpected sex change.

Certainly, the term Eros is used in many different ways, often having little connection with Eros, god of love. When used as an abstract principle, as for instance as libido, by Freud, or feminine relatedness, by Jung, it no longer presumes connection with Greek mythology. Nonetheless it is illuminating to consider the implications of current definitions of Eros in the light of the original meaning of the name. My interest here is of course mythological rather than etymological. In what ways can the nature of Eros, Greek god of love, throw light on modern concepts of Eros, especially the Eros principle in Jungian psychology? The global categories of Logos (meaning and knowledge) and Eros (relatedness) are given both complexity and precision when
personified. Apollo, Hermes and Christ each represent Logos differently. Eros represents a masculine form of relatedness both different from and connected to the relatedness represented by his mother, Aphrodite, different again from other mothers and lovers like Hera and Demeter, or Eros’s own partner Psyche.

Particularly relevant to this discussion are the different styles of relatedness of Aphrodite, goddess of love, and her son Eros, god of love. Both are themselves reportedly irresistibly beautiful, but where Aphrodite uses her own beauty (or that of other women) as a seductive tool, Eros is more often the agent rather than the object of desire. When these characters do occasionally reverse the trends, we are forced to remark on their uncharacteristic behaviours. Even in his association with Psyche, Eros appears initially as saviour then as active seducer; although it is Psyche’s beauty which enraptures him, his beauty plays no part, as she is forbidden to see him. Here is an illustration of the traditional categorisations of feminine as passive object and masculine as active agent, as they might encounter each other in a typical heterosexual relationship.

Aphrodite cannot be described as only passive, she is renowned for her interventions and interferences amongst gods and mortals, but her actions are usually directed to attracting attention to herself (or a female equivalent). In this way she is an embodiment of the feminine as object, particularly as the alluring female body. So “acting” in this context revolves around display, presentation, attracting attention to what one is, rather than what one does.

There are of course more passive forms of this interpersonal attraction, as for instance represented by Psyche, the ingénue. Psyche’s extraordinary beauty is an accident of birth, and she has no desire for the fame it brings, until she is finally taken as Eros’s lover. Here physical attractiveness awakens an irresistible desire outside the control of will or personal choice, whether it is actively used as a tool (typically by women, as with Aphrodite) to ensnare men,
or as a justification (typically by men, as with Eros) for the pursuit of, and even attacks upon, unsuspecting or unwilling objects of desire.

Eros's beauty, on the other hand, is almost incidental. If he does use it to attract attention to himself, it is most often as an initial ploy in the very active process of infecting his victims with his arrows of passion. His involvement is typically as an intermediary, working his magic on behalf of someone else, often his mother. Like the other messenger god Hermes/Mercurius, Eros is wilful, irresponsible and unpredictable (CW 13, § 278). He may inflame others with a strong and constant passion of love, but is all but immune to it himself. This makes his infatuation with Psyche all the more significant.

Here again is an illustration of the complexities of feminine and masculine qualities in this heterosexual relationship. Eros is passive in the sense that he is possessed by his passion for Psyche - it captivates him. But his response is to actively pursue; he saves but also captures Psyche. There is then a further twist to all these masculine and feminine requirements as the Eros and Psyche story progresses. When the lovers are separated it is Eros who retreats to a passive sulk on Olympus, while it is Psyche who sets out on the heroic quest to reunite them. The implications of this will be further examined below in the anima reflection, Out in the Cold with Psyche.

The central point I wish to underline here is that when masculine and feminine are defined as concepts, described by means of lists of abstract qualities, they remain lifeless, reductive and inconsistent ideas. Their appeal and their usefulness as descriptive categories are more evident when they are instantiated in images of men and women - not just any man or woman, but specific characters who appear as distinct personalities in specific contexts. As characters they still remain complex, shifting categories, yet they can facilitate explanations of the ways social and cultural expectations and requirements lead
to interpretations of masculine and feminine and how these touch the experience of a man or a woman, especially as unconscious anima and animus manifestations.

_Pursuing Psyche and Eros:_

An early Greek cosmology tells of Eros’s origin when he emerged, at the beginning of time, from the egg of Night and provided the male life force for the creation of the world (Graves, 1992). This is an image which brings together discriminating consciousness (order) and relatedness. The more familiar story has Eros as the son and assistant of Aphrodite. Eventually Eros falls in love with Psyche (soul, anima). He defies his mother’s order to punish the girl, instead becoming her secret lover. Even in his infantilised form as a chubby cupid in Renaissance art, or on modern Valentine cards, Eros is unquestionably male, a fact also stressed by James Hillman (1978). There is a suggestion in Plato’s (trans. 1928) _Symposium_ that Eros is androgynous, but even for Plato’s Socrates, Eros is still personified as a male god. This has led me to the proposition that Eros is a personification of aspects of the masculine lost to Western consciousness. He encapsulates the masculine qualities which have been so successfully repressed, displaced, then projected onto women, that they have come to be redefined as feminine. Psyche’s quest is to find her lost love Eros, her husband and partner (not for her own capacity for relatedness).

A summary of the story of Eros and Psyche will help set the scene for further discussion. The story, of uncertain origin, has been preserved in most complete form in Apuleius’s Latin version in _The Golden Ass_, but following Erich Neumann (1971) I will use the Greek rather than Latin names of the protagonists. As Marie Louise von Franz (1988) pointed out, the story as part of a novel rather than part of a cosmology or theogony, is as much fairy-tale as
myth - also betrayed in the "happily-ever-after" ending - so, in the context of this discussion, it provides an interesting transition between fiction and myth.

Psyche was an astonishingly beautiful young woman whose fame led to her being worshipped as a human incarnation of Aphrodite. However, when she heard of this sacrilege, Aphrodite was so outraged she commanded her son Eros, like her a god of love, to punish Psyche by having her fall in love with the "vilest of men" (Neumann, 1971, p. 5). Instead, Psyche remained unwed, until at the direction of an oracle she was offered as a sacrifice by her grieving family into a death marriage with a terrifying serpent demon. Left abandoned on a desolate crag, Psyche was unexpectedly swept up by the West wind and taken to a magnificent pavilion where she was kept as the secret lover of Eros, who had himself been smitten by her beauty.

Eros only visited at night and Psyche was ordered never to look at her partner or to seek to know his identity. Eventually, overcome with loneliness, curiosity and especially fear of her lover (whipped up by her jealous sisters, who claimed he must be the great serpent), Psyche broke her promise only to discover her partner was the most beautiful and perfect of lovers. In her ecstasy of discovery Psyche not only wounded herself with one of Eros's arrows (thus sealing her love), but also managed to burn and awaken Eros with a splash of oil from her lamp. His secret exposed, Eros abandoned Psyche and retreated to Olympus to nurse his wound.

Aphrodite, discovering her son's disobedience and his affair with Psyche, chose to vent her wrath on Psyche by setting the now pregnant girl a series of impossible trials. Despite her suicidal despair, Psyche, with the help and encouragement of natural forces, succeeded in the first three tasks. Then, after opening the casket containing a special cosmetic from Persephone, she fell prey to a deathly sleep. Finally Eros roused himself and came to her rescue. The
couple were married publicly and Zeus was prevailed upon to make the girl immortal, somewhat assuaging Aphrodite’s indignation as mother-in-law. The happy couple’s girl child was called Pleasure or Lust (“Voluptas”) (Graves, 1992; Neumann, 1971).

In the early stages of the story the rather passive, feminine psyche was simply overwhelmed by her cruel fate until miraculously rescued by her saviour/lover Eros. Here are the model romantic roles for the masculine and feminine, the passive, helpless woman, the powerful, controlling man. psyche’s curiosity and doubt about Eros’s true nature and later Persephone’s casket are also traditionally feminine traits, echoes of Eve and Pandora. Yet this feminine curiosity is paradoxical, bringing both disaster and success. If she had accepted her state of ignorance, psyche would only ever have experienced limited satisfaction, restricted to an isolated, lonely existence visited in the dark by her mysterious lover. Like Eve and Pandora, psyche was a very disobedient “girl” (in patriarchal terms) bringing disaster on herself and those around her. But it was only by disobeying, breaking old patterns, that these “girls” were able to become women; with the ensuing troubles came important gains. For Eve (and Adam) there was knowledge and self awareness, for Pandora (and the world at large) there was the release of Hope and for psyche there was reunion with her lover, public acceptance and immortality for herself and her daughter.

The second part of the story, consequently, reverses what have become the traditional romantic roles. It was Eros who retreated into passive misery, while the reluctant psyche pursued the traditional hero’s quest, overcoming apparently impossible odds. Joseph Campbell (1953, p. 245) provided a summary of the (male) hero’s journey - the hero’s “monomyth”. The hero leaves home either voluntarily or by force; there is an encounter with a
shadowy presence leading either to safe passage or death and descent into the underworld; there are tests in a strange world and the "supreme ordeal ... (sacred marriage) ... recognition by the father-creator ... divinization ..."; finally there is the return to the ordinary world (Campbell, 1953, p. 246). In the case of Psyche the sequence is accentuated in that she undergoes the process twice, first when she leaves her family home as sacrificial bride, then again when she is banished from Eros's presence. She certainly fits Campbell's pattern closely, fulfilling all requirements, with appropriate gender reversals for other characters as well. Campbell (1953) acknowledged the Psyche story as a hero myth, but, true to his cultural tradition, still concentrated on the hero myth in its quintessentially male forms.

Unlike many of her male counterparts, Psyche was no confident, energetic hero, battling tenaciously for her Grail. She was certainly brave when facing her impending death-marriage and again desperately so when she decided to confront Aphrodite and beg mercy for herself and her unborn child. Yet as she was faced with each of the ordeals inflicted by her vindictive mother-in-law-to-be, she despaired, ready to throw herself from some high place, only to be assisted, saved, by natural forces. Ants sorted the mixed grains for her; a reed told her how to obtain the gold fleece from the poisonous sheep; an eagle fetched the Stygian waters; then finally the tower from which Psyche intended to throw herself told her how to reach the Underworld. This is not a story of the heroic ego overcoming unconscious urges, but of natural (unconscious) forces actively helping Psyche (soul, anima) find satisfaction. Psyche fails to fit Campbell's (1953) model hero only in the last point - she does not return to her own world with the boon for her people. Are we to blame her, that the feminine hero has not finished her task, or are we yet to allow her space and opportunity to come home?
Possible interpretations of the myth are legion and are bound to be influenced by the style in which the story is retold. Versions range from the extroverted action tale to complex and painful psychological renderings. The version of the story in Robert Graves's translation is a roisterous tale of furious action, violence and broad, uncomplicated emotions - adoration, envy and lots of revenge (Apuleius, trans. 1993). Even the flawless and innocent Psyche is untroubled by remorse as she tricks her ruthless sisters to their brutal deaths. Interestingly, in her introduction to this version, the Jungian analyst Marion Woodman offers an interpretation of the story as a myth of development, from the excesses of childhood beliefs in magic, gods and lack of responsibility, to a more sober and realistic adult humanity (Apuleius, trans. 1993). In the sense that Graves offers a lively story of adventure with straightforward gains and retributions, I appreciate some of Woodman's assessment. However I also feel that inevitable twinge of disappointment. Of course we have to be realistic about living, but must we always be sensible iconoclasts; must we live in a world where "... the Gods have become diseases ... " (CW 13, § 54)?

Parallel with the more sober translation of H. E. Butler, Erich Neumann read the myth as an explanation of the psychic development of the feminine (Neumann, 1971). Without in any way detracting from the insights he offered, I suggest his is a romanticised view of the feminine which colours his interpretation. To his credit, Neumann recognised the degree to which the feminine had been devalued in modern psychologies and he attempted to redress the balance. My observation is simply that, with Psyche, as with his monumental work on the Great Mother (Neumann, 1970), much of what he described as the feminine was presented from the perspective of anima. It is a very positive anima, but still an essentially masculine viewpoint. The feminine is treated with great respect but also treated rhapsodically and lyrically,
presented in its inspirational and soulful form. In his retelling Neumann (1971) painted Psyche as more active and effective (valued *masculine* qualities) and Eros as more passive and uninvolved than the story warrants, resulting in a simplistic reversal of the traditional feminine and masculine. Marie Louise van Franz (1988) also interpreted the story, carefully and soberly, as an exposition of anima. She accentuated the context of the story in the Apuleius novel, as a veiled allegory for the secret Isis mysteries, into which the author, Apuleius, had been initiated.

While Graves’s (Apuleius, trans. 1993) version of the Psyche and Eros myth is energetic, good fun, Neumann’s (1971) is a rather more wistful account. But for my purposes, namely a psychological exploration of the feminine, it is the re-telling in the engrossing and psychologically complex C. S. Lewis (1976) novel, *Till We Have Faces*, which offers most. Lewis told the story from the point of view of one of Psyche’s sisters. Like Neumann, Lewis focused on the female characters, but the struggles of the sister, Orual, are treated not at all rhapsodically. Orual is not of the beautiful but mean spirited mould of the sisters in the other versions. She is physically ugly, lonely, but an intelligent and capable woman, passionately committed to her remarkable young step-sister. Orual devotes her life to the motherless girl and delights in living for and through Psyche. Then her full and satisfying world is shattered when Psyche, to appease the gods and end a plague, is taken to the sacred Mountain to be left as a sacrifice to the Shadowbrute.

The main action and themes follow the original myth, but the meanings are thoroughly modern and psychological. The entirely twentieth century feelings, reactions and moral dilemmas portrayed in the novel seem to be highlighted, intensified by the archaic setting in a fictional rustic kingdom contemporaneous with Classical Greece. Orual confronts such dilemmas as the distinctions
between love and possession, connections between beauty, mystery and power, or between duty, desire and personal responsibility. She is eventually forced to face the distressing realisation that her infatuation with Psyche has transformed her love and admiration into possession, control, even blackmail, resulting in disaster for Psyche, and for herself permanent, heartbreaking separation.

Lewis’s (1976) novel emphasises the painful and tragic consequences of damaged relationships by presenting Orual’s story as a counterpoint to the Psyche myth. The very human Orual is forced into a bleak journey of discovery which parallels that of her sister Psyche (which in turn recapitulates the original myth). Some of these issues are elaborated further at the end of the chapter in the section *Out in the Cold with Psyche*, but for the moment I will pursue the theme of Eros as male god rather than female principle.

**Eros as Animus:**

The gender contradictions in the Psyche and Eros myth are provocative and mirror nicely the psychological feminisation of Eros in Jungian theory. The mischievous god of love is rendered helpless; he not only *falls* in love himself, but is subsequently unable to do anything to rescue his broken relationship until the very last. Meanwhile, it is not the brave young god-hero, but a reluctant pregnant girl who undertakes the redeeming journey and quest. In fact, apart from his role as saviour and secret lover, a role he admittedly seemed to fulfil more than adequately, in this particular and very important part of his life, Eros is astonishingly passive; he simply drifts from naughty mother’s darling to chastened mother’s boy. Psyche must exert enormous effort, and accomplish extraordinary feats in order to rouse him.

A traditional gender interpretation would predict, as happens in the early part of the story when Psyche is rescued, the active male principle, the hero, would be the one energetically engaged in winning, pleasing and holding the
feminine principle, the Lady, or the soul seeking satisfaction. Yet the value in all these reversals of stereotype still emerge from their gender particularities. It is important, not arbitrary, that it is Eros who retreats and Psyche who quests. One suspects Eros's absence is as much about personal offence and injured pride, as about a burned shoulder; it is more a hero’s sulk than a heroine’s swoon. Psyche meanwhile, manages the impossible tasks set by Aphrodite, not through heroic personal attributes like Ulysses's cunning, Hercules's strength or even Medea’s magic, but instead with the unbidden and unexpected assistance of natural forces (traditional associations here with both the unconscious and the feminine). This is where the story and the character have the advantage over the abstract word, especially the discriminating definition or categorisation. Here is an example of quintessentially masculine passivity and feminine action, contradictions which are managed successfully in a story, where they can be confusing as semantic distinctions.

By reducing Eros to the feminine principle of relatedness Jung, in the name of explanatory clarity, collapsed together several distinct notions and consequently, in Jungian terms, ended up with the other pole, the psychological opposite, (an "enantiodromia") from that which he had intended. Not only is Eros not female, but neither is the feminine exclusively or entirely relatedness. It is likely that relatedness is understood and practised differently by women and men, but it is also very much a concept of mutuality. If relatedness is the sole province and responsibility of women, they will have to work awfully hard in the psychological wilderness to rouse reciprocal feelings in men to whom they want to relate.

For social creatures like humans relationships are essential, so unfortunately if relatedness (in the sense of respect and acceptance of the other) is missing, the relationship can still flourish, even if possession, domination,
jealousy or suspicion are the key influences. It may be that the negative quality (the condescension of the patriarchal husband, the possessiveness of the Logos mother, for example) are not the source of the difficulties, but rather that the source is the unfortunate consequence of a mistaken belief that relationships can be the delegated responsibility of just one person. There seems to have been a slide from an acceptance that women put more effort into personal relationships towards the dangerous assumption that women can make and maintain relationships alone, whether as friend, lover or mother. This is where social conventions degenerate into stereotypes which insult and ultimately enervate both women’s and men’s capacities to relate. To say then that Eros represents animus, in the sense of masculine relatedness, is to use Eros to personify ways of relating, from the impossible spoilt boy to the dashing, heroic lover and the honoured father and husband, all of which complement corresponding female roles and ways of relating. To reduce Eros, the feminine and relatedness to a unitary concept is to emasculate him, send him home in tears to mother, while Psyche is left deserted, shut out in the cold.

By considering Eros as animus, rather than as the feminine principle, it is possible to reconstruct an image of animus which has something of the inspirational value of its positive anima equivalents. A Logos dominated animus is the most easily recognised (especially as projection); after all, it reflects the prevailing Western masculine values. But just as Logos is not all of the masculine, it need not be all of the animus. Reconsidering the psychological significance of masculine and feminine as portrayed in the Eros and Psyche relationship can in turn shed light on anima and animus. Hence my contention is that Eros does relate directly to the woman’s psyche, but as animus, not as the female principle. The presentation of Eros as an animus figure is not new, von Franz (1988) and Carrin Dunne (1989) both refer to Eros
this way for example. What I specifically want to challenge is the notion that Eros represents the female psyche, that "... Eros is an expression of their [women's] true nature ..." (CW 9ii, § 29).

If Eros is indeed a manifestation of animus, then it follows that he also has a closer association with the masculine in men than Jung implied. So my further proposal is that Eros can be seen as embodying aspects of the masculine which have been devalued and discredited, and largely lost to men's conscious experience in Western patriarchy. What remains of Eros is left for women to preserve, and since it has become their exclusive responsibility, it has gradually come to be identified as feminine. This I believe to be a continuing feature of this century in Western society, intrinsically related to the fascination with that other tricky messenger of the gods, Hermes/Mercurius. Both Eros and Hermes represent developments beyond a more narrow nineteenth century orientation. To make the connection clear it is necessary to fill in a little of the historical perspective.

**Apollonian to Erotic Animus:**

Logos (the Word, intellectual knowledge) as conscious masculine principle, has developed into a precise and restrictive concept in the Western tradition. The valued qualities have narrowed progressively until they have come to refer to the intellectual mode of rational, analytical thinking apotheosised in the scientist, or in Freud's theoretical ideal of a civilised ego consciousness controlling unconscious urges. The god Apollo is an appropriate image for this form of Logos. It is the restrictive form of Logos which has been condemned by many feminists as phallocentrism or phallogocentrism (Daly, 1984; Gallop, 1982; Gatens, 1991). Marilyn French (1985, p.530) cleverly chose the inoffensive term "manliness" to identify the crippling ideal which demands sacrifice and control, in order to repress putatively dangerous and
shameful natural desires. Considering that such a distortion of natural desires leads to self-loathing and hence to destructiveness and moral confusion, “power-to”, power as an enabling capacity must be replaced by “power-over”, by domination and control (French, 1985, p. 505). Yet even though its limitations are more readily identified and increasingly treated with suspicion, the transcendent intellectual ideal persists. Like gender, or any other well established ideal, it is a remarkably difficult habit to change.

Jung, always searching out complementarities and opposites, expounded on this psychic rigidity so strongly evidenced in nineteenth century German Romanticism. He used as illustration Nietzsche’s own exposition of the Dionysian, showing how Nietzsche, in his later mental illness, finally succumbed to the destructive, primitive Dionysian forces which had fascinated and disturbed him, the careful, repressed, Apollonian intellectual (CW 12, § 118; CW 7, § 37).

The Apollonian/Dionysian split is particularly apt for the patriarchal consciousness of nineteenth century European culture. The Apollonian ideal is controlled, ordered, rational, consistent, a true gentleman. Inevitably though, the repressed Dionysian erupted into the popularised fears and fascinations with wild and primitive peoples and places; into perverse sexual practices; into frenzied outbursts of rage and violence. It is no wonder that the collective neurosis of the time, hysteria, most often affecting women, was seen as Dionysian (Hillman, 1980b).

Once again though, the tendency to label the Dionysian as feminine, because of Dionysos’s effect on women, is to miss an important point. The excesses of Dionysian possession are intrinsically related to the fact that Dionysos is male, even if effeminate by some accounts. Ritual practice and excess are qualitatively different when Dionysos is invoked rather than, say,
Aphrodite or Demeter. In nineteenth century culture, where the dominant consciousness was narrowly Apollonian, social pathologies would reflect what had to be repressed in order to maintain the accepted ideal. Women would have shared the dominant Apollonian consciousness and its values, but they were largely excluded from the direct benefits. Hence the most readily identifiable animus qualities would also have been Apollonian as well. Due to their marginalised social position, women’s access to the refinements of Apollonian form would have been restricted, so any manifestations would likely have been more clumsy (leading to Jung’s descriptions of animus as pompous and opinionated). The Dionysian excesses however, were socially unacceptable for both women and men. With greater social flexibility and more power, men had some scope to indulge, however surreptitiously, their Dionysian urges (particularly by combining violence with pornography). For women the release from repression was more difficult, hence likely to be more explosive, less controllable, so inevitably pathologised.

There has been a loosening and broadening of the Logos focus as this century has progressed, not least through the influence of psychological theories such as those of Freud and Jung. Apollo has been displaced, in part at least, by Hermes as the archetypal image personifying this shift. Jung himself (CW 13) was intrigued by Hermes, messenger, magician, trickster. In terms of a psychodynamic approach to psyche, Hermes as messenger or psychopomp can intercede between mortals (consciousness) and gods (unconscious). He can provide the “hermetic” understandings of unconscious, non-rational, numinous ways of knowing, thus expanding consciousness. In many ways he is like Christ, both bridge and buffer to the overwhelming forces of the divine and archetypal realm. He is also Luciferian, the bringer of light, but wily, clever, deceitful. It pays to be wary of him. What seem at first to be deep
psychological insights may turn out to be elaborate ego defences, talking, psychologising brilliantly and thus successfully side-stepping difficult psychological experiences.

Hermes also suits the chosen ego consciousness of this age (and as such has been taken up by post-Jungians, especially by Hillman (1990)). Hermes’s associations are many and varied, but notably, he is a phallic deity, patron of games and music and of commerce (and thieves); he is swift and elusive, both journeying and marking boundaries; above all he is master of the word, the message. Maps and messages can, of course, be inaccurate, even deliberately misleading. All these qualities have affinities with contemporary Western culture (Neville, 1995). Although still logocentric and fiercely materialistic, modern culture has diversified, especially in its intellectual concerns, attempting as it does to question, to deconstruct, some of the rigid categories of the exclusively rational, analytical bias of modern scientism.

Hermes too is quintessentially post-modern, typifying both advantages and disadvantages of this perspective. A preoccupation with the word, especially with its clever, playful use, enables the intellect to range far, make new connections as well as deconstruct old ones. However it can easily become so clever it transforms into an elegantly embroidered message, devoid of content; it becomes so self-conscious, so self-reflexive it makes scintillating references to other brilliant reflections in infinite regress, until playfulness takes on decidedly autoerotic connotations.

Although a masculine character representing a masculine consciousness, Hermes can equally have appeal for women who share this consciousness. Especially appealing, after the restrictions of the Apollonian, are the scope and plurality of approaches, the playfulness, the acknowledgment of, and access to other, often unconscious ways of knowing. This hermetic presence may be
found in the conscious intellectual orientation of women or as projected animus. Psychoanalytic feminists exploring Lacan, a truly mercurial character, provide an obvious example here, using as they do, the idiosyncratic logocentrism of Lacan’s psychoanalysis as a stepping off point for their varied and complex elaborations (Grosz, 1990; Mitchell & Rose, 1982). In reference to the association made in the previous chapter between Lacanian psychoanalysis, postmodernism and Athene, it is intriguing that, like Athene, Hermes is the child of the grand patriarch Zeus.

So what of Eros in all this? As noted earlier, he shares certain qualities with Hermes; both are tricky, swift intermediaries of the gods. Where Hermes excites the mind, Eros aims straight for the heart. Yet it would be dangerous to simply equate Hermes with intellect and Eros with feelings; that would be playing into the hands of the tricksters. Hermes also engages the emotions, delighting and fascinating his disciples. Then, as M. Esther Harding (1955) demonstrated, Eros stands not only for positive aspects of relatedness, but for the full spectrum from love to hatred. Eros plumbs the depths of these emotions, well beyond their appropriate civilised forms, the cosy domestic relationships at which women are supposed to excel. He also fires the intellectual passions, the love of Truth, Beauty and Goodness so dear to the Socratic tradition.

Eros’s intercessions are more narrowly focused than Hermes’s. Eros deals in passionate love, but also in hate. Most conspicuously he is involved in making others “fall” in love; in strong emotional attachments; in erotic possession. As a modern collective phenomenon this might have something to do with the Western addiction to romantic love. Most interpersonal arrangements, in public life and even in private life, are, ideally, undertaken in a spirit of clear thinking, common sense and reason. The exception has been
the ideal for a close, long-term relationship; here people are expected to fall in love. The degree to which the partners are passionately possessed by each other and overtaken by emotion, is the degree to which, it is implied, they have the necessary and only basis required for a successful relationship. If people happen to fall out of love, the negative emotions are likely to be just as extreme. Perhaps most people are more realistic than this, but romantic love and sentimental attachments are still touted as desirable states, with the implication that truly fine relationships, that is ideal relationships, just happen, they do not require work; in fact, to work at it could be seen as unhealthy manipulation of both relationship and partner. Relationships other than the romantic, such as friendships, professional associations, marriages of convenience, even parent/child relationships, are not typically seen as connected to Eros, any eroticism is usually disapproved of and denied - so by contrast, they are assumed to require effort. Perhaps both extremes, sentimental romanticism and "Platonic" relationships, suffer from the absence of Eros.

In a more general sense as well, Eros ignored might mean an inability to relate, to make connections, at the interpersonal, the intellectual and the intrapsychic levels. Alienation and lack of meaning are often proposed as the sicknesses of Western society. In seeking some twentieth century parallel to the nineteenth century collective pathology of Dionysian hysteria, I propose depression, currently very common, especially among women and young people. Both Hermes and Eros represent spirit, activity, agency, and to be depressed is to be shut out from all of these. With particular reference to Eros, depression features an inability to relate, to connect. If Eros is an aspect of the masculine typically repressed by men in modern culture, and has come to be relegated to the feminine, this fits with claims that maintaining relationships in
the private realm is women’s business. It is especially difficult and unrewarding work attempting to maintain relationships alone. When Eros is present only as animus, effectively lost to masculine consciousness (also often shared by women) he has to be made to work exceptionally hard to win and hold his love, Psyche (anima, soul), particularly when she is also being feted and dazzled by Hermes. Little wonder Eros retreats to Olympus to nurse his wounds. Should he be further provoked to revenge, the combination of his wilful spite and Hermes’s slippery magic would constitute a potent recipe for psychic confusion.

Further caution is called for as well. Eros and Psyche are archetypal images, they are of the gods. The happy conclusion to their story involved Psyche being made an immortal so that they could live publicly and eternally on Olympus, free of the trials and constraints of an ordinary mortal existence. This is Eros in close association with Logos, attaining intellectual and spiritual perfection. For von Franz (1988), the retreat to Olympus is equivalent to a return to the unconscious state. But as Jung (CW 7) and Esther Harding (1955) pointed out, Eros at human psychic level, is also concerned with the physical, with erotic and carnal desire. So to invoke him for only pure and transcendent relationships would be to paradoxically risk unconscious entanglements with the carnal aspects. Perhaps the side of Eros often expressed in animus at present is too much concerned with the heavenly, so that relatedness has come to be consciously compartmentalised and refined into something as insubstantial as a sentimental Valentine cupid. More complete appreciations of relatedness are only dimly apprehended. At its stereotypical worst, in heterosexual relationships, women accuse men of a failure to include relationship, a failure to include feelings, in sexual activity. While men, not finding much of Eros at all in themselves, cannot understand why some women
insist on dragging emotional, psychological issues into sexual encounters. Eros, “the great binder and loosener” (CW 10, § 255), might be wreaking revenge here.

When Eros is ignored, some of the valuable positive qualities which are lost are those connected directly with Psyche, with soul or anima (further connections here with Aphrodite and Demeter, as aspects of the feminine, would be worth considering if space permitted). After all her tribulations, it was with, and for, Eros that Psyche finally transformed from the frightened, helpless innocent to the mature woman. Then followed public recognition and acceptance, and the birth of Voluptas. For Eros to be fully involved in this process psychically, he must be present in the conscious psyches of women and men, as well as in animus. Then his active, energetic spirit can better fire individual and collective endeavour. He is able to act directly through the conscious masculine psyche relating to the conscious feminine psyche, or, as animus to anima, or perhaps as animus to animus as well. These many permutations ensure a richer, even if a more bewildering range of possibilities.

**In Summary; Re-masculating Eros:**

The story of Eros and Psyche presents an interesting interplay between masculine and feminine, giving considerable space and value to the feminine; space to Psyche’s own experience and to her interactions with Aphrodite as representing conflicting qualities of the feminine. The trials imposed by Aphrodite on the deserted and despairing Psyche tell a tale of the classic hero’s quest, a rare example with a female hero. The form in which the story has survived and has been interpreted however, is slanted towards a masculine, patriarchal appreciation. Yet such myths with their inherent bias, are the inheritance of Western culture, so they can still offer surprising insights when considered critically. An animus interpretation - Eros as animus - provides a
way of turning back, of reclaiming and reinterpreting this story from a woman’s perspective. The aim must necessarily be to include a woman’s experiences as human being, as feminine and as animus. Eros is simultaneously an aspect of the masculine and central to women’s experience. This provides an alternative perspective to the meaning of Eros as relatedness.

Paradoxically this puts a different slant on “reclaiming the feminine”. For women, it is one way of perceiving women’s nature beyond the constraints of the feminine as anima, that is the feminine as a projected male construct, even if it carries the positive connotations of “relatedness”, “nurturing” and the like. For men, on the other hand, getting in touch with their “feeling side” might be rather more complex than simply acknowledging their “feminine side”. If encouraged away from his sulk, Eros could provide the spirit and energy to once again enliven the debilitated and despairing Psyche, about to succumb to a deathly sleep.

**Out In The Cold With Psyche:**

*And now we were there. The iron girdle, and the chain that went from it about the gaunt trunk (there was no bark on the Tree) hung there and made a dull noise from time to time as they moved with the wind. There were no bones, nor rags of clothing, nor marks of blood, nor anything else.*

“How do you read these signs Bardia?” said I.

“The god’s taken her,” said he, rather pale and speaking low (he was a god-fearing man). “No natural beast would have licked his plate so clean. There’d be bones. ...”

I had not thought of our journey’s being so vain, nothing to do, nothing to gather. The emptiness of my life was to begin at once.

Over and again Psyche disappears, just when those around her are so sure they have her. She is so beautiful, so captivating, people are polarised by desire or envy; they want her as lover, healer, ornament, or they want her out of the way. She is a shining ideal, exquisite, unique. What an asset! What a threat! She is the ideal form against which another woman might measure herself, the ideal possession against which a man might measure his worth. She becomes such a beautiful thing it is enough to make you weep.

Undoubtedly Psyche’s charms personify stereotypical feminine beauty, but her story, the story of the particular woman called Psyche, also dramatises the objectification and alienation of the ideal “other”. Her natural physical perfection, accidental source of notoriety, leads to adoration by her countrymen, furious jealousy in both Aphrodite and Psyche’s sisters, love and desertion by Eros. Psyche engenders tumultuous responses simply by her physical presence and then finds herself buffeted about by the consequences - and the consequences inevitably involve exclusion and exile.

Psyche is offered as a sacrifice by her family, banished to a remote hill to await her dreadful death. She is rescued by Eros, but again she is confined, in lonely isolation, in Eros’s sumptuous but secret palace. After breaking her promise to Eros, she is forced into total exile, shunned by humans and gods, all of whom are too afraid of Aphrodite’s vengeance to offer any assistance to the desperate, pregnant wanderer. It is as if her presence creates such an excessive response, such agitation, she, Psyche (breath), is eventually forced out, expelled. Idolising, even idealising, can be suffocating.

In the version of the story told by C. S. Lewis (1976) the mysterious otherness of Psyche is heightened. The story is told by Orual, who is obsessed by her delightful young step-sister Psyche, but is also prone to continual
misunderstandings of who Psyche is, or what she wants of life. Psyche remains mysterious; what is revealed of her nature comes obliquely, through Orual, so what is revealed is by default, in perceived contrast to the dark, unlovely narrator. I find myself anxiously engaged in Orual’s experiences, frustrated when she fails to foresee what seems obvious to me, shaken when I fail to anticipate, and am ultimately saddened but accepting of the resolution of her difficult life.

Orual, in Jungian terms, can be understood as Psyche’s shadow. Where Psyche is beautiful, sunny, compliant and feminine, Orual is ugly, intense, stubborn and mannish. Like an even more negative shadow archetype, Grendel, the monster of the Beowulf story (Gardner, 1976), the great satisfaction of this story of a shadow character is that, not only is the character highlighted, given a voice and a stage on which to perform, but in the process (to continue the light and shade metaphor) the entire focus is moved so that many other dark and shady corners are illuminated. So in a sense it is Psyche who is the shadow, albeit a particularly bright, though nonetheless mysterious, shadow of Orual.

In a fantastic but thoroughly psychological resolution of the separation of the two extremes of female types, dark and light shadows, Lewis had Orual, finally and painfully realise that Psyche was, in fact, herself. The precious and mysterious child Orual had attempted to control and possess, and whom she had finally forced into exile in her misguided attempts at rescue, is finally encountered again in a vision Orual experiences at the very end of her long life. “Two figures, reflections, their feet to Psyche’s feet and mine, stood head downward in the water. But whose were they? Two Psyches, the one clothed, the other naked? ... ‘You also are Psyche’, came a great voice.” (Lewis, 1976, pp. 307-8). Although her life had been full and successful in the public sense -
she was a dedicated and respected ruler - Orual lived in a state of permanent
grieving for the self, the soul, she had inadvertently banished in her
overzealous protectiveness. The post-Jungian preoccupation with “soul-
making” (Hillman, 1990) might be a similarly hazardous preoccupation. In
“soul-making” might I not be attempting (like Orual) to educate, domesticate
and ultimately contain, possess and restrict soul? Couldn’t I instead, explore
my own motives, search my own soul, to better understand why and where to
go searching for Psyche? Perhaps the more ambiguous “soul-searching” is
more appropriate in this fragile terrain.