A Jungian Reading of the *Kalevala* 500–1300?: Finnish Shamanism—The Patriarchal Senex Figure. [Part 4: Conclusion]

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Abstract
Jungian interpretation of the *Kalevala*, focusing on the character of Väinämöinen and his role as Shaman. Part 1 gives an introduction to the *Kalevala* and to shamanism, then analyzes the creation myth in the *Kalevala*. Part 2 analyzes Väinämöinen's transformation of the land, the felling of the oak, the confrontation with Joukahainen, and the death of Aino. The third part discusses Väinämöinen's “second encounter with the anima figure in the being of Louki’s daughter.” The conclusion is a Jungian analysis of Väinämöinen's “night-sea journey” to the Abode of the Dead; his journey within the body of the giant Antero Vipunen; and his fashioning of an “instrument of eternal joy,” the *kantele*.

Additional Keywords
Jungian analysis of The Kalevala; The Kalevala—Characters—Antero Vipunen; The Kalevala—Characters—Väinämöinen; The Kalevala—Jungian analysis; Music in The Kalevala; Night sea journey; Patrick Wynne
The Night-Sea Journey

Like Osiris and Christ, as well as countless other mythical and historical figures who experienced their night-sea journeys, so Vainamoinen must still undergo his supreme test to further his initiation—the ego’s encounter with the Self. Such an ordeal requires the hierophant to overcome the terrible vicissitudes which take place with a regression into the collective unconscious: the drowning of the ego within its tumultuous waters; its fragmentation and assimilation of its components into light. Only after passing such an ordeal is the ego strengthened, able to function in harmony with the Self; only then is the shaman/poeT born into a higher sphere of consciousness. To come through the night-sea journey successfully requires great inner strength, psychological health; it is comparable to the life/death struggle.

Shamans must go through such a night-sea ordeal in order to become thoroughly conversant with their art/science. In Vainamoinen’s case, he must build the ship he will use to carry his psyche as a cohesive whole. The outer carapace of the ship must be strong and able to resist attack from all types of jagged rocks and ocean swells. Similar in shape and function to the womb, the ship encloses and protects; allowing everything within it to circulate and take nourishment, as blood through the arteries. All parts of the psyche are, therefore, to be strengthened, cooperating in the struggle facing the hero as shaman/hero. When called upon consciousness will revail, even when cataclysmic events seek its annihilation. Thus will the ego be saved from possible mutilation or innmunication by the Self.

Vainamoinen puts all his wisdom and skilT to work in the construction of the ship that will carry him to his goal. This time he sets about his task not because of a sudden impulse, the proddings of an anima figure, but because of a real inner necessity. Vainamoinen again has recourse to Sampsa, “the Spirit of Arable,” that dwarf figure who helped to seed the land with trees, that small being who lies buried within his unconscious—as an impulse, an Einfalt—and can be summoned into consciousness during moments of need. The little spirit, as before, works meticuiously. First he consults the trees around him—aspens, evergreens, oaks—formed into one powerful architectural form. Then old Vainamoinen, eternal sage, made a boat skillfully, by magic singing fashioned a vessel from the shattered remains of a single oak, from the fragments of the fragile trees. He sang a charm, made fast the bottom; he sang a second, joined the planks; soon he sang a third charm (p. 97).

Vainamoinen chants as he builds, intoning but a single note for long periods of time, relating this basic tone to others in nuanced sequences, vibrations that drone on and on with hypnotic effect. The singleness of purpose activates both physical and psychical powers, inclining them to focus in his favor. The very wood itself is entranced and bewitched with hypnotic effect. The singleness of purpose activates others in nuanced sequences, vibrations that drone on and on to further his initiation—the ego’s encounter with the Self. Such an ordeal requires the hierophant to overcome the terrible vicissitudes which take place with a regression into the collective unconscious: the drowning of the ego within its tumultuous waters; its fragmentation and assimilation of its components into light. Only after passing such an ordeal is the ego strengthened, able to function in harmony with the Self; only then is the shaman/poeT born into a higher sphere of consciousness. To come through the night-sea journey successfully requires great inner strength, psychological health; it is comparable to the life/death struggle.

Vainamoinen will now begin his night-sea journey. Unlike Charon’s ship which ferried the shades from one side of the River Styx to the other, or Amda Buddha who considered himself the “craftsman of life,” Vainamoinen of his own free will decides to immerse himself in the insalubrious domain of the dead. The chthonic powers he encounters are archetypal in dimension; forces with which he has not yet had to contend: Death’s Daughters, who are described as “stumpy,” “ugly,” “mean” and “vicious.” Negative female figures, which is the case with many guardians of secrets and treasures in myths and fairy tales, they are described as voracious dragons; their claws and jaws ever ready to pounce and crush any victim approaching them. That Vainamoinen encounters these spirits and is unafraid of them indicates his growing inner strength, his ability to face the most insidious of beings.

These horrific maidens are archetypal images: destructive and poisonous in every sense of the word, they are carriers of spiritual and physical disease. To expose oneself to them is to experience the very origin of a thousand different scourges. Described as having pustulating skin, each resonates over a particular illness: Puericity, Colic, Gout, Ritisis, Ulcers, Scabes, Cancer, Plague, and a “fatal spirit, a creature eaten up with envy” that is not given a name. Since in medieval times disease was believed to be caused by the soul’s departure from the body, a cure consisted in the recapturing of this force through exorcism. Plague, interestingly enough has been embodied throughout history as female. Like the Erinyes, those Greek goddesses of revenge, who also worked for the Terrible Mother, so Death’s Daughters perform their torture in vulnerable areas where darkness, fear, and repression reign supreme.

Despite the horrors that assault Vainamoinen, he remains fearless. Rather than shrink from their sight, he makes demands upon Death’s Daughters. He wants to be taken to the opposite bank of the river—to the land of the really dead. They comply. He is received by Tuonetar, the Queen of Tuo­nela, the Abode of the Dead, who offers his beer to drink.

Steadfast old Vainamoinen looked long at his stout crops were spawning inside, reptiles crawling on the sides (p. 100).

Vainamoinen refuses it. To get drunk, to lose his lucidity would be his undoing. Another reason is also instrumental in his refusal: to partake of beer (or water) in the Abode of the Dead in myths of many lands, meant to remain bound, imprisoned in this darkened domain—to forever forgo ego-consciousness. To withdraw into such a state of oblivion is to be a prey to circular energetic powers, to be shut up in the collective unconscious—to have insanity prevail. A shaman, a master of magic, is on the contrary always lucid, even paradoxically when experiencing a cataleptic trance. The shaman observes his activities at all times and is not swallowed up by their subliminal worlds: he believes he sees his soul leaving his body and is aware of the function of
every limb during his voyage heavenward or into the depths of the earth.

Vainamoinen’s refusal to drink the beer, angers the Queen of the Dead, and she informs him that he will never leave her realm, never return to the upper world—to consciousness. He has entered a sphere from which there is no return. Suddenly Vainamoinen falls into a deep sleep, and a net of iron mesh a thousand fathoms long with sharp interlocking teeth, is thrown over him. Never will he succeed in extricating himself from such a barrier, the Queen of the Dead exclaims. Vainamoinen, however, calls his knowledge of magic and his wisdom, which he has increased during his previous ordeals, and turns himself into a snake—he “creeps in the form of an iron reptile” (p. 101) and slithers through the sharp metal teeth, unharmed. He has learned that difficulties may be broached from several vantage points, and if one course does not solve a problem, another may. That he chooses the form of a snake—a symbol of wisdom in the East as well as of immortality (the annual moulting of its skin), indicates that he realizes he needs to be in touch with the elements it represents: the earth’s eternal natural rhythms of death and renewal. Snakes are also considered in Kunda-lini yoga, as energy centers. Every individual has his own snake which is coiled up in his lower extremities; its energetic powers are exercised and strengthened through special rituals during which time these lower forces are made to travel upward within the body until they reach the head—then focus upon a centrally located spot on the forehead which is believed to be endowed with “divine intelligence.” The fusion of energy and mind augments spiritual and physical insight. Snakes in their ambivalence and mysterious ways also cure as well as kill. If properly approached and handled with care, a serpent may yield its knowledge as it did to Aesculapius who had immortalized it on his caduceus. By transforming himself into a snake—frequently identified with the feminine in patriarchal cultures—and now used by the Queen of the Dead to destroy Vainamoinen, he is in effect availing himself of her power to save himself. His encounter with the feminine force, reminiscent of羿’s struggle with Circe, indicates a major step forward in his psychological growth.

Vainamoinen slithered through the vast iron net; its murderous teeth arranged in soldier-like formation, proved to be harmless because he knew how to extricate himself from the tentacles of impending doom—to use this force to his advantage. His eight-sea journey has further increased his understanding of the powers and wiles of the unknown; his own archetypal images which he has also experienced and succeeded in understanding and accepting as part of his world—both inner and outer. “Many have got there, few have come from there, to the home on the eternal cottages of the Abode of the Dead” (p. 102). Vainamoinen, realized how perilous his journey had been; he also knew that to become a great shaman/poet, a period of indwelling was a necessity: during this period one unearths one’s own archetypal images which he has also experienced and not allow it to destroy one’s course, but to adapt to the event in question, build upon it. It is this attitude now that increases Vainamoinen’s energies: it forces him to draw upon himself to seek out his own remedy. The fact that the giant swallows the shaman/poet is also of great significance psychologically. The mouth, the orifice from which breath and the spoken word emerges, represents an ontological condition. Logos, spiritus, consciousness make their secrets known through the mouth. The mouth is the vessel through which man reveals his creative power to transform the material force into an intangible force, the mouth is armed with teeth and tongue, connecting the uncreated realms of darkness with the created world of light. It is a vehicle through which fantasy is transformed into fact, energy into activity. That the giant’s dream of being eaten by the giant’s components is inactive, the task of his psyche towards the inner man, those archetypal forces within him. Unlike the volatile female principles Vainamoinen encountered in the Abode of the Dead in the form of archetypal imagery, the giant’s components are inactive. Slumbering most of the time, immersed inrawn rather than in brain, the giant offers Vainamoinen direct contact with vital organs: knowledge buried deep within the flesh of existence. Unimpeded, Vainamoinen travels deep into the giant’s stomach. Identified with the transformative process, since this organ takes in food in one state and alters its consistency and quality via its gastric juices, so knowledge, too, is to be gained by Vainamoinen within the gut area, calling upon the heart, liver, intestines, and bladder in the process. The giant’s entire inner system works on behalf of Vainamoinen. Each organ imparts its special knowledge to the shaman/poet. Still Vainamoinen seeks to discover more. He has recourse to art/artifact. He will practice metallurgy: from his shirt he makes a forge: his elbow, the hammer. He drives the iron cowlstaff into Antero Vipunen’s head, his jaw throbbing. Suddenly, Vainamoinen’s “right foot slipped, the left foot slid,” he finds himself in the giant’s mouth. The huge creature opens his jaws wide and Vainamoinen is swallowed up along with his equipment. Once again darkness prevails. Vainamoinen’s ingenuity has been heightened to even greater heights; his previous ordeals. He accepts his fate, much as Jonah did when he was swallowed by the whale. Instead of declining into a state of passivity, despair, he builds himself a small boat within the giant’s belly; with this, “he rows, he glides lightly from end of gut to end of gut” (p. 105).

That Vainamoinen’s foot slipped during the course of his work emphasizes, once again the importance in this life of fate or chance. No matter how much wisdom and reason humankind plans in the course of his or her life, there is always something beyond anyone’s control and understanding are ever present to disrupt the ordered sequence. What is important, is the individual’s ability to take the unpredictable into account and not allow it to destroy one’s course, but to adapt to the event in question, build upon it. It is this attitude now that increases Vainamoinen’s energies: it forces him to draw upon himself to seek out his own remedy. The fact that the giant swallows the shaman/poet is also of great significance psychologically. The mouth, the orifice from which breath and the spoken word emerges, represents an ontological condition. Logos, spiritus, consciousness make their secrets known through the mouth. The mouth is the vessel through which man reveals his creative power to transform the material force into an intangible force, the mouth is armed with teeth and tongue, connecting the uncreated realms of darkness with the created world of light. It is a vehicle through which fantasy is transformed into fact, energy into activity. That the giant’s dream of being eaten by the giant’s components is inactive, the task of his psyche towards the inner man, those archetypal forces within him. Unlike the volatile female principles Vainamoinen encountered in the Abode of the Dead in the form of archetypal imagery, the giant’s components are inactive. Slumbering most of the time, immersed inrawn rather than in brain, the giant offers Vainamoinen direct contact with vital organs: knowledge buried deep within the flesh of existence. Unimpeded, Vainamoinen travels deep into the giant’s stomach. Identified with the transformative process, since this organ takes in food in one state and alters its consistency and quality via its gastric juices, so knowledge, too, is to be gained by Vainamoinen within the gut area, calling upon the heart, liver, intestines, and bladder in the process. The giant’s entire inner system works on behalf of Vainamoinen. Each organ imparts its special knowledge to the shaman/poet. Still Vainamoinen seeks to discover more. He has recourse to art/artifact. He will practice metallurgy: from his shirt he makes a forge: his elbow, the hammer. He drives the iron cowlstaff into Antero Vipunen’s head, his jaw throbbing. Suddenly, Vainamoinen’s “right foot slipped, the left foot slid,” he finds himself in the giant’s mouth. The huge creature opens his jaws wide and Vainamoinen is swallowed up along with his equipment. Once again darkness prevails. Vainamoinen’s ingenuity has been heightened to even greater heights; his previous ordeals. He accepts his fate, much as Jonah did when he was swallowed by the whale. Instead of declining into a state of passivity, despair, he builds himself a small boat within the giant’s belly; with this, “he rows, he glides lightly from end of gut to end of gut” (p. 105).

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more painful spots, too, so that you will never get free, never, never at all unless I get to hear charms, take along propitious spells, hear enough charms, thousands of magic formulas (p. 111).

Finally, Vipunen begins reciting charms of all types: against injuries, disease, misadventures, exorcisms, intimidation. Still Vainamoinen has not heard what he wants to know. Only in the heart—the center of being, the focal point of life—can the answer be found.

The heart and lungs are the seat of the soul, according to mystics ranging from the ancient Egyptian sages to present-day Hindu practitioners of occult art. For this reason, the warriors in certain cultures eat the heart and lungs of those they vanquish: to better absorb their vital force. The heart is the focal point of feeling and affectivity. The knowledge emanating from this organ is not cerebral, but emotional; its responses, therefore, are frequently more important and more profound than those resulting from the cerebral cortex. That blood emanates from the heart and circulates through the entire body, indicates that this organ is responsive to the needs of the whole person rather than to a specific area. The Taoist masters understood that the heart was the focal point of cardiac rhythms, and for this reason learned to master it according to their will. They thereby combined thinking and feeling; in so doing, life’s polarities work together rather than being at odds. What had been assigned as an inferior or superior function within the psyche becomes better balanced. This is the lesson Vainamoinen has to learn.

When Vainamoinen, therefore, strikes at the heart—the heart of the matter—the giant yields and "opened his chest of words" (p. 111). His "chest" contained the secrets hard to attain—the Treasures of Tradition, the Tables of the Law—verbal spores. Unlike Pandora’s box that was opened out of curiosity, Vainamoinen’s quest is more consciously purposeful. The fruit of his work allows consciousness to grow and to do so, he perfects himself as shaman/poet—aiding humanity in overcoming their own trials.

Once Vainamoinen experienced the rhythmic chants emerging from the vital organ itself, the words and sounds communicated to him took on greater meaning and impact. Vipunen intoned his knowledge in the stillness of mind/body—in the timeless universal world soul. The shaman/poet learned how to cure souls of depression and sorrow, of worldly cares. Not from the head exclusively, as Plato had dictated in his world of Ideas, also from the belly sphere, thereby bringing feeling and emotion into what would otherwise have become a dry, stale, cerebral domain.

Vipunen’s pain grew intense. Still Vainamoinen hammered, cut, and fired his metals within the giant’s belly. Then Vipunen opened his mouth wide and allowed his captive to escape—tore off his message to mankind.

Old Vainamoinen set out from the mouth of the man of great learning, from the belly of the man of great knowledge (p. 112).

Eventually Vainamoinen builds his boat and sails onto other adventures. Solitary, as is the trajectory of the chosen one—the being who has been assigned to lead his people—he understands and accepts his lot. He knows now that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy that he will never be able to live on the human level. He cannot, therefore, seek out love in mortal terms nor enjoy.

Archetypal Music: the Kantele

One of Vainamoinen’s most moving adventures takes him on another journey by water. While sailing through some rapids, a large pike emerges from the deep. Since it is obstructing the boat’s course, it has to be killed. From its jawbone, Vainamoinen fashions an “instrument of eternal Joy,” the kantele.

From what was the harp’s frame? From the great pike’s jawbone.
From what was the harp’s pegs? They are from the pike’s teeth.
From what are the harp’s strings? From the hairs of the Demons’ golden.
Now the instrument was produced, the harp got ready, the great pikebone instrument, the fishbone harp (p. 274).

Bones of fish or animals are considered living entities, positive forces, frameworks for the soul and body. They were, therefore, rarely destroyed. The Sampo also vanishes during the course of the storm.

There it was fished. He sits down in the stem, sets out for the clear; the Sampo also vanishes during the course of the storm.

Shattered, some of its fragments are lost in the sea; others vanished my eternal source of joy!” (p. 286). Although the creative factor has been swept away, and with it the pleasures of life, no regrets existed on Vainamoinen’s part: “In a boat there must be no lamenting, in a vessel no whispering.” Life must pursue its course. Distress, pain, loss, are all part of the workaday world. The new, the fresh, the future, must forever be considered. “Weeping does not rid one of distress nor howling of evil days!” (p. 207). To face the realities of existence is Vainamoinen’s way.

The Sampo also vanishes during the course of the storm. Shattered, some of its fragments are lost in the sea; others are washed ashore. In keeping with the great mystical traditions of Orphism and Kabbalah, Vainamoinen starts to gather up the bits and pieces of this sacred force. He expands his energies seeking to find what has been broken, renew what has been destroyed. Hope, therefore, suppresses the despair that otherwise might have overwhelmed him.

Time passes. A boy is born to a virgin called Jarjatta. So "strange" is he, that Vainamoinen suggests that the baby be put to death. His advice is not taken. Instead, he is christened King of Karelia. Vainamoinen, angry and distraught, realizes that his worldly powers and authority have ended. Vainamoinen prophesies that one day he will again be called upon to guide his people, to instill them with strength, fiber, and energy. Before leaving in a copper boat, Vainamoinen bequeaths his newly fashioned kantele, along with his songs to those remaining behind.

He sang magically for his last time, sang up a copper boat, a copper-decked vessel. He sits down in the stem, sets out for the clear expanse of the sea.
He was still speaking as he was going, remarking as he went along:

"Let time pass, one day go, another come; they will need me again, be looking, waiting for me to fetch a new Sampo, to prepare a new instrument, fetch a new moon, free a new sun when there is no moon, no sun nor any worldly joy" (p. 336).

Earth-oriented, The Kalevala expresses the spiritual and creative yearnings of the Finnish people through its words and music, and the spectacular images and colorations. Its message, which reflects the culture of its creators, as do myths in general, is one of hope, but it is neither blind nor utopian. Rather it is that sort of realistic hope that exists at the very heart of conflict and the struggle for daily existence. In keeping with the importance given to nature, The Kalevala focuses on trees and forests, sowing and planting, seas and rivers and inland waterways.

Vainamoinen, the senex figure, shaman/poet, is archetypal in dimension. He represents an ideal for a people deeply rooted in the earth. He is a thinking principle, a light bringer to a land immersed for so many months in darkness and cold. In their vision, however, the Finns understand that too great a reliance upon a rational attitude also has its dangers: it brings aridity to a culture and to the psyche. Only with a balanced hieros-gamos, a working relationship between the polarities implicit in the life experience be effected. Such is the lesson that Vainamoinen learned. Once achieved, he offered himself to the service of humankind.

The Kalevala has been an inspiration to many creative artists. Laccadio Hearn (1882) believed that it contained "all the elements of a magnificent operatic episode... an universe for startling and totally new musical themes." Sculptors, such as Erik Cailinberg (1791-1816), who was the first to treat The Kalevala motif in that medium, inscribed his vision of Vainamoinen for eternity. Aksel Gallen-Kallela (1865-1931) created a pictorial version of Vainamoinen's Departure (1896) and a fresco entitled The Forging of the Sampo (1893). His student Alpo Sailo (1877-1955) sculpted many kantele players identified with Vainamoinen. A film, The Day the Earth Froze (1959), shot in Finland, but produced in America, was an adaptation of the Sampo episode. Perhaps the greatest spokesman of all was Jan Sibelius (1865-1957) who composed his orchestral works in the profoundly musical spirit of The Kalevala. With magic and artistry, he brought Vainamoinen to life; as the shaman/poet and kantele player predicted at the conclusion of his saga: "Let time pass, one day, go, another come; they will need me again, be looking, waiting for me... (p. 336).

Notes
22. Facts about Finland, pp. 64-77.