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A Jungian Reading of the *Kalevala* 500–1300?: Finnish Shamanism—The Patriarchal Senex Figure [Part 3: The Anima Archetype]

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

Anima in The Kalevala; Jungian analysis of The Kalevala; The Kalevala—Jungian analysis

A Jungian Reading of The *KALEVALA* 500-1300? Finnish Shamanism - The Patriarchal Senex Figure

Part III: The Anima Archetype

Bettina Knapp

Vainamoinen departs from North Farm with joy in his heart. On his way, he spies Louhi's daughter. Dressed in the Finnish traditional costume, she sparkles with beauty and vibrancy in the crystal-clear air. He is so taken by her that quite unpremeditatedly asks her to become his wife. She agrees, but only if he will first fulfill certain conditions, such as fashioning a boat without touching it.

Tests and difficulties have from time immemorial been one of the ways to gain access to one's own true love. In the days of chivalry, knights had fought to win their lady's favor. Although Vainamoinen's compliance with the young demands on the surface is not overly strange, a wise individual would have considered the circumstances and the impact of the test involved. He allowed his instinct rather than reason to prevail and ignores the fact that he has little or no understanding of the feminine principle: his feelings have only reached the germination stage; they are still only clusters of undeveloped impulses. The schism existing between his inferior feeling function and his dominant thinking characteristics has not been breached. He yields to the Joukahainen in him--his shadow--and will have to pay dearly for his rash act.

To win the admiration of the young lady, Vainamoinen brags about his great shipbuilding ability. Although in reality, he has never constructed one. The ship, a solid force that would see Vainamoinen through the dangerous waters of the unconscious bringing him safely to the other side, may be identified with ego consciousness. Blind to his limitations, allowing his inflated ego to be his guide, he neglects to consult the rational sphere of his personality and is therefore courting disaster.

Vainamoinen starts to split some logs with which to build the ship. The axe slips and wounds his knee severely. As we have already learned, the knee plays an important role in *The Kalevala*: it was on his mother's knee that the bird came to rest and build its nest before Vainamoinen's birth. The knee, therefore represents the origin and source of Vainamoinen's own identity: his strength and energy center. The fact that his knee has been cut so deeply means that he can no longer walk, indicating that his relationship with the ground--with actuality--has been injured. Since the knee spells motility and power, it may be subsumed that Vainamoinen's own thoughtlessness has immobilized him. That blood spurts out of him so powerfully, represents a decline in his energies, a diminution of that magical vital force that distinguishes the living from the dead.

Vainamoinen vainly tries to staunch the flow of blood. He puts moss on the wound, tries herbs of various kinds, applies pressure. He must find some way to heal the split, to mend what has been severed. The dichotomy within his personality, psychologically speaking, has grown too wide: the shadow and the anima are experienced only unconsciously; therefore, projecting themselves as autonomous split-offs and thus as dangerous powers.

As Vainamoinen is setting out as best he can in search of some magic formula, happens upon an Old Man who tells him that before he can make his knee whole, he must find the source of the element that caused the injury. No remedy can be effective until one understands what brought about the disruptive condition. Since Vainamoinen's axe was made of iron, he must trace this element to its source, and in that way learn how to control or work in harmony with it.

Psychologically the Old Man represents age-old wisdom. He may be identified as the spiritual embodiment of a shaman long since dead, noted for his extraordinary insight and powers. Just as Sampsa and the Copper Man emerged into consciousness when the need arose, so the Old Man emerges as a vestige from the primordial past. Similar to the patriarchal figures in a community--a priest, doctor, rabbi--the Old Man stands for the manna personality, that force existing in the collective unconscious that arises to consciousness in moments of deep stress. The Old Man is a warning principle. He puts Vainamoinen on guard as to the dangers involved in dealing impulsively with impulses and rash ways--anima and shadow types when these forces are not understood and integrated within the psyche.

Vainamoinen, however, fails to look within, to assess his deeds, feelings, and thoughts. He projects them on outer forces, namely a host of evil spirits whom he blames for his accident. It was the wizard Hiisi, Vainamoinen declares, that made the handle of the axe shake; the magician Lempo, that turned its sharp blade toward his knee; Patha that misdirected the stroke and caused the wound. These negative spirits succeeded in gaining power over him simply because Vainamoinen neglects to understand the role they played in his life, allowing his rational principle to diminish in force and scope. He did not weigh the problems involved. Overwhelmed by the maiden's beauty, he has allowed himself to be carried away once again by his inferior feeling function. He fails to consider the fact that he had no shipbuilding experience and that to create one without "touching" it, is an impossibility. Hands, which enable humankind to reach out, grab, fashion objects, are means of relating to the outside world. Without being able to grasp, manipulate, and feel life, ingredients so important in primitive societies, Vainamoinen would surely fail. Important, too, is the thought that harm awaits those who believe themselves capable of accomplishing feats outside their field of expertise.

Vainamoinen has still not accepted his past defeats: Aino's departure, his second encounter with the anima figure in the being of Louhi's daughter and the inordinately difficult demands she placed upon him. Bravura, the persona which hides inferiority, was used to face the world. The split knee, one might say in Vainamoinen's case, is a manifestation of his broken heart.

The culture hero realizes that the wise is the right course to take and follows the Old Man's advice. He goes to seek the origin of the metal that caused his wound. Iron, like all other metals, was believed to emanate from heaven. Strong, powerful, hard, and inflexible, its use has both positive and destructive consequences. As a plow, it helps in planting and thus feeding humankind. As a knife, sword, or other warlike instrument, it destroys as well as defends. Shamans use iron utensils during their ceremonies to evoke spirits and to prove their mettle. The smith's forge is made of iron. On it metals are heated, bent, and fashioned to serve humanity's needs. Considered as a kind of demiurge, because of the "miraculous" works it brings forth, iron is also known to have therapeutic powers. Prior to Pliny's time it was used to stay the flow of blood. Dr. Sydenham (1665) was one of the first physicians to have patients ingest the metal in a refined form, because he believed it was effective in increasing red corpuscles.¹⁸

Vainamoinen's quest to learn the source of this crude and energetic element aids him physically as well as psychologically. The forging and smelting process which iron must

undergo in order to become ingestible by humans, requires time and knowledge. Its consistency alters from hard to fluid; its color, from black to red, similar to Vainamoinen's nervous system which was heated and bruned with ardor for love of Louhi's daughter. The redness or fire of passion he felt in her presence had aroused sparks within him, influencing his countenance as well as his actions. Its incandescence had liquefied what had once been solid within him, spreading chaos, blindness throughout his system. So sightless had he become that when felling the tree to make his ship, he failed to pay complete attention to his task. His thoughts, like ductile metallic elements, flowed toward the object of his passion, the girl. The anima figure, unpredictable as an autonomous force in his unconscious, had caused him great harm. The joint that allowed him to walk, run, jump through life on a steady keel had been injured. Now he would have to apply particles of iron in their flaming state to his wound, to cauterize it and staunch the flow of blood. Only then will he contain the life force within him and purify the noxious and debilitating powers that caused such damage.

In time, Vainamoinen learns the secrets of iron. He returns to the Old Man and tells him: "I know the origin of iron" (p. 47). Satisfied with Vainamoinen's progress, the senex figure evokes the charm which checks the flow of blood. He also prepares an ointment that will "exorcise" the pain experienced during the healing process. Not only are pain and discomfort to be reckoned with in the physical sphere, when bones and flesh are mending; they are also part of the psychological process--as the split in the personality gradually fuses. To test the efficacy of the unguent, the Old Man mends some huge boulders, seals crevices in the mountains. He then bandages Vainamoinen's knee with strips of silk.

Then old Vainamoinen already felt a real relief. He soon got well, his flesh grew fair... healthier than before, finer than in the past (p. 54).

Vainamoinen raises his "eyes upward" in gratitude. The pain of the ordeal he has experienced has taught him that bravado and arrogance nearly severed his knee--his personality. What he has not yet understood, however, is that despite the iron's hardness and strength, it rusts and flakes when exposed too long to the elements. So too the anima, when projected indiscriminately and unconsciously onto another person, can likewise lead to a fragmented psyche.

When Vainamoinen finally reaches home he suggests to Ilmarinen, Master Smith and beater of iron, that he make a Sampo. Second in rank to the shaman, the smith in northern medieval times was constantly at work in the community to ward off evil spirits. Since he handles fire, forging instruments of war as well as for sorcery, he was believed to be a seer able to penetrate inner realms where metal is born and evolves.¹⁹ The Kalevala gives the entire history of iron, from its creation and gestation to the finished product. Identified with intelligence the forge and the smith--Ilmarinen in this case--were frequently associated with the fire of thought and meditation, and with the libido as well. That a forger succeeded in hammering a finished article out of a formless mass, made him a miracle worker and his forge, a theophany in primitive societies.

Ilmarinen arrives at North Farm and goes to work to bring the Sampo into existence. In a breathlessly exciting as well as terrifying interlude, the reader is shown the smith at work. The fire blazes, burns, and glows. From within its flowing embers, which Ilmarinen observes with extreme attention, there first emerges the bow of a boat. He removes it from the flames, examines it, is dissatisfied, smashes it, and throws it back. The same thing happens with other forms that he shapes: a heifer with golden horns, a plow with silver handles. A perfectionist, only a flawless object will satisfy his creative urge.

Then on the third day he came upon a marbled stone, a big block of rock. There the craftsman stopped, the smith built a fire; one day he made a bellows, the next he set up the forge, the craftsman Ilmarinen, eternal smith,

thrust the things into the fire, his work down to the bottom of the forge (p. 59).

Ilmarinen's forge is reminiscent of the great furnaces worked by the Taoist masters, those organizers of the created world, fashioners of so many wonder-working instruments. It also recalls the Nibelung dwarfs who shaped the magic helmet, Tarnhelm, and the mysterious sword, Nothung, in Wagner's *Ring* cycle.²⁰ As the fire blazes, the bellows sound, the anvil rings, so the Finnish counterpart of the Grek Goid Hephaestos, indulges in the alchemical dictum: *Solve et Coagula*--nothing substantial and valuable can be made until the hardest of elements can be made to flow like water; only then are new unions and alloys brought into existence; psychologically speaking, a reconstituting of views and attitudes toward life.

Ilmarinen's forging of the Sampo ushers in a whole new dimension into The Kalevala: the personification of metals, the humanization of inanimate forces. Nature, both within and without the earth seems to awaken, to tingle with life and activity, energized as if by some spectacular force. As the fire burns and glares, the molten metal acquires an audible voice. The shriek of the metal as it burns, and then is hammered and shaped, is again symbolic of the difficulties involved in trying to change one's life course, in altering the accustomed thrust of certain habits and relationships. The Sampo, like the Philosopher's Stone, is a complexio oppositorum. Within its essence lies a treasure, a mysterious alliage, a meditative device similar to a mandala, healing those who see into it and learn from the experience.

Ilmarinen, the Master Smith, brings the Sampo into being on the third day.

He bent down to look at the bottom of his forge; he saw that a Sampo was being born, a lid of many colors forming. Then craftsman Ilmarinen, eternal smith, taps away fast, pounds away spiritedly. He forged the Sampo skillfully: on one side a grain mill, on the second side a salt mill, on the third a money mill. Then the new Sampo ground away, the lid of many colors went round and round; it ground a binful in the dawn, one binful of things to eat; it ground a second of things to sell, a third of household supplies (p. 60).

The Sampo incarnated the needs of a culture, of a people whose lives were arduous and whose future was always precarious. As such, it brought happiness and prosperity to North Farm. It was composed of commodities of all types, foods and staples that were lacking in the workaday world. The Sampo fed both spiritually and physically, the hungry and starving communities. As a hierophany, it answered a deep-seated desire: humankind's wish to be connected with celestial and earthly spheres, thereby empowering them to block out and immobilize evil forces. Winter snows and iced-over waterways that made hunting and fishing so difficult were some of the nearly overwhelming odds against which these northern peoples struggled. The Sampo's presence developed in the people a new sense of belonging that helped them stave off melancholy, feelings of loneliness and alienation which corroded their beings during the long bleak winter months. The Sampo represented activity, fertility, and hope for those who believed in its power.

Footnotes

18. The occult and Curative Powers of Precious Stones, p. 468.
19. Shamanism, p. 470.
20. Robert Donnington, Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols, p. 98.

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Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965): p. 198

¹² Pictures: notes to Plate 47