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Active Imagination, individuation, and role-playing narratives

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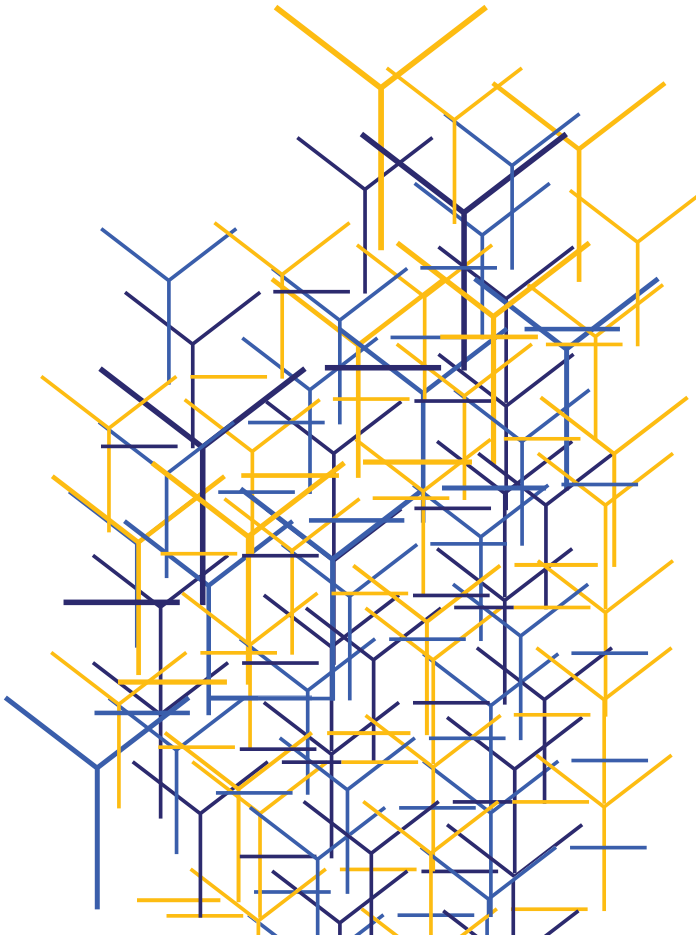
Abstract: This article examines Carl Jung's psychoanalytic processes of imagination and individuation, from interdisciplinary perspectives of role-playing, of Jung's psychology and drama therapy. For Jung, active imagination is a process by which the person engages in an awakening, creative exploration of his own psyche through free play of fantasy, narrative, and dialogue with different "characters" representing archetypes of the collective unconscious. Those fantasies are usually registered as words, images, or other forms of artistic expression. Such confrontation with one's unconscious may lead a person to become a more balanced and unified Self; a process known as individuation. Though observing the differences between the lonely therapeutic activity of active imagination and the social entertaining activity of role-playing, this article postulates that Jung's process reveals important insights within the nature of creativity. A role-playing game is an interactive activity in which the players represent characters in a narrative, having the freedom to affect fiction according to their creativity and choices. This article explores the extent to which active imagination correlates with acting in role-playing by examining the potential for shadow work and individuation within the structure of a game. Individuation is possible after the engagement in a creative play, provided that the participants judge it a valuable process, and gain some personal insights, by means of further reflection.

Keywords: Role-playing. Jung. Active imagination. Individuation. Shadow work.



1 Introduction

While the practice of role-playing is examinable from many disciplinary perspectives, some of the most intriguing approaches arise from the theories of Carl Jung (1875-1961). Jungian depth psychology examines the relationship between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind, emphasizing dreams, fantasies, and symbols. In particular, Jung was fascinated by the ways in which people find meaning through interaction with symbols, whether these images hold personal significance or connect to a larger system of meaning, such as mythology. Drawing upon Plato's concept of the ideal forms, Jung believed that certain symbols held universal significance across time and space and were inherited through evolution. He referred to these "archaic remnants" as archetypes.

Building upon previous work (BOWMAN, 2012), this article will examine Jung's psychoanaytic processes of active imagination and individuation from the interdisciplinary perspectives of role-playing studies, depth psychology, and drama therapy. For Jung, active imagination is a process in which a person engages in a waking, creative exploration of their own psyche through fantasy free play, narrative, and dialoguing with different "characters," who represent archetypes from the collective unconscious (SHAMDASANI, 2009, p. 209). These fantasies are often recorded as words, images, or other forms of artistic expression. According to Jung, this confrontation with the unconscious can lead a person to become a more balanced and unified Self, a process known as individuation. The goal of this article is to determine the extent to which active imagination correlates with enactment in leisure role-playing games, as well as to examine the potential for individuation within a gaming framework. A role-playing game is an interactive process where players portray characters in a narrative, having a degree of agency to affect the fiction according to their creativity and choices (MONTOLA, 2008, p. 23).

On the outset, key differences between active imagination and role-playing emerge. Active imagination is generally a solitary and internal process; while role-playing technically takes place within a subjective diegesis of the player-character's own consciousness (POHJOLA, 2004), the social nature of the activity distinguishes it from other creative endeavors such as novel or playwriting, as it generally transpires among two or more players. Additionally, in Jung's active imagination, the person undergoing the dialoguing is the primary ego identity of the participant, not an imagined character. Therefore, the dialoguing that occurs in active imagination, while still technically "imaginary," occurs between the person themselves and these archetypal characters, which means that less distance exists between the participant and the fiction. Thus, active imagination may be a more confrontational practice than leisure role-playing in that it offers less of a "game" framework through which to interpret these narrative interactions. Also, the intentions behind the two activities are different, as Jung's process is specifically intended for therapeutic purposes, whereas role-playing is focused on leisure; any therapeutic impact is a secondary goal or is not considered important by many players, which

limits the potential for individuation as a result of these narrative explorations.

Regardless of these distinctions, I suggest that Jung's process reveals an important insight into the nature of creativity, particularly in engaging with the archetypal and in creating new characters who offer surprising insights that otherwise may have remained hidden from the participants. Many role-players discuss the potential for the medium to have a therapeutic (BURNS, 2014), educational (BOWMAN, 2010, 2014a; ANDRESEN, 2012; LOS ANGELES, 2016), or otherwise transformative impact (BOWMAN, 2010). Players often report having learned new skills or insights from their characters or through enactment in the fictional world (BOWMAN, 2010; BELTRÁN, 2012; LOS ANGELES, 2016). Play is often touted as an excellent way for people to learn experientially from an educational psychology perspective (PIAGET; VYGOTSKY). A psychoanalytic view adds additional insights into the benefits of role-playing from the perspective of balancing the different aspects of the psyche, working through content that would be uncomfortable without the buffer of fiction, and making conscious elements of the unconscious that would otherwise remain repressed. Thus, role-playing is understandable as a variant of active imagination that takes place within a fictional framework in a group for leisure purposes (BOWMAN, 2012; BELTRÁN, 2012; BURNS, 2014). Individuation is possible under these conditions, provided that the participants find the process valuable and wish to gain personal insights from their engagement in creative play through reflection after the game.

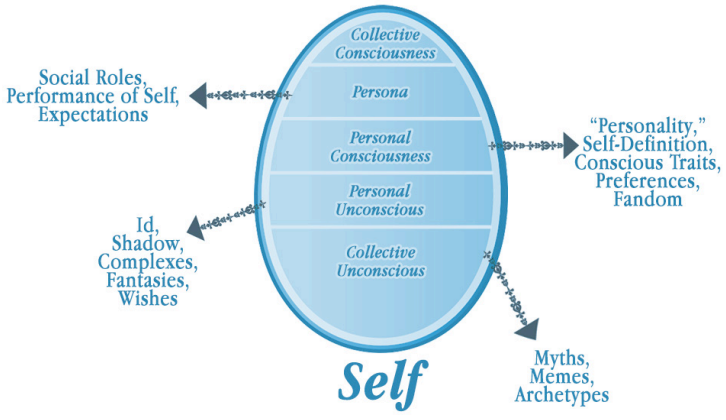
2 An Overview of Jungian Theory

Like other psychoanalysts, Jung believed that consciousness exists in layers within the mind. The most conscious layer involves the ego, or the "I" to which people refer when they consider their own identity. Additionally, Jung refers to the persona, a semi-conscious aspect of the psyche that represents the external front that a person performs -- often a role that is required by the demands of society, such as a profession or a family obligation. The second layer is made of the personal unconscious, which contains fragments of the personality that are specific to the individual, but are not totally conscious. Aspects within this personal unconscious may include dreams and memories, but also complexes, which are autonomous emotions, memories, and perceptions organized around a common theme. For Jung, these complexes are formed early in life and contain core modes of understanding reality. Also inherent to the personal unconscious is an element that Jung calls the shadow, which contains personality aspects that the conscious mind keeps repressed from itself, afraid to examine. While the shadow can include any repressed elements, it often contains facets that the conscious mind finds abhorrent, such as taboo instincts or other antisocial traits.

Finally, the third layer contains what Jung called the collective unconscious, which contains the archetypes universal to human consciousness. In Jungian psychology, the psyche will draw upon these archetypes in order to create basic systems for interpreting reality,

embedding them in the personal unconscious by intertwining them with complexes. For example, a person may draw upon the Great Mother archetype embedded within the collective unconscious, but archetypes are highly complex and often feature inherent oppositional aspects that are paradoxical and difficult for the mind to reconcile. Therefore, only a small part of that archetype will find its way to the personal unconscious, often tied to a complex around that particular concept: in this case, motherhood. In this regard, the person's relationship to a female primary caregiver early in life will likely impact the way in which they understand how relationships in general work, an instinct developed in later psychoanalytic theories of attachment (BOWLBY, 1999). For example, a kind, but often absent maternal figure might develop into an idealistic complex around motherhood and nurturing figures in adulthood, a complex that might manifest in the way that the individual views romantic partners and other females in life. Such a complex might also develop as an interest around symbolic imagery around the idealized feminine, such as the Virgin Mary or Sophia figures in traditional Christian and Gnostic mythology respectively. Alternatively, such a complex might result in a conscious value system in the ego based around a certain definition of "acceptable" femininity, such as an ideology of what a "good mother" is like, which serves as a model against which all women are evaluated. Similarly, this complex may inform the way the persona presents itself to the external world, such as a woman attempting to perform an idealized version of femininity based on her internalization of this facet of the archetype. The so-called negative elements of motherhood, such as controlling, manipulative, or neglecting aspects, might then become suppressed in the person's shadow, manifesting through dreams, fantasies, or neurotic behavior. The collective unconscious is distinct from but complementary to Durkheim's (2014) collective consciousness, which makes up the social beliefs, mores, and shared values of the group (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Visualization of the layers of Jung's consciousness from a modern perspective, integrating the collective consciousness of Durkheim as the upper layer.



Source: Developed by Sarah Lynne Bowman. Art by Mat Walker (2014).

Thus, for Jung, the layers of consciousness are interconnected and in contact with one another, regardless of the degree to which this interaction is conscious in a person. Indeed, for Jung, the goal of the therapeutic process is for people to create a greater balance between their conscious and unconscious. Like in other psychoanalysis, part of this practice includes bringing unconscious elements – such as complexes and shadow aspects – into consciousness through analysis.

However, Jung also highly valued creative output as a method of better understanding the inner workings of the unconscious, particularly a process that he termed active imagination. In active imagination, a person achieves a state of relaxed creativity in which they begin to access elements from the collective unconscious, such as archetypes. These elements may exist as static imagery, as in the case of many artistic representations or mythological symbols (VON FRANZ, 1964), but Jung found them especially valuable when they became personified characters with which the person could dialogue. These archetypal personifications can take many forms. In Jung's own active imagination experiments performed from 1913-1916 and recorded in a medieval-inspired tome called the Liber Novus -- also known as the Red Book (2009) -- they manifested in the following figures: a feminine soul or anima, which spoke to him as a bird, a human in the form of Salome, and a serpent; an Old Wise Man figure or Sage, personified as Philemon, a scholar, or the prophet Elijah, etc. These figures represent various archetypal figures, as well as both consciousness and unconsciousness to varying degrees.

For Jung, the goal of active imagination is to bring these facets of consciousness in balance with one another through contact. Interacting with archetypes in particular was a method through which humans could make meaning in their lives, which Jung found especially important in a time where the emphasis on science was taking ideological precedence over religious systems of understanding. While Jung did not advocate for any particular religious system, like many of his successors such as Joseph Campbell and Steven Larsen, Jung believed that the creation of a personal mythology was important for humans in order to make life meaningful. While archetypes themselves tend to recur cross-culturally in various mythological systems, Jung strongly advocated for people to build a personal relationship to these symbols. Through this relationship, Jung believed that people could experience individuation – a process by which the person becomes a more integrated Self, meaning that these layers of consciousness are more unified and balanced. While Jung did not believe all people would become individuated, he promoted this form of active imaginary engagement with archetypes in order to create a personal myth and to better connect with symbols that might prove illuminating during the process of life.

These personal myths sometimes take on a narrative character, such as Jung's own journey in Liber Novus. He descends into his own unconscious, which first appears as an abandoned desert, as it has lain fallow from his emphasis on conscious reasoning. By the conclusion of the tome, Jung has learned not only how to grow fruit in the desert, but has developed a personal mythology and map of the cosmos based largely upon Gnostic texts, which he finds meaningful

and explanatory. The road to this creation, however, requires Jung to confront many aspects of his own unconscious through narrative, including facing his shadow and the collective shadow of humanity, as well as building a relationship with his "soul," which he later terms anima. Thus, for Jung, the process of individuation required intensive devotion to personal investigation -- not only of archetypal aspects that one might find illuminating, such as a god-figure, but also of unappealing aspects, such as the negative characteristics of one's shadow personality.

3 Personal Mythology and Role-playing Games

Jung's investigations into active imagination took place within a larger context of early twentieth century pioneering in psychology, modern art, comparative religion, philosophy, and occultism. Sonu Shamdasani (2009) has demonstrated that these seemingly unrelated currents of investigation were in conversation with one another during this period, as these social circles overlapped in continental Europe (194-224). For example, the early Surrealist and Dadaist movements were inspired by the value psychoanalysis placed on dreams; similarly, Jung experimented with the automatic writing popular in that scene, which involved producing writing from an unconscious or supposedly supernatural source. Jung's dissertation examined the phenomenon of mediumship from a psychological perspective and much of his break with Freud centered upon arguments about whether or not such spiritual phenomena had psychological merit (CAMPBELL, 1973). During the development of Liber Novus between 1913-1930, Jung became fascinated with comparative religion and Gnosticism. The book itself is heavily influenced by Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Goethe's Faust, and Dante's Divine Comedy in theme and content (SHAMDASANI, 2009). Jung also became fascinated by the study of myth, a trend already present in anthropological works of the time by figures such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Emile Durkheim, and James Frazer. For example, although not all of these figures agreed on the nature of myth, Levi-Strauss and Jung both emphasized the importance of the principle of opposites in understanding mythology, where examining paradoxical or contradictory elements embedded within the same symbol could illuminate a deeper meaning (GRAS, 1981).

Thus, Jung's development of the theories of active imagination and individuation occurred within a specific context in which many multiple trends converged in an explosion of new thought, creativity, and analysis. This explosion was caused, in part, by the shifts occurring in scientific advancements, industrialization, and the increasing secularization of the Western world, as well as the traumatic influence of the First World War. For Jung, it became imperative that people rediscover meaning and purpose at a time when their lives could very well depend on it. However, Jung also worried about the influence of collectivist thinking, as evidenced by the rise of warring nationalism. He felt that individuation was crucial, in that the more individuals experienced a personal understanding of themselves through deep analysis and engagement with the unconscious, the less they would feel the need to project the shadow aspects of their

unconscious onto others as "enemies." In Liber Novus, for example, Jung himself undergoes a narrative in which he must slay a hero figure, only to realize that all soldiers believe they are the heroes in their own story, and that to slay the hero in someone else is to slay him in the Self. Thus, in this part of the narrative, Jung must embrace the shadow of all humankind within himself, including its warlike impulse to project its fears upon others and eradicate them. Jung comes to terms with the fact that all of these elements exist within the collective and need to be made conscious in order for balance to arise.

From this perspective, the social conditions that gave rise to the development of role-playing games exist within much of the same context as did Jung's theories, even if developed decades later. The lack of a unifying mythological structure and ritual practice still remains a concern; much of Joseph Campbell's work attempted to reestablish the universal meanings underpinning mythological systems and contextualize them for a modern audience. His student, Steven Larsen (1990), took this idea a step further, suggesting that personal engagement with old myths and themes in our lives can reinvigorate our sense of wonder. For both Campbell and Larsen, popular culture has become one of the main vehicles for people to narratively explore mythic ideals. Campbell's Hero With A Thousand Faces (1973) was a major influence on George Lucas' Star Wars, which has developed into a potent mythological universe in its own right for multiple generations of audiences (CAMPBELL, 1988). By investing the primary characters of the Star Wars series with the narrative principles of the monomyth, or hero's journey, these modern characters walk the same thematic path as the heroes of countless tales from the past, while resonating with modern audiences through the melding of the popular science fiction and fantasy themes. Similarly, Larsen praises the role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons for affording players the opportunity to engage narratively with mythological creatures, even if the players do not themselves believe in such things, including "cyclopes, demons, magic wielders, priests, alchemists, witches, shape changers, and the inevitable dragons" (LARSEN, 1990, p. 288). This paradox leads him to the revelation that "mythic imagination is alive and well in the nurseries of a demythologized society" (LARSEN, 1990, p. 289).

Role-play theorists have further emphasized the ways in which the practice can fill the need for myth in modern society. Whitney "Strix" Beltrán (2012), a depth psychologist and role-play scholar, explains that live action role-playing (larp) combines a form of active imagination, character enactment, and liminality in a way that is otherwise inaccessible through more traditional forms of media (BELTRÁN, 2012, p. 94). Beltrán continues,

> Larp is the West's solution to addressing the need to explore and connect with other roles and states of physical and emotional being -- essentially, to 'live' myth. Whether for an hour, an evening, or years of a story cycle, larp empowers players to seek out experiences they would never have in day to day life" (BELTRÁN, 2012, p. 95).

Craig Page (2014) expands upon both Beltrán's and Larsen's foundation by suggesting that larpers engage in myth at three distinct levels. In the World Myth, the fictional world is

placed in a specific setting with its own historical mythology, even if that mythology is highly disputed among factions in the game (PAGE, 2014, p. 61). He uses the example of the zombie post-apocalypse larp Dystopia Rising (2008-), describing both the immediate circumstances, in which characters are survivors attempting to fight against a mysterious Gravemind that endlessly produces zombie hordes, but also the overall mythology around what caused the apocalypse in the first place – likely a result of nuclear fallout.

Page further describes the Heroic Myth, explaining that whether or not the characters are heroic in the Campbellian sense, the players join their characters on a personal journey of transformation, whether "in the form of an actual quest or in the form of personal discovery" (PAGE, 2014, p. 63). In this regard, characters are often considered "heroes in their own story" in role-playing games and may even become legendary among the play group over time, as their enacted stories become part of the overall narrative of the game. These narratives are often conveyed after game between players in what Page calls the Player Myth (PAGE, 2014, p. 65). By transmitting stories in this fashion, the players confer status upon one another, praising each other's in-character deeds and role-playing abilities. He states, "These players, whether they realize it or not, have had a transformative effect on other players around them, not unlike the archetypal figures coming in to contact with a protagonist on their own [fictional] journey" (PAGE, 2014, p. 65).

Thus, for both Page and Beltrán, while players are not archetypal in themselves, their characters often embody archetypes, which, through the process of active imagination, can lead to collective mythmaking and the potential for personal transformation through individuation. In my view, the degree of individuation depends strongly on the degree of reflection among participants and the degree of value that they place upon their role-play experiences, as explored in the next section.

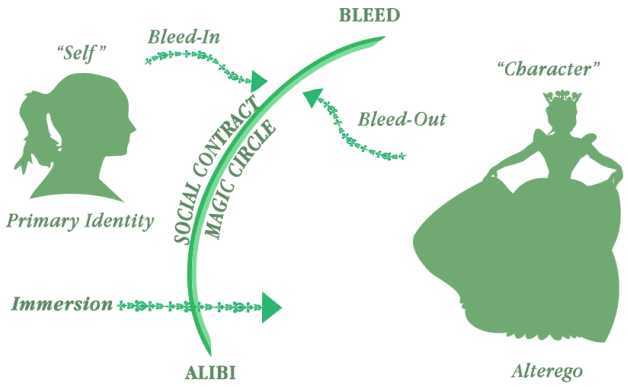
4 Role-playing and Reflection

Even when placed within a leisure framework, role-playing games – as with psychodrama, Drama in Education, and other forms of interactive narrative embodiment – allow for an opportunity for reflection. Due to the first-person audience, players are not merely spectators or readers of a text, nor do they perform for an external audience (MONTOLA; HOLOPAINEN, 2012; BOWMAN, 2015b). Instead, they embody their characters mostly for their own benefit and for engagement with their co-players. Additionally, the enactment of a character separate from the self allows for what educational drama calls *aesthetic doubling*, which is an experience of split consciousness in which the player experiences both their own and their character's subjectivities at the same time (ØSTERN; HEIKKINEN, 2001). Also, players experience immersion into a magic circle of play, in which the players temporarily pretend to believe in the rules of a fictional reality, forgoing those of the mundane world (SALEN; ZIMMERMAN, 2004). In pretending to believe, the players still acknowledge that mundane

society exists, but rather behave as their characters in the fictional world for a set amount of time (POHJOLA, 2004). Within this magic circle, the players experience some form of unfolding fictional narrative as their characters, whether it is one based in social realism or some form of high fantasy, such as Larsen's participants (1990). The act of donning a character's identity affords the player a sense of alibi, meaning that they are not fully responsible for the actions their character takes. However, sometimes players experience bleed, when emotions, thoughts, relationships, and physical states spill over from the player to the character and vice versa regardless of alibi (MONTOLA, 2010; BOWMAN, 2013, 2015a) see Figure 1.

Finally, because this magic circle is bounded by a certain timeframe and a social contract, the players both step into the game space and out of it, returning back to their mundane identities and lives (BOWMAN, 2010, 2015a). This ritualized (VAN GENNEP, 1960; TURNER, 1995) act of entering and leaving the magic circle offers a transition between the liminal and the mundane that affords additional opportunities for reflection, particularly when paired with activities such as workshopping, journaling, debriefing, and socializing with other players (BOWMAN, 2013, 2014). However, many games do not feature these ritualistic elements of entering and exiting the magic circle. Even though some games are more structured to inspire reflective conversations than others, the overall role-play framework offers all players the opportunity for personal reflection and insights to emerge as the result of play.

Figure 2: Diagram of the terminology of role-playing studies.



Source: Developed by Sarah Lynne Bowman. Art by Mat Walker.

For an example of how this role-playing process can provoke reflection, Larsen studied a group called Live Adventure Quest, a weekend-long fantasy boffer larp community in which players enact their characters physically, including using foam swords for combat. The head of the game, Billy Joe Thorpe, took seriously the psychological potential of the larp experience. He explains to Larsen his belief that the game can have a therapeutic effect:

> We have set the stage for a magical psychodrama with a complete cast of mythic creatures: heroes, villains, warriors, healers, dragons, demons, wizards, gods,

> goddesses, spirits, and fairy folk. When a character takes counsel from a particularly impressive and inspired wood god, say, the result can lead to great personal insight and growth (THORPE In: LARSEN, 1990, p. 291).

This example is reminiscent of Jung's active imagination exercises, in which he would dialogue with imaginary archetypal figures, including beings of godlike power, and gain insight from these interactions. Larsen further explores the psychoanalytic ramifications of playing a character with regard to the opposition between the conscious and unconscious mind that so concerned Jung when out of balance. He states:

> If Jung and Heraclitus are right, it would seem all too easy to fall into the "pair of opposites" within. Too much of the ego ideal, and we invoke the shadow. Too much ruthlessness, and we come face-to-face with the need for ethics. The interesting thing about a fantasy game is that it gives people the opportunity to explore their inner characterology in a playful "as-if" mode, rather than in real life, where it may indeed come out to their detriment. (Do we sometimes forget that, with the cold eye of eternity upon us, all life is "as-if" and get caught up in some of our ordinary roles much too seriously)? (LARSEN, 1990, p. 298).

Larsen touches upon a few important key observations in this passage. The first is that, while playing a character, one can explore the extremes of personality, from the intensely heroic character that focuses strongly on virtue to the selfish character who emphasizes vice and indulges the shadow side. In both cases, a character is likely to experience an eventual shift in which the unconscious oppositional part of the psyche becomes expressed, e.g., the hero who grows angry when his deeds are not praised and refuses to embark on new quests or the evil overlord who shows compassion to a child in need at a surprising time. This concept is especially interesting with regard to long-term character development in campaign games or multi-day events, where a player is immersed in a character's narrative for extended periods of time, although such a character arc also can occur in shorter game.

While some characters may never experience such a dramatic shift, the emphasis on the character as a distinct personality is notable here, as is the observation that we are "playing" at our lives and assigned social roles in ways that we may not realize. In this regard, the process of embodying a character and playing out a fictional narrative may reveal the degree to which all social interactions are, to a degree, socially constructed. Thus, many role-play theorists emphasize the work of Erving Goffman, who discusses the ways in which we perform roles on various social stages as befitting the expectations of the collective consciousness (GOFFMAN, 1953, 1974; BOWMAN, 2010, 2012). This concept that also resonates with Jung's notion of persona: a projected personality that conforms to an assigned social role.

Role-players can not only enact new types of personas, such as leaders, healers, or other social roles, but also explore more taboo elements of the human personality. Larsen touches upon the notion that characters can embody elements of the shadow, as alibi affords players the ability to obviate responsibility for their actions taken in-game. In traditional role-playing

games, the external threats of monsters – particularly dragons – represent the internal struggle with the shadow side, as our conflict with the monstrous represents the confrontation with the unconscious in the hero's journey (BOWMAN, 2010, 2012). However, as psychoanalyst Kevin Burns (2014) explains, the hero's journey is mostly appropriate in adolescence, when young people are learning to become individuals from their families. Burns emphasizes Jung's assertion that individuation is mostly a process suited for mid-life (BURNS, 2014, p. 27), in which adults have sufficiently established their place in the external society and now must confront the aspects of themselves that they have suppressed by undergoing an internal journey. Thus, the dragon-slaying and heroic embodiment of many role-playing games may focus on the outward aspects, rather than the more inward-facing reflection necessitated by individuation (BURNS, 2014, p. 36 and 37). In other words, if players do not recognize that, on some level, they hold the monstrous within themselves – i.e. the shadow – than they are missing a vital step of individuation, even when engaging with archetypes in fictional narratives.

Alternatively, Beltrán (2013) expresses concern over games that overemphasize shadow play, especially over long periods of time. For Beltrán, characters that embody shadow complexes exhibit:

> Jealousy, manipulation, greed, and similar attributes that are frowned upon in society. By taking up archetypal mantles like the anti-hero, villain, or seducer when playing a character, it is likely that a larper will face some aspect of their own shadow within the character that they enact. By directly experiencing an archetypal mode of being, there is an opportunity to learn from it and integrate it into a larger understanding of self, but that is not necessarily an opportunity that a player sets out to take. (BELTRÁN, 2013, p. 98).

Thus, while players may learn a considerable amount about themselves through enacting their shadow, Beltrán emphasizes the need for reflection and reintegration of shadow aspects into the self through the individuation process. Due to alibi, this process can remain quite difficult for some players, who rely upon the protective framework of "game" to distance themselves from their shadow. Indeed, discussing their portrayal of such negative characteristics may produce a sense of cognitive dissonance in players who do not relate such characteristics to their primary ego identity.

Nevertheless, Beltrán (2012) believes that these character experiences do impact the players. She offers the term ego bleed to discuss the phenomenon of personality characteristics that spill over from the player's identity to the character and vice versa. Beltrán distinguishes ego bleed from regular bleed in that the former refers to facets of personality rather than emotions, such as an increase in leadership or a more sophisticated capacity for manipulation. This process may be largely unconscious, which is why reflection is a necessary component for maximizing the individuation potential from role-playing. For example, in some debriefing exercises, players are asked to "de-role" by sharing an aspect of their character that they would like to take with them and a characteristic they prefer to leave behind. This practice offers two

benefits: the player can transition out of the liminal state more effectively and also manage the degree of ego-bleed they prefer to experience. While players cannot always control these psychological processes, they can become more mindful and purposeful about their own development. Educational psychologist Gabriel de los Angeles (2016) has suggested that bleed might be an important factor in the process of learning transfer in the case of educational role-playing, although this phenomenon likely applies to leisure contexts as well (LOS ANGELES, 2016, p. 21).

Burns (2014) discusses a similar process in his therapeutic practice, which applies the related theory of psychosynthesis. Developed by Roberto Assagioli, psychosynthesis presupposes that the human mind is composed of several subpersonalities -- many of whom have an archetypal character -- rather than a unified self. Psychosynthesis involves identifying these subpersonalities and encouraging them to dialogue. In this respect, Jung's active imagination experiments are interpretable as a form of personal psychosynthesis with himself as the therapist, although he did consult informally with other psychologists regarding the contents of Liber Novus (SHAMDASANI, 2009). Burns (2014) discusses an instance where one of his patients had two distinct personalities: Good Sally, or Slave Driver, and Bad Sally, or Little Playful Sally. Burns asked the patient to embody each of these subpersonalities while sitting in a chair, addressing the other in the empty chair across from her. Through this process, Burns explains how Good Sally expressed how she needed Bad Sally to pay closer attention and stop sabotaging her plans, while Bad Sally shared her preference for fun and relaxation (BURNS, 2014, p. 31). In this regard, these two elements of the patient likely represent the virtuous ego versus her shadow side. Burns (2014, p. 31) suggests, "Once the sub-personalities are brought into conscious awareness and begin to talk to each other, the individual can find a more harmonious, less contradictory way of living".

While this example arises from a therapeutic process, Burns believes that role-playing also affords such benefits, so long as the player respects the potency of the archetypes enacted in the process (BURNS, 2014, p. 37). He suggests the term "summoning" when discussing archetypal enactment, then states:

> However, even summoning is perhaps the wrong approach: gods and demons do not always do what we ask. It might be better, as we enter the liminal realm of larp, to notice instead what archetype is calling attention to itself in the way that we find ourselves playing. My most powerful larp experiences have involved this kind of occurrence. For example, playing the Nordic larp Kind and Coffee, "open night at your local BDSM club," I became the Sadist, who finds pleasure in causing harm. Playing a blind, evolving creature in the wordless larp Beginning, I became aware of myself as the Innocent waiting to be born. As it came to me that I was about to meet a world that destroys innocence, I wept for nearly ten minutes – a cathartically healing experience. Each of these archetypes, of which I am more aware since these larps, has a gift to offer me. (BURNS, 2014, p. 37).

5 Final considerations

Jungian theory has much to contribute to role-playing studies with regard to understanding the processes of character creation, enactment, and the transformational potential of these experiences. While active imagination as explored through Jung's method is an individual process with a therapeutic goal, it holds strong similarities with the group activity of role-playing. Jungian role-play scholars strongly suggest a correlation between the two processes, particularly due to the enactment of archetypes, the manifestation of shadow qualities of the personality, and the narrative dialoguing involved in the interplay between characters. Thus, if role-players take seriously the potential of their activity, they can not only learn traits from their characters through the process of ego bleed, but also can become more psychologically balanced. Role-playing affords players the opportunity to bring into consciousness repressed aspects of both the personal and collective unconscious through the play activity, which, with proper reflection, could lead to insights and greater understanding of the Self.

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