

**LIKE A LEPER MESSIAH:  
THE POSITIVE SIDES OF MEGALOMANIA IN DAVID BOWIE'S *THE RISE  
AND FALL OF ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS* (1972)**

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**Abstract**

Since the release of *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* in 1972 – a concept album about an androgynous alien rock messiah who comes to save the earth – David Bowie remained one of rock's greatest icons. My aim is to add a specific and unique context to the research of Bowie's work. The power of his legacy was musical as well as historical, mythological, and psychological. Hence, in this essay I will use Carl Gustav Jung's theory about the collective unconscious and the archetypes in order to re-read *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. I wish to discuss the subjects of megalomania, rebirth, apocalypse, the hero as a savior, and the conjunction archetypes. My purpose is to give a psychological, mythological, historical, and musical context relating to why this androgynous megalomaniac alien messiah was so important to generations of rock fans. I seek to understand the way this artwork is connected to adolescence and to the development of maturity.

In order to address this task, I would return to the history of the era and the mythology, biography and psychology of Bowie and his alter-ego: Ziggy Stardust. This psychological creativity and energy of Bowie's work, as I explain, was rooted in the history of the early 1970's and the post Counter-culture era. Bowie wanted to write the definitive obituary of the sixties, and came out with a psychological self-discovery album about the limits of rock religion. My own basic assumption is that the album projects various archetypes from the collective unconscious that gratify the audience with great spiritual forces. At the end, these archetypes shape our vocation, our everyday life actions, and our common sense of the world. The album connects us to hidden spectrum of adolescence, growing up, and the development of our maturity. Through facing the myths of Ziggy, we may think a little differently about our urge to obtain knowledge of good and evil, transcendental options, and our place in the world.

I'm not a prophet or a Stone Age man

Just a mortal with potential of a superman; I'm living on.

David Bowie, Quicksand, 1971

Who knows? Maybe I'm insane too, it runs in my family, but I always had a repulsive sort of need to be something more than human. I felt very very puny as a human. I thought, 'Fuck that. I want to be a superman.' I guess I realized very early that man isn't a very clever mechanism. I wanted to make better.

David Bowie, 1976<sup>1</sup>

Since the release of *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* in 1972 – a concept album about an androgynous alien rock messiah who comes to save the earth – David Bowie remained one of the centers of British music. Perhaps with rare exceptions, British critics were convinced that *Ziggy Stardust* was one of the most important events of rock during the seventies. It seems that *Ziggy Stardust* and the overall work of Bowie stand as an important gene in British music. It is well evident in the whole glam rock movement, post-punk artists (*Joy Division, Bauhaus*), new romanticism (*Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, and Boy George's Culture Club*), new wave electro pop (Gary Numan), and Britpop. All of these styles and artists – few would argue against it – were influenced by Bowie's works.

In America, the story was somewhat different. Bowie's journey to success over the Atlantic was slower and harder. In comparison to other British superstars from his generation, such as Elton John, Led Zeppelin, and The Who, he lagged behind in terms of records sold. *Ziggy Stardust* sold only a half million records in America (and seven million copies around the globe) during the golden age of rock music consumerism. Perhaps it was the result of mid-west old conservatism with Bowie's gay and androgynous images. Yet, in important parts of America, Bowie was a cultural sensation.

Critical receptions to Bowie in America were also more reluctant in comparison to the UK. Richard Cromelin from *Rolling Stone* magazine gave the album "at least 99", but until *Young Americans* (1975) and *Station to Station* (1976), influential critics, such as Lester Bangs and Robert Christgau, referred to Bowie's albums with less enthusiasm. The noisy Lester Bangs believed that Bowie was a pale imitation of Lou Reed, while claiming that he always felt that *Ziggy Stardust* was nonsense with its intention to be "George Orwell and William Burroughs while you've only read half of *Nova Express*."<sup>2</sup> In comparison to the tremendous impact Bowie had on the UK pop culture, in America his influence over other artists was more moderate.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Crowe, Cameron, 12 February 1976, "Ground Control to Davy Jones", *Rolling Stone* 206.

<sup>2</sup> Bangs, Lester, 1986, "Station to Station", in: *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung: The Work of a Legendary Critic: Rock 'N' Roll as Literature and Literature as Rock 'N' Roll*, Greil Marcus (Ed.), New York: Anchor, p. 162. Greil Marcus liked *Hunky Dory* (1971), though claimed that the artist has succeeded in creating an album about a person with no inner world. Christgau gave B+ to *Ziggy Stardust*, and in the re-release of the album in 1990, *Rolling Stone* magazine graded it with only 3.5/5 stars.

<sup>3</sup> Famous American artists and bands who were influenced by Bowie are The Runaways, Madonna, Marilyn Manson, Lady Gaga, Nine Inch Nails.

In any case, in spite of the different reactions to Bowie, he remained a cultural phenomenon around the globe: an icon, a myth, a musical hero, and a riddle. In his obituary to Bowie's death in early 2016, Rob Sheffield from *Rolling Stone* magazine declared him the greatest rock artist ever.<sup>4</sup>

Relatively surprisingly, the academic discourse concerning Bowie's world and work was not as wide as we would have anticipated. However, during the last decade more books on the subject have been published, with collections of essays from different fields – musicology, sociology, art history, literary theory, philosophy, politics, film studies, and media studies.<sup>5</sup>

My aim is to add a specific and unique context to the research of Bowie's work. The power of Bowie's legacy was musical as well as historical, mythological, and psychological. Hence, in this chapter I will use Carl Gustav Jung's theory about the collective unconscious and the archetypes in order to re-read *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. I wish to discuss the subjects of megalomania, rebirth, apocalypse, the hero as a savior, and the conjunction archetypes. My purpose is to give a psychological, mythological, historical, and musical context relating to why this androgynous megalomaniac alien messiah was so important to generations of rock fans. I seek to understand the way this artwork is connected to adolescence and to the development of maturity. However, before we enter Jung's world, let us locate young Bowie in his historical perspective.

### ***The Roots of Ziggy***

Bowie's journey from the London native David Jones to rock Olympus was influenced by a unique blend of both British and American culture. In many ways, he was the reflection of the British dandy tradition, with its connotation to Oscar Wilde's tradition to homosexuality and androgyny. In his youth, he was part of the Mod sub-culture, with its highly fashion obsession and European style. He was also greatly influenced by Music Hall and British rockers as the Kinks, The Who, and Syd Barrett's early Pink Floyd music. He was also a very tangible product of the British art schools' visual sensibilities despite the fact that he never attended one.

Yet, Bowie was also infatuated with America: *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac and the work of William Burroughs, as well as John Coltrane's jazz saxophone and the androgynous rock 'n' roll energy of Little Richard.<sup>6</sup> All these influences were not unique in terms of British youth during the post-war era, but Bowie was exceptional in his admiration to Andy Warhol's Factory scene with its transvestites, dark sexuality, and images of perversions. Especially, Bowie admired the music of the Velvet Underground, who was discovered by Warhol. The roots of *Ziggy* were

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<sup>4</sup> Sheffield, Rob, January 2016, "Thanks, Starman: Why David Bowie Was the Greatest Rock Star Ever: A tribute to the late master of rock & roll reinvention", *Rolling Stone*.

<sup>5</sup> Devereuxis, Eoin, Dillaneis Aileen, Poweris Martin, 2017, *David Bowie: Critical Perspectives*, London: Routledge; Cinque, Toija, Moore, Christopher, Redmond, Sean, , 2015, *Enchanting David Bowie: Space/Time/Body/Memory*, London: Bloomsbury Academi; Ammon, Thodore G., 2016, *David Bowie and Philosophy: Rebel Rebel (Popular Culture and Philosophy)*, London: Open Court.

<sup>6</sup> Hebdige, Dick, 1979, *Sub-Cultures and the Meaning of Style*, London, Routledge. British rock culture was fascinated by Afro-American culture and American white affluence fantasy. Dick Hebdige has argued that the post-colonial immigration, and its intersection with white working class, contributed to the notion of black fantasies through white eyes. But we might add that youth from middle class background also related to these black street fantasies, like Bowie himself.

evident in the world of the Velvet Underground's criticism not only concerning the American mainstream society, but also the sixties radical counterculture. Lou Reed's lyrical excellence and John Cale's avant-garde sensibilities were the torch toward dealing with social and personal decadence, the "death" of sexuality, guilt, social oppression, and affluence confusion.

Bowie's admiration to the alternative culture in general was a result, in some ways, of his own biography. His family was "different". His parents were not married when he was born, which was unusual at that time. Bowie's father was described as lower middle class (he was even married to a cabaret singer once), and died before Bowie's career took off. In addition, Bowie had difficulties to maintain a healthy relationship with his mother.<sup>7</sup> His half-brother, Terry, suffered from schizophrenia. Therefore, it was not surprising that Bowie was attracted to these issues of madness and mental illness since his early stages of his career, and especially since the album *The Man Who Sold the World* (1970). It also might be possible that Bowie would create Ziggy from his narcissistic wound, as a hero and a savior. Since he was unable to save his relatives, at least his alter ego would dare to be the savior of the entire world.

Bowie's mid-seventies interviews are notorious in their megalomaniac flavor and flood of hubris ("I could have been Hitler in England", he told *Rolling Stone* in 1976), but his attraction to strong personas was evident since his early career.<sup>8</sup> During an interview in 1969 he said:

This country is crying out for a leader. God knows what it is looking for, but if it's not careful it's going to end up with a Hitler [...] The only person coming through with any strength is Enoch Powell. He is the only one with a following.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike Pink Floyd, Bowie wasn't really a part of the British counter-cultural underground scene. He even insisted that he never got into acid. "I did it three or four times and it was colourful, but my own imagination was already richer," he confessed in the mid-1970s.<sup>10</sup> For some time he lived in a commune with his wife Angie, the producer Tony Visconti, guitarist Mick Ronson, and other friends that would finally emerge as his band, The Spiders from Mars. However, he never seriously considered the ideology of equality as his goal. Bowie told William Burroughs:

The idea of getting minds together smacks of the flower-power period to me. The coming together of people I find obscene as a principle. It is not human. It is not a natural thing as some people would have us believe.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, like the hippies, he adopted art as a way of life, but by the time of *Hunky Dory* (1971) he believed that artists and stardom have an important role in society.<sup>12</sup> In comparison to prog rock artists, he was never really into arcadia and medieval fantasy. He was more attracted to science fiction, alienation, and the gap between sanity and madness, as well as post-modern combination of irony and gloom, in a

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<sup>7</sup> Buckley, David, 2012, *Strange Fascination: David Bowie: The Definitive Story*, Kindle edition, London: Ebury Publishing, Loc. 690.

<sup>8</sup> Crowe, Cameron, "Ground Control to Davy Jones".

<sup>9</sup> Buckley, David, *Strange Fascination: David Bowie*, Loc. 690.

<sup>10</sup> Crowe, Cameron, September 1976, "David Bowie: The Playboy Interview", *Playboy*.

<sup>11</sup> Buckley, David, *Strange Fascination: David Bowie*, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> Turner, Steve, "The Rise and Rise of David Bowie", *Beat Instrumental*, August 1972.

time when the term was not yet in use. The political impotence of the British counterculture – which was documented in the Rolling Stone's "Street Fighting Man" (1968) and Jean-Luc Godard's *One Plus One* (1968) – was one of the causes to the attack on the sixties youth's political naivety. Bowie would write *Ziggy Stardust* as one of the most attractive obituary of the sixties. Rock 'n' roll would not save the world, maybe just the individual fan for a moment, he probably believed. "Hang On to Yourself" from the *Ziggy* Album was an accurate slogan for the post-Woodstock generation, like Tom Wolfe's "Me Decade".

### ***Bowie and the Seventies Polarization***

Fortunately for Bowie, his timing of adopting Reed's decadent world with British rock glam costume was perfect. "Goodbye, Great Britain", wrote the *Wall Street Journal* in 1975, which illustrated the restlessness and sometimes depressed mood that characterized life in the British islands in the seventies. When Bowie had entered the studio to record *Ziggy Stardust*, 900 thousand British people were unemployed. As I mentioned in my essay about of Pink Floyd,<sup>13</sup> increasing inflation (9% in 1973), frequent strikes, post-industrialization process, and Irish terrorism had disturbed everyday life. The economic boom that characterized the post-war era has slowed down in variety of levels. The Keynesian economic model lost its validity. Three Prime Ministers (Edward Heath from the Conservative; Harold Wilson and James Callaghan from the Labour party) have not succeeded in reviving the economy, and in 1979 Callaghan surrendered the stage to Thatcher and her revolution.<sup>14</sup>

In the sixties, members of a tiny minority of Swinging London created a dreamlike image, characterized by classless society and endless possibilities for all. But the seventies were defined by polarity, social and racial tensions, violence, and an extremist style of subcultures (skinheads and punk) with a sense of lost generations. The arts have incorporated elements of horror, violence, and nightmare, alongside nostalgia and escape through the countryside, fantasy and mythology, and have become more colorful with the advent of color television. All this, I wish to emphasize, occurred with a combination and a paradoxical side of nihilism, as was portrayed in *A Clockwork Orange*, Stanley Kubrick's film (1971). The radicalization of the mainstream culture gave rise to a challenge of a more self-conscious, and sometimes an alternative state of the art, and a utopian vision that recognizes the sense of disappointment at a time when the sixties' euphoria gave way to a sense of the "seventies paranoia".<sup>15</sup>

### ***Bowie and Glam Rock***

The glam rock movement was founded by Bowie, Marc Bolan, and the American Tony Visconti, who produced both of them. It was actually Bolan who preceded Bowie with "Ride the White Swan" (1970), but Bowie was the one to set the roots for the glam sound in his album *Space Oddity* (1969), especially in the title track itself,

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<sup>13</sup> Katorza, Ari, December, 2017, "Lead Role in a Cage: The Shadow, the Anima, the Puer Aeternus Archetype and the myth of Syd Barrett in *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1972), *Harvest Journal*.

<sup>14</sup> Beckett, Andy, 2010, *When The Lights Went Out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies*, London: Faber & Faber; Turner, Alwyn W., 2013, *Crisis? What Crisis?: Britain in the 1970s*, London: Aurum Press Ltd.; Marr, Andrew, *A History of Modern Britain*, London: Pan, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Katorza, Ari, 2012, *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Ramat Hasharon: Rimon, pp. 297-301.

which became a hit with its combination of British folk 12 strings acoustic guitar, strings and mellotron, stylophone synthesizer, original electric guitars parts, and a science fictional narrative allegorical to everyday life's real alienation; however, it was not yet a clear vision of what would emerge as glam rock. It was his wife Angie, a bi-sexual, who encouraged Bowie to experience the "forbidden territories". With an open marriage and nights of researches at gay discos, he began comprehending his musical purpose.

From the commune David and Angie established in south London, emerged the band Hype, which has presented Bowie, alongside music producer and bass player Visconti, and guitarist Mick Ronson, as superheroes: Rainbow man, Superman, and Gangster man. The glam rock, according to Bowie, was not just a matter of wardrobe, but of an essence: a compensation for the meaninglessness of everyday life, a fusion of madness and sanity that might offered an alternative sense of identity affirmation using glamorous stage costumes.

His next album, *The Man Who Sold the World* (1970), portrayed Bowie on the cover as sort of a drag queen (in the British release), dealt with Orwellian themes, psycho-erotic images, and Vietnam, and was influenced by early heavy metal (Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath), but was yet another commercial failure.<sup>16</sup> While confronting this abyss in his career, Bowie replaced his manager and record company, and reinvented himself as a fusion of Jacques Brel, Little Richard, and the Velvet Underground. His next album, *Hunky Dory* (1971), would be a British and European interpretation, and perhaps invention, to the American fantasy of greatness, stardom, meaninglessness, and admiration for artists who provide fictitious identities in this era of humanity. One of Bowie's heroes, Aleister Crowley, was an inspiration to one of the best songs in the album: "Oh You Pretty Things". It would be the torch toward the creation of *Ziggy*. This track tried to fuse Fredriech Nietche's philosophy about the death of God with the rise of a new breed of Homo sapiens bi-sexual youth.<sup>17</sup>

Another major breakthrough happened in early 1972 with Bowie's own declaration concerning his bi-sexuality, which was a major step in becoming a rock star. It was a crucial step that would finally lead to the definition of Ziggy Stardust as an androgynous rock messiah. This concept album would present the androgynous Ziggy Stardust as a messiah that is supposed to save the Earth in an apocalyptic time with the power of his rock music. The messiah's journey would end in his failure, and this breakdown would be an interesting psychological trip, which I would like to explain through a Jungian theory.

In order to comprehend the impact of this androgynous messiah, the feminine and masculine duality, and its importance to our psychological balance, let's enter Jung's world and examine the anima and the conjunction archetypes.

### ***Glam Rock, the Anima, and the Conjunction***

The power of bi-sexual rock culture is very evident in rock history. The evolution of rock music was parallel to the evolution of masculine and feminine images. Elvis

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<sup>16</sup> Grundy, Stuart, and Tobler, John, 1982, "Tony Visconti", in: *The Record Producers*, BBC Books, London.

<sup>17</sup> "Oh You Pretty Things" was also influenced by *Childhood's End*, a science fiction film from 1953 where aliens turned youth into something they do not understand; and perhaps from *The Coming Race*, by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a futuristic and dystopian book that was first published in 1871.

Presley was much more feminine than Frank Sinatra; Mick Jagger was much more feminine than Muddy Waters; the long haired hippies' bands diffused the dichotomy between men and women, and David Bowie, Elton John, Freddie Mercury, and Marc Bolan were much more feminine in comparison to previous generations of 20th century entertainers. On the contrary, female artists, such as Janis Joplin, Grace Slick, Patti Smith, Chrissie Hynde, Annie Lennox, and others, had a much more masculine image than previous white female entertainers.<sup>18</sup> The historical post-war sexual revolution opened the gate toward androgynous images, and in Jungian terms, the journey of rock 'n' roll toward femininity was healthy, natural, and part of our collective unconscious and its archetypes.<sup>19</sup>

Jung believed that the archetypes outline our vocation, our everyday life conduct, and our wisdom of the world. The anima/animus and the conjunction were crucial to the task. The Jungian scholar Avi Bauman explains that Jung portrays the masculine and feminine as contrasting psychological principles, archetypes, which are the deepest roots of all people. They lay, therefore, in the potential patterns of the collective unconscious. Bauman explains that the feminine principle attracts the mind to merge, log in, and enter all spectrums of emotional relationships, whether interpersonal or intra-psychic. The feminine principles are embedded in women as well as men. These principles are sources to important things in our lives – the urge to love, the ability to feel and express emotions in relation to our bodies, our attitudes to others in general, and of giving maternal features, such as empathy. Bauman continues and writes that there are many other features, such as beauty and sensuality, tenderness and devotion, which serve as feminine elements. The masculine principle, however, is the one that leads the mind and overcomes potential attacks. Urges and behaviors in our lives, in both men and women, related to the acquisition of independence, overcoming the passions, fears and weaknesses, our ability to use force and put things into practice, the ability to control ourselves, to create a schedule and limits – are examples of male elements that derive from the masculine principle.

The anima's origins, explained Jung, are in the feminine genes the male possesses (and the male genes the females possess, in the case of the animus). Like other archetypes, the anima projections on the external world are revealed through myths and religious doctrines. This duality is revealed through parental images people would believe ever existed, like a projection of supernatural qualities on the psych. In our case, it would be the myth of the androgynous messiah and the rock religion.

The anima/animus is an archetype of a bond, an action, through which a subject can connect to his unconscious. Jung writes:

The anima is the feminine aspect of the archetypal male/female duality whose projections in the external world can be traced through myth, philosophy and religious doctrine. This duality is often represented in mythical syzygy symbols, which are expressions of parental imagos.<sup>20</sup>

Jung believed that with the anima we could arrive to God's realm or the domain of metaphysics. The anima is dangerous, since its projections becomes psychologically

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<sup>18</sup> African-American female singers in the 1920s-1950s, such as Bessie Smith and Big Mama Thornton, preceded Caucasians female entertainers in presenting pioneering masculine images.

<sup>19</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav, 1938, *Psychology and Religion*, Yale University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

celestial – unconditionally mystic and intimidating. The anima might be the serpent in Heaven and might liberate forces that would better left in tranquility and undisturbed. The anima, explained Jung, wants virtuous and its opposites.<sup>21</sup> Yet, it is a powerful force that connects us to our unconscious.<sup>22</sup>

The anima might be the source of chaos in our psychological world, but it holds an undisclosed knowledge that stands against its unreasonable nature. When we reach the anima/animus and we endure to dig deeper, we see the opposite side to what we are, and this side complete us in our individuation process.<sup>23</sup>

Jung gave the union of opposites a specific archetype name: the conjunction. It means an alchemical process that combines two chemicals to produce a third. Psychologically, it refers to an unconscious experience (e.g., an anima projection) which, fused with consciousness, becomes something different (a healthy, loving relationship, for instance). It also leads to an alchemical correspondence with the psychological concept of transference. Conjunction of opposites, according to Jung, leads to wholeness.

In this sense, androgyny became a part of the post-sexual-revolution rock music. *Ziggy Stardust* was a radical projection of the anima/animus duality, and the conjunction of the opposites. We, as the audience, felt not only subversion, but also mystery, danger, attraction to this duality that characterized Ziggy, because it made us feel better about ourselves; it made us feel more complete as individuals. While listening to the album, it might transfer us to a feel more whole. Ziggy projects a spectrum of feminine and masculine principles in us as audience. It may be possible that we saw ourselves, our own reflection, in Ziggy's duality and conjunction. Yet, it is a process of individuation that could, in the end, transfer this basic state to its purpose. Jung explained that during the first stages of conjunction, there is total unconsciousness. It is only during the more advanced stages of individuation that the self – the center of order and meaning – accepts the conjunction.

### ***Ziggy as a Megalomaniac Hero and Savior***

Ziggy Stardust is a hero and a savior. The idea of a hero in rock music was already evident in The Who's rock opera *Tommy* (1969). While Tommy of The Who is a deaf, dumb, and blind kid who represents the status of modern youth in an era of spiritual crisis, Ziggy is a superhero and a savior. In comparison to *Tommy* and other myths, he is a megalomaniac alien rock god. He is a combination of many rock legends from the sixties: Jimi Hendrix, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison, and others whose images were fused into a sole and extraordinary rock icon.

Jung believed that the archetype of the hero's main purpose is to overcome the "monster of darkness" as part of the expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious.<sup>24</sup> The hero symbolizes a man's unconscious self, and this manifests as the total sum of many archetypes (includes the archetype of the wise old man). In myths and legends, the hero's goal is to search for the Holy Grail. The hero travels a journey in which he chases and conquers a dragon, a monster, a demon, but might

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav, 1989, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, London: Vintage, p. 180.

<sup>23</sup> Robertson, Robin, *The Beginner's Guide to Jungian Psychology*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>24</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav, *Aspects of the Masculine*, London & New York: Princeton University Press, 1989, 2003, pp. 1-25.

also be destroyed by it. Yet, this is the essence of the hero's task: while risking a fight under a great threat, the hero may gain the confidence necessary to acquire the right to believe that humanity would overcome future dangers.

Ziggy Stardust would emerge as an androgynous megalomaniac alien rock-star-hero that comes to save humanity in an apocalyptic nightmare. He would represent various archetypes, including the mother and father of his audience ("I'm a mama-papa coming for you," Ziggy presents himself in "Moonage Daydream"). Ziggy's mission would be so crucial and dangerous, since he would dare to try saving humanity with the power of rock religion, which is dangerous for its own connection to fame hazards, the hubris, and the risk of drowning in the unconscious.

Ziggy is characterized by mana inflation during the first stages of the album, while believing in his own numinous quality of a rock god.<sup>25</sup> He sings: "Don't fake it baby/lay the real thing on me/The church of man, love/ Is such a holy place to be" ("Moonage Daydream"). He believes in his power to save earth, but during his journey on earth he would succumb to the limits of his own power and rock powers. This failure has its advantages, since it could lead – via the self (the central archetype of order and meaning) – to a better psychological balance and maturity of the artist, the rock persona, and perhaps his audience.

Bowie was obsessed with the notion of the hero and his role models (Sinatra, Dylan, Warhol, Reed) in the album *Hunky Dory* (1971), which apparently became the womb to *Ziggy Stardust*.<sup>26</sup> Bowie recorded some songs he already tried in *Hunky Dory*'s recordings (such as "Hang On to Yourself"), but now he surrounded them with a frame story, a concept. Bowie transformed his detachment from the flower-power era to an obituary of the sixties. He introduced rock 'n' roll religion as dying, and the androgynous alien star Ziggy as a Savior. The rise and fall of Ziggy were allegorical to the rise and fall of the sixties with the idea of community, the ideology of equality, and that rock gods (Jim Morrison, The Beatles, Dylan, Hendrix, etc.) could "save the world". From "Five Years", which opens the album, to the epic "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide" in its end, the hero would come to save rock's dying religion.

Ziggy's hero archetype was created under the influence of several rock models. Bowie based his Ziggy Stardust character on the American singer Vince Taylor, who was one of the first to express aspects of bi-sexuality. He adopted the Stardust name from a colleague, Legendary Stardust Cowboy, another American singer who used science fiction in his songs. Ziggy's name – suggesting Iggy Pop – was adopted after

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<sup>25</sup> Mana is referring to a numinous quality in gods and sacred objects. A mana-personality embodies this magical power. Jung used it to describe the inflationary effect of assimilating autonomous unconscious contents, particularly those associated with anima and animus. See Jung, Carl Gustav, 1968, "The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious", *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 7, Princeton University Press, p. 377.

<sup>26</sup> DeMain, Bill, "Turn and Face The Strange: David Bowie and the Making Of Hunky Dory", unpublished, 2008, Retrieved from Rockbackpages.com. Both albums had almost the same musicians (pianist Rick Wakeman left to join Yes), the same producer (Ken Scott), and both were recorded at Trident Studios, though Ziggy had a more rock 'n' roll sound. Bowie remembered that his first journey to America filled him with adrenalin and he rediscovered himself: "Changes", with its jazzy harmony and flavor, was like gesture to Frank Sinatra; "Queen Bitch" was committed to Lou reed and the Velvet Underground. "Song for Bob Dylan" aroused the question that surrounded the artist and his role in society. "Andy Warhol" was a tribute to the pop-art artist he admired; "Life On Mars?" mentioned John Lennon. Another hero, Aleister Crowley, was the catalyst of one of the best songs in the album: "Oh You Pretty Things".

searching Christian names in the phone book (and perhaps was inspired by the name of a tailor from London).

While according to the famous myth, King Arthur had his sword Excalibur, the androgynous Ziggy has his masculine left-hand electric guitar. Bowie's biographies have already mentioned that the song "Ziggy Stardust" was a paraphrase of the variety of rock's legendary figures. The lyrics "He played it left hand", "he could lick 'em by smiling", and "jiving us that we were voodoo" may have referred to the image of Jimi Hendrix. The phrase "came on so loaded man, well hung and snow white tan" of the title song was inspired by the images of Iggy Pop and Lou Reed.<sup>27</sup> The sentence "Ziggy sucked up into his mind" recalled Reed's writing style. "He was the nazz" may have referred to Todd Rundgren and Alice Cooper's band The Nazz. "Making love with his ego" was about many rock stars, including Jim Morrison and Mick Jagger.<sup>28</sup>

In Fredriech Nietche's philosophy, God has died and the human being has become its own true cognitive self-god. Jung was highly influenced by this idea, and defined the self archetype as the new god that corresponds with various images of divinity. Yet, a savior in an androgynous costume is a quite a subversive idea, but it is an old-new breed of idea of divinity that is able restore the balance between the logical Apollonian world and the Dionysian instincts we all should have (in Greek mythology, Dionysus was frequently presented wearing feminine costumes).

As a savior, Ziggy may have needed megalomaniac powers and rock culture's grandiosity to save humanity, but Bowie the artist would have wanted to save us with the power of our imagination. Here lay the core of the savior's meaning: the failure of this rock god poses a moral question concerning rock religion; his failure as a rock god is supposed to sharpen our awareness. Ziggy, as a savior, has the power to free us from our "original sin", meaning he may liberate us to open our minds to new knowledge of good and evil. The myths of Ziggy might remind us of the biblical myth about Job's dialogue with Jehovah: over the plot of the book, Job would become more aware of God's totality, while Jehovah comes to the conclusion that the dark side (embodied by the devil) is rooted in humanity and as well as divinity.<sup>29</sup> For our purpose, in the course of Bowie's album, Ziggy becomes more aware of the limits of rock and the danger of his own megalomania, while as listeners we find our path to adulthood. The dialogue between the ego, the instincts, and the transcendental options via the self could lead to greater awareness, and therefore to maturity and development.

### *Apocalypse and Rebirth in Ziggy Stardust*

Ziggy Stardust projects two additional interesting principles: the Apocalypse and Rebirth archetypes. In this chapter, I refer to the word apocalypse not just as total destruction, but rather as its origin, meaning "Apocalypse" as revelation. The Greek meaning of the word is "uncovering what has been hidden", meaning the revelation of

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<sup>27</sup> The use of the term "loaded" implied Lou Reed, as the album of Velvet Underground's *Loaded* (1970).

<sup>28</sup> Pegg, Nicholas, 2004, *The Complete David Bowie*, London, p. 276.

<sup>29</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav, 2010, "Answer to Job", *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 11, Princeton University Press.

a new truth. Jung believed that this process operates in four phases: revelation, judgment, destruction, and a new birth.<sup>30</sup>

The archetype of the apocalypse is based on the activation of the archetype of the self in order to discover a new worldview, a new god-image, a new relationship to the divine, which could bring about a new stage of psychological maturation for humanity. The apocalypse archetype could lie dormant for a person's entire life, but when the self archetype becomes activated in the collective unconscious, it could lead to a change in the collective cultural worldview.

The sixties counterculture was, in many ways, a hope for revelation of a new Dionysian age: the sexual revolution, the psychedelic revolution, the feminist revolution, the revolution of the individual, youth revolution, and rock culture as its religion, offered a new world view.<sup>31</sup> However, the euphoric political and cultural youth movement could not fully comprehend reality and politics, and was doomed to fail. Therefore, *Ziggy Stardust* begins with the third stage of the apocalypse: destruction.

The album starts with a 6/8 time signature in "Five Years", with its lyrics that echoed Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (and perhaps the poem "At a Lunch Time – a Story of Love" by Roger McGough) with its sheer sense of annihilation. Bowie sings, "news guy wept and told us, earth was really dying," while adding American vernacular (news guy, cop, TV), piled with outsiders on the run ("black", "gay", "priest"), who emphasizes the chaos accompanied by an outstanding strings arrangement.

Yet, the second track, "Soul Love", suggests a new hope: human love can still save the world; somewhere (Bowie is not clear as for where) there is a new meaning of love, and Ziggy would rise to that call ("New love – a boy and girl are talking new words").

In the next stage, Bowie presents the alien Ziggy Stardust from different views: the third track, "Moonage Daydream", describes in first person the look-and-feel of the rock messiah: "I'm an alligator," then "I'm a mama-papa coming for you," and continues saying that he is a "space invader" and "rock 'n' rollin' bitch for you," while singing using American slang (including the expressions far out, freak out, and 'lectric) with a heavy British accent.

The fourth track, "Starman", continues the euphoric arrival of the messiah, but from the audience's view: an ecstatic octave leap in the chorus (which was probably borrowed from the song "Over the Rainbow"), "Morse signals" guitar riff, and commercial and attractive singalong a-la Marc Bolan, which also had an American vernacular (boogie, far out, and jives).

Yet, from track #5, things start turning to their dark side. Bowie is quite ambiguous, and leaves a space for self-interpretation. However, it is clear enough that the rock messiah struggles with its own failure to escape rock hubris. He finds rock culture impossible for his personal salvation and for that of humanity. In fact, he can't fully comprehend love – personal love, band relationship, and fandom. This factor radiates through the songs: "It Ain't Easy" ("It ain't easy to get to heaven when you're going

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<sup>30</sup>Edinger, Edward, f., Elder, George, R., 1999, *Archetype of the Apocalypse: A Jungian Study of the Book of Revelation*, New York, Open Court Pub Co.

<sup>31</sup>Judt, Tony, 2006, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, London, Penguin Books; Hobsbawm, Eric, 1996, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*, London, Vintage.

down," he feels toward fandom), "Lady Stardust" ("I smiled sadly for a love I could not obey", sings the storyteller about the messiah), "Star" ("I could fall in love all right as a rock & roll star", Ziggy sings while not noticing the hubris), "Ziggy Stardust" ("When the kids had killed the man I had to break up the band", sings a member of The Spiders from Mars). These songs are all about the failure of the messiah in his personal life as a rock star and as a martyr. Ziggy would finally collapse in the song "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide".

However, that would only be the introduction to stage four: the rebirth.<sup>32</sup> Ziggy Stardust has two aspects of the rebirth. The most evident is metempsychosis, meaning the transmigration of other rock stars' souls, such as Hendrix, Reed, Iggy Pop, etc., meaning that their lives, art, and musicality are transferred and reincarnated by passing through the persona of Ziggy Stardust; it is a life-sequence interrupted by multiple reincarnations at once.

Another side of the rebirth is the resurrection of the persona with new generations of fans; Ziggy would emerge into another rock Jesus. He is immortal, but like Jesus Christ, he is hidden in a spiritual, mortal, alien rock star.

The story of Ziggy resembles some other mythologies about martyrs who appeared on earth in order to save humanity, tribes, nations and societies, and paid a tremendous personal price. It echoed the myth of Prometheus ("forethought"), who gave the human race the gift of fire and the skill of metalwork, an action for which he was punished by Zeus, who ensured that every day an eagle would eat the titan's liver as he was helplessly chained to a rock. It also reminds something from the story of the Biblical Moses, who led the Israelites through the desert for forty years, but had never entered the Promised Land, since he was punished by God for a sole and minor sin. However, Ziggy Stardust is in many ways the Jesus Christ of rock 'n' roll. If Christ suffered for the world's sins, Ziggy suffers the impossibilities and failures of rock religion for more than a moment of transcendence. In other words, Ziggy was unable to save the world with his rock religion and reach a permanent transcendence.

### ***The Sound of the Androgynous Alien Rock Messiah***

Ziggy Stardust sounded as he was: androgynous. The album featured masculine Gibson Les Paul guitars with fuzz sounds of Mick Ronson in juxtaposition with his superb feminine strings arrangements; it has a masculine tight and tough rhythm section in juxtaposition with a style of various vocals, most of them quite feminine. Edward Macan described this matter as part of his discourse about prog rock, but we may use it to define any kind of music, especially glam rock.<sup>33</sup>

As a musician, Bowie continued some of the best traditions of British rock. The Beatles, The Who, The Kinks, Pink Floyd, have exhibited melodic and harmonic innovation. Bowie continued trends that have been outlined by his predecessors. His songs were rich with combinations of scales and modes, changes in tonality, and from an early stage it contained a mix of operatic flavor, musicals, rock 'n' roll, and French chansons.

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<sup>32</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav, "The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious", p. 113.

<sup>33</sup> Macan, Edward, 1993, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counter Culture*, London & New York: Oxford University Press.

In his early career, the American music producer Tony Visconti helped Bowie in shaping his sound.<sup>34</sup> Since Visconti and Bowie temporarily parted ways after the album *The Man Who Sold the World*, guitarist Mick Ronson has become Bowie's ultimate right-hand man. Ronson was a guitar virtuoso with an obsession to new sounds, but also a gifted strings arranger and an effective pianist. He had his autodidactic orchestration studies in a short period between the failure of *The Man Who Sold the World* (1970) and the beginning of *Hunky Dory* (1971) recordings. Ronson continued Visconti's passion for strings, and presented formidable arrangements that were often different and more feminine, so to say, than the "masculine" arrangements George Martin wrote for The Beatles (You may compare Ronson's strings arrangement to "Eleanor Rigby" or "I Am the Walrus").

Another important partner in the evolution of Bowie's music was the producer Ken Scott, a veteran from EMI studios, a recording engineer who has worked with The Beatles on their *White Album* and on songs such as "Hey Jude" (1968). Scott had the ability to adapt Ronson and Bowie's vision with a 16 channels analog tape machine with superb editorial and engineering abilities.

Bowie's sound was also influenced by Trident Studio, which was one of the most important music facilities of the decade. Elton John, Bowie, Marc Bolan, Queen, and others established their activities there. The studio had an old Bechstein piano, which was its main attraction.<sup>35</sup>

Like in previous albums, Bowie culminated a dynamic richness in this album. He continued with his combination of scales and modes, modulations and contradictions, weaved in catchy songs and rich texture. "Soul Love", basically in calm G major scale atmosphere, was filled with bursting pre-chorus and chorus, which borrowed from major and minor parallel scales. "Starman" stretched between G Dorian and F Major. "Ziggy Stardust", the theme song, starts with the comfort of G major in the verses, but rises with a modulation to a biting A major in the choruses, including modal interchange and a blues motif. "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide", basically on the C major scale, modulates to a surprising structure of chords that combines C# minor and major clusters with a dramatic cadence.

Despite the inspiration from "Over the Rainbow" octave leap in the chorus of "Starman", Bowie remained incredibly original in most of the songs, such as "Lady

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<sup>34</sup> "The Man that Sold the World" track is a good example for Visconti's contribution: he had run Bowie's vocals in a phasing effect, which underscored the sense of the madness, and tightened the rhythm section with Guiro, a Latin percussion, that like illustrated the mental "scratch". The song was wrapped in layers of synths, directing the men's voices and flutes and Moog synthesizer. Mick Ronson's riff guitar and the repetitive scales during the choruses designed especially strong melody to illustrate the world of the schizophrenic.

<sup>35</sup> Pianist Rick Wakeman participated in *Hunky Dory* and made the piano sound grandiose, reminding modern and romantic composers such as Chopin. Wakeman was also responsible for various forms of jazz, ragtime and stride, which gave the album a sound that almost sums up Anglo-American popular music of the 20th century. *Hunky Dory's* strength was partly due to a combination of piano and strings arrangements that Wakeman and Ronson connected with various styles: Tin-Pan-Alley meets Rock 'n' Roll on "Changes"; Music-Hall on "Kooks" (dedicated to the Bowie's child); opera and musical meets French chanson in "Life On Mars?", combined with Elvis Presley's and John Lennon's slapback-delay on the snare drum. 12-strings acoustic guitar was featured in many songs, including "Quicksand" and "Queen Bitch", kind of a tribute to Velvet Underground. Regarding Trident Studios, see: DeMain, Bill., 2008, "Turn and Face The Strange: David Bowie and the Making Of Hunky Dory", unpublished, retrieved from [Rockbackpages.com](http://Rockbackpages.com).

Stardust". "Star" and "Hang On to Yourself" were proto-punk, but endowed with strong melodies and superb studio production.

The androgynous sound appeared in its full spectrum in "Moonage Daydream": an intro raging with masculine fuzz guitars that lead to a first verse that relies mostly on feminine 12 strings acoustic guitars. Piano and masculine contrapuntal backing vocals fill in the choruses, preparing a second and more brutal attack of the fuzz guitars. This track also contains a solo of baritone and piccolo saxophones, an electric fuzz guitar solo wrapped in phasing strings, and a tape-delay that stretched Ziggy's "far out" calls to their limit.

### *Epilogue*

"Ziggy was a melting pot of Little Richard, Vince Taylor, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Marc Bolan, Jacques Brel, T.S. Eliot, *A Clockwork Orange*, Metropolis, and Kabuki theater," Bowie said, "this is what we needed at that time."<sup>36</sup>

*The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* turned Bowie into a rock star, first in the UK, and later on around the world. The album became a milestone in popular culture. My own basic assumption was that it projects various archetypes from the collective unconscious that gratify the audience with great spiritual forces. At the end, these archetypes shape our vocation, our everyday life actions, and our common sense of the world. The album connects us to hidden spectrum of adolescence, growing up, and the development of our maturity. Through facing the myths of Ziggy, we may think a little differently about our urge to obtain knowledge of good and evil, transcendental options, and our place in the world.

While taking the feminine and masculine duality and the conjunction archetype to its extreme androgynous images, Bowie was able to suggest an alternative to the sixties' sexual revolution, and more importantly, a comfort to the psychological urges of its fans. This duality has become a crucial part of the seventies culture and since. Perhaps the character of the megalomaniac Ziggy Stardust has remained a symbol of the eternal rock god – who was composed by previous rock gods – and like them, was doomed to be drowned in the unconscious.

As a rock hero, Ziggy took upon himself the impossible mission: escaping the traps of the hubris of unconsciousness and win over, but he failed. However, as a messiah presented in an alien mortal body, his destiny was to become immortal, and to remind Bowie and his audience about the dangers of the unconscious concerning the dark sides of rock religion. This way, Ziggy could connect us to the rebirth archetype while evolving into sort of a rock Jesus.<sup>37</sup>

Bowie placed Ziggy in an apocalypse background, in a world in chaos, where new meaning are being placed, in order to help us find the truths of our own politics regarding everyday lives and reevaluate them. Bowie encourages us to hang onto ourselves and hold onto everyday life. Rock offers only a momentary transcendence, and limited personal salvation may come through art and imagination, not from youth

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<sup>36</sup> Pegg, Nicholas, *The Complete David Bowie*, p. 276.

<sup>37</sup> Concerning the psychology of the Rebirth archetype, see: Jung, Carl Gustav, 1968, "The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious", *Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 9 Part 1, 2nd ed., Princeton University Press, pp. 113-147.

politics and "coming together". Acknowledging that notion – via the self who balances the other archetypes – would be another step toward maturity.

David Bowie continued with the issues of apocalypse, rebirth, the anima, and conjunction in several other works, including *Aladdin Sane* (1973) and *Diamond Dogs* (1974), while almost falling into his own traps as a rock star who lived a life of excess. Fortunately, he healed himself through the Berlin trilogy in the second half of the seventies. In his last work, *Blackstar* (2016), he dealt perhaps with his own mortality and rebirth. In any case, I believe that the Ziggy Stardust's mythology still liberates unpremeditated vibrant forces. It might oblige fans "as its victims". Jung would have defined it as numinous. According to this psychological theory, the *Ziggy Stardust* album enables inspection of ideas of enlightenment and darkness, and powerful ideals that rock apparatuses represent. Old and new audiences, I believe, may still worship these ideas and images while facing the legend and myth of this megalomaniac leper messiah.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Jung, Carl Gustav, *Psychology and Religion*, p. 36.