

Every Dream Is a Discourse: Lacan, Jung, and the Linguistic Nature of Unconscious Dreamscapes

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“The unconscious is that chapter of my history that is marked by a blank or occupied by a falsehood: it is the censored chapter. But the truth can be rediscovered; usually, it has already been written down elsewhere.”¹

—Jacques Lacan

INTRODUCTION

Despite their status as major influences in the history of psychoanalysis, exceedingly little academic scholarship within the discipline of psychology focuses on bringing Jacques Lacan and Carl Gustav (C.G.) Jung into dialogue

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¹ Jacques Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” 38.

with one another, and casting a wider net over all areas of research yields no greater catch. Perhaps one reason for such hesitation among scholars is the prevailing notion that the psychologists' respective approaches to the mysteries of the unconscious are so fundamentally disparate that bridging the gulf without the aid of interpretive concessions seems impossible. The conclusion one may draw from this lack of exchange on two of psychology's most influential spearheads is that scholars—treating them as though they were awkward guests at a dinner party—have deemed it better for the sake of the soirée that the two remain muted mutual acquaintances—nay, veritable strangers—rather than force shared conversation upon them. And yet, with a little effort, some of life's most engrossing discussions emerge in spite of popular expectation; perhaps the time has come for a host to seat each thinker across from the other at the dinner table, so to speak.

It is in the spirit of such cautious optimism that I propose a scholarly toast to temerity in the form of a carefully drawn out comparison of two of psychology's most cryptic contemplatives and uncompromising critics. The following comparison provides the reader with a salient account of each psychologist's notion of the unconscious, beginning with Lacan before moving on to Jung. The purpose of these overviews is twofold: to provide a context out of which each thinker's approach to dream interpretation emerges and, accordingly, to articulate the interpretive method by which each thinker investigates dreams. For this reason, I have either omitted or downplayed those facets of thought in either's psychoanalytic theory that do not directly attend to dream interpretation. Ultimately, such a comparison yields insight into the primacy of language—and specific manifestations thereof—in both Lacanian and Jungian psychoanalytic dream interpretation, thereby situating our otherwise psychoanalytic antipodes on common ground, itself an indispensable condition for engendering rich and rewarding dialogue.² Most

² This article is part of a larger work, in which I continue the investigation introduced here by venturing beyond the rarified air of the theoretical and into the realm of applied understanding via the case study. Specifically, I recall in detail Jung's analysis of the infamous Frank Miller dream series, which is found in his *Symbols of Transformation*, followed by an endeavor to apply a Lacanian-influenced hermeneutic approach to the same set of dreams. A comparison of these respective interpretations—both Jung's published findings and my own determination of what Lacan's conclusion's might have been, given what I establish about his analytic method in this article—arguably bears the fruit of the overall labor; in what follows, I establish the grounds for

importantly, it is my hope that the following comparison inspires the reader toward attentive reflection upon the nature and significance of one's own dreams.

PART I, SECTION I

A SEMIOTICS OF SYMPTOMS: LACAN'S LINGUISTIC REFORMULATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Perhaps the most noted aspect of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory is its foundational apothegm, namely, that the unconscious is structured like a language.³ That such a provocative proposition monopolizes the attention paid to Lacan's work is appropriate, for, beyond grounding Lacan's interpretive method of dream analysis, this insight into the nature of the unconscious impacts his theory on subjectivity, informs his understanding of the psychological dimension of human lifespan development, and even tempers his expectation for the rehabilitative capacity of psychoanalysis. Indeed, this singular premise presides over all facets of Lacan's thought, for it is the orienting principle—of a particularly disorienting quality—that allows one to recognize the precise way in which seemingly disparate elements of his psychoanalytic theory cohere.

However, in order to begin to understand what Lacan might mean by this rather mystifying statement—especially as it relates to our investigation of dreams—one must first be aware of its place in the gradual unfurling of psychoanalysis in general, that is, from psychoanalysis' nascence as a science intent on studying previously unconsidered psychic phenomena with the overall aim of helping disturbed individuals, to what might be perceived as a

such a case study through a careful (and what I hope is compelling) comparison of Lacan and Jung.

³ The first time this formula appears in print is in one of Lacan's seminars. There, it appears in rudimentary form: "Translating Freud, we say—the unconscious is a language" (Lacan, *Seminars*, 11). Interestingly, Lacan himself expressed some concern over his somewhat tautological formulation on at least one occasion: when speaking to a gathering of international scholars in Baltimore during the autumn of 1966, he admits that the qualification, "as a language," is wholly redundant because it means exactly the same thing as "structured" (See Lacan, "Of Structure," 188). For further elaboration and contextualization of this qualification, see also Nobus, "Lacan's science of the subject," 58.

multifarious academic enterprise—one that has forgotten its dialogical and curative roots. Thus, it is in response to what Lacan views as a schism within the psychoanalytic movement of the early 1950's that he often characterizes his own approach to psychoanalysis as a return to Freud.⁴ In doing so, Lacan intends to suggest that his approach to psychoanalysis is a “return to *the meaning of Freud,*” which is to say, a return to a particular kind of symbolic order yielded by the unconscious, one that begs for interpretation in, by, and through language.⁵ Not incidentally, Lacan's contribution to Freudian psychology in this regard is to suggest that, in order to do so truly (and thereby remain authentically Freudian), one must first interpret the unconscious *as* a language by virtue of fully recognizing its intrinsic linguistic structure. To be sure, Lacan is not suggesting that an unconscious is located at a specific spot within each one of us—as though it were an observable piece of the brain or its own bodily organ—wherein it “speaks” its own particular language similar to all other languages found throughout the world. Rather, he means to claim that, collectively, those psychical symptoms of an individual that manifest outside of the realm of one's conscious intentions and circumvent one's conscious awareness reveal, or communicate, themselves in such a fashion that indicates a kinship with the way in which language itself operates, especially with regard to those governing features that afford language its perceived organic quality and structural integrity. Furthermore, Lacan argues for such an understanding of the unconscious by synthesizing preexisting, albeit refined, Freudian tenets with linguistic elements, a synthesis that he accomplishes through a novel appropriation of certain key precepts found in structuralism. To present most clearly Lacan's position within the proper context of his most significant influences, I follow the trajectory of Lacan's development of Freud by beginning with the emergence of the unconscious in childhood development prior to its articulation in dream form, followed by Freud's identification—and Lacan's subsequent deepening—of the operative elements organizing dreams, before finally

⁴ Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech in Psychoanalysis,” 197–201. For a separate and, arguably, more impassioned plea, please see Lacan, “Beyond the ‘Reality Principle,’” 58–74.

⁵ *Ibid.*, My emphasis. Lacan employs this banner-statement in several different essays throughout his corpus as a way to describe his overall objective. Perhaps most poignantly, Lacan unequivocally proclaims the following at a public lecture that he delivered roughly one year prior to his death: “It is up to you to be Lacanians if you wish; I am Freudian” (See Jacques Lacan, “Overture to the 1st International Encounter of the Freudian Field,” 18).

arriving at Lacan's uncovering of the inherently linguistic nature of such formative principles.

Prior to tracing the links in the chains of association that comprise the unconscious, however, it is first necessary to differentiate it from another element of the psyche with which it often gets conflated: the preconscious. To be sure, the unconscious differs from the preconscious insofar as the "stuff" of the preconscious is but incidentally outside of that of which the conscious subject is presently aware and, as such, can be called to mind freely and immediately.⁶ In other words, preconscious content escapes consciousness' attention inadvertently, and such content thereby remains readily available for consciousness to recall and is neither inhibited by acts of repression nor, when called upon, appears incognito. By comparison, Lacan subscribes to the Freudian theory that the origin of the unconscious occurs as a reaction to what Freud refers to throughout his corpus as the Oedipus complex, which, for Lacan, finds its "resolution" in the subsequent castration of the phallus by the Father. As the theory suggests, unconscious content consists of traumatic experiences and illicit desires that seem to evade conscious awareness naturally through instinctive, automatic repression.⁷ As we shall see below, when such content manifests in its nocturnal form of expression, the taboo circumstances surrounding its birth necessitate a characteristic lack of interpretive transparency to all of its oneiric representations. For Lacan, the impetus behind such an intrapsychic reaction lies at the very heart of childhood development, namely, socialization, to which I now turn.

Lacan understands childhood development as the formation of a child's sense of self, one that necessarily involves the mediation of initial desires by intrusive external forces and crests in an introduction into societal

⁶ Sigmund Freud articulates this very distinction. See Freud, "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis," 314–315.

⁷ Repression, here, is not to be mistaken with suppression, which is a conscious agent's deliberate attempt at forgetting something that she finds deeply troubling. However, it is worth mentioning that, even here, intentionality is latent in the defense mechanism of repression in spite of its knee-jerk connotation. For that matter, intentionality plays a significant, sometimes-subtle role in a variety of Freud's theories, no doubt indicative of the influence of his teacher, Franz Brentano, who also taught Edmund Husserl (and who, like Freud, takes seriously Brentano's notion of intentionality, albeit in a slightly different fashion). I kindly refer the reader to Freud and Joseph Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria*; therein, *repression* is always preceded by the term, *intentional*.

norms. He first argues in an early and influential work that a budding child is unable to identify himself clearly as a single, cohesive whole, one that is individuated from all other entities.⁸ As Lacan understands it, a child first experiences his body as fragmented insofar as he is unable to operate some appendages as well as others. Such primary experiences lead the child to a tentative and nebulous notion of himself, which, for Lacan, is only logical, given the child's unrefined motor skills and imprecise depth perception.⁹ Eventually, the child, upon peering at his reflection in a mirror and grasping the reflected image as his own, arrives at the realization that his body is, judging by its reflection, an integrated whole.¹⁰ Such recognition (literally, a re-cognizing of his self-perception in light of this profound insight), mediated by his external image, or "*imago*," ushers in a heightening of self-awareness and accompanying delight in spite of the fact that the child's firsthand experience of his interaction with objects in the world continues to remain characteristically disjointed.¹¹ That the child's direct, albeit limited, experience as "*decentred*," or as an embodied yet uncoordinated creature, seems to betray the cohesiveness of the *imago* staring back at him is crucial for Lacan's philosophical anthropology because it anticipates such future problematic relationships of ipseity (selfhood) and alterity (otherness) as the conflation of one's inevitably fractured self with one's "ideal I" and, more pertinent to the

⁸ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function," 75–81.

⁹ Elsewhere, Lacan further concludes that young children have little understanding of where they end and the rest of the world begins. For example, a child might reach for an object located far across the room, yet, simply because it resides in his field of vision, the child believes it to be well within his reach. Ultimately, Lacan takes such observations as empirical grounds for psychologist Charlotte Buhler's notion of transitivity, a term used to describe such phenomena as when a child strikes another child, only to believe that it was he who was struck, or when a third child cries out in pain upon witnessing that second child being struck by the first one, as though that third child, who merely bore witness, were actually the assaulted party. See Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," 13.

¹⁰ This is thought to occur, generally, sometime between the sixth and eighteenth month of life.

¹¹ Because the catalyst for incipient self-individuation necessarily involves an external image, or an-other, Lacan concludes that one's sense of self is always mediated from without. As scholar Matthew Sharpe writes in his encyclopedia entry on Lacan, "The implications of this observation on the mirror stage, in Lacan's reckoning, are far-reaching. They turn around the fact that, if it holds, then the genesis of individuals' sense of individuation can in no way be held to issue from the "organic" or "natural" development of any inner wealth supposed to be innate within them. The I is an Other from the ground up, for Lacan (echoing and developing a conception of the ego already mapped out in Freud's *Ego and Id*)."

current discussion, the disjuncture between one's dreams and waking life.¹² Of course, the text that sets the context, so to speak, for all future possibilities of a child's relation to itself and with others is the primordial relationship fostered between the child and his primary caregiver, the maternal parent.

It is generally understood that, according to Freudian depth psychology, the bonds forged between an infant and his mother during the earliest stages of development are absolutely fundamental to any attempt at self-understanding in the name of psychological rehabilitation. The child, completely reliant upon his primary nurturer, comes to identify with his source of attention and nourishment to the point where the child, quite literally, cannot comprehend clearly where he ends and his mother begins. Eventually, however, the child not only achieves the aforementioned realization that he is his own entity but also begins to grasp that his mother is also a separate entity, and this typically occurs when the child's desire for sustenance goes unfulfilled for a short time. This, in turn, prompts the child to identify his mother as his object of affection, for she is that which, for the most part, responds to his every beck and call, and those times when the mother does not rush to meet the child's needs indicates to the child that the mother is tending to her own needs elsewhere. The child, now enamored with his mother, wishes to reciprocate her love by being that which completely satisfies her every desire; from such a perspective, the child imagines a scenario in which he and his mother compose a self-contained, self-sustaining unity. Of

¹² Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function," 2–4. Although outside the scope of the current discussion, it is worth mentioning that said *imago* proceeds to function as a gestalt for emerging perceptions of selfhood. Specifically, Lacan will argue that the seemingly cohesive reflection peering back at the child suggests that it is possible to actually become fully integrated, both internally as well as externally. However, the inevitable splintering of the psyche that occurs during the Oedipal stage of childhood results in permanent internal fragmentation, thereby rendering impossible any chance of complete internal harmony. As such, this notion of a unified internal self becomes a mythical ideal—mythical because it neither can, nor ever will, truly exist in spite of popular belief—capable of serving as a standard of integration for which one will perpetually strive. Additionally, believing too fully in the ideal tends to result in such psychological maladies as depression when one's actual sense of self perpetually pales in comparison to its ideal; the key to avoiding such a devastating pitfall, Lacan seems to indicate, is neither to lose sight of, nor despair over, the ruptured origins of one's sense of self, for such inevitable fragmentation conditions one's human experience, perhaps most especially when one's rearing takes place in the western world.

course, the child encounters stiff competition in the form of the father (mother's "elsewhere," as it were), to whom the mother has already given herself, and it is on this point where Lacan slightly departs from Freud. For Freud, the child recognizes something that the mother inherently lacks and, in the case of a male child, that he possesses: the male generative organs. And while the general consensus among scholars is that Freud's related notions of the phallus, Oedipal stage, and castration anxiety are thoroughly anatomical in their most popular manifestations, Lacan understands the same ideas in a way that places an even heavier emphasis on their figurative dimensions.¹³

For Lacan, the most influential factors of the Oedipal complex are precisely those that are not physically present but, instead, symbolically represented; indeed, Lacan enriches Freud's notion of childhood development by drawing attention to the social and symbolic factors of the emergent family dynamic. One of the ways in which Lacan accomplishes this task is by speaking almost exclusively of the phallus in lieu of the penis. Returning to the quasi-undifferentiated mother-son dyad, the son longs ardently to be regarded by his mother in the same way in which he regards her; it is as Lacan writes: "What the child wants is to become the desire of desire, to be able to satisfy the mother's desire, that is, 'to be or not to be' the object of the mother's desire...[in order] to please the mother."¹⁴ Lacan designates the supposed object of the mother's desire as the phallus; accordingly, Lacan identifies the child as that which strives to become phallic. Due to the intimacy of their relation at the child's earliest stages of development, it is of little surprise that the child assumes himself capable of, not merely possessing, but being all that his mother lacks. Again, Lacan does not seek to establish the strong symbolic connection between the phallus with the biological organ of the son (*à la* Freud) but, rather, with that of the entirety of the young boy, and this includes the child's very desire to be desired by that which he desires, namely, the mother, replete with her complete devotion to, and her full satisfaction with, him. As we can see, what matters most for Lacan in this regard is what the

¹³ To be sure, Freud does not simply equate the phallus with the male genitalia (or female genitalia, for that matter); rather, the penis represents the child's sense of his own potency, or self-efficacy; hence, it is a phallic symbol. As we see below, Lacan expounds upon its symbolic nature in a way that is at once consistent with Freud's understanding and uniquely his own. For one example of a detailed articulation of the phallus in relation to the Oedipal stage, penis envy, and castration anxiety, please see (among many other places) Freud, "On Narcissism," 1–32.

¹⁴ Lacan, *Seminar V: The Formation of the Unconscious*, 98.

penis symbolizes: a supposition on the child's part, or a possible solution to the child's fathoming of what his mother lacks—and, presumably, what she must be searching for when not attending to him—and what he, in turn, might be able to provide for her out of love, thereby bringing to fruition the child's fantasy of a perfectly symbiotic relationship. And while such a relationship could never truly manifest in the way in which the child anticipates, it is the unique way in which the child's wishes are foiled that brings about the birth of the unconscious.

As I previously mentioned, the mother has already given herself over the father; but what does this mean, exactly? Relative to the son, it means that the father's mere presence threatens to thwart his aspirations insofar as he is forced to bear witness to countless displays of affection between his parents; subsequently, this Oedipal child cannot help but view his father as a rival. For Lacan, the child's experience of "castration anxiety," of which Freud so often speaks, is less a fear of dismemberment and more a fear of having one's place in his imagined, utopian mother-son fantasy usurped by a more imposing force. The twofold realization that, firstly, the father is a more suitable phallic figure for his mother and, secondly, that this is how his mother seems to prefer it, is quite devastating; already, the boy's "castration" has begun. The father's frustration of his son's desires compels the son to modify his impulses by directing them towards more attainable objects. Indeed, the father's intervention makes it clear that the mother, in a certain sense, belongs to him and not to the child, and it is here, especially, where Lacan, in what is a truly original development of Freud's Oedipal theory, deepens the nature of the family dynamic by extending such relations even further into the symbolic realm. Specifically, he contends that the father's intrusion is a necessary one for the child's socialization because the father represents the normative laws of society writ large—the ultimate "father figure," as it were.

As we will see in just a moment, metaphor plays a significant role in deciphering the rebus that is one's dream; it is, thus, only fitting that one finds a particularly powerful metaphor at the heart of the affairs surrounding the birth of the unconscious. According to Lacan, the father's prohibition of the son's wish to be with his mother functions as a metaphor for society's disapproval of taboo desires (in this case, the desire for what appears to be an

incestuous relationship).¹⁵ More to the point, the father serves as a delegate of sorts for the norms of society, or those dictums that work to channel all desires towards socially acceptable outlets.¹⁶

The child even begins to recognize this law of the father as operative in the mother's devotion to her paternal counterpart in the following sense: based upon the tremendous amount of love and attention the mother bestows upon the child, the child, at least initially, has a difficult time accepting the idea that his mother does not also long for the same kind of Aristophanic union as he.¹⁷ However, what the child concludes, Lacan contends, is that his mother's desires are already ordered by the father, and that the father, in this sense, deliberately deprives each beloved of the other.

Nevertheless, the child interprets his mother's loving behavior towards his father as indicative of the kind of authoritative respect that is becoming of a patriarch, and this encourages the son to comply with what he perceives to be his father's demands: that he abandon his infantile fantasy of a society of two and, in doing so, seek satisfaction elsewhere (as his mother, evidently, has already done). According to Lacan, this moment places the child at a crucial impasse for the following reason: if the child submits to his father and allows his desires to be tamed, then he is, in essence, capitulating to the pre-established norms of his society, of which his father stands as an embodiment.¹⁸ In such a scenario, the father's figurative castration of his son's phallus effects a resolution of the Oedipal complex in the form of a baptism

¹⁵ Lacan notoriously dubs such laws (*nomoi*) the name (*nom*) of the father, thereby playing on a felicitous homonymy in the French between *nom* (name) and *non* (the "no!" to incestuous union). Clever, significant wordplay such as this pervades Lacan's corpus.

¹⁶ The potential upshot is that, if the boy follows the example set by his mother and allows his primordial desires to pass through the sieve of society via the Law of the Father, then he exits the Oedipal stage with what Lacan refers to as "title deeds in its pocket"; in other words, Lacan intimates that the child will mature into a conventionalized citizen who, if properly obedient to society's norms, may end up with a beloved after all. Whether or not such a socially appropriate mate could ever be a satisfactory substitute for his first lost love, the mother, is questionable for Lacan; at the very least, it casts an interesting light on the similarities between one's chosen spouse and one's mother.

¹⁷ See the mythical speech delivered by the comedic playwright, Aristophanes, in Plato's *Symposium* (any translation will suffice).

¹⁸ The child's ensuing oscillation between whether to remain phallic or not to remain phallic (to accede to castration) is reflected in the *Hamlet* reference found in an earlier quotation. See above.

into the normative values of their community, thereby providing his son with an orientation into conventional, civilized life.¹⁹

Ultimately, the son ceases to identify with his original desires and, instead, commences to identify with the desires of society, thereby divorcing himself from his initial urges and their corresponding object of affection. But make no mistake: although figurative rather than literal, such castration delivers traumatizing pain and confusion upon the child, who is all but compelled to relinquish the first real love of his young life. Realizing that his earliest feelings of desire are not simply misplaced but outright wrong to the point of shameful, his subsequent supplication to the governing norms of society levies a heavy tax on his still-developing, malleable, and highly fragile sense of self-identity. Verily, the price he must pay to become normal is the endurance of a traumatic detachment from his natural, previously unremitting desire to be as close as possible with his nurturer. Such internal torment triggers an immediate fragmentation of the psyche, or an opening of internal space wherein what is entirely too painful of a loss and despicable of a desire gets disowned and forgotten.²⁰ And while this defense mechanism, repression, allows the child to complete his maturation into that of a socially acceptable individual, those initial desires—along with whatever other, similarly taboo inclinations that become buried as quickly as they crop up—continue to fester far below the purview of conscious awareness, only to surreptitiously percolate back to the surface in unexpected and, oftentimes, uncontrollable ways, as if demanding their acknowledgment.

PART I, SECTION II

A SEMIOTICS OF SYMPTOMS: LACAN'S LINGUISTIC REFORMULATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

¹⁹ It is worth noting that I have chosen to forego consideration of a major influence in Lacan's understanding of the Oedipus complex, namely, the Hegelian theme of the master-slave relationship, wherein desire figures most prominently. While certainly an important point of discussion in its own right, such considerations would be merely ancillary to the article's primary concern of dream interpretation.

²⁰ "Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of these wishes, repugnant to morality, which have been forced upon us by Nature, and after their revelation we may all of us seek to close our eyes to the scenes of our childhood" (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 297).

As we have just seen, Lacan understands the birth of the unconscious to be the inevitable result of a cataclysmic event that occurs in the early stages of childhood development, when the child begrudgingly consents to allow his once immediate desires to become mediated by the wishes of his father/society. But, like all unresolved trauma, the effects of phallic castration puncture through the illusory walls of self-awareness to reveal a part of oneself that is, at once, both intimate and alien. And, whereas his biggest influence, Freud, discusses the manifestation of repressed content in jokes, parapraxes (“Freudian slips”), reveries (daydreams), and dreams, Lacan focuses most predominantly on the latter. To that end, it behooves us to take a close look at the specific way in which Lacan furthers the Freudian endeavor, namely, through an ingenious reimagining of Freud’s initial diagnosis of dream work in light of rhetorical tropes, a kinship encouraged by Freud but never fully developed.

Perhaps the most fundamental connection between language and dreams—the face of the unconscious, so to speak—is the figurative dimension found in each form of expression. Beginning with dreams, Lacan takes up Freud’s distinction of the two kinds of content inherent in them: manifest content and latent content. The manifest content is the dream as it presents itself, which is to say, the dream as we recall it. In other words, Lacan is referring to the specific images, sounds, and plot that comprise the dream in its literal presentation when discussing manifest content. Beneath the manifest content, however, resides the latent content of the dream; it is what one’s dream is truly indicating, or the real message that the unconscious is attempting to communicate.

Lacan, following Freud, is convinced that the manifest content is nothing but the latent content in disguise. This singular premise, that one belies the other, suggests a fundamental connection between what appears in the dream and what the dream is truly saying; taken in tandem, these two dimensions comprise the entirety of the dream. Granting such a connection, one can conclude, as Freud, Lacan, and countless other psychologists have, that it is possible to excavate the latent content by way of delving into the manifest content. Of course, this gives rise to two separate but related questions: first, by what means does one gain access to what is merely represented through what actually appears, or manifests? And, secondly,

what is the cause of, and subsequent need for, such a division within dreams? In fact, we have already attended to that latter question in section I.

One does well to recall that the genesis of the unconscious is the result of one's primitive and unabashed desires being brought into check violently by society's pre-established norms; once an impressionable child becomes indoctrinated into the conventions of his society, society can be said to have left an indelible imprint on that person such that it becomes impossible to return to one's pre-normalized, arguably untainted perspective. Essentially, each person is customizable—that is, able to be molded by the inherited customs of one's tradition—for one completes his accession to the "law of the father" precisely by internalizing his or her community's normative standards of value and conduct. The internalization of society's prescribed values compels an identification of oneself with said norms; societal norms, then, become the standard by which one evaluates oneself in terms of morality ("Am I a good or a bad person?") and self-efficacy ("Am I winning or losing in this game of life?"). Accordingly, those initial desires found in the Oedipal stage (delineated above) contrast so very starkly with one's new understanding of oneself that one cannot bear to acknowledge any previous identification with one's former set of desires for even a fleeting moment, lest one run the risk of one's self-identity being torn asunder; after all, each of us has already been forced to endure such trauma once before.²¹ Such a strong, deeply rooted aversion to this "other," which is, nonetheless, part and parcel with oneself, impacts the very form of manifestation that this otherness takes, and this is especially apparent in its most sophisticated form of manifestation: that of the dream form. To wit, the unconscious takes the form of a dream, as it were, and crops up at a time when one's defenses are down, and, yet, what it has to reveal is so difficult to reconcile with what one thinks one knows about oneself (or who one thinks one is) that the dream itself experiences censorship. Accordingly, those pieces of the dream that one recalls—again, the manifest content—have already been "cleared" for consciousness' attention only because they have since become far removed from what they represent (again, the latent content) and, as a result, their consideration by the dreamer

²¹ Repression can thus be understood not only to shield oneself from the pain of past trauma, but also to prevent the threat of future pain by working to ensure that one's demons remain locked in their hidden compartment, down deep in the corner of the basement, so to speak.

will not undermine the illusion of self-cohesiveness. The latent content, then, is the truth of the dream, or that, which is, at once, the most insistent for its reception and the most cloaked in secrecy.

Of course, remaining blissfully ignorant of a serious issue is no way of resolving it. What is called for is a gradual unveiling and acceptance of what is being repressed—indeed, a self-revelation of sorts—the purpose of which is to work towards a more complete and honest form of self-integration. Lacan, crediting Freud, understands this search for internal integrity to be the true mission of psychoanalysis, even if, ultimately, the best that one can hope for is a healthy acceptance of one’s irreparably fractured self.²² So understood, a significant part of psychoanalysis must include the decoding of one’s manifest content in order to “hear” the unconscious dream more clearly. To that end, Freud determined that unconscious dreams are characterized by what he calls displacement and condensation, terms that, taken literally, have a home in the natural sciences as technical terms employed to explain the dynamics of force, or energy.²³

Relative to dream interpretation, Lacan’s overall approach is, in a certain respect, a reiteration of this discovery of Freud, with the addition of meticulous consideration given to the place and function of rhetorical tropes, particularly metaphor and metonymy. In what remains of Part I, I present the precise way in which Lacan links Freud’s notion of condensation with metaphor and links displacement with metonymy, respectively. In doing so, I hope to make sense of Lacan’s contention that the unconscious is structured like a language.

Freud distinguishes between several forms of condensation in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. One such paradigm is condensation by fusion, or “superimposition.” According to this type, various elements of latent material become fused together, or condensed, into a single entity on the level of the manifest content. Similar to the way in which a neologism tends to arise from the combination of two or more terms, certain individual characters or items within one’s dreams can be the result of a fusion of several different

²² Recall that the very nature of socialization removes any possibility of a complete return to the time of one’s free-forming desires; accordingly, a complete merging of one’s socially-constructed self with one’s other, unconscious side is forever out of reach.

²³ “Dream-displacement and dream-condensation are the two governing factors to whose activity we may in essence ascribe the form assumed by dreams” (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 343).

individuals from one's waking life. Such a person represents a composite of potentially several individuals, against whom one might secretly harbor such strong feelings that one is unwilling to admit them to oneself.²⁴ For example, one may happen to harbor severe resentment towards one's previously abusive grandfather, who has since begun suffering from Alzheimer's disease, one's buffoon of a brother, who now suffers from cancer, and one's son, who was born without well-functioning kidneys and requires numerous and expensive surgeries. Such feelings are instantly repressed; however, one may have a dream in which one confronts one's childhood bully, only this version of the bully also happens to have the dreamer's brother's nose, grandfather's gait, and a non-rhotic accent similar to the dreamer's son. Thus, the latent content is sufficiently disguised to where it remains unnoticed by the dreamer, hypothetically speaking.

The second kind of condensation involves an omission rather than a pastiche of sorts. With condensation qua omission, the reconstruction of the latent content as presented in the manifest content is omitted, substituted, or incomplete to the point of virtually imperceptible. Whereas the aforementioned composite figure unifies several particular targets of the same latent, or repressed impulse (resentment), omission occurs as an over-determination of a single element within the manifest content, one that is the nodal point, to use Lacan's terminology, for a multiplicity of latent elements.²⁵ To put this important point alternatively, a single entity could signify several different unconscious feelings and desires, such that it becomes quite difficult for both the analyst and analysand to trace back the various chains of associations that have since merged into a single entity. For instance, one may have a dream in which one loses an incisor. This single displaced tooth may be the symbolic nexus for several conflicting impulses, such as the seething anger one harbors over the affair that an ex-wife had with a dentist, the grief one may still feel over the loss of a parent who had played the role of the tooth fairy, and even the lament one feels towards one's own son's inevitable

²⁴ One of Freud's most famous examples of condensation qua superimposition is the "propyls" of "The Dream of Irma's Injection" (Ibid., 328–330).

²⁵ One of Freud's most famous examples of condensation qua omission is the botanical monograph of "The Dream of the Botanical Monograph." Ibid., 316–319.

progression towards adolescence and beyond. In such a case, the lost tooth symbolizes not one, but all three of these repressed impulses simultaneously.

The other primary mechanism identified by Freud is displacement. Like condensation, displacement works to obscure on the manifest level that which is fundamental on the latent. But unlike condensation, displacement involves a transfer of desire from the actual object to one that is less threatening or disruptive, which is to say, one that is easily integrated into who the person is or aspires to be during her waking life. In this sense, displacement either obscures by emphasizing on the manifest level that which is relatively insignificant on the latent level or, inversely, deemphasizing on the manifest level that which is most significant on the latent level.²⁶ For instance, the central person, object, or event around which one's dream appears to revolve may be a representation of something nugatory, whereas a seemingly incidental detail of one's dream can represent a surplus of meaning and, indeed, is presented in so unnoticeable a fashion for that very reason.

Now that we have attended to the quintessentially Freudian aspects of Lacan's method of dream analysis, we are prepared to consider the explicitly linguistic component of Lacan's approach. As we are about to see, Freud alone did not influence Lacan; in fact, Lacan borrows from the Structuralist thinkers of his day, and none are quite so rich and generous as Ferdinand de Saussure, from whom Lacan adopts the notion of linguistic signs, and Roman Jakobson, from whom Lacan appropriates the theory that metaphor and metonymy, or selection and combination, are the two basic axes of language and communication.²⁷

Regarding Saussure's contribution, Lacan understands the linguistic sign to be that, which "unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a

²⁶ "It thus seems plausible to suppose that in the dream-work a psychical force is operating which on the one hand strips the elements which have a high psychic value of their intensity, and on the other hand, *by means of over-determination*, creates from elements of low psychical value new values, which afterwards find their way into the dream-content. If that is so, *a transference and displacement of psychical intensities* occurs in the process of dream-formation...the process which we are here presuming is nothing less than the essential portion of the dream-work; and it deserves to be described as 'dream-displacement'" (Ibid., 342-343).

²⁷ Because Lacan makes these insights very much his own, a detailed excursion into the intricacies of Saussure and Jakobson, respectively, would be beside the point of this essay.

sound-image.”²⁸ What is important for Lacan is the nature of the sign itself, namely, that it is an example of an associative relation between that which is signified and that which is accomplishing the signifying, otherwise known as the signifier. And whereas Saussure attributes primacy to that which is signified, “the concept,” over and above that which is signifying, or the auditory image, Lacan promptly inverts the schematic relation such that the signifier retains top priority, and, moreover, he does so for reasons involving the role of metaphor and metonymy in dreams.

The most important aspect of metaphor is that a metaphor is figurative rather than literal, such that *this* stands in for *that* in an exclusive sort of way; for this reason, metaphor operates on the paradigmatic axis of language insofar as its *modus operandi* includes selection, substitution, and similarity. Lacan does well here to draw a connection between the substitution facet of metaphor and the way in which condensation is said to operate in dreams; just as substitution, an inherent property of metaphor, occurs when one substitutes a word or image for another one, the crux of condensation is that a new image stands in for, or signifies, something other than itself.

Before advancing on to metonymy, it is necessary to mention that the respective metamorphosing powers of metaphor and metonymy as they operate simultaneously in dream formation are what co-constitute the locus of the dream work, and to understand them as merely isolated, if coincidental, acts rather than in tandem and as mutually reinforcing is to enucleate the dream of its cohesiveness. Indeed, the significance of metaphor for Lacan’s purposes is not to be understood apart from the role played by metonyms, for it is the artful way in which they operate in conjunction with one another that lends the dream its fundamentally holistic quality for Lacan.

Bearing this in mind, a metonym, then, is a term for that which is but a part of a greater whole uttered in reference to that greater whole. For example, when a young adult casually refers to his friend’s new car by saying, “nice wheels,” he is employing a synecdoche, which is a species of metonymy. Accordingly, metonymy is the representation of the whole by merely a part; for Lacan, this is simply another way to understand the representation of the

²⁸ By “sound-image,” Saussure is referring to the sensory impression that a sound leaves on one’s senses, as opposed the purely material, auditory element. Please see Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 66.

essential by the incidental, which, as we have seen already, is Freud's notion of displacement as operative in the realm of unconscious dreamscapes. Rather than pivoting on the kind of substitution akin to metaphor, metonymy functions on a syntagmatic axis of language and, as such, relies on combination, contexture, and contiguity: *this* stands in proximal relation to *that* in an inclusive fashion. In other words, deciphering the metonymic elements within dreams requires a traversal of the associative chain of contiguous elements, beginning, no doubt, with what comes last but is most readily apparent: the manifest content.

To return to my previous example, one's dream may include a pair of wheels that occur in the dream for a matter of seconds. This set of tires, while a seemingly meaningless detail in an otherwise epic dream, may be the piece of the dream that is most in need of analysis. Following the chain of association, these wheels may represent a particular car from one's past, with which one associates strong emotions or repressed memories that one needs to acknowledge above all others; the wheels' minor role in the dream belies their significance, for the difficulty which the patient will have in coming to terms with what they represent are commensurate with the degree to which they are downplayed in the dream. In a sense, the dream is at odds with itself by working to heal the patient while also "protecting" the patient from the severity of the healing process. And, insofar as the dream is an extension of the patient, the patient could be said to be at odds with herself without fully realizing how or why; given the complicated nature of such a condition, the crucial role of the midwife played by the psychoanalyst when engaging the patient in psychoanalytic dream interpretation is evident.

By way of concluding Part I, I must reiterate that the linchpin which ties together Lacan's understanding of how nocturnal dreams suggest that the unconscious is structured like a language is the primacy of the signifier in relation to the signified. Recall that metaphor is a linguistic mechanism that runs along language's paradigmatic axis, which is to say, along the axis of the lexicon; indeed, metaphor is nothing other than a process of lexical enrichment insofar as it attributes figurative meaning. In essence, then, metaphorizing consists of referring to something by the name of something else, and the ease with which one is able to substitute one signifier for another while avoiding misunderstandings is precisely what Lacan finds so important. Thanks to metaphor, it becomes possible to identify terms predominately with

their figurative meaning; from here, one can further deepen the meaning of a word by employing its already-figurative meaning in such a way that substitutes a new figurative meaning in place of the old one, thereby pushing it away from its original connotation, or that which was initially the signified.

Once such refiguring has taken place, what one is left with, according to Lacan, is a signifier that is signifying, or substituting for, another signifier. The signifier's primacy over the signified lies in the fact that one is still able to make sense of what has been spoken of or, as Lacan puts it, "follow the logic of the signifiers." Hence, one is able to deliver perfectly intelligible discourse or participate in a conversation with recourse to only a network of signifiers, whereas the same could not be done with pure signifieds, for they depend on signifiers for their comprehensible reception in communication; thusly, it is the signifiers that govern the signified and not the other way around (à la Saussure).²⁹ Lacan, in a stroke of genius, recognizes this phenomenon as inherent in dreams, for it is entirely possible to have one word or image substitute for another word or image that was already itself a metaphorical substitution. And just as the similarity between the two signifying elements that compose a metaphor is not always immediately apparent and, therefore, the statement spoken to one by another appears unintelligible, so, too, can a dream that includes the metaphoric work of condensation appear unintelligible, unreadable, or just plain unusual. Accordingly, interpreting a dream is akin to grasping a metaphor in reverse order, for "metaphor occurs at the precise point at which sense emerges from non-sense," which is to say, when the dream suddenly means something.³⁰ Furthermore, the same basic principle holds true in the case of metonymy, with the exception being that metonymy, once again, restricts itself to the syntagmatic axis. Essentially, it is slightly easier to recognize the relation of signifiers in metonymy to the extent that, even if the whole of the signifier does not get mentioned in discourse, or does not fully materialize in the manifest content of one's dream, the meaning comes across regardless thanks to the contiguous relation of part to whole; in other words, the signifying relation behind their linkage remains more explicit

²⁹ For an exceptionally thorough and riveting example of this principle in action, please see Lacan's treatments of Edgar Allen Poe's story, *The Purloined Letter*, in his eponymous Seminars.

³⁰ Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud," *Ecrits*, 2007, 172.

and, therefore, more discernable. It is, thus, in light of such considerations that Lacan writes

As a rule, we must always give precedence to the signified in our analyses, because it's certainly what is most seductive and what seems at first to be the dimension appropriate to symbolic investigation in psychoanalysis. But in misrecognizing the primary mediating role of the signifier, in misrecognizing that it is the signifier that in reality is the guiding element, not only do we throw the original understanding of neurotic phenomena, the interpretation of dreams itself, out of balance, but we make ourselves absolutely incapable of understanding what is happening in the psychoses.... The opposition between metaphor and metonymy is fundamental, since what Freud originally emphasized in the mechanisms of neurosis, as well as in those of marginal phenomena of normal life or of dreams, is neither the metaphoric dimension nor identification. It's the opposite. In general, what Freud calls condensation is what in rhetoric we call metaphor. What he calls displacement is metonymy. The structuration, the lexical existence of the entirety of the signifying apparatus, determines the phenomena present in neurosis, because the signifier expresses itself. This is why, when we turn our attention back to the signifier, we're doing nothing other than returning to the starting point of the Freudian discovery.³¹

In these elements of Lacan's thought, we find all of the principle theoretical arguments justifying the thesis that the unconscious is structured like a language. The primacy of the signifier is attested to by the metaphoric and metonymic mechanisms; these mechanisms are assimilated to the functioning of the primary process, condensation and displacement; and, finally, they are extended to the configuration of the formations of the unconscious.³²

For Lacan, each dream is a discourse of desire being uttered by an Other that comes from within and, yet, will forever remain at some distance. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to conclude, as Lacan does, that dreams are, ultimately, symptoms of an insatiable desire for recognition on the part of that piece of us which was abandoned outside of the gates of societal norms. When the unconscious is brought to light by dismantling the dream through following its chain of associations, the symptoms are only alleviated in the

³¹ Lacan, *Seminar III*, 220–221.

³² Dor, *The Unconscious Structured like a Language*, 45.

sense that one's dreams appear less foreign and arbitrary; instead, one begins to catch a glimpse of a lost and long-forgotten chapter in one's personal history and, in doing so, comes to appreciate the purpose and presentation behind one's dreams.

PART II: UNCONSCIOUS ART: JUNG'S RECASTING OF PSYCHOANALYSIS AS AN APPRECIATION OF THE PSYCHE'S CAPACITY TO CREATE SPONTANEOUSLY

If Lacan's development of his notion of the unconscious is, in part, an attempt to rein in psychology from its departure from Freud, then Jung's theory of the unconscious could easily be likened to a maverick, whose bucking spooked the rest of the yoked harem into wild dispersion. To put this differently, Jung, from Lacan's perspective, is an example of what happens when psychology drifts too far afield from its Freudian roots. And, while many scholars of psychology and beyond have discussed the tempestuous relationship between Freud and Jung,³³ it is worth mentioning here that Jung's biggest influence in psychology was never Freud but, rather, Theodore Flournoy, whose case studies on individuals claiming to possess clairvoyance and memories of past lives are what encouraged Jung's keen interest in, and subsequent analysis of, such phenomena.³⁴

On a related note, although I discussed Lacan's account of the origin of the unconscious in great detail, less attention will be paid to Jung's genesis theory. The reason for this omission is simply that a nuanced understanding of the set of circumstances that cause the psyche to become fissured is necessary if one is to entertain seriously Lacan's account of the intricacies of dreams and their corresponding method of analysis. By comparison, Jung's inquiries typically lead him to bypass the developmental phases of early childhood in lieu of exploring the more artistic dimensions of the psyche. Rather than tracing the unconscious back to its hypothetical point of departure

³³ "The correspondence between Freud and Jung is hard to outclass in terms of the incidence of invective and vitriol that they dished out to their psychological and psychiatric colleagues, and finally, to each other" (Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 50). For a more recent and cinematic portrayal of their infamous falling-out, see *A Dangerous Method*, directed by David Cronenberg and starring Keira Knightley and Viggo Mortensen, 2011.

³⁴ See, for instance, Flournoy's *From India to the Planet Mars: A Case of Multiple Personality with Imaginary Languages*.

in childhood trauma, Jung prefers to focus his investigations on the latter half of one's life, for this is arguably when one's creative capacities begin to bear their ripest fruit. As scholar Hester Solomon surmises, Like popes of old in the face of the globe as it was then, Freud and Jung had

divided up the map of the human psyche, with Freud and his followers concentrating on its depths, on the exploration of the early childhood developmental stages, while Jung and his followers focused on its heights, on the functioning of the more mature states of mind, including those creative and artistic states responsible for the finest cultural, spiritual, and scientific pursuits of mankind, states which Jung studied as aspects and activities of the self.³⁵

Essentially, Jung suspects that the psyche's true power lies in its ability to create rather than conceal; the nature of such creation and the means through which the unconscious gives rise to creativity in dream form are the focus of this section.

In order to attain a solid understanding of the creative element that grounds Jung's approach to interpreting the unconscious, one need only to look at what he has identified as the productive forces at work in dreams: that is, the interlocking notions of the archetypes and the collective unconscious, respectively. To that end, it serves us well to examine two salient excerpts from his collected works, both of which stem from the same volume. In this first passage, Jung offers a response to those contemporaries of his whose criticism of his work resides on a fundamental misunderstanding:

Again and again I encounter the mistaken notion that an archetype is determined in regard to its content, in other words that it is a kind of unconscious idea (if such an expression be admissible). It is necessary to point out once more that the archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree. A primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience. Its form, however, as I have explained elsewhere, might perhaps be compared to the axial system of a crystal, which, as it were, pre-forms the crystalline structure in the mother liquid, although it has no material

³⁵ Hester McFarland Solomon, "The developmental school," 120.

existence of its own. This first appears according to the specific way in which the ions and molecules aggregate. The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a *facultas praeformandi*, a possibility of representation which is given a priori. The representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms, and in that respect they correspond in every way to the instincts, which are also determined in form only. The existence of the instincts can no more be proved than the existence of the archetypes, so long as they do not manifest themselves concretely.³⁶

Perhaps nowhere else does Jung provide a more definitive explication of the nature of archetypes. Aside from serving as a corrective for those countless commentators of his work who mistakenly interpret his understanding of archetypes as consistent in content as well as form, this passage gives the reader a firm understanding of how Jung views the creative capacities of the psyche. Essentially, one's psyche is pre-disposed to create, recognize, and identify with the particular manifestation of universal, possibly eternal forms. What is more, these empty forms are, themselves, formative insofar as they give shape to the material of conscious experience. When form directs content in this fashion, the results are what Jung refers to elsewhere as "natural symbols...derived from the unconscious contents of the psyche, and they therefore represent an enormous number of variations on the essential archetypal images."³⁷ Indeed, that to which Jung is referring by "the material of conscious experience" is the emergence of archetypal images within the context of a given cultural milieu. The inevitable appearance of such images testifies to the symbol-making propensities of man insofar as man's psyche is, for Jung, predisposed to the creation of key symbolic images by virtue of the spontaneous and creative qualities of the archetypes, those formative principles to which all human beings have access.

Furthermore, such images are not necessarily purely visual; quite the contrary, Jung interprets the concretization of certain archetypal motifs in the rich and varied myths of one's culture, most especially those grand narratives that seek to account for the creation of the cosmos, its possible destruction, and the like. To be sure, Jung is not equating archetype with symbol here.

³⁶ Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, vol. 9, pt. 1, 79–80.

³⁷ Carl Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," 83.

Instead, the archetypes afford the psyche its ability to work within the symbolic order of one's culture so that such myths are not only produced, but also preserved. Indeed, the particular examples of symbolism within one's cultural heritage correspond to those "representations that are not inherited," for these are created by man.³⁸ It is, then, no coincidence that the archetypal figures such as the mother, god, the hero, the shadow—one's dark side, as it were—occur in virtually every culture's origin story; they are central to all myth because they are fundamental to man himself.

At this point, one cannot help but pose the question as to the nature of myth to which Jung appears to be subscribing; in what way in particular did these empty, purely formal archetypes become of a piece with unconscious instincts, their biological correspondents? Jung, in an especially lucid passage, offers the following clarification regarding his understanding of the unconscious:

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconscious. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substratum of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. Psychic existence can be recognized only by the presence of contents capable of consciousness. We can therefore speak of an unconscious only in so far as we are able to demonstrate its contents. The contents of the personal unconscious are chiefly feeling-toned complexes, as they are called; they constitute the personal and private side of psychic life.

³⁸ This distinction is important, for Jung is "far from applying a European symbolism to peoples of other cultures; this is a fundamental misunderstanding. What he is saying is that certain similarities in the symbols and myths of all peoples can be discerned, so far as they contain images of the archetypes of the collective unconscious in them. Jung makes a further distinction between symbols and signs. While some aspect of a symbol remains undefinable, a sign simply denotes a particular object or thing, and thus may stand for it. The Christian cross is an example of both a sign and a symbol. As a sign, it stands for a given religion. As a symbol, it represents part of the mythological background of that religion and is ultimately undefinable" (Drake, "Jung and His Critics," 332).

The contents of the collective unconscious, on the other hand, are known as archetypes.³⁹

Here, Jung takes measures to distinguish between the “personal unconscious,” that is, the unconscious as experienced uniquely by each individual, and the “collective unconscious,” which both supports and gives rise to the personal unconscious. We have arrived, then, at the level of dreams; Jung recognizes the presence of archetypal figures within dreams, and their presence within one’s personal dreamscapes indicates an intermingling between one’s personal unconscious and that of the collective unconscious.

For Jung, such intermingling is more than mere happenstance, for the recognition of archetypes within one’s dreams is the key to unraveling one’s dreams. In fact, the place of archetypes in the collective unconscious indicates that their manifestation in one’s private dreams is beneficial for the psychical healing of the patient. Accordingly, the psychoanalytic “talking cure,” so to speak, becomes a game of identifying patterns of symbols, which is to say, the analyst strives to ascertain what those entities contained within the analysand’s private dreams symbolize for her individually and her culture in general, at which point one can begin to correctly identify the manifestation of certain archetypes within one’s dreams. Broadly speaking, Jung’s approach to the nature of dreams is best understood as based upon a teleological understanding of the psyche, whereby all psychological events, including the most severe symptoms, are considered to have purpose and meaning.⁴⁰

FINAL THOUGHTS

Both Lacan and Jung agree that the personal psychical experience of one’s dreams, despite its apparent particularity and incommunicability, contains structural invariants, without which it could be neither identified nor named as such; for Lacan, these structures are linguistic, and, for Jung, these structures are archetypal/mythic-poetic, and, as evidenced above, are also indelibly intertwined with linguistic expression.

³⁹ *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, vol. 9, pt. 1, 3–4.

⁴⁰ Solomon, “The developmental school,” 121.

For Lacan, the unconscious has no location and is no-thing, that is, it is a reaction to a lack or severance that remains forever unsatisfied, and the only evidence psychologists have for its existence is its linguistic-like materialization in the form of its “tells,” namely, parapraxis and dreams, both daydreams and nocturnal manifestations. For this reason, these indicators, taken collectively, *are* the unconscious, and, considering their linguistic mode of representation, which itself all but demands reception, consideration, and interpretation as and through language via the “talking cure,” Lacan’s abstruse claim that the unconscious is structured like a language is understandable and, in fact, well-stated. It thus follows that, when he defines the unconscious as speech, which is suggested by the technique of the talking cure, he treats the symptom as a kind of message, an encoded cipher for a gagged discourse containing a kernel of truth.⁴¹ And, similarly, when the unconscious is described not just as speech but as a language, the symptom becomes known as a signifier structured like a metaphorical chain concealing the primary signifier of the trauma.⁴²

For Jung, however, the unconscious is, rather than nothing, something (and a collection of things, at that). While he agrees with Lacan that the unconscious always and only expresses itself through symbolic means (never literally), thereby requiring an interpretative approach, he contends that the unconscious is that which is found deep inside a person and composed of archetypes and their corresponding universal manifestations, arguably best embodied through divine myths, or religion, that have been passed on (perhaps even phylogenetically) since the dawn of mankind and of which dreams are imitative. Jung’s notion of the unconscious contends that the unconscious has a secure location in the psyche and is of a positive nature, that it is substantial and, rather than signaling a deprivation of cohesiveness, is a plenum of sorts. It may come as no surprise, then, that Jung focuses on the creative, productive, even prophetic nature of myths partially as a reaction to Freud’s narrow, regressive, and reductionist reliance on prepubescent childhood development. Jung’s passion for the possible, as it were, is further characterized by a speculative openness to alternative approaches (hypnotism, occult, séance or other agency involving a medium, to name but a few). But, contrary to Jung’s critical appraisal of Freudian psychoanalysis as, at root,

⁴¹ Soler, “The paradoxes of the symptom in psychoanalysis,” 86.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 86.

entirely reductive to the realm of the biological and psychosocial, Lacan, while agreeing that the emergence of the unconscious directly centers around Freud's notions of the phallus, Oedipal complex, castration, and other such terms borrowed from prepubescent sexual development, does not hold that such reduction is necessarily limiting. Indeed, Lacan's mining of the insight that the unconscious is structured like a language is such a strong exhibition of the productive, poetic nature of the unconscious that one could make the argument that it is Jungian in spirit in spite of its being his most strident claim to remain faithful to that which he understands to be authentically Freudian. Such a claim even finds support in Lacan scholar Darian Leader, who writes, "If we understand myths less as fictions with a low truth-value than as attempts to make sense of contingent and perhaps traumatic sets of events by means of a narrative, then all developmental schemas have a mythic character."⁴³

While we may safely conclude that Lacan and Jung's respective theories of dream interpretation are compatible to a significant degree, is it possible that they are also, in fact, complementary? Perhaps so, for our investigative comparison has introduced the strong possibility that the crystalline structure of Jung's archetypes directly corresponds to Lacan's way of taking up Saussure's notion of the structure of language. Furthermore, on an even more fundamental level, both thinkers agree that the unconscious beckons for attentive consideration through dreams and, thus, cries out for its decipherment for the sake of bettering the individual. Herein lies Lacan' and Jung's most significant similarity: both agree that psychoanalysis is meant for more than just the reparative suture of some sort of brokenness within the patient; specifically, it is for the sake of true betterment, or psychological refinement of an individual, and this is why those who are not afflicted with any form of neurosis or psychosis whatsoever (i.e. "normal") can still benefit from its self-revelatory effects. Ultimately, for both authors, psychoanalysis is something of a hermeneutic art resting on a maieutic method that, when successful, affords the patient a personalized propedeutics of selfhood for the sake of enhancing her overall quality of life. And, the conditions that allow for the efficacy of dream analysis (those curative, enriching effects that it fosters)

⁴³ Leader, "Lacan's Myths," 36.

are the constitutive elements of the unconscious itself, those cryptic yet inviting signals that are structured like a language and plead for their interpretation. If nothing else, this suggests that even our most primal urges are linguistically inclined; in this crucial sense, we are, quite possibly, fundamentally linguistic down to our deepest of depths.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The author kindly thanks Timothy Burns, Scott D. Churchill, Robert Kugelmann, Kristina Manzi, Takeshi Morisato, and Dennis Sepper for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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