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**A Discovery of Meaning: The case of C.**

**G. Jung's house dream**

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### A Discovery of Meaning: The case of C. G. Jung's house dream

Jung's work is a serious attempt to engage psychology with 'meaning', comparable with narrative psychology, though the two emerged in different cultural and historical settings. Whereas narrative psychologists typically study autobiographical stories, Jung studied images such as appearing in dreams and myths. This study turns the question on Jung, examining a dream that Jung had regarded as the birth moment of his 'collective unconscious' theory. The dream's contents vary when retold after many years in ways that mirror the interim development of his theory. Representations of the dream as a biographical event in others' writings reflect contrasting attitudes towards him. His use of the dream's image as heuristic in the dissemination of his theory is counterweighted by the dream's effect on him as a poetic image. The psychological function of the image for Jung is considered.

*Keywords:* Dreams, Jung, Poetic image, Collective unconscious, History of psychology  
Narrative psychology

### **A condensed history of meaning in psychology**

'Meaning' confounded psychology from the outset. 'Meaning depends upon personal biography; it has a highly complicated origin...' wrote Köhler (1930), concluding: 'Therefore we must get rid of it and learn to approach actual sensations in such a way that their qualities and laws must be discovered in their pure form' (p. 55). The early 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologists were acutely aware that modern physics became possible when a switch was made from values to abstract concepts; e.g., from describing the sensation of heat to a concept of temperature. Taking physics as the model science, and writing lengthily about the change from Aristotelian to Galileian ways of thinking, Lewin (1935) foresaw a similar revolution in psychology. Skinner (1971) ridiculed Aristotle's belief that a falling body accelerated because 'it grew more jubilant as it found nearer home': talk of purpose clearly has no place in modern physics, 'yet almost everyone attributes human behaviour to intentions, purposes, aims and goals' (p. 14). Lost in the argument was sight of the human being as someone to whom getting nearer to home, falling, or feeling heat, do matter. Making a case for narrative psychology, Freeman (1997) points out that the traditional disciplinary categories omit 'the living, loving, suffering, dying human being... human lives, existing in culture and in time' (p. 171). Bruner (1990) told of disenchantment with the cognitive approach, and Gergen (1994) narrated successive crises of confidence. A shift 'back' to Aristotle, though with a twist (cf. Harré, 1997), became possible in the wake of the postmodernist redescription of subjectivity as constituted in language and the 'interpretative turn' in the social sciences (Polkinghorne, 1988). Since the 1980s narrative psychology has emerged as a viewpoint addressing personal biography and the 'highly complicated origin' of meaning, shared by a diverse group of scholars who, enthused by new ideas and methodologies (e.g., McLeod, 1997; Crossley, 2000; McAdams, 2001).

The 'postmodern' discontent is not new. Speaking in 1945, Jung reflected that 'modern psychology ... does not exclude the existence of faith, conviction, and experienced certainties of whatever description' but it 'completely lacks the means to prove their validity in the scientific sense' (1948/1959a, par. 384). Even if it were possible to 'verify' faith, such endeavour was irrelevant to the philosophical preoccupations of experimental psychology at its inception in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see

Kusch, 1995). The collateral emergence of *Völkerpsychologie* (ethnopsychology), which Wundt regarded as complementing experimental psychology, dissipated early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Danzinger, 1983). While *Völkerpsychologie* charted matters of faith such as myths and rituals (Wundt, 1916), it did not address the dilemma that concerned Jung. Jung's work is arguably the first serious attempt to engage psychology meaningfully with meaning, so to speak. His priority was psychotherapy: 'We should not try to "get rid" of a neurosis, but rather to experience what it means, what it has to teach, what its purpose is' (Jung, 1934/1964a, par. 361). Confronted with the anxieties and delusions of the mentally ill, psychotherapists could hardly ignore matters of faith and fantasy; but they could—and, in Jung's view, did—make 'very notable blunders ... as when the perfectly normal function of dreams was viewed from the same angle as disease' (par. 369). Jung's criticisms were mostly aimed at Freud. Experimental psychology was too distant from medical psychology. Speaking in 1924, Jung pointed out that analytical psychology (his approach) 'differs from experimental psychology in that it does not attempt to isolate individual functions'; instead, 'the hopes and fears, the pains and joys, the mistakes and achievements of real life ... provide us with our material' (1946/1970, par. 170-1). Exactly the same could be claimed on behalf of narrative psychology.

Whereas narrative psychologists typically turn to autobiographical stories for their material, Jung turned to dreams, patients' hallucinations, art, fairytales, myths, and more. Although some Jung scholars find a confluence between his thought and 'narrative' ideas (Pietikäinen, 1999) or postmodernism generally (Hauke, 2000), the connections are not so obvious from the other side. That is partly because 'Jung' is seen chiefly through others' permutations, reformations and distortions of his more famous ideas (see a comparison of McAdams' 'imago' theory and Jung's archetypes in Jones, 2003a). In any case, whether confluent or conflicting, the two psychologies are unique responses to different cultural-historical conditions. They are embedded in separate discourses in terms of their leading linguistic community (German versus English), its geographical and historical circumstances (the birth of the state-nation of Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, globalisation in late 20<sup>th</sup> century). An account of the divergent epistemologies ensuing from their disparate settings could be as illuminating as the identification of their convergent attitudes (work in progress by the author).

Two points lead to the present study. First, a review of the similarities and differences between Jung's work and narrative psychology would not necessarily show how insights from both could be integrated in an empirical inquiry, though it would make the case for their integration. The argument cannot be duly developed in the space of this paper, which aims to demonstrate the application in action. Second, their *differentiae* open up the possibility of studying meaning through a triangulation of the two psychologies (the hidden third corner of the triangle would be the empiricist 'other' of both)—applying a kind of bifocal lens to the material, reading image into story and story into image. This method underpins my engagement with various accounts of a dream by Jung. It is not a method in the logico-scientific sense; as Polkinghorne (1995) says about narrative analysis, it is 'actually a synthesizing of the data rather than a separation into its constituent parts' (p. 15). Image and story are not mutually exclusive categories. Below the method translates into the identification of linkages among multiple constructions of the importance of the dream for Jung's theory of the collective unconscious.

### **About the study**

Jung regarded his theory of the collective unconscious as his greatest achievement. In a nutshell, it states that some contents of the unconscious originate

[Not in personal experience] but in the inherited possibility of psychic functioning in general, i.e., in the inherited structure of the brain. These are the mythological associations, the motifs and images that can spring up anew anytime anywhere, independently of historical tradition or migration. I call these contents the *collective unconscious*. (Jung, 1921/1973, par. 842)

The term 'collective' is misleading, for it could be misread as 'social'. There is nothing social about the collective unconscious; it is 'collective' in the way that human anatomy is, i.e., universal or common to all. Jung postulated the existence of innate propensities to form certain kinds of symbolic representations, which he called archetypes (a common misconception is that he meant inherited memories; see Jones, 2003b, for an attempt to figure out what he did mean). The theory became the structuring core of analytical psychology, which nowadays is diversified into several schools of thought

(Samuels, 1985). The collective unconscious is something that any Jungian or post-Jungian must contend with, whether accepting or querying its original formulation. That formulation is fraught with metaphysical problems; and already in Jung's lifetime, his Lamarckian assumption regarding how archetypes are formed has made it untenable. But it didn't release its hold on him.

Why was it so meaningful to him? This is the central question of this study. It is not my intention to critique the theory, but take it as a historical phenomenon. Cassirer (1925/1946) urges those who engage in historical reflection to find 'those "pregnant" moments in the course of events where, as in focal points, whole series of occurrences are epitomized' (p. 27). In these moments 'a thousand connections are forged by one stroke', and it is 'an awareness of such relationships that constitutes the peculiar historicity, or what we call the historical significance of facts' (p. 28). Within the history of Jung's thought, there is indeed one significant moment, a focal point, within which all antecedent and consequent threads are pulled together. The moment is a particular dream that he had in 1909 when travelling with Freud to Clark University in Massachusetts (see Bair, 2003, for a chronicle of the trip). On the way back Jung dreamed of a house where each floor belonged to a different historical era, and in the lowest level he found prehistoric remains (more detail below). He immediately told the dream to Freud, who offered an interpretation which Jung rejected (again, more below). Jung eventually understood the dream as the moment when the existence of the collective unconscious was revealed to him. Although he had several famous dreams, the centrality of the house dream cannot be understated. It has become commonplace to introduce 'Jung' with this dream. For instance, the link entitled 'About us' on the New Israeli Jungian Society website begins with an account of the house dream, leading to a description of the worldwide Jungian movement and lastly information about the particular Society. In this and similar instances, the dream fronts what contemporary Jungians wish to communicate about themselves. Yet Jung told different versions of the dream (reviewed below). Although their discrepancies do not undermine the basic point that he took from the dream, they do affect our understanding of how he came to see this point in the dream.

Popper (1958) held that scientific discoveries are 'impossible without faith in ideas which are of a purely speculative kind, and sometimes even quite hazy' (p. 38). Someone's idea sets in motion the theory-building machinery of the discipline.

Subsequently the theory acquires an independence from its author, and is evaluated and re-evaluated in successive cultural indexing of its utility. Now it has a life of its own, an autonomy that persists when historians of ideas seek clues about its origins in its author's biography. Yet it takes that initial act of faith to pursue a new direction. What brings about faith in one's idea? In Jung's case, it might be more appropriate to talk of faith in an image. In retrospect, he realized that the metaphor had been with him before the dream (Jung, 1926/1989). Precursors of his collective unconscious theory are found in highly influential theses on myth, evolution, and the unconscious, that circulated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century German speaking world, and which Jung commented upon in his works. The dream pulled these threads together and literally made visible an abstract idea with which he had struggled. Research on dreams that aid scientific problem solving indeed shows that the dream is the culmination of a prolonged and intensive preoccupation with the problem (e.g., Baylor, 2001). Yet neither the problem nor its solution are 'storied' in the problem solving dream. The dream presents some novel image that has to be understood by the dreamer as symbolising the solution to the problem.

Wittgenstein (1953) made a similar point apropos Kekulé's discovery of the benzene ring in a dream:

What is to be done with the picture, how it is to be used ... must be explored if we want to understand the sense of what we are saying. But the picture seems to spare us this work: it already points to a particular use. This is how it takes us in. (p. 184)

The process of being 'taken in' by a dream image is clearer in accounts of dreams that influence creative work (e.g., Knudson, 2001; Russo, 2003). In such cases, there is a protracted, sometimes life-long, preoccupation with the image, translating it into numerous different productions that explore its possibilities. Jung's dream could be classed as likewise inducing a creative obsession.

The contingency of dream contents on language has been noted long and widely, from Freud's (1900/1976) comments on puns in dreams to Mageo's (2002) analysis of intertextuality in Samoan women's dreams. However, Wittgenstein (1953) pointed out the inseparability of the dream from its report. Commenting on Schroeder's (1997) interpretation of this point, Hanfling (1998) contends that the impossibility of

empirically determining whether the dream really happened does not render the question, 'did it happen', nonsensical. Replying to Hanfling, Schroeder (2000) defends the view that the temporal location of dreams in sleep is 'not an empirical fact, but determined by grammar' (p. 70). The autobiographical emplotment and reconstruction of the memory of a dream is seldom (if ever) considered in research into memorable dreams. Studies typically posit the dream as a singular past event that has on-going significance, though the documentation of dreams that change the dreamer's life (e.g., Knudson & Minier, 1999; Knudson, 2001) supports Hanfling's contention that the dream's timing in the biographical flow is not trivial. As I aim to demonstrate, Jung's dream as we know it is first and foremost an *autobiographical memory*—not a narration of a dream once dreamt, but an active, dynamic, narrative reconstruction influenced by its cumulative significance for Jung. The use to which he put the dream's picture reverberated and resounded throughout his followers' work, which, in the five decades between the event of the dream and his death, must have confirmed to him the dream's importance. This ripple effect is part of the dream's story.

As the account of the dream travels across discursive contexts—Jung's autobiographical and theoretical writings, biographies of Jung and Jungian textbooks—it acquires 'local' meanings, yet also carries vestiges of its meaning elsewhere. Below, the excavations of these strata yield clues as to the dream's deep unspoken meaning, its psychological function for Jung.

### **Morphology of the dream**

Jung told his house dream numerous times, and written records span 1925 to 1961. It is therefore possible to track the morphology of the dream's account. In a sense, the singular dream hardly happened once—in Jung's sleep on a particular night in 1909—but has continued to evolve in subsequent accounts. While this prompts viewing the dream as a 'living' text, like an oral folktale, it poses the pragmatic problem of which version should be taken as most relevant for ascertaining the significance of the dream for Jung. Jung's (1963) autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (henceforth MDR), gives the most detailed account. I find it the most illuminating—not because of its fidelity to what Jung had actually dreamed (which is doubtful)—but because it is the end product of protracted poetic labour. It illuminates the 'whole point' of the dream for Jung (as will be shown later).



The MDR account is probably authentic insofar as it was told by Jung. This speculation needs defending, because the chapter in which the dream appears was partially written by the editor, Jaffé, who incorporated passages from a famous 1925 seminar 'in which Jung spoke for the first time of his inner development' (Jaffé, in Jung, 1963, p. 11). Noll (1994) dismissed the MDR account of the dream as 'a highly embellished one by Jaffé'—but took the version told by Jung in the same seminar as 'perhaps the most direct information' (p. 177). The MDR account closely resembles what Jung told his friend Bennet in 1951 (Bennet, 1983) and again in 1952 (Bennet, 1985). While the MDR and Bennet versions are inconsistent with the 1925 recollection, they are consistent with 'Mind and Earth' (henceforth MAE), an essay first published in 1927 and revised in 1931 with no alteration to the relevant passage (minor differences exist in the respective English translations). In MAE, Jung posits the house as an analogy for the psyche, but without mentioning the dream origin of the comparison. Doing away with the obligation to be faithful to the 'facts' of the dream freed him to reconstruct the picture in the service of his theory (the heuristic use is examined later below). It seems plausible that when retelling the dream to Bennet and Jaffé more than a quarter of a century later, he confused his early imaginative creation with the dream itself.

In the 1925 seminar, Jung explained his concepts through a personal account of how they came about:

In those times I had no idea of the collective unconscious. I thought of the conscious as of a room above, with the unconscious as a cellar underneath and then the earth wellspring, that is, the body, sending up the instincts. ... That is the figure I had always used for myself, and then came this dream ...  
(1926/1989, p. 22-3)

He told that he dreamed of a 'medieval ... big, complicated house with many rooms, passages, and stairways' (p. 23). He comes in from the street and directly goes down to a vaulted Gothic room, from there into a cellar, where he finds a square hole. With a lantern in hand he peeps down and sees 'dusty stairs, very much worn' which lead him to another cellar, 'this one of very ancient structure, perhaps Roman' (p. 23). Again

there is a hole, and through it he looks down into 'a tomb filled with prehistoric pottery, bones, and skulls' (p. 23).

Certain incidental details—coming in from the street, the lantern—did not survive the retelling in the years to come. In the MDR and Bennet versions, all the dream elements fit together, creating a hermeneutic whole. The 1925 version is less neat. There is no mention of the upper floor of the house, yet later he would describe finding himself in that floor and draw a crucial analogy between it and modern consciousness:

I was in a house I did not know, which had two storeys. It was 'my house.' I found myself in the upper storey, where there was a kind of salon furnished with fine old pieces in rococo style. On the walls hung a number of precious old paintings. I wondered that this should be my house, and thought, 'Not bad.' But then it occurred to me that I did not know what the lower floor looked like. Descending the stairs, I reached the ground floor. (Jung, 1963, p. 155)

His interaction with the house, in the dream, changes in the retelling. In all versions he lifts a stone slab in the cellar and discovers another level below. In 1925 Jung told the seminar audience that he looked down into the tomb-like space and, 'as the dust was undisturbed, I thought I had made a great discovery' (1926/1989, p. 23). In 1951 he told Bennet, 'as the dust *settled* I felt I had made a great discovery' (1983, p. 73, my italics), but there was no mention of entering the lowest level. In the MDR version, he does—at last—enter the cave and explores its contents:

I saw a stairway of narrow stone steps leading down into the depths. These, too, I descended, and entered a low cave cut into the rock. Thick dust lay on the floor, and in the dust were scattered bones and broken pottery, like remains of a primitive culture. I discovered two human skulls, obviously very old and half disintegrated. Then I awoke. (Jung, 1963, p. 155)

Jung's identification with the house, too, intensified over the years. Whereas in 1925, it is 'a house' entered from the street, later it is a house inside which he is already present. In 1951 he told the dream to Bennet more or less as in MDR; but upon reading Bennet's

manuscript in 1961, Jung added the words 'in *my* house', remarking that this was important because it showed his identification with the house (Bennet, 1983, p. 73, *n.*). In 1959, talking with Bennet about the symbolism of the medieval house in his dream, Jung added that it was 'as if it was where he lived' and associated it with his uncle's 'very old house in Basel which was built in the old moat of the town and had two cellars; the lower one was very dark and like a cave' (1985, p. 118). In the dream (MDR), he describes the higher cellar as

[A] beautifully vaulted room which looked exceedingly ancient. Examining the walls, I discovered layers of brick among the ordinary stone blocks, and chips of brick in the mortar. As soon as I saw this I knew that the walls dated from Roman times. (Jung, 1963, p. 155)

In 1961, Jung provided Bennet with further information about his uncle's house. It was the priest's house at Basel Cathedral (it can be seen in a 1566 illustration appearing in Jung, 1958/1964b, Plate V). In 1960, some excavations were carried out there and it was found that it was built on Roman remains, and underneath was a cellar like that in the dream. 'This interested him very much—that somehow it was in the family,' reports Bennet (1985, p. 124). The personal bond is reinforced in *Man and His Symbols*, where Jung (1964c) characterised the dream as a short summary of his life.

The house dream has been retold numerous times by others. Propp (1928/1958) famously observed that variations in traditional folktales reflect the local context in which the particular version is told, yet certain dramatic functions remain constant, constituting the plot-axis of the tale. All permutations of the house dream are plotted around the descent through a historically stratified house to its prehistoric lowest level. But the subtle variations on the theme reveal the migration of the dream narrative from the autobiographical context to that of theory dissemination. The details of historical periods in the MDR account—Rococo upper floor, 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-century ground floor with medieval furnishings, Roman basement—usually disappear, whereas the idea of numerous periods is emphasised. Stein (1998) describes Jung as finding himself in a house of 'many levels', going down to 'the basement (the recent historical past) and beyond that down through several sub-cellars (the ancient historical past, like the Greek and Roman, and finally into the prehistoric and Palaeolithic past)' (p. 89). The

embellishment accentuates the idea of the psyche as evolving over many eras (a two-storey house is an understatement). Jungian theory assumes a continuity of psychic stratification from the historical near past to the distant evolutionary past. Accordingly, the cave (MDR) is the lowest extension of the house, a mere sub-cellar. In MDR, a kind of continuity with the house is captured in the images of thick dust on its floor and scattered broken pottery, which give the place a domestic feel. Elsewhere in Jung's and others' accounts, the lower cellar is *like* a cave or tomb.

The precise wording seems trivial when describing what an imaginary cellar looks like, but is poetically crucial. A poet would not choose the simile casually. A tomb or grave is man-made, evincing a civilisation and spirituality, unlike a cave. The innocuous slip from a cave-like tomb to a cave alters the poetic meaning of the dream in a definite direction, in which Jung's thinking indeed flows. Liberated from the dream, Jung's engagement with the image of a cave in the MAE analogy emphasises its discontinuity from the building, although historical periods meld seamlessly into geological strata. Jung invites readers to imagine a building 'whose upper storey was erected in the nineteenth century, the ground-floor dates back to the sixteenth century' and its masonry was 'reconstructed from a tower built in the eleventh century' (1931/1964d, par. 54). The cellar reveals 'Roman foundations', and under it there is 'a choked-up cave with Neolithic tools in the upper layer and remnants of fauna from the same period in the lower layers' (par. 54). He 'free associates' on the cave:

[Here] we reach the naked bed-rock, and with it that prehistoric time when reindeer hunters fought for a bare and wretched existence against the elemental forces of wild nature. The men of that age were still in full possession of their animal instincts, without which life would have been impossible. (par. 55.)

Jung probably had in mind the Palaeolithic era. The anachronistic reference to Neolithic tools appears in Hull's translation, cited above, but is absent in both the German original and the Baynes' translation of the 1927 version. In these texts, there is 'under the cellar a filled-in cave, in the floor of which stone tools are found and remnants of glacial fauna in the layers below' (Jung, 1927/1928, p. 119). The translator's slip gives pause to thought. *Glacial* fauna indicates Palaeolithic. Yet pottery—seen in his dream

(MDR)—first appeared in the Neolithic era. Neolithic tombs are megalithic constructions of impressive engineering, which seems a far cry from ‘that prehistoric time’ when reindeer hunters in full possession of their animal instincts fought for a bare existence. When distilling a poetic image from the dream, Jung overwrote the Neolithic cues and took the imaginary descent farther back in time, as far back as imaginable, tracing the collective unconscious to the Palaeolithic past and reconstructing the picture of the cave to suit this use.

Finally, in retelling the dream, the skulls are sometimes omitted, become ‘bones’, ‘skeletons’ or alternatively ‘many’ skulls or just ‘skulls.’ Yet in view of Jung’s later theory, the skulls of the MDR version are symbolically poignant precisely because they are human and a pair. They constitute an indivisible unity, the ancestral mother and father, alive in each of us in the masculine and feminine duality of the psyche postulated by Jung (e.g., 1931/1964d; cf. Rowland, 2002). But the skulls are played down in Jungian accounts of the dream. It was Freud who regarded them as the key to the dream, though for a very different reason. In Bremen, on the eve of their sailing to the USA, Jung became keenly interested in a discovery of mummified corpses in the peat bogs of Northern Germany. He recalled that this ‘got on Freud’s nerves. “Why are you so concerned with these corpses?” he asked me several times’ (Jung, 1963, p. 153). During one such conversation Freud fainted, and later told Jung that he was convinced that ‘all this chatter about corpses’ meant that Jung had death wishes towards him (p. 153). Not surprisingly, Freud was perturbed by the skulls in Jung’s dream on the return journey, and pressed Jung to reveal whom he was wishing death upon. (Jung reluctantly suggested that it might be his wife, but tells in MDR that this interpretation of the dream never felt right to him.) In a way, Freud was correct: the house dream quickened the death of Freudian theory for Jung and consequently sealed their falling out. In making the analogy in MAE, Jung did not mention skulls (there is only ‘fauna’, who could be human remains but he doesn’t say so). Yet the skulls seem foremost at the back of his mind, so to speak, when he apologised for the ‘lame analogy’ between the house and the psyche on grounds that ‘in the psyche there is nothing that is just a dead relic. Everything is alive’ (Jung, 1931/1964d, par. 55). Here he still conducts an internal dialogue with Freud: ‘Why are you so concerned with these corpses?’ asked Freud in 1909. ‘Because in the psyche nothing is just a dead relic,’ replied Jung in 1927-1931.

### **Representations of the dream as a biographical event**

Jung was still working out ramifications of the image when drawing the analogy in 1927 (MAE), but in the 1925 seminar he already reflected upon the event of the dream from a biographical distance. He recognised it as a milestone in the development of his thought, and likened it to Kekulé's dream. There is a subtle difference between dreams that reveal how something is (e.g., the benzene ring) and dreams that reveal how to do something (e.g., Mendeleev's dream of how to draw the periodic table). Commonly, the house dream is talked about as if revealing how the psyche is—in MAE, the imaginary tour of the building end with the statement: 'That would be the picture of our psychic structure' (Jung, 1931/1964d, par. 54). This is encapsulated in Jung's conversational comment in 1952: 'It was then, at that moment, I got the idea of the collective unconscious' (Bennet, 1985, p. 36). Yet in the specific conversational context 'that moment' refers to his rejection of Freud's interpretation of the dream, not to dreaming the dream. In MDR, the dream account appears in the chapter entitled 'Sigmund Freud'. Jung did not wake up with knowledge of the collective unconscious. His reflections about the dream 'continued on and off for months—indeed for years after that. He was quite unable to account for the dream in personal terms. Then it occurred to him that the house might represent stages of culture' (Bennet, 1983, p. 74; see also Jung, 1963). Jung gradually arrived at the collective unconscious idea whilst struggling with his misgivings about Freud. The subtext of his autobiographical narrative is that the dream showed him how to theorise the psyche better than Freud could.

This subtext seeps into biographies of Jung. In these texts, the representation of the dream event depends on how Jung features in his biography. To paraphrase Bakhtin's (1981) classification of literary novels, in the 'ordeal adventure' genre the hero first moves through foreign landscapes where dangers abound and his interaction with the world is passive and reactive. Similarly, Jungian storytelling usually positions Jung as a lone hero who endures ordeals of self-doubts and soul-searching before obtaining the ultimate prize, the truth about the psyche. Propp (1928/1958) discovered that a typical (European) fairytale begins with some act of villainy or something amiss, and the dispatch of the hero from home. Likewise, Jung is at a loss, troubled by his misgivings about Freud, alienated. The generic tale continues to tell about a sustained ordeal and then introduces help from unexpected source, some magical agent that may

appear as if of its own accord (Propp). Jung has the dream. In tales, the hero's subsequent struggle with the villain is followed with a victory, when misfortune is done away with through the aid of the magical agent (Propp). Jung realises what the dream means. There is indeed a villain in the tale: Freud.

According to Homans (1995), Jung's MDR discussion of the house dream and other incidents depicts Freud as 'hopelessly trapped in his own authoritarian dogmatic system of ideas' and Jung 'as an open person who is superior because he is capable of seeing through the limitations of Freud's dogmatism' (p. 54). Homans turns the power relation around by proposing that Jung's sense of Freud's powerful self-confidence activated his own narcissistic vulnerability, hence his defensive accusation of dogmatism. Homans thus locates the Jung–Freud conflict in (Jung's) psychological interior, independently of what either Jung or Freud wanted from a psychological theory. In contrast, MDR and related narratives in the Jungian literature represent Jung and Freud as interlocked in their epic-like conflict, each staking a claim on the truth about the psyche. Either way, storytelling-wise there are only the timeless functions of hero and villain, the incumbents of which alternate according to whether the tale is told in a pro-Jung or pro-Freud context.

In the Jungian context, the hero's struggle with the villain accentuates the construction of Jung's quest as individual undertaking: he reaches his goal *despite* Freud. The individualistic aspect is accentuated in the chronotope shift in von Franz's (1985/1991) characterisation of the house dream as 'an outline, so to speak, of [Jung's] later development: he descended into deeper and deeper layers of his soul' (p. 26). In the next sentence she resumes the familiar story—Freud's interpretation of the dream and Jung's dissatisfaction with it. But the above comment is evocative of a novelistic genre in which biographical time unfolds in a predetermined sequence of personal states, whereby the seeker of knowledge undergoes stages of transformation from ignorance to wisdom through compliance with elders (Bakhtin 1981). Rebellious against Freud's 'paternal' authority, Jung finds truly ancient elders in the depths of his soul.

The critical biographies by Homans (1995) and Noll (1994) resemble the modern novel, in which psychological emergence is contingent on the person's embedding in historical time and place. Homans' work, the earliest of the two (first edition in 1975), deploys sociological theses to locate Jung in the historical context of modernity, but, as seen, applies psychoanalytical theories to explain Jung's themes as

emerging from personal conflicts. Homans does not attribute special significance to the house dream—it is merely listed with other incidents that happened during the USA trip. Noll identified the house dream as a catalyst—intriguingly, not for the collective unconscious hypothesis—but for Jung's psychotherapeutic technique of active imagination (which Noll goes on to attribute really to the influence of visionary practices already familiar to Jung). Noll justifies this with a quotation of Jung's disclosure in the 1925 seminar that he 'involuntarily' began to fantasise about the dream although he 'did not then know anything about the principle of fantasising in order to bring up unconscious material' (Jung, 1926/1989, p. 23; Noll, p. 178). While Jung alludes to active imagination, he actually attributed the method—not to fantasising about this dream—but to a specific episode in 1913, when he heard a voice telling him that what he was doing was art (more details later below). Noll systematically silences Jung's own story, and his narrative reconfigures Jung's biography in a way that robs Jung of any claim to originality of thought and contribution to psychological theory and practice. Although the historical accuracy of some of Noll's claims is questionable (Shamdasani, 1998), his storytelling is compelling, crafted as a bold journalistic exposé of dark truths. It has given rise to a counter-myth in which Jung fulfils the dramatic function of a sinister, self-serving, self-appointed cult leader. This is as archetypal a motif as is the hero-scientist motif of the disciples' Story of Jung. But in this new Story of Jung, while the biographical event of the house dream might be of some minor relevance, its *picture*—the dream's content—has no use. The recent additions to the 'Jung histories' shelf either don't discuss the house dream (Pietikäinen, 1999; Bair, 2003) or add nothing new to its account (Shamdasani, 2003).

### **The dream image as a tool**

To those taken in by the picture, the dream points to a particular use. As seen, there is another side to the coin: the picture was drawn in the Jungian discourse in accordance with the use to which it was put. This section concerns Jung's use of the house image in developing his theory. Citing the philosopher Pepper, Sarbin (1986) described how worldviews form around a 'root' metaphor: desiring to understand the world, someone 'pitches upon some area of commonsense fact and tries to understand other areas in terms of this one' (p. 5). The commonsense analogy is poetically reconstructed, and the structural characteristics of the metaphor's source imagery



become the basis for conceptualising the target phenomena. Jung drew a 'commonsense' parallel between psyche and body; and, piling analogy upon analogy, took the inorganic image of the dream's house as the 'fact' (hardly common sense, because such houses are not commonplace) whose structural characteristics enabled the conceptualization of psychic structure. This was compounded with archaeological and geological metaphors throughout his essays and lectures in the 1920s. The dizzying panorama of analogies deserves a study in its own right. In the present context, suffices it to note how the house fits in with other analogies.

To accept the house image as an analogy for the evolutionary stratification of the psyche, it must be first assumed that the psyche is something that evolves and that it evolved in ways that paralleled the body's evolution. The dream did not bring about these assumptions, because its imagery had to be interpreted by Jung in this way. The assumption of isomorphic physiological and psychological evolution was commonplace (e.g., Wundt, 1916, deploys it) and implicit in the 'hot' debate concerning monism and psychophysical parallelism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Psychophysical parallelism had many critics, but most psychologists and physiologists endorsed it well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, viewing it as a scientifically respectable doctrine that allowed psychology to coexist autonomously alongside physiology and other sciences (Heidelberger, 2003). Jung participated in the debate in passing comments throughout his works. He advocated viewing the psyche as an autonomous system of subjective values, making it clear that that for him this was a pragmatic solution, not a metaphysical proposition (he was not concerned to describe how the psyche conjoined with the body). A related influence was evolution theory. In Jung's youth the 'great news of the day was the work of Charles Darwin' and he developed a 'preoccupation with comparative anatomy and palaeontology' (Jung, 1964c, p. 56-7). The physiological analogy is epitomised in the application of the term *archetypes* to denote the constituents of the collective unconscious. His semantic use of the word is consistent with evolutionary theory. In the latter, archetypes traditionally represented 'selected clusters of conserved features associated with a particular taxon ... based on body plan characters', such as 'Owen's vertebrate archetype, Urbilateria (the archetypal ancestor of triploblastic bilateral metazoans) and single structures such as the pentadactylous tetrapod limb' (Richardson, Minelli & Coates, 1999, p. 5). It seemed to Jung that just as anatomies evolved when sophisticated structures were added onto primitive ones, so there must be living fossil

structures within the psyche. And just as primitive anatomical structures remain functionally integrated in the workings of the present-day living organism, so the archetypal mental structures remain functional, constituting 'the inherited possibility of psychic functioning in general' (Jung, 1921/1973, par. 842).

The image of emergent structures enveloping earlier ones does not fit well with the image of cumulative strata in the house analogy. To speculate why Jung did not abandon the confounding house metaphor requires changing our 'reception' of the kind of tool that it was for him—not just a 'pedagogic' heuristic, but above all a poetic image. Bachelard (1958/1994) suggested that a poetic image 'sets in motion the entire linguistic mechanism' by its novelty: after 'the original reverberation, we are able to experience resonances, sentimental repercussions, reminders of our past. But the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface' (p. xxiii). In thinking about the dream, Jung perhaps experienced reminders of his youthful interest in palaeontology and the sentimental repercussions that archaeology had for him. Upon returning from the USA, he was indeed impelled by the dream to visit archaeological excavations (Jung 1926/1989). The conflux of poetic associations resulted in something that is more akin to an artistic creation than to a scientific worldview. Whereas the latter is born from concrete perceptions used to explore abstract concepts (at least according to Pepper/Sarbin), the artistic work is the product of an existing worldview and at the same time it creates a new commonsense, new ways of seeing things.

Jung explores this new way of seeing in a further metaphoric drift in MAE, where the tomb-like cellar is imaginatively replaced with the choked-up cave with its upper and lower layer, where there are remnants of glacial fauna. The 'picture' is clearly geological strata, rather than historical periods; and of fauna who could be human, who are not merely interred or entombed, but petrified within the earth, having become part of it, like the peat bog corpses that had so excited him in Bremen. In the 1925 seminar, Jung spoke of the 'geology' of personality and provided a pictorial diagram that paraphrases the house analogy on a grand scale indeed. The diagram shows a series of island-mountains rising from the sea, where the summits represent individuals, and the body of the mountain is the family. Below sea-level there are strata representing, in descending order, 'the clan which unites several families, then the nation which unites still a bigger group' and so forth, through ethnic groups to primate ancestors and 'animal ancestors in general' (1926/1989, p. 133). In his model, family, clans, and so

forth, are *not* nested social systems within which human development takes place. In keeping with the physiological analogy, they are psychic structures: the most recent acquisitions are shared by family members, older characteristics by a clan, and so forth, 'down' to the animal ancestry of the human species. Below it all there is the 'central fire, with which ... we are still connected' (p. 134)—the diagram shows chimneys into the mountains, as in volcanoes. At this geological scale, history becomes minuscule and irrelevant for understanding what 'fires' the human soul. Jung's 'geology' presents a static configuration that permits movement across discrete strata:

Psychic processes ... behave like a scale along which consciousness 'slides'. At one moment it finds itself in the vicinity of instinct ... at another, it slides along to the other end where spirit predominates and even assimilates the instinctual processes most opposed to it. (Jung, 1954/1960a, par. 408.)

Jung's conception of psychic is not static, quite the contrary (Jones, 2001, 2002), but there is a certain unilateral quality to it. This can be seen in Jung's (1931/1964d) assertion that consciousness is 'continually influenced by its living and active foundations. Like a building, it is sustained and supported by them' (par. 55). In the other translation of the same sentence, consciousness is 'carried by them, as is the building' (1927/1928, p. 119), referring to the imaginary house he had just described. The carried has no influence on the carrier; the species' past evolution cannot be changed by its present history. In contrast, in an evolutionary or epigenetic perspective, early structures are irreversibly incorporated into more advanced organisations, and although they remain discernible, they are now sustained by the new whole. Jung's simile, which is juxtaposed with the cave beneath the house, dichotomises building and ground, manmade and natural, history and evolution, consciousness and the (collective) unconscious.

### **Discoveries enabled by the dream**

The picture of the evolutionary stratified psyche, which the dream communicated to Jung, rests on assumptions that were entrenched in 19<sup>th</sup> century German intellectual life. Anthropological evidence was commonly construed as revealing early stages in the development of human consciousness; and, like many at

the time, Jung took it for granted that the 'consciousness of primitive man, like the child's, is very limited. Indeed, in accordance with phylogenetic law, we still recapitulate in childhood reminiscences of the prehistory of the race and of mankind in general' (1931/1964d, par. 55). Jung was not interested in studying development. As seen, his use of the word *evolution* refers, not to a process, but to how 'we used to be' in the remote ancestral past. This is consistent with early 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism, which transformed the earlier emphasis on developmental aspects of cultures (attributed to Herder) into a 'one-sided emphasis on the past' (Danziger, 1983, p. 304). Against this backdrop, Jung's original idea was that the remote ancestral past lives on in the modern adult. The dream took him there. Fromm (1970) sums up Jung as a conservative romantic who 'saw the sources of all human strength in the unconscious' (p. 51). Lincoln (1999) describes a trajectory beginning with Herder (18<sup>th</sup> century), and continuing with German romanticists who embraced myth and Eastern thought in their rejection of Enlightenment values, thus setting in motion a 'paradigm of land-myth-Volk' that persisted into the work of early 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars, including Jung (p. 73). Circa 1900, the intellectual tide was turning to re-emphasise the emergence of mind in cultural activity. For instance, where Jung saw hereditary residues of ancestral experiences, Durkheim and Mauss (1903/1963) saw primitive classifications and mythologies emerge from communities' awareness of their own social organization. The sociologists postulated a historical process whereby a progressive weakening of the affective hold of religious constructs left 'more and more room for the reflective [scientific] thought of individuals' (p. 88). Jung did not enter a debate with sociological ideas. On his part, he regarded religious constructs and scientific concepts as welling forth from the same primordial source within individuals: 'variants of archetypal ideas, created by consciously applying and adapting those ideas to reality' (1948/1960b, par. 342).

Jung's bold claim is that he discovered the lawfulness of symbol formation. The immediate experience of some typical situation associated with intense polarised affect (e.g., the baby's experience of the mother's presence/absence) triggers the spontaneous formation of symbolic representations that makes that experience accessible to consciousness. It is therefore possible, in Jung's view, to uncover a current existential crisis (my term) through the analysis of the person's symbolic productions, usually dreams. Certain images have universal connotations. For example, the cave is listed

among mythological motifs of 'big' dreams—motifs that characterise the hero's journey and represent 'all things that in no way touch the banalities of everyday ... the process of becoming' (Jung, 1948/1960c, par. 558). The cave is 'an archetype of considerable power ... for the mystery attaching to caves comes down from immemorial time' (Jung, 1926/1989, p. 47). This could be taken as explaining the importance of the cave in his house dream—or, conversely, the subjective significance of that cave could explain why he made the above statements. Jung regarded such motifs as discrete 'mythologems', but noted that in dreams they get 'condensed' and modify each other (1948/1960c, par. 559). In his house dream, the cave motif is compounded with decent. Jung notes elsewhere that the 'purpose of the decent as universally exemplified in the myth of the hero is to show that only in the region of danger (watery abyss, cavern, forest, island, castle, etc.) can one find the "treasure hard to attain"' (1944/1953, par. 438). In one patient's dream, there are '*two boys in a cave. A third falls in as if through a pipe*' (1944/1953, par. 196). Here the cave is said to represent 'the darkness and seclusion of the unconscious; the two boys correspond to the two unconscious functions' (par. 197). The dream has striking parallels with Jung's own (MDR version), where he too 'falls' into a cave inhabited by two (skulls). Regarding another patient's dream in which the dreamer is '*wandering about in a dark cave, where a battle is going on between good and evil*', Jung suggests that the 'dark cave corresponds to the vessel containing the warring opposites. The self is made manifest in the opposites and in the conflict between them. ... Hence the way to the self begins with conflict' (1944/1953, par. 258-9). Although ostensibly there is no danger in the house-dream cave, he was in a 'region of danger' (his situation with Freud at the time), and his dream-descent clearly marked the way to the self for him.

Jung might have read his private associations into his others' dreams and fantasies (a likelihood that he conceded in the 1925 seminar), although this does not invalidate his conclusions about the common significance of particular motifs. He was testing his hypotheses on his patients' dreams with an awareness of their (the patients') situation. Jung (1954/1959b) stressed that 'symbols must not be torn out of their context', cautioning against mechanically connecting a dream image with its mythological counterpart—'for who is to guarantee that the functional meaning of the [motif] in the dream is the same as in the mythological setting?' (par. 103). Jung's sensitivity to the contextual and contingent nature of the function of symbols is lost in

the cataloguing of decontextualised archetypal images, as undertaken by later Jungians (especially in the USA). Already in his immediate context, the subtleties of his epistemological position were obscured by the language game of science, from which Jung could not disengage himself. Scathing statements such as ‘the psyche is not a hormone but a world of almost cosmic proportions. Scientific rationalism completely overlooked this fact’ (Jung, 1934/1964a, par. 366)—referring to the ‘disease’ model of mental illness—do not rule out the possibility that the psyche is ‘out there’ for the discovery like the universe studied by astronomers and astrophysicists.

Taylor (1989) pointed out that what holds true for the objects of scientific study does not hold for the self. A scientific object must be taken irrespective of its meaning to someone. It must exist independently of any description or interpretation of it, and be potentially knowable in its entirety. It has to be something that (in principle, if not practice) could be described without reference to its surrounding. Jung (1948/1959a) similarly problematised the scientific approach to the psyche. To ‘inquire into the *substance* of [phenomena] is possible in natural science only where there is an Archimedean point outside. For the psyche, no such outside point exists’ (par. 384). As if anticipating postmodern psychology, he concluded that in psychology ‘one of the most important phenomena is the *statement*, and in particular its form and content ... our subtlest lucubrations can establish no more than is expressed in the statement: this is how the psyche behaves’ (par. 384). Yet in the same paragraph Jung avers that although ‘knowledge of psychological substance is impossible for us’, it does ‘not rule out the possibility that the atomic physics of the future may supply us with the said Archimedean point’ (1948/1959a, par. 384). He might have said it wryly or put too much faith in physics. Either way, the rhetoric colludes with its audience to imagine psychic substance. In the four decades that elapsed between his house dream and the above statement—in a 1945 lecture—many were already convinced that Jung had insight into an objective reality unseen by microscopes. A future concrete proof perhaps seemed plausible. In the same year, *Time* (January 22, 1945) published a photo of a benzene molecule seen for the first time through an electronic microscope, with a caption informing readers that this ‘reveals exactly the structure foreseen by the German scientist, Kekulé, seventy years ago’ (cited in Gutheil, 1951, p. 32).

Much hinged on the perceived scientific status of Jung’s discovery. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, according to Foucault (1975/1991), concepts such as psyche, personality,

consciousness, etc. were constructed by way of carving out domains of analysis of the modern 'soul', building upon this basis 'scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral claims of humanism' (p. 30). In this regard, Jung discovered how to carve out a domain for analysing the soul. This gave him considerable power (he founded a worldwide movement), and positioned him on a high moral ground:

The boldness of our psychology in daring to operate with such unknowns would be presumptuous indeed, were it not that a higher necessity absolutely requires its existence. ... We doctors are forced, for the sake of our patients, to tackle the darkest and most desperate problems of the soul, conscious all the time of the possible consequences of a false step. (Jung, 1946/1970, par. 170)

Moreover, his discovery of how to analyse the soul allowed him a position of superiority over Freud who (in Jung's view) took many a false step.

The importance of the house dream for Jung cannot be easily, if at all, untangled from the Jung/Freud schism. Jung (1963) regarded the house dream as a prelude to *The Psychology of the Unconscious*, published in 1912, in which he first announced his alternative to Freudian theory. Freud rejected it outright. Yet Freud and Jung alike saw the instinctual as being expressed in the cultural; they differed in how they understood this relation. The oscillation between their similarity and differences is evident in the dream as told in MDR and to Bennet. The house has a striking resemblance to Freud's model of the psyche: its three principal levels correspond to id (cellars), ego (ground floor) and super-ego (upper floor). Freud described the mature personality as ascending from the primordial id. The movement is reversed in Jung's dream-action (he descends). Freud wanted to understand the unconscious so as to control it—Jung wanted to understand it so as to draw vitality from it (Fromm, 1970). Another layer of meaning could thus be peeled off the dream: it is a house that uses Freud's blueprint and turns it upside-down, making it Jung's own (and, as seen, his ownership claim on the house was a later narrative addition). The house dream communicates precisely his crisis of confidence in Freud, which contradicted his personal and professional dependence on Freud—but this succinct private 'mythologem' was not articulated until many years later. If the 1925-seminar version is the more accurate one, the tripartite structure was not in the original dream (he doesn't see or mention an upper floor). His discovery—the

solution of his crisis, way to the self—lay in the decent to the cave. Yet the heuristic potential of the dream invites a representation of modern consciousness with which to contrast the prehistoric unconscious. He supplied the contrast in the analogy given in MAE, where the upper floor is explicitly likened to consciousness. Much later, the upper floor enters the dream, having now acquired a salon furnished with fine old pieces and complete with precious old paintings (MDR). It is the well-lit bourgeois salon that Freud would have us live in, and Jung departs to explore its dark foundations. Perhaps when he could no longer recall the dream exactly as it was, this was how he felt the dream ought to be. Like a poet who finally gets the rhyme right, Jung finally discovered the perfect image.

### **The function of the dream**

The house dream is the most famous out of a series of dreams and fantasies that suggested to him the existence of the collective unconscious. In 1913, whilst writing down some disturbing fantasies that he had, he wondered,

‘What is this I am doing, it certainly is not science, what is it?’ Then a voice said to me, ‘This is art.’ This made the strangest sort of an impression on me, because it was not in any sense my conviction that what I was writing was art. (Jung, 1926/1989, p. 42)

Conversing with the voice, Jung resisted the notion that he was doing art. He knew, he says, that the inner voice ‘had come from a woman. Obviously it wasn’t science; what then could it be but art, as though those were the only two alternatives. That is the way a woman’s mind works’ (p. 42). Clearly, it was Jung construing science and art as mutually exclusive, and projecting the ‘unreasonable’ standpoint onto a female other. To be taken seriously as a medical practitioner he could not rescind science. But the collective unconscious hypothesis became to him something that is intuitively known with unshakeable conviction—not a hypothesis in the scientific sense, i.e., something that is doubted, tested, and possibly refuted.

Jung was probably aware that his psychology broke what he described as one of the ‘unbreakable rules in scientific research’ (1948/1959a, par. 384). He noted that science takes ‘an object as known only in so far as the inquirer is in a position to make



scientifically valid statements about it', where *valid* 'simply means what can be verified by facts' (par. 384). The conception of the collective unconscious opened up (to him) a way to reconcile the tension between science and art. It enabled him to talk about the evolution of the psyche and inherited brain structures, and in this way to make the collective unconscious 'sound' scientific. At the same time, it allowed him to delve into mythology, ancient scriptures, medieval alchemy, and eastern mysticism—making matters of 'faith, conviction, and experienced certainties of whatever description' (par. 384) matters for a psychological inquiry. The psychological function of the house dream for Jung operates through its aesthetic or poetics—the way that its components hold together—rather than any appraisal of its symbolism. Ruminating about the dream led Jung to developing his theory; but the aesthetic-poetic potential of the initial dream empowered him to pursue the theoretical line, having given him faith in his hazy idea (cf. Popper, 1958).

Clues are given in the duality of above/below, consciousness and the unconscious, which reached its narrative refinement in the MDR version. Above, there is the house, a monument of civilisation. In the hermeneutics of the dream, the period details of the floors are not trivial. Why is the top floor Rococo, which was already dated in Jung's day? He himself says that the salon had an antiquated appearance, though a comfortable lived-in atmosphere (in his conversations with Bennet, he likened it to his study). There are precious things there, he says, yet this ornamental and frivolous style could not express better his attitude to modern consciousness as the superficial, veneer-like, aspect of the psyche. Why is the basement Roman? Here in the basement he closely examines the walls and floor, whereas in the upper floor he noticed the removable furnishings. In the classical world we find the foundation of modern consciousness. The whole house is well ordered. Each floor has its distinct period theme, and they are arranged logically above each other. There is the vertical symmetry of the three levels. The house resonates classicism—the aesthetic attitudes and principles that emphasise 'form, simplicity, proportion and restrained emotion' (Pioch, 2002a). It evokes the attitude of structuralism, which 'above all insists upon preserving the coherence and completion of each totality ... [and] prohibits the consideration of that which is incomplete or missing' (Derrida, 1967/1978, p. 26). It is consistent with Science: order and balance, elegance and parsimony of explanation, the 'safe house' of rationality.

Below the Roman basement he leaves culture and history behind and comes into an existence within nature. In the imaginary journey in MAE, 'the deeper we descend into the house ... the more we find ourselves in the darkness, till finally we reach ... that prehistoric time when reindeer hunters fought for a bare and wretched existence' (Jung, 1931/1964d, par. 55). Here is romanticism in full swing—emphasising 'strong emotion, imagination, freedom from classical correctness in art forms, and rebellion against social conventions' (Pioch, 2002b). In the hermeneutics of the dream, the cave evokes wilderness at the dawn of time. It is womb-like, the place of existence before the birth of the self into the house that history built.

Here he finds the skulls. They are silent (no reason why skulls can't speak in dreams), and their muteness is pregnant with meanings. They are not inert remains, 'not just dead relics' (MAE). On the contrary, those fragile, half-disintegrated skulls are very vibrant, very alive, for Jung. He wakes up as soon as he discovers them. The duality of the dreamer (One) and skulls (Two) closes the hermeneutic circle of the dream. The symbolism evokes the ancient Chinese yin-yang duality—a relevant association (Jung mentioned the yin-yang already in MAE, though not in conjunction with the house analogy; he later wrote the Introduction to Wilhelm's translation of the *I Ching*). In the *I Ching* oracle, a solid line represents the masculine principle (yang), and a broken line represents the feminine principle (yin). The solid line stands for the creative, light giving, active, and strong, and is associated with the image of heaven; the broken line represents the 'dark, yielding, receptive primal power of the yin ... its image is the earth' (Wilhelm, 1950, p. 10). In the house dream—which should be renamed the cave dream—the singular dreamer is self-aware, active, autonomous, descending from the light above. The two skulls are a divided unit, like the broken line, and are unaware, passive, their silence resounding with the dark, yielding, receptive power of the earth. In the whole house there is not another soul; and here, in a place that is deep inside the house and simultaneously outside it, these human skulls forever hold their secret. Here is the dark mystery of existence that could never be fully brought to the light of consciousness, hinting at the unknowable distant past and anticipating the likewise unknown future. Here is the incomplete, the missing, the uncertainties that structuralism cannot tolerate. Here Jung finds his freedom.

## Conclusion

As seen, many-layered meanings are at work in the house dream. Jung had no privileged claim on its true meaning insofar as dreams, like texts, have different meanings to different readers. However, in tracking Jung's and others' narrative interactions with the dream, it becomes clear that the dream had empowered him in a way that was uniquely true to him. The house dream had such a hold on him—not because it gave him a convenient analogy—but because it had changed his attitude to 'doing' psychology.

If nothing else is taken from Jung, his case could serve as a cautionary tale. In postmodernity it has become commonplace to view scientific truths as contingent, fashionable to speak of stories, myths and poetics, and even to take statements of 'this is how the psyche behaves' as the object of psychological study in their own right. To some psychologists, everything becomes story-like ('save for that part ... that deals with sensory physiology': Sarbin, 1986, p. 8). Mair (1988) makes a passionate plea for 'a storytelling psychology' that would challenge the 'master myth' of psychological science, and 'surely be party to the fight for more usable freedoms, greater powers to speak and listen' (p. 135). The cosy image of storytelling and the seduction of emancipatory ideology risk being 'taken in' by our own pictures, telling our stories and losing sight of questions such as why and how human beings find particular stories meaningful.

Mair (1988) further submits that each story is 'a claim to existence set against other known and partially sensed claims. It is also set against a *terrible unknown*, the potential claims that we do not own, do not understand, and have not anticipated' (p. 132). This might well be said on Jung's behalf. For all its metaphysical pitfalls and biological implausibility, his theory staked a bold claim on that terrible unknown, the shadowy otherness of the self, seeking to describe—not how human beings make claims on existence—but also how existence claims *us* through our dreams and fantasies.

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