CARL JUNG AND MYTHOLOGICAL CRITICISM

Once a favored pupil of Freud, Carl Jung (1875–1961), a Swiss physician, psychiatrist, and philosopher, eventually broke from his mentor, then built on his teacher’s ideas in ways that made Jung, too, an important figure in the new field of psychoanalysis. His insights have had significant bearings on literature as well.

Like his teacher, Jung believed that our unconscious mind powerfully directs much of our behavior. However, where Freud conceived of each individual unconscious as separate and distinct from that of others, Jung asserted that some of it is shared with all other members of the human species. He describes the human psyche as having three parts: a personal conscious, a state of awareness of the present moment that, once it is past, becomes part of the individual’s unique personal unconscious. Beneath both of these is the collective unconscious, a storehouse of knowledge, experiences, and images of the human race. It is a racial memory, shared and primeval, often expressed outwardly in myth and ritual. Young Goodman Brown’s presence at the forest gathering, for example, can be described as participation in a ritual binding past and present. As Jung explains it, “This psychic life is the mind of our ancient ancestors, the way in which they thought and felt, the way in which they conceived of life and the world, of gods and human beings.” Its contents, because they have never been in consciousness, are not individually acquired. They are inherited.

The relevance of these ideas to literature lies in the correspondences in plots and characters that literary scholars began to find in works by writers in disparate circumstances who could not have been known to each other. Gilbert Murray, for example, was so struck by the similarities he found between Orestes and Hamlet that he concluded they were the result of memories we carry deep within us, “the memory of the race, stamped . . . upon our physical organism.” That is why such criticism is sometimes called a mythological, archetypal, totemic, or ritualistic approach, each name pointing to the universality of literary patterns and images that recur throughout diverse cultures and periods. Because they elicit perennially powerful responses from readers the world over, they suggest a shared commonality, even a world order. As a result, archetypal criticism often requires knowledge and use of nonliterary fields, such as anthropology and folklore, which provide information and insights about cultural histories and practice.

Although the collective unconscious is not directly approachable, it can be found in archetypes, which Jung defined as “universal images that have existed since the remotest times.” More specifically, he described an archetype as “a figure . . . that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is fully manifested.” It is recognizable by the appearance of nearly identical images and patterns (found in rituals, characters, or entire narratives) that predispose individuals from wholly different cultures and backgrounds to respond in a particular way, regardless of when or where they live.

Archetypes may have originated in the unchanging situations of human beings, such as the rotating seasons or the mysteries of death, but they are not intentionally created or culturally acquired. Instead, they come to us instinctually as impulses and knowledge hidden somewhere in our biological, psychological, and social natures. As John Sanford explains it, archetypes “form the basis for instinctive unlearned behavior patterns common to all mankind and assert themselves in certain typical ways.” In literature we recognize them and respond to them again and again in new characters or situations that have the same essential forms we have met before and have always known. For example, when we meet Huckleberry Finn or the Ancient Mariner (as Maud Bodkin pointed out in Archetypal Patterns in Poetry), we are connecting with archetypes, re-creations of basic patterns or types that are already in our unconscious, making us respond just as someone halfway around the world from us might.

Archetypes appear in our dreams and religious rituals, as well as in our art and literature. They are media for the telling of our myths, which, according to Jung, are the “natural and indispensable intermediate stage between unconscious and conscious cognition.” By becoming conscious of what is generally unconscious, we integrate our lives and formulate answers for things that are unknowable, such as why we exist, why we suffer, and how we are to live. By uniting the conscious and unconscious, they make us whole and complete.

Living fully, Jung believed, means living harmoniously with the fundamental elements of human nature. In particular, we must deal with three powerful archetypes that compose the self. They are the shadow, the anima, and the persona. All three are represented in literature.

The Shadow is our darker side, the part of ourselves we would prefer not to confront, those aspects that we dislike. It is seen in films as the villain, in medieval mystery plays as the devil, and in powerful literary figures like Satan in Paradise Lost. Young Goodman Brown clearly confronts (and rejects) his shadow in the figure of his nocturnal traveling companion. The anima, according to Jung, is the “soul-image,” the life force that causes one to act. It is given a feminine designation in men (like Brown’s Faith), and a masculine one (anima) in women, indicating that the psyche has both male and female characteristics, though we may be made aware of them only in our dreams or when we recognize them in someone else (a process Jung refers to as projection). The persona is the image that we show to others. It is the mask that we put on for the external world, which may not be at all what we think ourselves to be inside. The persona and anima can be thought of as two contrasting parts of the ego, our conscious personality. The former mediates between the ego and the outside world, the latter between the ego and the inner one.

To become a psychologically healthy, well-balanced adult—or, as Jung says, for individuation to occur—we must discover and accept the different sides of our selves, even those we dislike and resist. If we reject some part of the self, we are likely to project that element onto others, that is, transfer it to something or someone else, thereby making us incapable of seeing ourselves as wrong or guilty. Instead, we see another person or institution to be at fault. In these terms, Young Goodman Brown’s despondency can be seen as the result of his failure to achieve individuation. He projects his shadow on the forest companion and later on the entire community. He fails to nurture his anima, leaving Faith behind and in the end suspecting her of the faithlessness
he has committed. And, finally, his persona, the face that he shows to the world, is a false one. He is not the “good man,” the pious Puritan he claims to be. The healthy individual develops a persona that exists comfortably and easily with the rest of his personality. Young Goodman Brown, unable to integrate all parts of his personality, dies an unhappy neurotic, or as Hawthorne puts it: “they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.”

There are, of course, many different archetypes, but some are more commonly met than others. Some of the characters, situations, and symbols that frequently elicit similar psychological responses from diverse groups of people can be found in the lists that follow. Whenever you meet them, there is the possibility that they carry with them more power to evoke a response than their literal meanings would suggest.

Characters

- **The hero.** Heroes, according to Lord Raglan in *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*, are distinguished by several uncommon events, including a birth that has unusual circumstances (such as a virgin mother), an early escape from attempts to murder him, a return to his homeland where, after a victory over some antagonist, he marries a princess, assumes the throne, and only later falls victim to a fate that may include being banished from the kingdom only to die a mysterious death and have an ambiguous burial. The archetype is exemplified by such characters as Oedipus, Jason, and Jesus Christ. Sometimes the story may involve only a journey during which the hero must answer complex riddles, retrieve a sacred or powerful artifact, or do battle with superhuman creatures for the purpose of saving someone else, perhaps a whole people. The quests of some of the knights in Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, such as those made by Gawain and Galahad, are examples.

- **The scapegoat.** Sometimes the hero himself becomes the sacrificial victim who is put to death by the community in order to remove the guilt of the people and restore their welfare and health. On occasion, an animal suffices as the scapegoat, but in literature the scapegoat is more likely to be a human being. Again, Jesus Christ is an example, but a more recent retelling of the story is found in Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery.”

- **The outcast.** The outcast is a character who is thrown out of the community as punishment for a crime against it. The fate of the outcast, as can be seen in *The Ancient Mariner*, is to wander throughout eternity. Hawthorne’s Young Goodman Brown also finds himself separated from his community following his refusal to join in the forest communion. He cannot listen to the hymns of the assembled congregation on the Sabbath, kneel with his family at prayer, or trust in the virtue of Faith, his wife. He is lonely and alone.

- **The Devil.** The figure of the Devil personifies the principle of evil that intrudes in the life of a character to tempt and destroy him, often by promising wealth, fame, or knowledge in exchange for his soul. Mephistopheles in the legend of Faust is such a figure, and certainly the old man whom Young Goodman Brown meets in the forest is one too. He carries a snakelike staff and purports to have been present at ancient evil deeds. Brown even refers to him as “the devil.”

- **Female figures.** Women are depicted in several well-known archetypes. The Good Mother, such as Ma Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*, is associated with fertility, abundance, and nurturance of those around her. The Temptress, on the other hand, destroys the men who are attracted to her sensuality and beauty. Like Delilah, who robs Samson of his strength, she causes their downfall. The female who inspires the mind and soul of men is a spiritual (or Platonic) ideal. She has no physical attractions but, like Dante’s Beatrice, guides and directs and fulfills her male counterpart. Finally, women are also seen as the Unfaithful Wife. As she appears in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, the Unfaithful Wife, married to a dull, insensitive husband, turns to a more desirable man as a lover, with unhappy consequences.

- **The Trickster.** A figure often appearing in African-American and American Indian narratives, the Trickster is mischievous, disorderly, and amoral. He disrupts the rigidity of rule-bound cultures, bringing them reminders of their less strict beginnings. For example, in the tales of Till Eulenspiegel, which date back to the sixteenth century, Till, a shrewd rural peasant, outwits the arrogant townspeople and satirizes their social practices.

Images

- **Colors** have a variety of archetypal dimensions. Red, because of its association with blood, easily suggests passion, sacrifice, or violence. Green, on the other hand, makes one think of fertility and the fullness of life, even hope. Blue is often associated with holiness or sanctity, as in the depiction of the Virgin Mary. Light and darkness call up opposed responses: hope, inspiration, enlightenment, and rebirth in contrast with ignorance, hopelessness, and death.

- **Numbers,** too, are invested with different meanings. The number three points to things spiritual, as in the Holy Trinity; four is associated with the four seasons (and by extension with the cycle of life) and the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water). When three and four are combined to make seven, the union produces a powerful product that is perfect and whole and complete.

- **Water,** another common image, is often used as a creation, birth, or rebirth symbol, as in Christian baptism. Flowing water can refer to the passage of time. In contrast, the desert or lack of water suggests a spiritually barren state, as it does in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*.

- **Gardens,** and other images of natural abundance, often indicate a paradise, a state of innocence. The best-known, of course, is the Garden of Eden.

- **Circles** can be presented simply or in complex relationships with other geometric figures. By their lack of beginnings and endings, they commonly suggest a state of wholeness and union.

- **The sun,** like the seasons, makes one think of the passage of time. At its rising it calls to mind the beginning of a phase of life or of life itself; at its setting it points
to death and other endings. At full presence it may suggest enlightenment or radiant knowledge.

Situations
- The quest pursued by the hero, mentioned earlier, usually involves a difficult search for a magical or holy item that will return fertility and abundance to a desolate state. Certainly the boy in James Joyce's "Araby" goes to the bazaar in search of a fitting offering for Mangan's sister, whom he has sanctified with his young love. It is both a holy quest and a romantic one. A related pattern is that of the need to perform a nearly impossible task so that all will be well. Arthur, for example, must pull the sword from the stone if he is to become king. Often found as part of both these situations is the journey, suggesting a psychological as well as physical movement from one place, or state of being, to another. The journey, like the travels of Ulysses, may involve a descent into hell.
- Death and rebirth, already mentioned in connection with the cycle of the seasons, is one of the most common of all archetypes in literature. Rebirth may take the form of natural regeneration, that is, of submission to the cycles of nature, or of escape from this troubled life to an endless paradise like that enjoyed before the fall into the sufferings that are part of mortality. Coleridge, for example, in "Kubla Khan" presents a landscape that is both savage and holy, a landscape of heaven and hell, ending with a vision of a transcendent experience in which the speaker/holy man has "drunk the milk of Paradise."
- Initiation stories deal with the progression from one stage of life to another, usually that of an adolescent moving from childhood to maturity, from innocence to understanding. The experience is rarely without problems, although it may involve comedy. In its classic form it requires that the protagonist go through the initiation alone, experiencing tests and ordeals that change him so that he can return to the family or larger group as an adult member.

Northrup Frye and Mythological Criticism
In 1957, Northrup Frye advanced the study of archetypes, at least as they apply to literature, with the publication of Anatomy of Criticism, in which he presents a highly structured model of how myths are at the basis of all texts. Although he did not accept Jung's theories in their entirety, he used many of them as the basis of his efforts to understand the functions of archetypes in literature. He spoke of a "theory of myths," by which he really referred to a theory of genres as a way of understanding narrative structures. All texts, he concluded, are part of "a central unifying myth" exemplified in four types of literature, or four mythoi, that are analogous to the seasons of the year. Together they compose the entire body of literature, which he calls the monomyth. Specific works of each type contain archetypes and patterns that are like those found in ritual or myth.

The mythos of summer, for example, is the romance. It is analogous to the birth and adventures of innocent youth. It is a happy myth that indulges what we want to happen—that is, the triumph of good over evil, problems resolved in satisfying ways. Autumn, in contrast, is tragic. In the autumn myth the hero does not triumph but instead meets death or defeat. Classic tragic figures, like Antigone or Oedipus, are stripped of power and set apart from their world to suffer alone. In the winter myth, what is normal and what is hoped for are inverted. The depicted world is hopeless, fearful, frustrated, and dead. There is no hero to bring salvation, no happy endings to innocent adventures. Spring, however, brings comedy: rebirth and renewal, hope and success, freedom and happiness. The forces that would defeat the hero are thwarted, and the world regains its order. And, according to Frye, every work of literature has its place in this schema.

Currently the mythic or archetypal approach is less frequently used than it was in earlier decades. Some readers complain that it overlooks the qualities of individual works by its focus on how any given text fits a general pattern. When a novel is seen as but one of many instances of death and rebirth, for example, its uniqueness is ignored and its value diminished. However, the process of relating a single work to literature in general, and finally to human experience as a whole, gives it stature and importance in the eyes of other readers. It relates literature to other areas of intellectual activity in a reasoned, significant manner. Certainly it is worth knowing and sometimes using, for it yields insights about both literature and human nature that other approaches fail to provide. It considers a work in terms of its psychological, aesthetic, and cultural aspects, making such an analysis a powerful union of three perspectives.

Jacques Lacan: An Update on Freud
Since the 1960s the Freudian approach, which had waned in popularity, has experienced a renaissance due to the ideas of a French psychoanalyst named Jacques Lacan. His work has been described as a reinterpretation of Freud in light of the ideas of structuralist and poststructuralist theories, particularly those of Ferdinand de Saussure (see chapter 8). Whereas Freud's concept of the unconscious as a force that determines our actions and beliefs shook the long-held ideal that we are beings who can control our own destinies, Lacan has further weakened the humanist concept of a stable self that is governed by attributes of consciousness (such as rationality and self-reflection) by denying the possibility of bringing the contents of the unconscious into consciousness, as his predecessor had hoped to do. Freud wanted to make hidden drives and desires conscious so that they could be managed, but according to Lacan, the ego can never replace the unconscious or possess its contents, for the simple reason that the ego, the "I" self, is only an illusion produced by the unconscious. How we develop this illusion is of particular interest to the Lacanian critic.

Like Freud, Lacan acknowledges the importance of the unconscious in our conscious behavior. He differs from his predecessor, however, by asserting that the unconscious is structured like a language. Even Freud, who conceived of it as a disordered, even chaotic collection of wishes and desires, alluded to the condensation
and displacement of dreams, processes that are similar to metaphor and metonymy. Even his analysis of unconscious symbolism was often based on verbal techniques—puns, word associations, and slips of language. Lacan expands such ideas by turning to Saussure, with a few modifications. Unlike Saussure, who saw a signifier and a signified as two parts of a sign, Lacan sees in the unconscious only signifiers that refer to others signifiers. Each has meaning only because it differs from some other signifier. It does not ultimately refer to anything outside itself, and the absence of any signified robs the entire system of stability. In these terms the unconscious is a constantly moving chain of signifiers with nothing to stop its shifting and sliding. The signified that seems to be “the real thing” is actually beyond our grasp, for, according to Lacan, all we can have is a conceptualized reality. We cannot go outside language. Nevertheless, we spend our lives trying to stabilize this system so that meaning and self become possible.

Our movement toward adulthood means developing several parts of our personality in search of a unified and psychologically complete self, which, although it can never be achieved, can be approached by stabilizing the sliding of signifiers. Consequently, we move through three parts of our personality, or Orders, as Lacan calls them: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic, corresponding to the experience of need, demand, and desire. Underlying the process, so the assumption goes, is language as the shaper of our unconscious, our conscious minds, and our sense of self.

The new infant exists in a state of nature, a psychological place characterized by wholeness and fullness. Unaware of its separateness from the mother or any other object that serves its needs, the infant does not recognize a distinction between itself and anything else. Some Lacanians recognize this as the Real Order, though others see it as part of the Imaginary Order, reserving the Real for the final stage of development. (This disagreement will be explained more fully below.)

Somewhere between six and eighteen months of age, the baby begins to perceive the distinctions between itself and the surrounding world, an experience that certainly identifies the Imaginary Order. It is a preverbal stage in which the baby becomes aware of its body only in bits and pieces, whatever is visible at any given moment, but it does not yet conceive of itself as whole, although other people can be recognized as whole. Lacan explains that at some time during the Imaginary Order the baby will see itself in a mirror, giving it a sense of its possible wholeness because it looks like other objects, like beings with discrete boundaries. When the awareness of being separate comes, it must if the individual is to move from nature to culture, the sense of unity with others and other objects is lost and, along with it, the sense of security that it provided. With the baby desiring a return to that earlier period of oneness with the mother, its needs at this point turn into demands, specifically demands for attention and love from another that will erase the separation that the baby now knows, but such a reunion is not possible. One can never return.

Identification of the mirror image as the “self” is misleading, however, because the image is not the actual “self.” The infant only thinks it is and uses it to create the ego, the sense of “I.” Thus the “self” is always manufactured, an acceptance of an external image instead of an internal identity. It is known as an “ideal ego,” because it is whole, nonfragmented, having no lack or absence. In other words, the individual makes up for the union that has been lost by misconceiving of the self as whole and sufficient, but such an assumption is illusory.

When the infant realizes it is not connected to that which serves its needs, it experiences irretrievable loss, making it necessary for language to take the place of what is lacking. The Symbolic Order, which overlaps with the Imaginary, introduces language, which a person must enter to become a speaker and thereby designate the self as “I.” By stopping the play and movement of signifiers so that they can have some stable meaning, it masters the individual and shapes one’s identity as a separate being. Because in the Symbolic Order everything is separate, to negotiate it successfully, a person must master the concept of difference, difference that makes language possible (that is, we know a word such as light because it is not the word fight) and difference that makes genders recognizable.

According to Lacan, there are biological sexual differences, but gender is culturally created. Whereas the Imaginary Order is centered in the mother, The Symbolic Order is ruled by what he calls the “Law of the Father,” because it is the father who enforces cultural norms and laws. Because the power of the word and being male are associated, the boy child must identify with the father as rule giver, and the girl must acknowledge that, as such, the father is her superior. Both male and female experience a symbolic castration, a loss of wholeness that comes with the acceptance of society’s rules. The ultimate symbol of power Lacan calls the phallus, referring not to a biological organ but to a privileged signifier, the symbol of power that gives meaning to other objects. Neither males nor females can possess it totally, though males have a stronger claim to it. Instead, we human beings go through life longing for a return to the state of wholeness when we were one with our mother, manifested in our desire for pleasure and things. But wholeness will always elude us.

Some disagreement exists about the nature of the Real Order, partly because it is a difficult concept to grasp, and partly because Lacan himself changed his mind about it. Some scholars see it as the condition of the infant: prelinguistic, unified, full, and complete. Language is not needed, because there is no lack or absence, and when language appears, the Real is lost. Others argue that because the Real symbolizes what is external to an individual, all that she is not, the Real cannot exist until the subject and the Symbolic are formed because nothing can be outside the Symbolic until it exists. That would make the Real the final phase of psychic development. The important thing to understand about the Real Order is that it is beyond language, either preceding it or exceeding it. In fact, it is beyond language, the individual, or representation because in it there is no loss, lack, or absence.

For the literary critic, Lacan’s ideas are interesting because they provide more ways of understanding and analyzing characters. A reader can look for symbolic representations of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic Orders to demonstrate how the text depicts the human being as a fragmented, incomplete being. In “Young Goodman Brown,” for example, evidence of the three orders points to lack and absence that make wholeness impossible. The protagonist longs for the wholeness provided by the Real, but it eludes him. He does not know and can never know the true “self,” and he
resists the acceptance of society’s rules, the power of the group. Clearly suffering from a loss that he can never recover, he exemplifies the fragmented being who is unable to achieve the completeness he desires.

Lacan’s ideas are also germane to the work of the critic because he acknowledges that literature offers access to the Imaginary Order and a chance to reexperience the joy, jouissance, of being whole, as we once were with our mother.

WRITING PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM

PREWRITING

Once you are accustomed to taking a Freudian, mythological, or Lacanian approach, you will begin to notice meaningful symbols and pay close attention to dream sequences just as a matter of course. If you are not used to reading from these perspectives, however, during prewriting you may want to be intentional about noting aspects of a work that could be significant with them.

If you are interested in using Freudian theory, you can begin by making notes about a selected character, then write a paragraph of description about her.

- What do you see as the main traits of the character?
- How are those traits revealed?
- What does the narrator reveal about the character?
- In the course of the narrative, does he change? If so, how and why?
- Does the character come to understand something not understood at the outset?
- How does the character view himself or herself?
- How is he viewed by the other characters?
- Do the two views agree?
- What images are associated with the character?
- What are the main symbols?
- Which symbols are connected with the character or forces that affect the character?
- Does the character have any interior monologues or dreams? If so, what do you learn about the character that is not revealed by outward behavior or conversation?
- Are there conflicts between what is observable and what is going on inside the character? Are there any revealing symbols in them?
- Where do the characters act in ways that are inconsistent with the way they are described by the narrator or perceived by the other characters?
- How can you explain a character’s irrational behavior? What causes do you find? What motivation?

An archetypal approach can start with these questions:

- What similarities do you find among the characters, situations, and settings of the text under consideration and other works that you have read?

- What commonly encountered archetypes do you recognize?
- Is the narrative like any classic myths you know?
- Where do you find evidence of the protagonist’s persona? anima/animus? shadow?
- Does the protagonist at any point reject some part of her personality and project it onto someone or something else?
- Would you describe the protagonist as individuated—that is, as having a realistic and accurate sense of self?

You can begin a Lacanian approach by considering the following questions:

- Where do you recognize the appearance of the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic Orders?
- Is the character aware of the lack or absence of something significant in the self?
- Are there objects that symbolize what is missing or lacking?

DRAFTING AND REVISING

The Introduction

When you are writing an analysis of a work of literature from any of these three forms of psychological criticism—Freudian, mythological, or Lacanian—you will find it helpful if you announce at the outset what the primary focus will be. Because such studies can look at a single character, the relationships among characters, meaningful symbolism, narrative patterns, or even the life of the author, an indication of the direction your paper will take makes it easier for others to follow the development of your discussion.

Another approach is to comment on similarities and differences between the work you are dealing with and other works by the same author. If you have determined that the elements of the poem or story you are analyzing are typical of a given writer, that is, for example, that the conflicts faced by a particular character are similar to those that have been developed in some of her other works, noting those correspondences in the introduction can help convince the reader that what you say is valid. On the other hand, if the work under analysis is atypical of what one anticipates from a given writer, then revealing at the beginning that it is a departure from the expected can garner attention.

If you have discovered parallels between the text you are writing about and others that you have read, you may want to mention the similarities you have discovered. If the situations or relationships among the characters have reminded you of those found in classic myths, fairy tales, Greek drama, or even more modern works, mentioning those correspondences will turn your discussion to a mythic perspective.

The Body

Because of the number and diversity of topics you have to choose from when doing psychoanalytic (and related) criticism, there is no formula for the organization of the
body of the paper. There are only suggestions that may help you structure the way in which you report your ideas.

As always, you cannot expect your audience to accept your analysis simply as stated. You will have to prove your case by using tenets of psychological or critical theory to explain, for example, that a certain character cannot keep a job because he is resistant to authority as a result of unresolved issues with his father, or that another is projecting an undesirable part of her personality when she blames a good friend for provoking a quarrel that she herself began. You do not have to refer to all of the principles explained in this chapter, but you should incorporate all the points that help to support your position.

If you have chosen to take a character as the principal topic of a Freudian analysis, you may have already discovered what you want to reveal about him when you were prewriting. If not, it may be necessary to return to those notes in order to expand and deepen them so that you eventually arrive at an understanding of some struggle the character is living through, an epiphany he or she experiences, or the motivation behind some particular behavior. It will be that understanding that you address in the body of your discussion. You may find the following strategies to be helpful.

- Identify the nature of the character's conflicts, looking for indications of whether he or she has the attitudes of a healthy adult male or female. If not, then the neurosis needs to be identified and its source examined.
- Because any changes in the outlook or behavior of a character signal that some struggle has been resolved, for good or ill, assess their meaning.
- Examine whether a character operates according to the pleasure principle, the morality principle, or the reality principle.
- Explain a character's typical behavior by determining whether the personality is a "balanced" one or whether it is dominated by the id or the superego.
- Look carefully at any dreams that are recounted or alluded to. What repressed material are they putting into symbolic form? What are they really about?
- Probe the meanings of symbols by thinking about them in terms of their maleness and femaleness.
- Find some particular behavior that a character is fixated on, then trace it to some need or issue from childhood that went unsatisfied or unresolved.
- Note any conflicts or events in the author's life that are reflected in the text.

Using a mythological approach, you can explore one or several of the following topics.

- Show how characters follow (or vary from) well-established patterns of behavior or re-create well-known figures from literary history—for example, from Greek mythology.
- Look at similarities and contrasts in the personal conscious and personal unconscious to determine whether they reflect the same desires and impulses or if they are in conflict.

Locate any instances in which the collective unconscious of a character is revealed, perhaps through a dream or vision.

Identify archetypal images and situations and explain how they work together to create meaning.

Examine instances in which the persona, anima/animus, and shadow of a character are revealed, including instances of rejection and projection.

To use Lacan's ideas as the basis of your discussion, you can consider the following points.

- Identify the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic Orders in the narrative and explain the position of a character in relation to them.
- Locate those occasions on which a character recognizes that she is a fragmented being yearning for wholeness and explain their causes.
- Explain how certain objects symbolize that which is lacking in a character's life.

The Conclusion

The psychological analysis is one of the occasions on which a summary conclusion may be welcomed by the reader. Because the discussion is likely to have covered some unusual ground and used some unusual terminology (for literary criticism), a brief reiteration of the major points followed by a general conclusion may be in order. You should take care not simply to say everything again but to assume a more global view, looking at the analysis as a whole. If you discussed multiple points, for example, you will probably need to rename them and tie them all together, showing how they extend and reinforce each other. If you focused on only one topic, such as character or imagery, then a simple reiteration of the themes that grew out of what you found should suffice.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USEFUL IN PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM

**Anima/animus** The life force within an individual. It is both life itself and the creator of life. It is made up of contragender elements of the self and belongs to the personal and collective unconscious.

**Archetypes** Inherited ideas or ways of thinking generated by the experiences of the human race that exist in the unconscious of an individual. They are universal and recurring images, patterns, or motifs representing typical human experience that often appear in literature, art, fairy tales, myths, dreams, and rituals. They unite the conscious and the unconscious, helping to make an individual whole.

**Collective Unconscious** The inherited collective experience of the human race.

**Condensation** The use of a single word or image in a dream to articulate two references.

**Displacement** Moving one's feelings for a particular person to an object related to him.

**Ego** In Freudian terms, the part of the psyche that mediates between the inner self and the
external world. As such, it helps regulate the id by postponing its urges or by diverting them into socially acceptable actions.

Id An unconscious part of the psyche that is the source of psychic energy and desires. It operates for the sole purpose of finding pleasure through gratification of its instinctual needs.

Imaginary Order A term used by Jacques Lacan to refer to the psychic stage during which the infant begins to recognize its separateness from other objects and to develop a sense of self.

Individuation Successful discovery, acceptance, and integration of one's own shadow, anima/animus, and persona. It is a psychological maturation.

Libido The instinctual energies and desires that are derived from the id.

Monomyth Northrop Frye's term for literature, composed of four mythoi.

Mythoi Four narrative patterns that, according to Northrop Frye, exhibit the structural principles of the various genres. He associates each with a season of the year.

Persona Jung's term for the social part of an individual's personality. It is the being that other people know as one's self.

Personal consciousness A state of awareness of the present moment.

Personal unconscious A storehouse of past personal experience no longer extant in the personal conscious.

Phallic symbol A masculine symbol. It is recognizable because its length exceeds its diameter.

Psychobiography The use of a psychoanalytic approach to understand a writer.

Real Order A term used by Jacques Lacan to refer to the physical world beyond the individual, language, or representation because in it there is no loss, lack, or absence. Some readers understand it to exist during early infancy (before language) and others understand it to exist as the final phase of psychic development (after the Symbolic).

Shadow Jung's term for the dark, unattractive aspects of the self. An individual's impulse is to reject the shadow and project it on someone or something else.

Sign The combination of a signifier and a signified.

Signifier The concept or meaning indicated by a signifier

Signifier A conventional sound, utterance, or written mark.

Super ego The part of the psyche that provides discipline and restraint by forcing unacceptable desires back into the unconscious. It is formed early on by parents and later by social institutions and other models.

Symbolic Order A term used by Jacques Lacan to refer to the psychic stage in which an individual learns language and it shapes his identity.

Yonic symbol A feminine symbol. It is recognizable because it is concave—for example, a bowl or a cave.

**Recommended Web Sites**

Web sites devoted to some of the topics covered in this chapter should be used with caution. Although the ones listed below are deemed helpful, many sites that are connected to philosophical, psychological, and religious slants, both traditional and nontraditional ones, are not. Some take extreme positions of belief. In particular, the Web surfer looking for information on Jung, archetypes, and myths needs to be aware that a search can lead to so many different topics that the initial quest can get lost. For these reasons, more than the usual thoughtfulness needs to be exerted when searching this topic on the Web.

- [http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/psychlit.html](http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/psychlit.html)
  - A discussion of what psychoanalysis and literature have in common and what psychoanalysis can contribute to literature.
- [http://www.cglas.ufl.edu/users/mnh/mindbook.htm](http://www.cglas.ufl.edu/users/mnh/mindbook.htm)
  - An essay on psychoanalytic literary criticism by Norman Holland.
- [http://members.home.com/mikencarrie/crit15.htm](http://members.home.com/mikencarrie/crit15.htm)
  - A brief discussion of Freud and art.
- [http://www.dragonfire.net/~brysons/academic/frye.html](http://www.dragonfire.net/~brysons/academic/frye.html)
  - Brief notes about Northrup Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*.
- [http://www.cgjungpage.org](http://www.cgjungpage.org)
  - Extensive information about Jung and Jungian psychology.
- [http://www.daimon.ch/](http://www.daimon.ch/)
  - An online bookstore devoted to publications on Jungian themes. It includes books, journals, and audiotapes.
- [http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/hmc/journey/](http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/hmc/journey/)
  - An interactive site that takes the user on the journey of the hero archetype.
  - Biographies of Greek mythical characters. The graphics are colorful and entertaining.
- [http://www.acs.appstate.edu/~davick/fnt/jung.html](http://www.acs.appstate.edu/~davick/fnt/jung.html)
  - Definitions and discussions of major archetypes, including special attention to the shadow, anima/animus, and several others.
- [http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/lacan.html](http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/lacan.html)
  - Lengtby but readable explanation of Lacanian theory.
- [http://members.home.com/mikencarrie/crit25.htm](http://members.home.com/mikencarrie/crit25.htm)
- [http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/terms.html](http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/terms.html)
  - Explanations of key terms and concepts of Freud and Lacan.

**Suggested Reading**

have reached a conciliation in the sleepy presence of the ego (the son). The fact that this happens when the lights are out and all parties are sleeping points to a truce on the level of the unconscious and a wish fulfillment for the libido that is only vaguely sensed by the narrator (ego).

But this truce can only be temporary. The restaurant must again open at night because that is when most of its business occurs. The father will return to his suppressed state, his silence broken only occasionally.

The next morning the narrator ponders the egg on the table, but his consideration of the egg and the hen leaves no place for the rooster. "I wondered why eggs had to be and why from the egg came the hen who again laid the egg." The mystery of this cycle, which includes and excludes the father and the son, distances them from and connects them to each other: "The question got into my blood. It has stayed there, I imagine, because I am the son of my father." The son on one level is ignorant concerning sexuality, but on another level as the ego he senses the jockeying for power between the superego and the libido and realizes that it must be a problem that "remains unsolved in my mind."

The powerful inexplicable nature of "The Egg" has struck readers from the beginning. Virginia Woolf in 1925 wrote that with this story "Mr. Anderson has bored into that deeper and warmer layer of human nature." The psychological framework gives names for the story's dynamics that disturb the reader but does not reduce them to corralled categories. Its mixture of the pathetic and the absurd, the close and the distant, the specific and the undefinable, says something profound about humanity.

Water, Sun, Moon, Stars, Heroic Spirit, in Tennyson's "Ulysses": A Mythological Analysis
Tiffany N. Speer

In the poem "Ulysses," Alfred, Lord Tennyson turned to one of the classic heroes of literature to explore the nature of the heroic spirit as it approaches death. Throughout the poem, the aging king remembers all that he has achieved. He realizes that he is no longer physically capable of performing such great acts, but that his heroic virtue remains. Though age has conquered his body, he insists that his triumphant spirit will not rest. The poem is paradoxical because the hero continually compares the deterioration of his physical capabilities with the rekindling of his heroic heart and his will to survive. There are several instances in which the descriptions of life and death are allusions to universal symbols and archetypes.

In the first few lines of the poem, Ulysses introduces the topic of debate: acceptance of age and retirement without settling for submission. He signals his refusal to stop living when he says, "I will drain / Life to the lees." This statement, the intense rejection of death, the image of drinking the full cup of tea, or drinking life "down to the last drop" is a recurring idea in this poem. Perhaps Ulysses' most significant instance of acceptance in the poem comes when he pauses and states, "I am become a name." He realizes that his name alone will live on in glory because of the reputation that he made from years of leading others.

It is in this first proclamation of identity that Jungian archetypes of self are introduced. He is shadow, anima, and persona combined to make a trinity of personalities that hover around acceptance of what is to come. Through this poem, Ulysses shows all three parts of his personality, the weak, the realistic, and the strong. In fact, the poem itself becomes a trilogy of archetypes combined to suggest Ulysses' image of himself.

The idea of becoming an "idle king" weary from a life of glorious reign is unacceptable to Ulysses. He refuses to accept that because he is aging, he will no longer roam the world as he did as a young hero. He says, "How dull it is to pause, to make an end, / To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!" Words such as "dull," "end," "rust," "barren," "aged," and "dim" indicate a sense of death and decay. It is in these words that Ulysses uncovers the "shadow" that he is trying to conquer. He is aware that it exists, but because he prefers not to live it out in full, he attempts to continue on with life as he did before.

Second, Ulysses' "anima," his sense of inevitable death, controls all that he does. After stating that he will always be a valiant warrior and that "every hour is saved / From that eternal silence," Ulysses begins to reflect on the possibility of passing down his reign to his son. He contradicts himself slowly as he comments on Telemachus' abilities as a leader and begins to face the fact that he, Ulysses, will soon die. At this transition, death is personified as a "vessel," a feminine object that holds his fate. She is his anima. He seems to whisper, "There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail; / There gloom the dark, broad seas." Because Ulysses can see that he will soon die, he is revived in the final portion of the poem. Ironically, the vision of death is the "life force" that causes him to remember that he does not have to die in spirit.

Once again, Ulysses realizes that death does not have to take hold of his heart as it does his body. He says optimistically, "Old age hath yet his honour and his toil." His persona, or the mask that he wears for the sake of others, is the attitude that he shows at the end of the poem. He admits that death is drawing near, but he also says that it is never too late to live life to the fullest. He says, "for my purpose holds / To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths / Of all the western stars, until I die." His public stance is a positive one that encourages his people to believe that no matter what happens to their bodies, their spirits and souls will never age.

Not only does this poem contain the Jungian trinity of archetypes of the self, but it also contains other physical symbols that support its structure. There is a repetition of water images, of sailing "beyond the sunset," and "on shore, and when / Thrice scudding drifts the rainy Hyades / Vext the dim sea." These references to water indicate the passing of time, as they wash away what was old while the new things come to surface. It is
always the water or ship that takes Ulysses away when he speaks of death; therefore, water indicates his eternal fate. In the beginning of the poem, he speaks of being an idle king "among these barren crags," suggesting that his life now is without water, dying, desolate, or useless. Without water he cannot live, just as without duty and adventure he refuses to live. But it is the water that continually sails him off to death. The duty, or the water of his life, is the very thing that gives him life.

Ulysses also makes many references to the elements of the sky. He mentions rain, sun, stars, moon, and sunsets, all of which are in reference to light in some kind of darkness. First, he says, "and vile it were / For some three suns to store and hoard myself, / And this gray spirit yearning in desire / To follow knowledge like a sinking star." Hiding behind the sun and not following his dreams and pursuing further knowledge are repugnant to him. Just as stars fall, his knowledge will also fall from his memory. He also uses the image "The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs" to indicate the approach of death. Each of the references to elements of the sky is a description of Ulysses' inevitable end, his final adventure.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson used many elements in his approach to the topic of death in his poem "Ulysses." Not only does the voice of Ulysses echo the three parts of the Jungian shadow, anima, and persona, but it also uses references to death as water and sky to speak of death. Ulysses argues with himself that despite age and fate, the truly heroic spirit never dies. It is through these universal symbols that Tennyson is able to completely capture the undying soul of a dying hero. The memory of him will always be present, just like the water, sun, moon, and stars.

The Marxist analysis has got nothing to do with what happened in Stalin's Russia: it's like blaming Jesus Christ for the Inquisition in Spain.

Tony Benn, British Labor politician

A comment that has made the rounds of many English departments over the past few years is that since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent opening of Russia to the West, Marxism has died a quiet death—except in English departments, where it is still alive and well. Even if it weren't for China and some other places in the world where Marxist theory is securely in place, the remark would be inaccurate, but it does point to the lasting viability of Marxist literary criticism, which continues to appeal to many readers and critics. It is interesting to note, however, that the principles of Marxism were not designed to serve as a theory about how to interpret texts. Instead, they were meant to be a set of social, economic, and political ideas that would, according to their followers, change the world. They are the basis of a system of thought that sees inequitable economic relationships as the source of class conflict. That conflict is the mechanism by which Western society developed from feudalism to capitalism, which, according to Marxism, will eventually give way to socialism, the system that will characterize world economic relationships. Since its inception, Marxist theory has provided a revolutionary way of understanding history.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Marxism has a long and complicated history. Although it is often thought of as a twentieth-century phenomenon, partly because it was the basis of the social-governmental system of the Soviet Union, it actually reaches back to the thinking of Karl Heinrich Marx, a nineteenth-century (1818–1883) German philosopher and economist. The first announcement of his nontraditional way of seeing things appeared in The German Ideology in 1845. In it he introduced the concept of dialectical