the Lionhearted (Richard Coeur de Lion). The townspeople's description of Richard Cory is filled with words laced with regal connotations: "He was a gentleman from sole to crown," "imperially slim," "he was rich—yes, richer than a king." In addition, Richard Cory is described as charming: "He was a gentleman," "he fluttered pulses when he said, / Good-morning," and "he glittered when he walked," he was "admirably schooled in every grace."

Such sycophantic adoration reaches a zenith in lines 11–12: "In fine, we thought that he was everything / To make us wish that we were in his place." Yet, despite his popularity, Richard Cory is in reality a suffering figure who takes his own life. But this dark side of Richard Cory is lost on the townspeople, who appear to be enraptured with the outward trappings of wealth and success. This dichotomy between the outward appearance of success and the reality of inner turmoil is not fully realized until we learn of Richard Cory's death in the last line of the poem.

The fact that the townspeople do not realize this dichotomous tension between Richard Cory's outward and inner states is evidenced in the second tension of the poem—the tension between Richard Cory and the state of the townspeople. In stark contrast to the description of Richard Cory's apparent life of ease, the townspeople are depicted as miserable, hardworking sorts: "So on we worked, and waited for the light, / And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;..." The word "so" comes immediately after the line "To make us wish that we were in his place" and thereby suggests that these people were driven by material urges to emulate Richard Cory.

There is no indication in the poem that the townspeople realize the error of their positive assumptions about Richard Cory. In addition, there is no internal evidence within the poem to indicate that the people cease their material striving after Richard Cory's death; the most any close reader can say on this matter is that he or she simply does not know what the townspeople's reaction is to Richard Cory's death. To infer anything else would be to read into the poem something that is not there—a critical no-no in the interpretive analysis of poetry. Also, the poem gives absolutely no evidence whatsoever for the cause of Richard Cory's suicide. Hence, it would be a mistake to interpret the poem as a moral lesson warning against the dangers of materialism. Rather, the safest interpretation is that appearances can sometimes be misleading.

Human beings are fascinating creatures, and we can be said to take a psychological approach when we try to understand them. The questions we ask about characters are the same ones we are likely to ask about our friends. "Why'd he want to do something dumb like that?" we say. Or we shake our heads and comment, "I knew that wasn't going to work. I don't see why she had to try it." We never seem to run out of speculation about other people's motives, relationships, and conversations or, for that matter, our own. There are our dreams, too, puzzling as to their source, bizarre in their form, and ambiguous as to their meaning but powerful enough to frighten, please, and intrigue us.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Aristotle knew that human beings are endlessly interesting. As far back as the fourth century B.C. he commented on the effects of tragedy on an audience, saying that, through pity and fear, tragedy created a catharsis of those emotions. He was only the earliest of many writers and critics down through the centuries to question why we are drawn to write stories and poems and why we like to read them. Does literature make us a better person? Matthew Arnold believed it could. Poetry, he said, could "inspirit and rejoice" the reader. Where does the impulse to write come from? Wordsworth said it springs from "emotion recollected in tranquillity." What is creativity? Coleridge thought that there were two types: the primary imagination, described as "the living power and prime agent of all human perception," and the secondary one, "identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree and in the mode of its operation." Even Friedrich Nietzsche spoke of personalities as being Apollonian, by which he meant that they were guided by the
use of critical reasoning, or Dionysian, referring to personalities ruled by creative-intuitive power.

All such questions and theories are psychological ones. They are efforts to explain the growth, development, and structure of the human personality. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, such speculation lacked the broad theoretical basis that would give validity to those early attempts at devising theory. It was then that Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) advanced his startling theories about the workings of the human psyche, its formation, its organization, and its maladies. His students and followers, such as Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, and Carl Jung, would build on his ideas to probe the workings of the human psyche in order to understand why people act as they do. Of particular interest to literary critics is Jung, who provided the concepts of the collective unconscious, myths, and archetypes that have helped readers see literature as an expression of the experience of the entire human species. Later, in the 1950s, Northrup Frye developed Jung’s ideas in ways that were more directly applicable to literature. More recently Jacques Lacan has received serious interest for his efforts to build on Freud’s work, turning to new linguistic theories to assert that language shapes our unconscious and our conscious minds, thereby giving us our identity.

Preceding the significant contributions to come from Jung, Lacan, and others, Freud began the quest for understanding by providing new ways of looking at ourselves. The power of his theories is evident in the number and variety of fields they have affected, fields as disparate as philosophy, medicine, sociology, and literary criticism. Although they do not provide an aesthetic theory of literature, which would explain how it is beautiful or why it is meaningful in and of itself, their value lies in the unconscious plays a major role in what we do, feel, and say, although we are not aware of its presence or operations.

Today the psychological literary critic can base her inferences on the work of numerous important theorists, but it is Freud’s ideas that have provided the basis for this approach, and it is his ideas that are still fundamental to it. To work as a psychological critic, whether you are directly applying Freudian theory or working with the ideas of his followers, it is necessary to understand some of his concepts about the human psyche.

**FREEUDIAN PRINCIPLES**

As a neurologist practicing in Vienna in the late nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud was troubled that he could not account for the complaints of many of his patients by citing any physical cause. Diagnosing them as hysterics, he entered upon analyses of them (and himself) that led him to infer that their distress was caused by factors of which perhaps even they were unaware. He became convinced that fantasies and desires too bizarre and unacceptable to admit had been suppressed, buried so deeply in the unconscious part of their being that, although the desires did not have to be confronted directly, they led to neuroses that caused his patients’ illnesses. He concluded that the unconscious plays a major role in what we do, feel, and say, although we are not aware of its presence or operations.

He did not come by these ideas easily or quickly. As early as 1895 he published, with Joseph Breuer, Studies in Hysteria, an important work asserting that symptoms of hysteria are the result of unresolved but forgotten traumas from childhood. Five years later he brought out *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he addressed the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, a treatment in which a patient talks to an analyst about dreams, childhood, and relationships with parents and authority figures. (Freud was not alone in asserting the close relationship between dreams and art. In 1923 Wilhelm Stekel published a book on dreams, saying that no essential difference exists between them and poetry, and around that same time F. C. Prescott, in *Poetry and Dreams*, argued for a definite correspondence between the two in both form and content.) Using free association, slips of language, and dreams, Freud found ways for an analyst to help the patient uncover the painful or threatening events that have been repressed in the unconscious to make them inaccessible to the conscious mind. When such ideas are applied to literature, the process is called psychoanalytic criticism, and the same topics and techniques form the basis for analyzing literary texts.

Just after the turn of the century, Freud himself began to apply his theories to the interpretation of religion, mythology, art, and literature. His first piece of psychoanalytic criticism was “Delusions and Dreams” in *Jensen’s Gradiva* (1907). In it he psychoanalyzed the central character, noting the oedipal effects behind the plot. The concern with literature soon turned to the writers themselves and to artists in general as he questioned why art exists and why people create it. In that search he wrote monographs on Dostoyevsky, Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci, Goethe, and others. His sense of the artist, finally, was that he is an unstable personality who writes out of his own neuroses, with the result that his work provides therapeutic insights into the nature of life not only for himself but also for those who read. As Freud commented...

**PRACTICING PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM**

To understand the discussion that follows, you should read the short story “Young Goodman Brown,” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, which begins on page 234.
in Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, “The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become a neurotic.”

In 1910 the depth that Freud’s approach could add to literary analysis was made apparent in a (now classic) essay on Hamlet by Ernest Jones, in which he argues that Hamlet’s delay in taking revenge on Claudius is a result of the protagonist’s own “disordered mind.” More specifically, Jones sees Hamlet as the victim of an oedipal complex that manifests itself in manic-depressive feelings, misogynistic attitudes, and a disgust for things sexual. According to Jones, Hamlet delays his revenge because he unconsciously wants to kill the man who married his mother, but if he punishes Claudius for doing what he himself wished to do, that would in a sense mean that he was killing himself. Also derived from his oedipal neurosis, his repressed desire for Gertrude, who is overly affectionate toward him, causes him to treat Ophelia with cruelty far out of proportion to anything she has done. When he orders her to a nunnery, the slang meaning of “brothel” makes it clear that he sees all women, even a guiltless one, as repugnant. And throughout the play his disgust toward sexual matters is apparent in the anger evoked in him by the marriage of Claudius and Gertrude as well as in his repulsion of Ophelia.

Since Freud’s era, and since Jones’s landmark essay appeared, psychoanalytic criticism has continued to grow and develop, generating, for example, the related genre of psychobiography. Today it shows few signs of slowing down. Nevertheless, it is still Freud’s work that provides the foundation of this approach. Not all of his explanations of how the mind operates are applicable to literary criticism, but the six that follow have had enormous impact on the way we understand what we read. They have even affected the way writers construct their works.

**The Unconscious**

Probably the most significant aspect of Freudian theory is the primacy of the unconscious. Hidden from the conscious mind, which he compares to that small portion of an iceberg that is visible above the surface of the water, the unconscious is like the powerful unseen mass below it. Because the conscious mind is not aware of its submerged counterpart, it may mistake the real causes of behavior. An individual may be unable to tell the difference between what is happening and what he thinks is happening. In short, our actions are the result of forces that we do not recognize and therefore cannot control.

In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story “Young Goodman Brown,” for example, Brown finds himself in just such a dilemma. Even well past the events of his night in the forest, he is not sure of what was real and what was a dream. His journey is a psychological, as well as physical, one, for he moves from the security of consciousness to the unknown territory of the unconscious, a powerful force that directs him in ways he neither expects nor understands. He leaves the village of Salem, where social as well as spiritual order prevails, to go into the forest, where daylight, and the clarity of vision and understanding it seems to confer, gives way to darkness and frightful confusion of perceptions. In the end, he can no longer tell reality from dreams, good from evil.

**The Tripartite Psyche**

In an effort to describe the conscious and the unconscious mind, Freud divided the human psyche into three parts: the id, the superego, and the ego. They are, for the most part, unconscious. The id, for example, is completely unconscious, and only small parts of the ego and the superego are conscious. Each operates according to different, even contrasting, principles.

The **id**, which is the repository of the libido, the source of our psychic energy and our psychosexual desires, gives us our vitality. Because it is always striving to satisfy its hunger for pleasure, it operates without any thought of consequences, anxiety, ethics, logic, precaution, or morality. Demanding swift satisfaction and fulfillment of biological desires, it is lawless, asocial, amoral. As Freud describes it, it is “only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle.”

Obviously the id can be a socially destructive force. Unrestrained, it will aggressively seek to gratify its desires without any concern for law, customs, or values. It can even be self-destructive in its drive to have what it wants. In many ways it resembles the devil figure that appears in some theological and literary texts, because it offers strong temptation to take what we want without heeding normal restraints, taboos, or consequences. Certainly it appears in that form in “Young Goodman Brown.” The id is personified in the person of Brown’s fellow traveler, who appears to Brown immediately after he thinks to himself, “What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!” The narrator suggests the embodiment of Brown’s id in the figure by describing him as “bearing a considerable resemblance” to the young man. Even before the older man’s appearance, from the very outset of the journey, Brown recognizes that he is challenging acceptable behavior by leaving the highly regulated life of Salem, and the pull of the id to disregard the usual restrictions and participate in acts normally forbidden in the village intensifies as he walks deeper into the forest. As Hawthorne points out, Brown becomes “himself the chief horror of the scene.”

To prevent the chaos that would result if the id went untamed, other parts of the psyche must balance its passions. The **ego**, which operates according to the reality principle, is one such regulating agency. Its function is to make the id’s energies non-destructive by postponing them or diverting them into socially acceptable actions, sometimes by finding an appropriate time for gratifying them. Although it is for the most part unconscious, the ego is the closest of the three parts of the psyche to what we think of as consciousness, for it mediates between our inner selves and the outer world. Nevertheless, it is not directly approachable. We come closest to knowing it when it is relaxed by hypnosis, sleep, or unintentional slips of the tongue. Dreams, then, become an important means of our knowing what is hidden about ourselves from ourselves.

The third part of the psyche, the **superego**, provides additional balance to the id, for it furnishes a sense of guilt for behavior that breaks the rules given by parents to the young child. Similar to what is commonly known as one’s conscience, it operates according to the morality principle, for it provides the sense of moral and ethical wrongdoing. Although parents, who enforce their values through punishments and
rewards, are the chief source of the superego, it is expanded by institutions and other influences later in life. Consequently, it works against the drive of the id and represses socially unacceptable desires back into the unconscious. Balance between the license of the id and the restrictions of the superego produces the healthy personality, but when unconscious guilt becomes overwhelming, the individual can be said to be suffering from a guilt complex. When the superego is too strong, it can lead to unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the self.

For Goodman Brown, the descent into the unconscious (the night in the forest) presents a conflict between the superego (the highly regulated life he has known in Salem) and the id (the wild, unrestrained passions of the people in the forest). Lacking a viable ego of his own, he turns to Faith, his wife, for help. Unfortunately, she wears pink ribbons, a mixture of white (purity) and red (passion), which indicates the ambiguity of goodness and Brown's clouded belief in the possibility of goodness throughout the remainder of his life.

**The Significance of Sexuality**

Prior to Freud, children were thought to be asexual beings, innocent of the biological drives that would beset them later. Freud, however, recognized that it is during childhood that the id is formed, shaping the behavior of the adult to come. In fact, Freud believed that infancy and childhood were periods of intense sexual experience during which it is necessary to go through three phases of development that serve specific physical needs, then provide pleasure if we are to become healthy, functioning adults. The first phase is called the oral phase, because it is characterized by sucking, first to be fed from our mother's breast, then to enjoy our thumbs or, later, even kissing. The second is the anal stage, a period that not only recognizes the need for elimination but the presence of another erogenous zone, a part of the body that provides sexual pleasure. In the final phase, the phallic stage, the child discovers the pleasure of genital stimulation, connected, of course, to reproduction. If these three overlapping stages are successfully negotiated, the adult personality emerges sound and intact. If, however, these childhood needs are not met, the adult is likely to suffer arrested development. The mature person may become fixated on a behavior that serves to fulfill what was not satisfied at an early age. The early years, therefore, encompass critical stages of development because repressions formed at that time may surface as problems later.

Around the time the child reaches the genital stage, about the age of five, he or she is ready to develop a sense of maleness or femaleness. To explain the process by which the child makes that step, Freud turned to literature. Referring to the plot of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, he points out that the experience of Oedipus is that of all male children. That is, just as Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother, a young boy forms an erotic attachment to his mother and unconsciously grows to desire her. He consequently resents his father because of his relationship with the mother. Fearing castration by the father, the male child represses his sexual desires, identifies with his father, and anticipates his own sexual union. Such a step is a necessary one in his growth toward manhood. The boy who fails to make that step will suffer from an oedipal complex, with ongoing fear of castration evident in his hostility to authority in general.

In the case of girls, the passage from childhood to womanhood requires successful negotiation of the Electra complex. In Freudian theory the girl child, too, has a strong attraction for her mother and sees her father as a rival, but because she realizes that she has already been castrated, she develops an attraction for her father, who has the penis she desires. When she fails to garner his attentions, she identifies with her mother and awaits her own male partner who will provide what her female physiognomy lacks.

In "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne clearly implies that Brown's troubling impulses are sexual ones, and they are not his alone. The sermon of the devil figure promises Brown and Faith that they will henceforth know the secret sins of the people of Salem: "how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; ... how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral." The catalogue leaves no doubt that sexual passion is part of the human condition, and left unrestrained, it leads to grave offenses. Freud explains that as both boys and girls make the transition to normal adulthood, they become aware of their place in a moral system of behavior. They move from operating according to the pleasure principle, which dictates that they want immediate gratification of all desires, to an acceptance of the reality principle, in which the ego and superego recognize rules, restraint, and responsibility. Goodman Brown, unable to discern reality or define moral behavior, remains outside the adult world.

**The Importance of Dreams**

The vast unconscious that exists beneath the surface of our awareness seems closest to revelation when we sleep. Our dreams, according to Freud, are the language of the unconscious, full of unfulfilled desires that the conscious mind has buried there. Their content is rarely clear, however, for even in sleep the ego censors unacceptable wishes. Through the use of symbols that make repressed material more acceptable, if not readily understandable to us, the ego veils their meaning from direct apprehension that would produce painful recognition. As in literature, the process may take place through condensation. For example, two desires of the psyche may be articulated by a single word or image in a dream, just as they are in a poem. Condensation can also take place through displacement, moving one's feeling for a particular person to an object related to him, much as metonymy uses the name of one object to replace another with which it is closely related or of which it is a part. When dreams become too direct and their meanings too apparent, we awaken or, unconsciously, change the symbology. Interestingly, Young Goodman Brown is never certain whether he has dreamed his experience or not. Indeed, the ambiguity and uncertainty about the other villagers and their part in the satanic communion haunt him for the rest of his life. He returns to the village and the light of day, but what is real and what is fantasy eludes him. The meanings of the symbols remain unrevealed to him.
As a window into the unconscious, dreams become valuable tools for psychoanalysts in determining unresolved conflicts in the psyche, conflicts that a person may suspect only because of physical ailments, such as headaches, or psychological discomfort, such as claustrophobia. When a reader meets them in literature, they offer rich insights into characters that their outer actions, or even their spoken words, might never suggest. Because they are meaningful symbolic presentations that take the reader beyond the external narrative, they are valuable tools of the critic using a psychoanalytic approach.

Symbols

Freud's recognition of the often subtle and always complex workings of sexuality in human beings and in literature led to a new awareness of what symbols mean, in literature as well as in life. If dreams are a symbolic expression of repressed desires, most of them sexual in nature, the images through which they operate are themselves going to be sexual ones. Their sexuality is initially indicated by shape. That is, physical objects that are concave in shape, such as lakes, tunnels, and cups are assumed to be female (yonic) symbols, and those that are convex, those whose length exceeds their diameter, such as trees, towers, and spires, are assumed to be male (phallic). Although Freud himself objected to a general interpretation of dream symbols, insisting that they are personal and individual in nature, such readings are not uncommon. Sometimes this approach to understanding symbols has been pushed to ridiculous extremes, but it undeniably has the capacity to enrich our reading and understanding in ways that we would not otherwise discover.

The symbols in "Young Goodman Brown" are replete with sexual suggestion that is rarely made explicit in the story. Many of those that play a part in Brown's initiation, such as the devil's staff, which is described as "a great black snake, a living serpent," are male images, suggesting the nature of Brown's temptation. The satanic communion is depicted as lighted by blazing fires, with the implication of intense emotion, especially sexual passion. The burning pine trees surrounding the altar, again masculine references, underscore that the repressions of nature exercised in the village give way to obsessions in the forest. There are female symbols, too. For example, entering the forest suggests returning to the dark, womblike unknown. And what if Young Goodman Brown has not actually undergone the experience and has only dreamed it? The event is still significant, because dreams can function as symbolic forms of wish fulfillment.

Brown's nighttime journey, the nature of which is powerfully deepened by the symbolic imagery, leaves its mark on him. He is thereafter a dark and brooding man, leading Richard Adams ("Hawthorne's Provincial Tales") to argue that Brown fails to mature because he fails to learn to know, control, and use his sexual feelings. That is, he cannot love or hate; he can only fear moral maturity. He never manages to emerge from his uncertainty and consequent despair. He has been required to acknowledge evil in himself and others, including his wife, so that he can recognize goodness, but having failed the test, he is left in a state of moral uncertainty. The result is moral and social isolation.

Creativity

The connection between creative expression and the stuff of dreams was not lost on Freud. His curiosity about its sources and nature is reflected in the monographs he wrote on creative artists from various times and cultures, pieces on Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, and Michelangelo, for example. He recognized that the artist consciously expresses fantasy, illusion, and wishes through symbols, just as dreams from the unconscious do. To write a story or a poem, then, is to reveal the unconscious, to give a neurosis socially acceptable expression. Such a view makes the writer a conflicted individual working out his problems. Freud explained the idea this way in Lectures on Psycho-Analysis:

"The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become a neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous. He longs to attain to honor, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his libido too, to the creation of his wishes in the life of fantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis."

In the process of engaging in his own therapy, says Freud, the artist achieves insights and understanding that can be represented to others who are less likely to have found them.

Such views have led some critics to focus their attention not on a text but on the writer behind it. They see a work as an expression of his unconscious mind, an artifact that can be used to psychoanalyze the writer, producing psychobiography. (A good example of this genre is Edmund Wilson's The Wound and the Bow.) Of course, to do such a study, one needs to have access to verifiable biographical information as well as expertise in making a psychological analysis. Most literary critics, while they may be able to find the former, usually lack the latter. And, indeed, one might ask whether such an undertaking is literary criticism at all.

Summing Up

In the end, when you make a Freudian (psychoanalytical) reading of a text, you will probably limit yourself to the consideration of the work itself, looking at its conflicts, characters, dream sequences, and symbols. You will use the language Freud provided to discuss what before him did not have names, and you will have an awareness that outward behavior may not be consonant with inner drives. You will avoid oversimplification of your analysis, exaggerated interpretations of symbolism, and excessive use of psychological jargon. If you do, you will have the means to explore not only what is apparent on the surface but what is below it as well. As Lionel Trilling pointed out in The Liberal Imagination, Freud has provided us with "the perception of the hidden element of human nature and of the opposition between the hidden and the visible."
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, jouisance, 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 might 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 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 having 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.

- **Reveal what is happening in the character's unconscious as it has been suggested by images, symbols, or interior monologues.**
- **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 male-ness 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  Northrup Frye's term for literature, composed of four mythoi.

Mythoi  Four narrative patterns that, according to Northrup 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 conscious  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 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  A conventional sound, utterance, or written mark.

Superego  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 non-traditional 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
A discussion of what psychoanalysis and literature have in common and what psychoanalysis can contribute to literature.

http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/nnh/mindbook.htm
An essay on psychoanalytic literary criticism by Norman Holland.

http://members.home.com/mikencarrie/criu15.htm
A brief discussion of Freud and art.

http://www.dragonfire.net/~brysons/academic/frye.html
Brief notes about Northrup Frye's Anatomy of Criticism.

http://www.cgjungpage.org
Extensive information about Jung and Jungian psychology.

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/smc/journey/
An interactive site that takes the user on the journey of the hero archetype.

http://www.mythweb.com/
Biographies of Greek mythical characters. The graphics are colorful and entertaining.

http://www.acs.appstate.edu/~daviscst/nt/jung.html
Definitions and discussions of major archetypes, including special attention to the shadow, anima/animus, and several others.

http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL212Kliges/lacan.html
Lengthy but readable explanation of Lacanian theory.

http://members.home.com/mikencarrie/cri25.htm

http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/terms.html
Explanations of key terms and concepts of Freud and Lacan.

SUGGESTED READING


MODEL STUDENT ANALYSES

Psychological Complexity in Sherwood Anderson's

"The Egg": A Freudian Analysis

Mark Wekander

Sherwood Anderson's story "The Egg" functions with a slim plot. A man leaves his happy life as a bachelor to assume the economic responsibilities of marriage and parenthood. The first step in this attempted transformation is a chicken farm that he and his wife buy. When this endeavor fails, the couple start a small restaurant near a railroad station that they run around the clock by dividing the schedule. The father attempts to attract new customers by a positive attitude and an attempt to cater to the young. The climax comes when he performs his pathetic tricks for the young Joe Kane, who is waiting for a train that is running late. He first attempts to make an egg stand on end by rolling it in his hands, then shows the young man chickens that were born freaks of nature that he has preserved in alcohol, and then boils an egg in vinegar and tries to force it down the neck of a bottle. The father's egg tricks finally scare off the customer, and the father goes in defeat to his wife.

The story, however, could be summed up as a man's marriage leads to higher goals and so to ridiculous failure, or in another way, that entering the reproductive cycle leads to defeat.

In his typical fashion, Anderson defuses the tension of plot with the first sentence: "My father was, I am sure, intended by nature to be a cheerful, kindly man." The word intended already insinuates the discrepancy between nature and society. The first paragraph ends by pointing to the father's original natural state and his attempt to integrate into the world: "He had at that time no notion of trying to rise in the world."

Anderson's simple story leaves the reader with complex feelings about the ridiculous father, whose dilemma appears to be tragic, and about the son, who narrates the story and seems to replace the father and become him. Behind them both stands the mother who pushes each of them out into the world and in mysterious ways controls and checks the father.

In this slight plot with no suspense, the action is contained and does not form a strong causal chain but instead gives one the sense of viewing a series of chronological tableaux that explain the psychological relationship of the characters. The relationship among the father, mother, and son exists on two levels. On one level the son is the usurper, the oedipal child who usurps his father's position with his mother and his power. On the second level, each member of the family represents an aspect of the tripartite personality. The narrator-son is the ego; the father, who existed as a rural Pan before marriage, is the libido residing in the id; and the mother, who socializes the father and the son, functions as the superego.

The son, who has usurped his father's place with his mother and stands as a barrier to his father's sexual gratification, tells the story. He himself fears assuming his father's role as the displaced lover and is ambivalent about sexual gratification and procreation, which will lead him to the same position of exile as his father. The son as the voice of the story controls and silences the father, so the ego has suppressed the sexual desire (libido) in the id and come under the influence of the superego. Likewise, the son has usurped the father's place in bed, and the mother's affection and her aspirations for success are now placed on the son.

The egg in its dual symbolic role stands for the son-ego and for a fertility and potency that is always beyond the reach of the father. His failures with eggs begin after the narrator, the son who is the egg fertilized by his father, has been born and the father's life changes: "I came wriggling and crying into the world. Something happened to the two people. They became ambitious." The birth of the narrator robs in the father, who before marriage would "make his horse comfortable for the night," a reference to the father's easy sexuality in his idyllic unwed state. From the start the father's place in bed and the mother's affection, at least in the eye of the narrator-son, has been forfeited to the son. It is now the narrator who "lay beside her," and her dreams are that her son "would some day rule men and
cities." In an oedipal revolution, the son has taken both the bed and the affection of the mother away from the father.

The father's subsequent sterility and alienation are immediately emphasized: "... she induced father to give up his place as a farmhand, sell his horse and embark on an independent venture of his own." The father sells his horse, a traditional symbol of male sexuality, and symbolically gives up his sexual prowess. The chicken farm and all that has to do with eggs becomes "an independent venture of his own." While the venture actually is not just the father's, the narrator-son sees the father as removed from the world occupied by him and his mother.

The story includes many incidents where the father's separateness from the mother, son, and community are emphasized. At the narrator's birth, he and the mother share the bed, and the father is exiled from sexual intercourse. The move to the restaurant signifies a more public and less sexual life. Their 24-hour-a-day restaurant means the father works while the wife is in bed and she works while he is in bed. In the final episode of the story the father comes to throw himself on his knees at the bed of his wife after the scenes of his humiliation in the restaurant. The restaurant's location also develops the theme of isolation and failure, since the house in which they establish the restaurant is not in the town of Bidwell but a mile away at the railroad station in Pickleville. The father's ride on the wagon is emblematic of his separateness. He rode alone while the mother watched "to be sure that nothing fell from the wagon," and the narrator walked "to see the wonders of the world."

The mother-superego is behind the father's socialization. She has the idea for the chicken farm, which removes the father from his idyllic life as a farmhand and makes him ambitious. Later the narrator tells us that the father has been silenced "from long association with mother and the chickens." The mother's roles are those of the superego, the mother-wife-lover in the oedipal love triangle, and instigator of plans for upward mobility or integration into society.

The move from the chicken farm to the restaurant represents a further sublimation of the libido. The father rides alone in the wagon with objects that emphasize his infertility while his wife watches to make sure that he remains there. The road figures as a symbol for sexual intercourse and viability. The son is beginning to understand "the wonders of the world," while the mother has become the restrictive eye that ensures that nothing falls into the road from the wagon, such as the father's sperm. He is left with his treasures; the deformed chickens in bottles of alcohol—in a sense eggs gone awry—and the baby carriage with its broken wheels. No other contents of the wagon are mentioned. Like the freaks in alcohol, the baby carriage represents both sexual inability and infertility. It is a reminder that there will be no more offspring, since the libido has been thoroughly controlled. The broken wheels emphasize the impotency of the father and the sublimation of libido. The only viable wheels are those on the wagon that "had been borrowed for the day from Mr. Albert Griggs, a neighbor."

The story equates sexual impotence with financial and worldly failure. The ambition of the father, a desire that the narrator-son claims is inspired by the mother, repeatedly meets with failure. The eggs of the father's chicken farm are doomed to short freakish existence or to eventual failure and fatality. The road to success, or the road of sexual intercourse, is always up. Success is "rising in the world," "getting up in the world," "rose from poverty to fame and greatness," and "upward journey through life." The male erection and the sperm rising in the uterus to fertilize the egg are also embodied in this language. But after the birth of the narrator, sexual success seems to be impossible.

The son's own conception is described both in his birth, when he came "wriggling ... into the world," and in a dream that he has. The dream is triggered when he looks at his father's bald head, "and the bald path that led over the top of his head was, I fancied, something like a broad road ... into the wonders of an unknown world." The father's bald head, as a male phallic symbol, inspires and frightens the child and finally becomes the metonym for his father's sexual and financial failure. When the father reaches his final humiliation, the son remembers "my own grief and fright and the shiny path over father's head glowing in the lamp light as he knelt by the bed." The child's dream of sexuality, inspired by his father's bald (impotent) head (male sexuality), incorporates the wonder of sexuality with the fear of procreation. "I was a tiny thing going along the road into a far beautiful place where there were no chicken farms and where life was a happy eggless affair." In his dream he is both the sperm moving up the uterus and the child who will have no usurper from other siblings or from children of his own. In the dream the wish fulfillment of the libido is achieved by avoiding the inevitable loss of sexual satisfaction that comes through fatherhood. The dream concerns conception but also equates happiness with "eggless" existence.

When the family leaves the chicken farm and its sterile "poor stony land," they move to Pickleville. Formerly, "there had been cider mill and a pickle factory at the station." The phallic pickle and the feminine symbol of the apple are now inoperative. They have both been closed by failure, and again Anderson associates sexual failure with financial failure.

In Pickleville, the restaurant depends on the railroad for business. An iron horse has replaced the father's horse, or sexuality. He no longer travels but waits on those who do. The father tries to subdue the usurping generation, the young people of the town of Bidwell, with his great personality and good humor. His desire for sexual success is masked as an attempt at business success. "Father became a little feverish in his desire to please." Through displacement, the father's competition with the son becomes an attempt to conquer the youth of Bidwell. Besides being the oedipal threat, the son and Joe Kane are representatives of the ego-conscious public self. The father represents the libido, which has been exiled through sublimation to the silenced subconscious.
On the second level the son as ego associates himself with his father, who is libidino, while being his antagonist in the battle for his mother’s affection. The episode with the eponymously phallic Joe Kane, when the father tries to impress his new customer with his egg tricks, is remembered by the son not as something he has heard but as something he himself had experienced: “For some inexplicable reason I know the story as well as though I had been witness to my father’s discomfiture. One in time gets to know many inexplicable things.” As ego through states of dream or reverie, he is able to access the knowledge of the libido, which has been banished to the id.

Since the son-ego is influenced by both the mother-superego and the father-libidino, he must speak for the father-libidino and silence him. The ego is aware of the control of the superego. As they head out in the wagon for their move to the restaurant, the narrator-son tells us that his father “from a long association with mother and the chickens ... had become habitually silent and discouraged.” Later it is the son who shapes and permits his father’s speech: “That was as far as he got. My own imagination has filled in the blanks.” The ego speaks for the person and with its incomplete knowledge it creates the self.

The son tells his father’s story and, in doing so, his own, for as he points out, “If correctly told it [the story] will center on the egg.” As ego, he is not an objective speaker but represses and ridicules sexuality. When he sees the girls skipping and singing on their way home from school, he at first imitates them and then represses himself: “I was afraid of being seen in my gay mood. It must have seemed to me that I was doing a thing that should not be done by one who, like myself, had been raised on a chicken farm where death was a daily visitor.” His experience on the chicken farm, the world of sexual and financial failure, has determined his perception of the world: “They [the chickens] are so much like people they mix one up in one’s judgment of life.” The chicken farm with endless eggs and tragedies—adverse sexual experience—causes him to suppress sexuality. His father caged in the wagon on his way from the chicken farm to the restaurant is the symbol of this suppression.

In the incident with Joe Kane in the restaurant, the father attempts to regain his sexual prowess and reverse his fortunes. The father-libidino has already become subdued as he has attempted to find a voice. “He painted a sign on which he put his name in large red letters. Below his name was the sharp command—EAT HERE—that was seldom obeyed.” When Joe Kane enters the restaurant, the mother-superego and son-ego are asleep upstairs. The father is confronted with the younger generation, the young man from Bidwell waiting for the train. He does not speak. “For a long time father, whom Joe Kane had never seen before, remained silently gazing at his visitor. He was no doubt suffering from an attack of stage fright.” When he breaks the silence, his words mimic the sound of a barnyard rooster, “How-de-do.”

His first attempt at dominating this surrogate for the younger generation, or ego, is to get an egg to stand on end. The veiled allusions to male erections continue through this episode. But as he attempts this trick, “rolling the egg between the palms of his hands,” he talks. His silence is broken as he attempts to prove his sexual potency. But his talk is ridiculous because it lacks the control of the superego and the ego. The association between expression and sexuality is pointed out in the father’s criticism of Columbus, a worldly success who “was a cheat,” he declared emphatically. “He talked of making an egg stand on end. He talked, he did, and then he went and broke the end of the egg.” The father’s references to Columbus’s talking are followed by his outrage at the discoverer’s Gordian-knot solution to the problem.

The father’s own attempts to make the egg “stand” are frustrated. His scientific explanation of how he will make the egg stand—“He explained that the warmth of his hands and the gentle rolling movement he gave the egg created a new center of gravity”—though perhaps sexually charged in notation, are not as illogical and sexual as his earlier mumbling explanation of “the effect to be produced on an egg by the electricity that comes out of the human body.” Unlike Columbus who breaks the egg and lets the fluid out, his own attempts are dry and his success ultimately unseen by Joe Kane. The egg has turned away from the display of the libido at the crucial moment.

In his next attempt to prove his sexual viability, he shows Joe Kane one of the freak chicks in alcohol that he has preserved from his years on the farm but only elicits the young man’s disgust: “His visitor was made a little ill by the sight of the body of the terribly deformed bird floating in the alcohol in the bottle and got up to go.” The father offers him a free cigar and a cup of coffee to make him stay. Though Freud himself said that “sometimes a cigar is just a cigar,” here the cigar and the cup function respectively as phallic and yonic counters, a replacement for the sexuality the father cannot himself enjoy.

Finally the father becomes more explicit when he boils an egg in vinegar and attempts to force “the egg to go through the neck” of a bottle. Joe Kane, however, leaves during his attempt, and the father in his desperation throws an egg at Joe and misses him. His failed attempt to put the egg in the bottle is figured as failed coition when the speakee states, “When he thought that last the trick was about to be consummated the delayed train came in at the station and Joe Kane started to go.” The train, the iron horse, prevents the father from consummation by its own arrival and has won Joe Kane away from him. The contrast between the father’s horse of the older generation and the iron horse of Joe Kane’s generation is implicit. Completely defeated, he runs up to his wife and son. “He laid the egg gently on the table and dropped on his knees by the bed.” The father has come up from the restaurant where he had been humiliated. His prostration next to her bed provides a visual representation of the libido ruled by the superego.

At the end of the story there is a type of temporary reconciliation. The father and mother lie in bed together. The restaurant, which is the public arena that controls and humiliates the father, is closed. The son lies in the same room, can see the egg, and listens to the “muttered conversation” of his parents. The superego (mother) and the libido (father)
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 corrall ed categories. Its mixture of the pathetic and the absurd, the close and the distant, the specific and the indefinite, 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 trilogy 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 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 away “beyond the sunset,” and “on shore, and when / Thro’ 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