

POSSIBLE BOOKS: Carl Gustav Jung: The Collective Dream, Part 3



Neurotic and Psychotic Analogs

The particular expressions of a vision, Jung tells us, can never exhaust the possibilities of that vision: "What is essential in a work of art is that it should rise far above the realm of personal life and speak from the spirit and heart of the poet as man to the spirit and heart of mankind. When a form of 'art' is primarily personal, it deserves to be treated as if it were a neurosis." Dante's presentiments are clothed in images that run the gamut of Heaven and Hell; Goethe brings in the Blocksberg and the infernal regions of Greek antiquity; Blake invents for himself indescribable eternal figures. In Gerard de Nerval's posthumously published prose poem *Aurelia*, the manuscript of which was found on the poet's body after his suicide, Jung unfolds a classic account of vision and psychosis proceeding in tandem. Nerval relates the history of his anima, and at the same time his psychosis, in a sequence of fantasy experiences that are largely descriptions of archetypal figures. The natural process of coming to terms with the unconscious which Nerval transfigures into poetry is the same process that occurs in the initial stages of certain forms of schizophrenia. Jung named it the "transcendent function" because it represents a function based on real and "imaginary" data. The transcendent process itself is a work that involves both action and suffering.

In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, too, Jung saw a suspicious resemblance to schizophrenic mentality, but, again, not the stereotyped and repetitious expressions that are characteristic marks of the compositions of the insane:

Joyce's inexpressibly rich and myriad-faceted language unfolds itself in passages that creep along tapeworm fashion, terribly boring and monotonous, but the very boredom and monotony of it attain a grandeur that makes the book a Mahabharata of the world's futility and squalor.

In his amusing and confessional preface to the book, Jung calls it "a piece of technical virtuosity . . . a brilliant and hellish monster-birth" in which "every sentence rouses an expectation that is not fulfilled." He also calls it "cubistic"—the product of a modern artist who is following a current of collective life that arises from the collective unconscious of the psyche of modern man, "*who is in the process of shaking off a world that has become obsolete*" (emphasis is my own).

From Jung's two volumes of professional responses to the fantasies of his patient and analysand, Miss Miller, a young American literature student whose tour of Europe touched off a bout of schizophrenia, we have received several of Jung's most detailed commentaries. There are forty pages on Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and two pages on the famous refrain of Poe's "The Raven," a poem whose atmosphere anticipates the fate that befell Miss Miller: spiritual benightedness. Reference to the neurotic woman's desire to stand aside from the dangerous struggle for existence drew from Jung seven pages on the symbology of the mortals, the angels, and the passion in Lord Byron's unfinished poem "Heaven and Hell." Beside Byron's poem appears the sonnet "Mon reve familier" from Paul Verlaine's *Poemes saturniens* (1806), a beautiful expression of desire for a mother's embrace, with a few lines of commentary.

Jung did more than cite the literary analogues of neurosis and psychosis and interpret their contents. He also theorized on their form. The real value of Jung's two works on psychological types and poetry ("Schiller's Ideas on the Type Problem," "The Type Problem in Poetry") is the exposition of

his formal theory, although this is not readily apparent. These two articles on their face present poets and their works categorically to exemplify a psychological theory; concerned neither with the fundamental purpose of poetry nor with the basic aesthetic instinct, they investigate “style” or “expression” more than they do symbols and archetypes. The rather extensive commentary on Schiller emphasizes Jung’s debt to that poet’s concept of the sentimental and the naive, which anticipates and approximates his own concept of introverted and extraverted types. In Jung’s view, Schiller’s poems, and most of his plays, give us a good idea of the introverted attitude: they are material mastered by the poet’s conscious intention. In these discussions, Homer is always tied to Schiller, who considered Homer a perfect example of the “naive” poet. Of types and literary criticism, Jung has this to say:

We must bear in mind these two entirely different modes of creation [the introverted and the extraverted, the psychological and the visionary] . . . for much that is of the greatest importance in judging a work of art depends upon this distinction.

Many of the critiques of the representative authors arranged in this collection are drawn from *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, *The Symbolic Life*, *Symbols of Transformation*, and *Psychological Types* (CW, Vols. 15, 18, 5, and 6, respectively) in complete, or nearly complete, form. Among these critiques are the handful of introductions that Jung wrote for literary works, including Linda Fierz-David’s interpretive study of Francesco Colonna’s *Dream of Poliphilo*. The Holderlin commentary is typical of Jung’s critiques on major authors and their works. Jung’s twenty-page commentary on Holderlin, which composes the first half of “The Sacrifice” (CW, Vol. 5, Chap. VIII, pp. 397–414), analyzes the pathological ecstasy and apocalyptic vision of nearly a dozen of Holderlin’s poems. English translations of the poems by Hamburger and Leishman

appear in the text. To the main article are joined brief commentaries from Jung's other volumes; these are included as endnotes. The articles on Schiller and Longfellow's "Hiawatha" are also of this kind.

Other critical articles are formed of brief excerpts, some almost little anthologies in themselves. Such, for instance, is the one on Dante and the *Divine Comedy*: More than twenty brief notes on the medieval Italian visionary, originally scattered through ten volumes written by Jung over forty years, have been synthesized into a single composite article. The inclusion of Jung's full lecture on Gerard de Nerval's *Aurelia* no doubt would have enriched this volume; unfortunately, the lecture exists only as an uncorrected twenty-four page typescript of a stenogram in the Jung archives and has never been translated into English; the one-page abstract by Jung that does appear in this volume discloses the lecture's argument.

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