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African American Dreaming and the Beast of Racism

The Cultural Unconscious in Jungian Analysis

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This article is an interpretation of the dream of an African American woman. The purpose is to discuss the contribution that contemporary Jungian analysis might make to the attempt by psychoanalysis to serve historically disenfranchised populations—in particular, African Americans. The dreamer encounters racism in the image of a lion and other beasts. The interpretation takes into account both the archetypal level and the cultural level of the dream. Important concepts are the cultural unconscious and history-residues. The article argues that Jungian analysis—as well as all other varieties of psychoanalysis—will remain ineffective in addressing the concerns of disenfranchised populations until analysts make a serious effort to become culturally knowledgeable.

Over a decade ago, Young-Eisendrath (1987) published an article on the absence of African Americans among Jungian analysts. There remains a conspicuous underrepresentation of African Americans among analysts of all persuasions—and, I would add, among patients. Historically, African

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Americans have been disenfranchised in many ways, including psychoanalytically. To address this issue, I have argued for a multicultural imagination (Adams, 1996) and have called for the desegregation of the White ego (Adams, 1998). For psychoanalysis adequately to serve disenfranchised populations, I maintain that it must effectively engage what I call the *cultural unconscious*.

Jungian analysis is distinctive in the emphasis that it places on the collective unconscious. I believe, however, that it is now necessary to redefine the collective unconscious explicitly to include, in addition to archetypal factors, cultural factors. Fanon (1967) argues that "the collective unconscious is cultural" (p. 188). I would say that the collective unconscious is partly but not wholly cultural. Henderson (1990), who has introduced the concept of the cultural unconscious into Jungian analysis, remarks that much of "what Jung called personal was actually culturally conditioned" (p. 104). I would add that much of what Jung called collective was also culturally conditioned. What I mean by the cultural unconscious is similar to, although not identical with, what Herron (1995) means by the *ethnic unconscious.*

Hardly anyone has conducted any systematic research on the dreams of African Americans. An exception to this rule is Anthony Shafton (1996, in press), who has published an article and written a forthcoming book on the topic. To demonstrate how contemporary Jungian analysis might contribute to the effort to extend psychoanalysis to historically disenfranchised populations—in this case, to African Americans—I shall interpret the dream of an African American woman. I shall interpret the dream first on the archetypal level, then on the cultural level. This is the dream:

> I'm at a carnival with friends. I get lost. We get separated. I can't find my friends. I strike out on my own. I'm looking for my way home but lose my way. I come to a great mansion. I meet a kind man, the owner of the mansion. He's gardening. I'm trying to get to the other side of this huge property. I have to pass up the steps and through the front door of the mansion. On the steps is a huge animal—a lion—blocking my way. I'm afraid. I tell the owner that I'm lost. I tell him that I'm trying to get past. I ask the man, "Could you show me how to get past? Could you ask the animal to move so that I can go on my way?" The man smiles and moves the animal out of the way so that I can pass. Then the man shows me how to get to the end of his property. There I come to another great mansion. I enter it through the back door. In the mansion huge animals lie all about. They're beasts that are wounded or deformed in some way. In particular, these beasts are propped up against the front door through which I have to pass. The owners of this mansion are a man and a woman. I tell the woman that I have lost my way and ask, "Could I pass?" The woman goes into another room and relays the message to the man. I hear him ask, "Why does she want

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> to pass?" The man then gives me a huge stick and says, "Beat the animals out of the way to get through the door." I say, "I do not beat animals!" The man says, "Fine," and leaves me there. The woman reenters the room where I am. I plead with her, "Let . . . me . . . pass." Instead, she locks the door. I become her captive. I'm in prison. It's unbearable. The room is like a cell in a mental institution, with mesh on the windows so that I can't get out.

The Archetypal Level of Interpretation

This is an archetypal dream—that is, one that employs a mythological motif. The dream is a typical initiation dream, or rite of passage dream, that confronts the dreamer with obstacles in her path: first a lion, then beasts. The problem that demands a solution is how to remove these obstacles. This is the task that the dreamer has to perform. The dream is a lion-removing, beast-removing dream.

A Jungian interpretation of this dream would employ what Jung calls *amplification,* which is a comparative, intertextual method. That method would compare the form and content of the dream to the form and content of other texts—for example, myths—in an attempt to identify parallels. The method is identical with the one that Thompson (1955) employs to classify folklore by motif, or type. What Thompson calls a *type* Jung calls an *archetype*. An amplification of a dream is a classification of it in terms of a dominant archetype. The mythological motif, or folkloric type, in this dream is, in the index that Thompson provides, Type "B16.2.3. Giant lion overcome by hero" (Thompson, 1955, p. 361).

One parallel would be the myth of the labors of Hercules. The very first labor, or task, that Hercules has to perform is to kill the Nemean lion. In the myth, a lion is in Hercules's path, as one is in the dreamer's path. Hercules has to remove the lion. Of course, "the lion in the path" is also a cliché for any obstacle. For example, the economic historian Rostow (1971) employs that very phrase—"the lion in the path"—in a discussion of what he calls "the problem of dynamic equilibrium" (p. 17).

Images of Hercules depict him wearing the skin of the Nemean lion as a cloak, with the head of the lion as a hood, and carrying a club. Graves (1955) describes the Nemean lion as "an enormous beast with a pelt proof against iron, bronze, and stone" (p. 103). He recounts the first labor of Hercules (or Heracles) as follows:

> Heracles visited Mount Tretus, and presently descried the lion coming back to its lair, bespattered with blood from the day's slaughter. He shot a flight of arrows at it, but they rebounded harmlessly from the thick pelt, and the lion licked its chops, yawning. Next, he used his sword, which bent as though made of lead; finally he heaved up his club and dealt the lion such a blow on the

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> muzzle that it entered its double-mouthed cave, shaking its head—not for pain, however, but because of the singing in its ears. Heracles, with a rueful glance at his shattered club, then netted one entrance of the cave, and went in by the other. Aware now that the monster was proof against all weapons, he began to wrestle with it. The lion bit off one of his fingers; but, holding its head in chancery, Heracles squeezed hard until it choked to death. (pp. 103–104)

The effort to kill the lion with weapons, including the club, is an exercise in futility. Hercules finally realizes that he must grapple the lion and throttle it. He can remove the lion in his path only by hand-to-paw or hand-to-jaw combat. Jung (1984) notes that "in the hero myth, in the supreme struggle, the hero has to fight with his bare hands, even his usual weapon fails him" (p. 595).

Jung (1997) says that "when a modern patient dreams of a lion," the image is archetypal: "It does not mean any particular lion, it is mythological." Such a lion has "all the old mythological qualities, which are very unlike the lion as a zoological specimen." In the zoo, the lion "is anything but royal" (p. 488). Jung amplifies the image mythologically:

> The lion expressing the idea of power is really the oldest form of the symbol. Many primitive tribes called the chief the lion of the tribe; the Lion of Judah meant the powerful man Judah. Then there is the myth of Samson who killed the lion. And the kings of Babylon and Assyria were represented as lion-killers, even stronger than lions—super-lions, so a king wore a lion's skin, as the King of Abyssinia still wears a crown made from a lion's mane, in order to express this supreme power. (p. 497)

Thus, according to Jung, the lion is an image of the archetype of power—as in the expression "king of beasts."

In a recent book on dream animals (Hillman & McLean, 1997), Hillman discusses the power of the lion in the animal kingdom, but he also says: "There can be no single interpretation of the dream lion." An accurate interpretation requires attentive observation of the specific image of the lion in the immediate context of the dream. "Whether escaped, wounded, appearing unexpectedly, lazing, crouching as if to spring," Hillman notes, "it is always displaying itself in a scene and bringing a mood." A dream lion is an imaginal lion: "It is a lion *inside an image,* and it is this image as a whole that transmits to our consciousness the lion" (p. 63). In the dream of the African American woman, the scene is an obstacle course, and the mood is fear. As the dreamer imagines this specific dream lion, it is blocking her way. What the image transmits to the consciousness of the dreamer is blockage.

The dreamer encounters two obstacles. Archetypally, she has to perform a heroic labor, or task. A man removes the first obstacle, the lion

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in her path. The dreamer, who is afraid, does not—or does not have to—remove this obstacle. She does, however, evidently have to remove the second obstacle. Another man offers her a huge stick with which she might remove the beasts from her path, but she rejects the weapon. The dreamer refuses the solution that the man offers to the problem. In contrast to Hercules, who tries various weapons, including a club—but to no avail—and only then rejects as impractical those possible solutions to the problem, and thus, by trial and error, discovers the actual, effective solution, the dreamer refuses even to entertain the possibility that a huge stick comparable to a herculean club might be the practical solution. Apparently this dreamer believes that it would be excessively violent, abusively cruel for her to beat the beasts from her path. I would say that the ego of the dreamer has a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) attitude toward the archetypal beasts of the collective unconscious.

In this respect, a Jungian interpretation would emphasize what Jung calls *compensation*. According to Jung, the basic function of the unconscious in dreams is not to fulfill wishes but to compensate attitudes—those of the ego. The attitudes of the ego are partial, prejudicial, and discriminatory—even, at the extreme, utterly defective. In dreams, the unconscious compensates these attitudes by presenting to the ego potentially valuable alternative perspectives that have been excluded from consideration (repressed, dissociated, ignored, or neglected) or that have been unknown for whatever reason and therefore unlived. If the ego is receptive rather than defensive, it may entertain and evaluate these alternative perspectives and then decide whether to accept, reject, or otherwise engage them.

The huge stick is an attempt at compensation for a "don't be cruel" attitude, but the ego of this dreamer is unconditionally resistant. The offer is apparently inconsistent with an animal rights attitude that the ego rigidly and righteously maintains, even if the huge stick might enable the dreamer to remove the beasts that block her way. An ego with a different, more flexible attitude would be prepared—in fact, would be determined—to employ any means at its disposal. In this instance, the unconscious poses a means–ends question. The real labor, or task, of this dreamer is seriously to consider various options, various strategies and tactics, for the removal of the beasts from her path.

Active Imagination and Guided Affective Imagery

For example, the dreamer might employ what Jung calls the method of *active imagination*. Active imagination is a serious discipline that de-

mands strict adherence to an “as if” ontology, which assumes that images from the unconscious are spontaneously emergent autonomous realities. Some of these images may be anthropomorphic; others, theriomorphic. That is, some images are personifications; others, animalizations. To regard the imagination as reality is to regard these personifications as if they were real persons, these animalizations as if they were real animals—or even as if they were animals with communicative abilities equal to those of persons. When one practices active imagination, one regards the images as if they were realities just as real as any other reality. One may then engage these images in various ways.

The dreamer might simply observe the beasts—and not immediately interpret them. Hillman (1979) says of animals in dreams: “To find out who they are and what they are doing there in the dream, we must first of all watch the image and pay less attention to our own reactions to it” (p. 148). The dreamer might then attempt to engage the beasts in a conversation, in a version of what Watkins (1986) calls “imaginal dialogues.” She might directly address them. She might ask them why they are blocking her way. The answer that the beasts provide to this question might indicate to the dreamer how she could remove them from her path. Perhaps the beasts do not intend to block her way; perhaps, as the dream says, they are just propped up against the door. Perhaps these beasts that lie about are so wounded or deformed that they cannot otherwise stand up. Perhaps they are just props. The dreamer might inform the beasts that she wants to pass and that she does not want to beat them and ask them how she might remove them from her path. Rather than beating the beasts with a huge stick, which the dreamer evidently cannot imagine, could she imagine feeding them, training them, taming them, or capturing and caging them? Because the beasts are wounded or deformed, could the dreamer imagine treating and curing them or reforming them? Hillman (1979) says that to be a hero like Hercules is to have an ego that “insists on a reality that it can grapple with, aim an arrow at, or bash with a club” (p. 115). There are many other ways besides the herculean to be heroic. There are many ways, not just one, to remove a beast. One does not necessarily have to beat a beast to death.

The method of active imagination is similar to, although by no means identical with, what Leuner (1984) calls the method of *guided affective imagery*. Leuner provides a series of 12 images that he has deliberately selected (not that the unconscious has spontaneously produced) and then guides patients through the series, image by image, so that they may affectively engage the images. The eighth image in the series is

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a lion. Leuner notes that aggression by an animal trainer against wild animals "scarcely leads to their becoming tame" (Leuner, 1984, p. 96). Some patients, he says, have an immediate tendency aggressively to attack or even kill an image. In contrast, he mentions with approval "the procedure of the trainer who attempts to put the animals in a friendly mood and make them affectionate, first of all, by feeding them" (Leuner, 1984, p. 96). Leuner encourages patients to feed the image enough to satiate it. Thus he says to patients:

> Please, imagine (for example in the case of the lion) that I have gotten a big pile of pieces of fresh meat for you, which are now lying next to you. You throw them to the lion one after another and observe carefully whether it eats them and how it reacts to this subsequently. The only important thing is to feed him a lot, for the time being more than you think is necessary for him to be totally satiated. Always offer him another piece, there is plenty available. (Leuner, 1984, p. 96)

The result of this exercise is that the image "becomes full, tired, and usually soon lies down to sleep, as the creature does in real life." The apparently hostile image becomes docile, and the patient "can approach it and even stroke it" (Leuner, 1984, p. 98).

Jung differs from Leuner in that he respects the autonomy—I might say, the integrity—of the unconscious. He never provides images for the patient; nor does he guide the patient through them. In contrast to guided affective imagery, active imagination relies exclusively on the spontaneous emergence of images from the unconscious, depends entirely on the patient to engage them, and refrains from any prior assumption about the most effective means for the patient to accomplish any end. For example, Jung does not privilege feeding over any other strategy or tactic that a patient might employ. One cannot theoretically conclude in advance what an imaginally correct relation to the image might be. One can only hope to discover that experientially through the process of active imagination.

Ultimately, a Jungian interpretation would emphasize how the dreamer imagines the situation—and how she might reimagine it. At the end of the dream, the door is locked and the dreamer is stuck. Jung (1931/1966) notes that this is an archetypal experience:

> In the majority of my cases the resources of the conscious mind are exhausted (or, in ordinary English, they are "stuck"). It is chiefly this fact that forces me to look for hidden possibilities. For I do not know what to say to the patient when he asks me, "What do you advise? What shall I do?" I don't know either. I only know one thing: when my conscious mind no longer sees any possible road ahead and consequently gets stuck, my unconscious psyche will react to the unbearable standstill.

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> This "getting stuck" is a psychic occurrence so often repeated during the course of human history that it has become the theme of many myths and fairytales. We are told of the Open sesame! to the locked door, or of some helpful animal who finds the hidden way. In other words, getting stuck is a typical event which, in the course of time, has evoked typical reactions and compensations. (pp. 41–42)

When a patient gets stuck and has no answer to a question, the analyst offers no advice about what the patient should do, for the analyst knows no more, perhaps even less, than the patient; it is the unconscious—or the imagination—that may provide a compensatory answer. For example, could this dreamer imagine an "Open sesame" that would unlock her door? Could she imagine the animals helping her find her way?

The Cultural Level of Interpretation

I shall now interpret the dream of the African American woman in a way that attempts to address the cultural level. On that level, the ethnicity of the dreamer may assume special relevance. In this instance, I believe that it does. The dreamer is a woman with both a personal and academic research interest in African American culture. Like many other African Americans she has had to confront various obstacles, including the obstacle of racism. She has encountered racists whom she has experienced as beastly obstacles in her path. She is also, however, appreciative of nonracists who sometimes have either removed obstacles from her path or offered her a means to that end (whether she has always accepted the offer or not).

Although the dreamer now lives and works in the North, she was born and raised in the South. Racism, of course, is hardly unique to the South; it has been and continues to be a national, not just a regional, issue in America. In the South, however, prejudice and discrimination against African Americans have historically had a distinctive style that I would call an inequality etiquette, which was both a cause and an effect of slavery and segregation. The purpose of this etiquette was to maintain White supremacy and to keep African Americans "in their place." Anyone, Black or White, who has been born and raised in the South is intimately familiar with this etiquette, which has existed to preserve White superiority and Black inferiority. This etiquette is different from and, in some ways, even more perniciously insidious than, say, "Jim Crow" laws, for it is a tacit code of conduct that employs manners to sustain a system of inequality.

A Jungian interpretation on the cultural level, I would argue, has to take this inequality etiquette into account, for certain images in the dream

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are allusions to it. The dreamer approaches and enters two mansions. She passes through the first mansion after a man removes the lion from her path. She wishes to pass through the second mansion, and a man offers her a possible means to that end, but she rejects the offer. The dreamer interpreted the two mansions as two educational institutions that she had, in fact, approached and entered. She had passed through—that is, graduated from—the first institution, in spite of obstacles that she had interpreted as racist. She credited a White man with having removed those obstacles for her. One of those obstacles was a White woman who had given her low grades and who, the dreamer believed, had tried to prevent not only her graduation from the first institution but also her admission to the second institution (the White woman had declined to write a letter of recommendation for the dreamer). According to the dreamer, this White woman had stood in her way exactly like the lion in the dream. At the time of the dream, the dreamer had again encountered obstacles, which she had again interpreted as racist, to graduating from the second institution. Another White man had offered advice as to how she might remove those obstacles, but she had rejected it. As she had interpreted the situation, another White woman had finally prevented her from graduating from the second institution. The dilemma of the dreamer, whose way is first lost and then blocked, is how, as African American culture expresses it, to make "a way out of no-way" (Hyde, 1998, pp. 277–278).

The archetypal interpretation of this dream is accurate as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. To go further would be to interpret the dream on the cultural level—in this instance, in the context of the inequality etiquette and what I would call a master–slave dynamic. In this respect, the images of the mansions are, I believe, allusions to a historically residual plantation mentality. There are not only day-residues in dreams but also what I would call *history-residues*. Historically, the mansion was the "Big House" of the master, which the slave might approach and enter only under certain conditions. In accordance with the etiquette of the South, anyone who approached and entered the front door of the mansion was on a level of equality with the master. The slave, ostensibly inferior to the superior master, had to approach and enter by the back door. Even after slavery, during segregation, this was still the etiquette: Whites through the front door, Blacks through the back door. Blacks who attempted to enter through the front door would commit a breach of manners, a gross transgression of the inequality etiquette. Whites would regard them not as properly submissive or servile but as presumptuously impertinent or "up-

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pity." That the dreamer enters the first mansion (or educational institution) through the front door but enters the second through the back door indicates that she experiences the persistence of a plantation mentality, an "if you're Black, get back" inequality etiquette, a master–slave dynamic.

This mentality, this etiquette, and this dynamic ultimately constitute a certain psychic reality that is just as much of an obstacle as the external reality of racism. Psychic reality can enslave, segregate, and disenfranchise one just as much as any external reality can. The partial, prejudicial, and discriminatory attitudes of one's own ego can block one just as much as another person's actions, racist or otherwise, can. One's defensive ego can be one's own worst obstacle. One may arbitrarily and peremptorily abjure the very means that would enable one to accomplish a necessary end. In contrast to the dreamer, when Rosa Parks refuses to ride the bus in the back seat, she refuses, in effect, to enter the mansion through the back door. Parks epitomizes the African American who has an ego with a consciously "up front," that is, confronting, attitude. Because Parks has an unenslaved, desegregated ego, she has an emancipated, integrated, reenfranchised psychic reality.

The Pragmatics of the Imagination

Some dreams provide a solution to a problem; others present a problem and leave it to the dreamer to ponder a possible solution. The dream of the African American woman leaves her to discover the means to an end: how she might most effectively remove the beasts from her path. In African American culture, Martin Luther King Jr. proposed some solutions to this problem: civil disobedience, passive resistance, direct action, or demonstrative protest; Malcolm X proposed another solution in the phrase "by any means necessary." The SPCA attitude of the dreamer would seem to be similar to the nonviolent position of Martin Luther King Jr., rather than to the (if necessary) violent position of Malcolm X. Cruelty is a paradoxical notion; as in Shakespeare, sometimes one has to be cruel in order to be kind. Or, as with Malcolm X, sometimes one has to be violent in order to be just. As Malcolm X (1965) says,

> I don't speak against sincere, well-meaning, good white people. I have learned that there *are* some. I have learned that not all white people are racists. I am speaking against and my fight is against the white *racists*. I firmly believe that Negroes have the right to fight against these racists, by any means that are necessary. (p. 373)

Thus, in contrast to the dreamer, Malcolm X refuses to practice prior restraint or renounce any available means, including violence, that might accomplish the ends of justice.

I would note that as the dreamer finally experiences the situation, it seems to her not difficult but impossible: She is in a prison or a mental institution, as if her attitudes and actions were criminal or insane. (Perhaps for an African American woman slavery is not the only peculiar institution.) Not only is the door of opportunity blocked; now it is also locked. To pass, she would not only have to remove the beasts but also unlock the door. By what means might she accomplish this end? A passkey? (That is, a master key rather than a slave key?) Perhaps a password? In this respect, the words that she speaks in a final effort to pass constitute a plea—and it is precisely when she pleads that the woman in the dream locks the door. Special pleading is apparently not the means to the end. Perhaps if the dreamer were more articulate, more eloquent, more logically and rhetorically persuasive, more argumentatively assertive, even aggressive—I would say, more *imaginative*—she could speak the words necessary to pass.

It is curious that the dream does not include an answer to the question, "Why does she want to pass?" This omission would seem to pose a motivational challenge for further reflection by the dreamer. I would also note that "passing"—as in the expression "passing for White"—is a word fraught with considerable historical anguish in the cultural unconscious of African Americans. As Ginsberg (1996) says

> The genealogy of the term *passing* in American history associates it with the discourse of racial difference and especially with the assumption of a fraudulent "white" identity by an individual culturally and legally defined as "Negro" or black by virtue of a percentage of African ancestry. As the term metaphorically implies, such an individual crossed or passed through a racial line or boundary—indeed *trespassed*—to assume a new identity, escaping the subordination and oppression accompanying one identity and accessing the privileges and status of the other. (pp. 2–3)

In this rite of *passage* dream, the dreamer has to contend with her cultural and personal *past,* get *past* obstacles that she interprets as racist, *pass* her courses at the two educational institutions, and in the process preserve and affirm her African American identity instead of *passing* for White.

This dream is about what I would call the *pragmatics of the imagination*. In this respect, one might say that Martin Luther King Jr. was a moralist and Malcolm X a pragmatist. Martin Luther King Jr. emphasized what was good or right (at least as Jesus and Gandhi defined it); Malcolm

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X emphasized what was necessary. Of course, Martin Luther King Jr. was also pragmatic to the extent that he believed that the prospect of violent confrontation would compromise the moral authority—or what he calls the "soul force" (King, 1971, p. 348)—of the civil rights movement and provoke racist repercussions that might defeat the very purpose of the movement. Malcolm X seems more pragmatic—and more radical—because he refuses to repudiate any means that might be necessary, but he is also moral to the extent that the end that he endeavors to accomplish is justice.

Of what potential value are Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X to the dreamer? What might the cultural level add to the archetypal level in this case? Contemporary analysts emphasize empathy and—with a dreamer such as this, for whom racism is such an important issue—sensitivity to significant differences in ethnic experience between analyst and dreamer. An empathic and sensitive regard by the analyst for the dreamer as a member of a specific ethnic group is necessary in such a case. Whether it is also sufficient is another matter. It is not enough for an analyst, especially one who is not a member of the same ethnic group as the dreamer, merely to have an empathic and sensitive attitude. Ideally, what such a case requires is an analyst with substantial knowledge of the specific cultural unconscious germane to the case. An analyst who is a member of a different ethnic group will not, of course, have had the same cultural experience as the dreamer. Such an analyst may, however, even in the absence of that experience, acquire considerable knowledge of the cultural unconscious of the ethnic group of which the dreamer is a member. No analytic institutes with which I am familiar, whether they be in the Freudian tradition or the Jungian tradition, offer courses in the content of specific contemporary cultures. This seems to me an unfortunate state of affairs. Although I have advocated that Jungian institutes consider offering such courses—for example, "Cultural Sources of the African American Psyche" (Adams, 1997)—at present analysts from all of the various persuasions have to obtain pertinent cultural knowledge by other means.

An analyst who had extensive knowledge of African American culture would be at a distinct advantage over an analyst who had only an empathic and sensitive attitude toward this particular dreamer. Such cultural knowledge would be an invaluable resource for the analyst in the effort to enable the dreamer effectively to engage the means–ends problem. The dreamer has a characterological resistance to a certain means (the huge stick) that the dream presents to her and that she experiences and rejects as a violent, or cruel, solution. A culturally knowledgeable analyst

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would be in a position to cite the precedents of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X as culture heroes who impressively pondered this very issue and articulated alternative perspectives on it for other African Americans, like the dreamer, to consider seriously. (The only cautionary note that I would add is that the analyst and the dreamer might eventually have to confront the fact that both Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X paid a terrible price for trying to remove the beast of racism from their and our paths. They were both assassinated for their trouble. Hercules may have lost a finger to the Nemean lion, but Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X lost their very lives.)

In the cultural unconscious of African Americans, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X are much more than mere persons or personalities. They are personifications of the African American heroic imagination. The dream leaves the dreamer with a "we shall overcome" African American dilemma: how she might, like those culture heroes Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, imagine the necessary, the appropriate, the viable (and not only the pragmatic but also perhaps, as she might eventually define it, the moral) means by which she might overcome the archetypal and cultural obstacles in her path. This is her heroic task—and, I would add with emphasis, ours as well. We, too, try to imagine how we might overcome obstacles in our path—and one that, so far, in spite of all the means at our disposal, we have been unable to remove is that most obstinate obstacle, the beast of racism.

The Roar of the Inner Lion

Rosen (1994) reports the following dream, which, if not exactly a lion-in-the-path dream, is at least a lion-in-the-door dream. The dreamer was Frank N. McMillan, who in philanthropic appreciation of Jung endowed an academic chair specifically in Jungian psychology at Texas A&M University. McMillan dreamed the dream in 1934 when he was 7 years old:

> My father and I go to the house of one of the negro tenant families for supper. The people there are black and hospitable. After returning to our house and retiring, I awake to see [an enormous] maned lion standing in the door and looking at me with great yellow eyes. I am paralyzed with terror—unable to move or speak. The great lion slowly approaches and licks my face with his huge tongue. The terror is released and I let out a mighty yell that scared my father half to death. (p. 121)

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Not until 40 years later, after McMillan had developed an interest in Jungian analysis, did he finally interpret the dream. "The meal with the black folks (a thing not done in those days)," he says, "was a meeting with and acceptance of my 'shadow"' (pp. 121–122). As McMillan interprets the lion in the door, it is an archetypal image. "When faced and recognized," he says, "he (it) proved to be a powerful and friendly force" (p. 122).

In the dream, a little White boy experiences terror when a lion appears in his door, just as the African American woman experiences fear when a lion appears in her path. The affect is similar in both dreams. In the dream that McMillan recounts, however, the image of the lion spontaneously contacts the ego. Although McMillan says that he "faced and recognized" the lion, the ego (which is "unable to move or speak") does not, in the strict sense, do anything; it is the lion that does something ("slowly approaches and licks my face with his huge tongue"). Perhaps, however, the ego does do something by doing nothing—that is, by not reacting defensively when the image contacts it. The little boy does not react to the lion as if it means to attack him or kill him and eat him, and the result is that it merely approaches and licks him, with affection. When the image affectionately contacts the ego, it releases terror and transfers to the little boy what is, in effect, the power of a lion—"a mighty yell," or roar, by which a son scares a father "half to death." In short, this dream is not a lion-removing dream but a lion-roaring dream.

Sidoli (1998) presents two cases that feature "the archetypal image of a roaring lion" (p. 23). One of the examples is from a dream that employs the metaphor of the lion in the path. The dreamer recounts the conclusion of the dream as follows: "There is a gate leading into the park and as I reach it I see a huge male lion standing on top of it. I feel paralyzed by fear and as the lion roars, I run away" (p. 27). As Sidoli interprets the image, the dreamer has now encountered "the lion inside him," a capacity for power. She reports that the dreamer gradually began to use "his inner lion's potency in his private life," until eventually "his internal lion had roared at his wife," with the result that "he had succeeded in making her shut up, and she had not hit him nor had he needed to hit her" (p. 28). As the image was integrated, the dreamer was empowered. By roaring like a lion, he could finally be effectively assertive in a very vocal but nonviolent way.

After I had completed the interpretation of the dream of the African American woman, the dreamer and I had a conversation that revealed just how difficult it was for her to roar like a lion. The dreamer had now

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entered a third educational institution. She had arranged for a committee to supervise her academic research project on African American culture. She informed me that she was experiencing difficulty with one of the members of her committee. In effect, that member was yet another lion or beast, another obstacle, in her path. She wished to remove that member from her committee. She had discussed the issue with the chair of her committee, and he had agreed to the removal.

By what means, however, might she accomplish this end? The chair of the committee recommended that the member be removed only after the signature of that member had been obtained on a document approving her research proposal. I said, "So the chair of your committee is an archetypal trickster. He's saying that you don't have to be a hero like Hercules but can be a hero like Hermes or Mercury. You could be slippery like quick-silver." She replied, "But that would be *cruel*!" I could not believe my ears. There, suddenly, in her very own words, was the SPCA attitude of the ego. She was reluctant, perhaps unable, to do what might be necessary. For her, it was a moral, not simply a pragmatic, issue. "I was raised in the church," she remonstrated. "My family was very involved in the church." That is, like the herculean solution, a hermetic or mercurial solution would be "un-Christian," "immoral"—and therefore unimaginable.

Had I been more culturally knowledgeable, I could have invoked, instead of Hermes or Mercury, an African American trickster who just might have done the trick in this instance—that is, a trickster who might have convinced the dreamer that trickery is not necessarily synonymous with cruelty—or that tricks, even when cruel, are sometimes necessary. For example, I could have cited "Aunt Nancy," who is homonymically a female version of "Ananse," a male Ashanti trickster (Hyde, 1998, p. 338). Perhaps a mention of this trickster from African American culture would have enabled the African American woman to imagine that she, too, could be tricky when need be. In fact, in one tale Ananse tricks a lion. Rather than fight the lion, Ananse scares the lion with a song. Ananse sings, "I killed ten thousand lions yesterday" and asks the lion, "What do you think about ten today?" (Abrahams, 1985, p. 72). With this lyrical hyperbole, Ananse intimidates the lion into going away and never coming back.

As the dreamer and I continued to discuss the means–ends problem, she said that she would prefer that the chair of her committee remove the member for her. Only if he would not do that would she then write a letter to the member. She said that she could not imagine having a conversation with the member, either in person or even over the telephone, to remove the member from her committee. Then she suddenly clutched her throat

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with her hand and said, "The words would just not come out. I would not be able to speak." Ironically, the dreamer did finally apply the herculean solution—but to herself—and by that means she symptomatically stifled the words (or choked the roar) of her own inner lion. In that one involuntary gesture, that one symptom, she summarized her entire situation. When it came to removing obstacles, racist or otherwise, she was her own worst obstacle. It was she—and no one else—who finally was unwilling or unable to do what might be necessary: roar like a lion to get her own way.

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