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FROM THE EDITOR’S LAPTOP

Welcome to Volume 6 of The Independent Scholar (TIS), the open access peer-reviewed online journal of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS).

The 2019 NCIS Conference at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) “Making Connections, Meeting Challenges” has given us the opportunity to present a volume of conference papers, this one entitled “Meeting Challenges.” Another volume of conference papers – provisionally (and predictably) titled “Making Connections” – is currently underway. This present number consists of four critical essays as well as the winner and runner-up essays of the 2019 Elizabeth Eisenstein Essay Prize, plus six book reviews. The articles feature Karima Amer’s contribution to the historiography of psychoanalysis in which she foregrounds the role of Théodore Flournoy; Renee Elizabeth Neely’s paper on the Marrons of the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia and North Carolina; Amanda Haste’s study of the challenges faced by the British expatriate colony in nineteenth-century Marseille; and Annie Rehill’s piece on resistance and change among the Metis of Canada.

TIS remains a highly collaborative enterprise. Alongside myself, Joan Cunningham as STEM Editor and Amanda J. Haste as Humanities Editor, the TIS Editorial Board now has five Associate Editors, all with their own areas of expertise, to which we were recently delighted to welcome our new Associate Editor Dr Annie Rehill. Our small army of anonymous peer reviewers toil away in obscurity. As to their identity, only their editors (as it was once said about hairdressers) know for sure[...] Each paper printed is subjected to at least two peer reviews, so without their work, there would be nothing to fill the pages of this journal.

The Editorial Board meets regularly, and have recently made several major decisions concerning the future of TIS: we will be asking authors to submit their manuscripts formatted to the house style; we are currently looking at introducing an automated submissions system; and we will soon be standardizing the referencing style to provide stylistic consistency for the journal. Final decisions on the latter two will be made over the coming months, so in the meantime authors should submit according to the guidelines in force at https://www.ncis.org/submission-guidelines.

We invite NCIS members to submit manuscripts to tis@ncis.org. NCIS authors are also invited to submit their books for reviews which will appear both online (with the author having the opportunity to respond to the review) and in the next TIS.

Shelby Shapiro, Ph.D.
General Editor, TIS
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Karima Amer (Ph.D., University of Paris Diderot, Paris, France) is a psychopathology and psychoanalysis historian whose research focuses on the unconscious in the nineteenth century and on the history of Swiss psychoanalysis and the appearance of a mytho-poetic unconscious. Dr. Amer’s research on Swiss psychoanalysts who, concerned with their independence and their freedom of thought, defend a psychoanalysis stripped of any sexual etiology sits alongside her work on exile and migration.

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HISTORIOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES IN UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS: CONNECTING FLOURNOY, FREUD, JUNG AND THE CREATIVE UNCONSCIOUS

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Abstract

This paper presents a historiographic challenge pertaining to the famous rupture between Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, which came about because of controversies surrounding occultism and the research of Swiss psychoanalyst Théodore Flournoy into mediumistic phenomena. Without focusing on the historiographic controversies surrounding Freud and Jung themselves, this study examines the view of the unconscious mind which prevailed in the “Genevan school” to which Flournoy belonged, demonstrating not only that Flournoy’s was a seminal scientific discovery, but also that he was particularly significant with respect to Freud. This finding runs counter to the official French historiography, which does not recognize the true significance of Flournoy’s work on hypnosis and suggestion. Even though Flournoy and Freud came to convergent hypotheses in many aspects until 1900, Flournoy’s creative unconscious differs fundamentally from that of Freud. Taking the intellectual proximity of Jung and Flournoy as a starting point, it becomes clear that the expressed divergences result less from a broadening of the Freudian concept of the libido than from a new and subversive approach to psychoses and their relationship with madness. Evidence of this approach is derived from statements made by Flournoy on subliminal stories produced by the creative imagination.

Keywords: Freud; Jung; Flournoy; history of psychoanalysis; mythopoetic; cryptomnesia; mediumnity; hypnosis; creative unconscious; dream theory

INTRODUCTION

Because the contribution made by Swiss psychologist Théodore Flournoy (1854–1920) to the discovery of the unconscious mind has not been widely acknowledged, this article examines that discovery through a re-reading of the tensions between Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), which without doubt influenced the premises of Jungian analytic psychology. Like Jung, Flournoy found parallels between several productions—somnambulism, early dementia. storytelling—and the creative imagination, in a continuous analogy with the paradigm of dreams. It was at the Munich Congress, where the rift between Jung and Freud became obvious, that Jung distinguished his thinking from that of Freud on two points: the creative imagination and the fact that psychosis brings out mythical elements.
Both Flournoy and Jung stressed the potential of the psyche to heal the patient. This applies across the psychic productions of mediumnity, psychosis, storytelling, and early onset dementia, because all of these conditions or activities involve the mobilization of the imaginary creation and its theatralization. Through this creative power of the unconscious mind, human experiences, from the occult to psychosis, share the same mobilization of the imaginary creation and its theatralization. This is identical to the function which links Flournoy's medium Hélène Smith with Jung's medium Hélène Preiswerk, and also with those diagnosed as suffering from early onset dementia. These latter patients also undergo a dramatic production of imaginary characters (beyond the link with projection, or the link between theatralization and projection), and both Flournoy and Jung thought that this constituted a stage in their future recovery.

Taking the intellectual proximity of Jung and Flournoy as a starting point, this study begins with a brief review of the origin of the concept of an unconscious mind, and considers the contemporaneous ideas about hysteria and dream theory of Janet, Freud, Jung, and Flournoy. It becomes clear that the expressed divergences result less from a broadening of the Freudian concept of the libido than from a new and subversive approach to psychoses, in their relationship with madness. Evidence of this finding derives from the statements made by Flournoy on subliminal stories produced by the creative imagination. This analysis concludes by considering Flournoy's legacy and parallels between him and Jung. Jung's questioning of the place of mythology, morals, and religion undeniably places him closer to Flournoy than to Freud.

CONTEMPORANEOUS THOUGHT ON THE UNCONSCIOUS

The genealogy of the concept of the unconscious mind before Freud contextualizes the work in French-speaking Switzerland, and led to the discovery of a subliminal, creative and mythopoetic unconscious at the end of the nineteenth century. Modern approaches to the unconscious date from the heart of the nineteenth century, with the convergence of three sources: the philosophical, the psychophysiological, and the psychopathological. The latter is the most visible part of this story and explores the phenomena of dual personality, hysteria, and neuroses through those “strange states of conscience” of hypnosis and somnambulism.¹

Pierre Janet’s Automatism

In an age when the phenomena of hypnosis and dual personality were in vogue, the French psychologist Pierre Janet (1859–1947), a contemporary of Freud, thought of these as the expression of subconscious phenomena. In his 1889 thesis, L’Automatisme psychologique (p automatism), Janet studied what were then called “hysterical women,” using hypnosis as an experimental method. He highlighted activities that he qualified as inferior or automatic, in normal subjects usually inhibited by the superior functions. Janet was interested in phenomena which cannot be controlled by the subject: for example, the way in which hypnotized people and spirit mediums wrote texts, while apparently unaware, in an automatic fashion. For him, these facts could not be reduced to psychological causes. This was contrary to the thoughts of Théodule Ribot (1839–1916), the founder of psychology in France, and of Jean Martin Charcot (1825–1893), with whom Janet studied. However, such examples of automatic writing do have a psychological character in that they are accompanied by a rudimentary form of consciousness. Janet thus talked about subconscious phenomena, meaning situated below consciousness, and this opened up the possibility which led to much discussion, at the time, of the idea of a psychological subconscious.

For Janet, the conscious mind of hysterics resulted from subjects’ somewhat congenital psychological weakness, was exacerbated by emotional shocks suffered over the course of a lifetime. Such a mind could contain and synthesize only a small number of mental states. The “shrinking of the field of consciousness,” as he called it, explains the dissociation of the self which can lead to the formation of a dual personality.² To summarize, the subconscious to which Janet referred is the site of expression of a consciousness which is inferior and pathological. Psychologists, including Janet, who claimed priority over Freud, were thus still far from considering possible explanations that were as radically new as was the unconscious according to Freud. Indeed, for Freud, the unconscious mind is a constituent of all human psyches, whether normal or pathological.

¹ I explore these issues more fully in Le Coq-Héron, n° 218, 2014, pp. 46-61; and in The Independent Scholar, vol. 5 (2019).
**Freud’s Repressed Unconscious**

At the end of the nineteenth century, Freud and Janet were perceived as researchers and therapists and were engaged in researching the psychology of hysteria and later of *psychasthénie*, or mental strain, and of obsessive-compulsive disorder. This meant they often cited each other in their publications. However, from this point onward, each developed different concepts of phenomena beyond the conscious mind. From 1895, Freud (also a student of Charcot) proposed a form of hysteria resulting from defense mechanisms rather than from psychological weakness; this led him to formulate the hypothesis of an unconscious mind, which cannot become conscious because it is repressed. Indeed, in 1895 Freud’s book *Studies on Hysteria* was published, and it was the problem of hysteria which, through Jean Martin Charcot, Josef Breuer, and Anna O., and maybe also through Janet’s *Psychological Automatism*, that set Freud on the road to his later discoveries.

In 1896, Freud proposed a general theory of neuroses as opposed to neuroses in their true sense. For him, neurasthenia and anxiety disorders originated in the patient’s sex life, and psychoneuroses (hysteria and obsessive-compulsive disorder), were linked to sexual trauma, real or imagined, in early childhood. Freud then applied to dreams the model he had devised for hysteria, and to what we now call *actes manqués* (Freudian slips) the symbolic realizations of unconscious desires. This led to very hot debate between Freud and Swiss psychologists Flournoy, Edouard Claparède, Alphonse Maeder, and Jung. Nevertheless, the current study argues that these different theorizations of the world of dreams were not at the center of the theoretical rifts between Jung and Freud. Freud’s 1900 “Interpretation of Dreams” and his 1901 “Psychopathology of Everyday Life” unquestionably represent a reconsideration of the primacy of the consciousness in classical philosophies. It is because thereafter the subject appeared divided that Freud, starting in 1900, could state that “the unconscious is the psyche itself and its essential reality.” Jung, on the other hand, relied on two models: Janet’s for the understanding of psychopathology, and Flournoy’s for the subconscious elaboration of creative fantasies.

**Flournoy’s Unrepressed Subconscious**

Flournoy belonged to the Society of Psychic Studies in Geneva and studied spirit and parapsychological phenomena. He developed his notion of the subconscious in situating himself more toward the thinking of Frederick Myers (1843–1901) and his theory of the subliminal self in a dynamic creative conception of the subconscious, than toward that of Pierre Janet, who attributed a passive and automatic dimension to the subconscious. Even so, Flournoy rejected the metaphysics associated with Myers’ work, and differed from him on certain points. Flournoy considered that behind the potentialities of certain mediums lie only normal mechanisms, including dream work. As a result of his studies, he postulated the efficacy of a subliminal unconscious mind, which differs from Freud’s unconscious mind through its compensatory cryptomnesic and, above all, mythopoetic dimensions.

**DISCUSSION**

Even if Flournoy’s propositions are close to Freud’s in many respects, the fact is that Flournoy does not mention repression, or the return to repression, through which Freud devised dynamic therapeutics. Flournoy only mentions cryptomnesia, a forgotten memory that returns without being recognized as such by the subject, who believes it is something new and original. Cryptomnesia is, thus, a way of finding the path of consciousness in subliminal productions. The remark of Flournoy’s grandson, Olivier, also a psychoanalyst, is extremely illuminating in this respect: he states that Théodore Flournoy described cryptomnesia at the same time as Freud was describing infantile amnesia. Indeed, for Olivier Flournoy, it is a question of showing that two unconscious personalities are developing at the same time: one subliminal in reference to the unconscious work of cryptomnesia, and the other dynamic in reference to repression.

**Flournoy, Freud and the Dream**

In Flournoy’s work, dreams constitute a real paradigm of understanding of mediumistic phenomena. As Pierre Bovet points out in an homage to Flournoy, his work is situated at the boundaries of three different fields of research: medical, metaphysical, and theological. Freud’s “Interpretation of Dreams” (1900) was published at the same time as the book which made Flournoy famous, *From India to the Planet Mars*, in which Flournoy traces the mediumistic potentialities of Hélène Smith, the young woman with whom he worked, while always closely relating this to dream work. He put forward

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novel ideas on the connections between médiumnity and madness: such concepts were groundbreaking because they deviated from the prevailing discourse, which for example envisaged mediumnic productions based on Janet’s pathological model of automatism. In fact, Flournoy never for a moment considered the “subliminal creations” of Hélène Smith to be pathological. The teleological and compensatory value of these subliminal productions, that we also find in his ideas about dreams and their interpretation, leads to a position of the emancipation of mediumnity, with regard to the pathology subscribed to by William James, Frederick Myers, and their disciples. Additionally, this same teleological and compensatory value leads to a reconciliation of mediumistic productions with dream-like constructions, in a clear affiliation with Frederick Myers, who above all developed knowledge about dreams’ premonition powers. Indeed, Myers acknowledged that dreams were related to mental layers about which the conscious mind no longer knows anything. Faced with dreams, as he was faced with psychosis, hysteria, hypnosis, genius, and sleep, Myers emphasized their positive aspects and refused to assimilate them into a particular degeneration or to consider them primitive remains.

In spite of the incoherence of dreams, Myers felt that they work on images which are the same as those which inspire genius. They do not simply copy lost memories, but actually “reason” on buried facts of the past. Myers put sleep, possession, ecstasy, and dreams on the same level, considering them all to contain inexplicable psychic powers. He thus emphasized the metaphorical role of dreams, and the power of their symbolism.

In his 1896 “Notice sur le laboratoire,” Flournoy states that dreams are particularly important for psychological research, and in 1899 he wrote the following statement in the *Revue Philosophique*:

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En somme, ce que l’automatisme traduit au dehors [...] c’est une sorte de petit roman, élaboré subliminalement au moyen des données de la mémoire et de la perception, sous l’impulsion d’un état émotif plus ou moins intense, et avec l’aide de cette curieuse faculté de dramatisation et de personnification que, sans sortir de la vie quotidienne ordinaire, chacun peut y voir à l’œuvre dans le phénomène du rêve.
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[To put it simply, what automatism expresses outwardly [...] is a sort of short novel developed subliminally through the information stored in the memory and the perception, driven by somewhat intense emotional state, and with the aid of this curious faculty of dramatization and personification in which, without leaving the context of ordinary everyday life, everyone can find themselves involved through the phenomenon of dreams.]

And, still in 1899, during a course notated by Pierre Bovet, Flournoy cites the studies on hysteria by Freud and Breuer. It is thus quite understandable that in 1903, Flournoy felt the need to write a review of Freud’s “Interpretation of Dreams” in the *Archives of Psychology*, and his reservations about Freud’s manner of interpreting dreams would later be reflected in the amendments and modifications of Freudian theory.

**Freud versus Jung – And the Legacy of Flournoy**

It is worth remembering that when Jung met Freud, he already held a conception of the unconscious and of the psyche that he had inherited from Flournoy, Janet, and all those who had worked on the subconscious. This was a “subliminal” legacy about which we must ask ourselves whether Flournoy had not influenced the development of Jung’s work and contributed to the differences between Jung and Freud, given the silence which surrounded the discoveries in Geneva concerning the mythopoetic unconscious. Or indeed whether, in the end, the controversies surrounding the libido were not simply an “epiphenomenon” of much deeper divergences, related to the place both Freud and Jung assigned to mythology, and susceptible to questioning Freudian psychoanalysis on a more fundamental level in its relationship with the unconscious. Indeed, Flournoy’s cautiousness when faced with the Romanesque creations of “his” medium, Hélène

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Smith, show that at the heart of his discovery is a questioning of the place of mythology, morals, and religion which undeniably places him closer to Jung than to Freud.

CONCLUSION

For both Flournoy and Jung, the emphasis is on the creative potential of the psyche to lead to a patient’s healing. This applies across the psychic productions of mediumnity, psychosis, storytelling, and early onset dementia, because all of these conditions or activities involve the mobilization of the imaginary creation and its theatricalization. For both Jung and Flournoy, the creative potential of the psyche is directly related to dream work. In this respect, Jung’s thinking is distinguished from that of Freud on two points: the creative imagination and the fact that psychosis brings out mythical elements. Jung thought of the imagined blossoming, the characters, and theatricalization as a phase in the healing process, a journey through insanity which was necessary to achieve a superior integration of the personality. From Flournoy to Jung, the emphasis is on the creative potential of the psyche to lead to health and mental stability, those teleological aspects of the psyche which give us a reference point in the development of analytical psychology.

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