Chapter 10. The Orchestral Score of Levi-Strauss.

To get from the beautiful and powerful reach of Winnicott with children, to the full power of the unconscious in adults, we will need a more comprehensive score. The difference is something like that between an accompanied voice and a full orchestra. The reason that you need such a score and orchestra of all the musical colors is that an adult has a much bigger difficulty than a child who has a family that is ready to help him. The adult world is often not ready to help, being often indifferent and downright hostile.

Fortunately, the archaic mind mapped by Levi-Strauss (originally published, 1958; 1963; originally published 1964; 1983) has these very powers of transit between the benign and the malignant, or between life and death. It has also the power to radiate such transitional energy across every possible dimension of existence, from birth and death, to the rise and fall of planets, to the rawness of nature and the cooking of civilization. Its powers are displayed in myths.

These powers of transit remain with us in our dreams, which is what Barfield (1977) called extraordinary consciousness. However, the most difficult transit is between this archaic and extraordinary consciousness // and the modern and ordinary consciousness which is concerned with the defense of property. While Levi Strauss (originally published 1955; 1977) acutely suffered this gulf himself, he did not have a fully developed method for coping with it.

That is because he was looking to a social solution to the degradation of humanity:

... When the spectrum or rainbow of human cultures has finally sunk into the void created by our frenzy ... (p. 473, 1977, original 1953)

Levi-Strauss feared that this entropy of sameness (speed) was irreversible. The march of western man was and is going to flatten everything into its 2-dimensions. All (and it is very great) that he could hold out to oppose this march was the contemplation of the beauty of our origins:

... as long as we continue to exist and there is a world, that tenuous arch linking us to the inaccessible will still remain, to show us the opposite course to that leading to enslavement; man may be unable to follow it, but its contemplation affords him the only privilege of which he can make himself worthy; that of arresting the process, of controlling the impulse which forces him to block up the cracks in the wall of necessity one by one and to complete his work at the same time as he shuts himself up within his prison ... (p. 473)

Interruption of this "hive-like activity" and "unhitching" from it and "contemplation" discovers

... a mineral more beautiful than all our creations; in the scent at the heart of a lily and is more imbued with learning than all our books; or in the brief glance, heavy with patience, serenity and mutual forgiveness, that, through some mutual understanding, one can sometimes exchange with a cat (pp. 473-474) ...
is the very sentence on which he ends Triste Tropique. I hear in it echoes from the last several thousand years, particularly, in the despair of Tolstoy (1869) about the hive, and in St. Exupery (1943) about his fleeting opposition of The Little Prince (Gustafson, 1995a; 1995b).

I am more hopeful than this, because I think that the arcaic and extraordinary consciousness is already in us, and available to us every night we choose to visit. Therefore, I transpose Levi-Strauss’s structural understanding of the archaic powers from the world of myth and from the world of music which is his chief metaphor, back into the world of dream. There are but a few papers (chiefly Kuper and Stone, 1982) suggesting that this could be worked out, which take us in the right direction. Jung was concerned with a similar project, but there is a vast difference in the results gotten by Levi-Strauss.

First, I will expound Levi-Strauss’s archaic world of transit between opposing forces, secondly take as my chief example his “Toccata and Fugue” from The Raw and the Cooked (originally, 1964; 1983), and thirdly take us back from the structure of myths to the structure of dreams.

The Archaic Powers of Transit in Levi-Strauss

We will not have a plausible theory of search in dreams unless it is constructed upon the activity of archaic mind. After all, there was no other mind, until the last three thousand years, and very little until the last three hundred years. We will then want to explain the difference made by the addition of modern specialized consciousness.

Levi-Strauss’s theory of the archaic mind is encyclopedic in its range, because the theory radiates like the archaic mind itself through every nuance of the aboriginal worlds. Yet, the theory is highly economical because the operating structure is relatively simple.

This simplicity of its mechanism is very difficult for a modern mind to comprehend. We can read a brief account of the structure of this structuralism of Levi-Strauss and think we get it, when we have introduced huge distortions. For example, Kuper and Stone (1982) expound the mechanism as a way to think about contradictions. This is correct as a first step. Levi-Strauss did think that the archaic mind was preoccupied with contradictions, or what he called (in our English translations) disjunctions. For example, the disjunction brought about by heat is that it can be beneficent for keeping warm and growing things and cooking things but it can be malignant when it is excessive and dries up all the crops and overcooks us.

Yet Kuper and Stone (1982) run this preoccupation with contradiction or disjunction into a mechanism for resolving them by the well-known formula of Hegel:

\[ \text{thesis} + \text{anti-thesis} = \text{synthesis}. \]

Then, they use this mechanism for analyzing Freud’s Irma dream as if they were giving a structural analysis. The gist of it is that Freud’s struggle is between
a thesis of neurosis as an organic condition +
an anti-thesis of neurosis as a strangulation of affect =
a synthesis of a medical grand rounds in which TRIMETHYLAMIN
is the solution, because it is a sexual metabolite that would build up in a woman
as an organic condition brought about by her psychological repression.

The sequence of the dream is solution-focused in the modern sense of driving forward to a
successful conclusion, through a series of steps as in the synthesis of an organic chemical
compound. As Kuper and Stone put it

\[
\ldots \text{We stress the movement from the initial problem to its resolution and suggest that this}
\text{movement is coherent and orderly . . . (p. 1233)}
\]

The reader may refer to their original paper for the details, which demonstrate the dream as an
argument (not as a wish-fulfillment as Freud himself would have it). The gist of it is that the
sequence follows the model of diagnostic medical rounds in a hospital (p. 1229) . . . If the
examination sequence carries, as it were, the melodic line of the dream, then the
dialectical permutations are the harmony. Their development occurs through a distinct
process of contrasts and reconciliations. We have already stated the first opposition,
between the diagnoses of hysteria and organic illness. This is only the most superficial
aspect of what is the dialectical structure of the dream, the opposition between the
physical and the psychological domains (pp. 1229-1330).

Now it is true that the story in a myth can arrange a resolution, just as coitus can be a resolution
of a sexual tension, and a cadence of a musical discord. This archaic transition between
opposites is not the same, however, as the synthesis of an organic compound like
TRIMETHYLAMIN (either literally, or symbolically as a solution to a theoretical problem).

The difference is that the mythical, sexual and musical tensions recur as divergent
problems, while an organic chemical compound like TRIMETHYLAMIN (literal or symbolical)
is a convergent problem which remains fixed once it is synthesized (Schumacher, 1977;
Gustafson, 1995a and 1995b). In Levi-Strauss's language, the mythical, sexual or musical
disjunction is resolved by a conjunction, but only temporarily. The Hegelian machine of modern
progress synthesizes stable objects. The modern improvement in the direction of stability has the
disadvantage of putting an end to the excitement of the disjunction. Once a solution is found, the
problem is dead, trivial, and repeatable for a kind of dull learning. A fresh antithesis may not be
able to rouse the monumental synthesis in stone. Entropy has set in. This is the wasteland of the
modern world.

Therefore, I think that Kuper and Stone have made a dreadful mistake in reducing the
archaic mechanism to the Hegelian mechanism and in joining Freud in synthesizing his result.
They have followed Freud’s Hegelian logic with great accuracy. Indeed, it has proved to be the
main myth of psychiatry a hundred years later. Its chief research is the synthesis of metabolites
like TRIMETHYLAMIN, which are now called the neurotransmitters. The doctor’s job is to
regulate them as best he can, quite as Freud imagined in his dream. As Jung would say (1974, originally, 1945), Freud’s big dream is one of a gifted dreamer that is taken up by his group.

Levi-Strauss’s archaic mechanism of thinking retains the disjunctions, which the modern and Hegelian and Freudian mind would resolve forever. Kuper (1989) is clearer about this in his article on Levi-Strauss versus Freud. For example, this would lead to a very different perspective on the Irma dream. The reader should please read it now, if he or she is not entirely familiar with it (Freud, originally 1900). The opposition or tension in the dream, the disjunction, is between a woman who will not get better and a group of men forcing a solution upon her.

The men are in a nasty competition with each other, in regard to diagnosis, and treatment. The text is shot through with Freud’s rivalry with Fliess, Dr. M. (Breuer) and Otto (his pediatrician friend, and doctor of the Freud family, Oskar Rie (Schurr, 1966)). Indeed, the men are so caught up in their findings and in their battles with each other that the woman disappears. In this sense, the drive towards convergent solution is the same as the drive to be ascendant among doctors. Is that not an accurate picture of the hierarchical modern world?

If we return to Levi-Strauss’s theory of the archaic mechanism, we see that his view is that

The truth of the myth does not lie in any special content. It consists in logical relations which are devoid of content or, more precisely, whose invariant properties exhaust their operative value, since comparable relations can be established among the elements of a large number of different contents (p. 240, 1983, originally, 1964).

Thus, the meaning of the set of myths is not the story-line of melody about arranging one convergence or another in the horizontal plane. The meaning lies in the vertical plane of the harmony, in which the divergence of great opposites are recognized. In the case of the Irma dream, the divergence is between a raw woman who refuses to get better, and a group of doctors cooking up solutions. Levi-Strauss also utilizes a mechanical term for this mechanism of thinking, which devalues particular outcomes (resolutions, convergences) for recognition of the constant oppositions:

I propose to give the name armature to a combination of properties that remain invariant in two or several myths: code to the pattern of functions ascribed by each myth to these properties; and message to the subject matter of an individual myth . . . . I can define the relation between the Bororo myth (M₁) and the Sherente myth (M₁₂) by stating that when we move from one to the other, the armature remains constant, the code is changed, and the message is reversed. (p. 199, 1983, originally, 1964)

“Armature” is an interesting word with a gamut of meanings, in which there is a constant idea:

1. Armor, esp. that worn for the protection and defense of the body; hence, a covering suggestive of such armor, as a. A covering of flat wire would about a cable. b. Biol. An organ or structure for offense or defense, as teeth, thorns, etc. 2. A piece of soft iron or
steel used to connect the poles of a magnet or of adjacent magnets. 3. Elec. a. The movable part of a dynamo or motor, consisting essentially of coils of wire around an iron core . . . b. The movable part of a relay or electric bell, moving in a variable magnetic field (Webster’s Collegiate, 1941)

The electricity is created by the connection of the poles, and that is the dynamic power that interests Levi-Strauss, and it is a kind of ancient armor, or armature, as it were. The power is set in motion by the gap or disjunction between the great opposing powers, like life and death itself. Particular solutions or messages are relatively trivial by themselves, but important as they point to the pattern that connects them (the armature). In this precise sense, Levi-Strauss is not interested in myths per se, but in the sets of related myths which allow him to characterize the engine of the archaic mind.

The “code” of the myth is simply the sensory category, taste, hearing, smell, feel and sight, and its contrasted pair which can be drawn from different sectors of the aboriginal world like the cosmography of rising and setting planets, which is visual, or the growing or rotting of plants, which is olfactory.

Before I illustrate the archaic engine at work, I want to summarize the difference between such a “cold engine” and a Hegelian “hot engine” in the hands of a modern man like Freud, or his interpreters like Kuper and Stone. The “cold engine” generates stories or melodies full of strange transformations between the poles it is concerned with, like life and death, sky and earth, raw and cooked. The messages in the stories are amusing or frightening or whatever, but they are not to be taken literally as the truth of the matter. The truth lies in the mighty disjunctions that remain, coldly, and must be negociated all the time. Things live, and die, rapidly, in an aboriginal world. The masters of such worlds are masters of these transitions, and are often coded as animals, like the opossum, or the crow, or whatever animal can negotiate the distance from one extreme to another that must be undergone.

The “hot engine,” by contrast, of the modern world is built upon a fixed difference in power between those who have it, and those who serve it

Thermodynamic machines . . . such as the steam engine, operate on the basis of a difference in temperature between their component parts, between the boiler and the condenser; they can do a tremendous amount of work, far more than the others, but in the process they use up and destroy their energy. (p. 33, Levi-Strauss, with Charbonnier, 1969, originally, 1959).

In summary, a hot engine uses up its raw materials, as in a steam engine, while a cold engine recycles its raw materials, as in a cumulus cloud.

Thus, Freud’s hot engine operates on a tremendous difference in temperature between the heated-up doctors // and the patient’s cold reception of them. This disjunction is not the truth, however. The truth becomes the message which is concocted, or the rhetorical solution to the convergence of power upon cold objects, which makes them respond (Tate, 1934). The code is
no longer of much interest, since the engine works the same on all its specialized objects, as in
the different disciplines of the university. Their form is remarkably the same, whether they are
producing the solution in feminist short stories or in hoof and mouth disease. The problem is to
administer the world, and the technologies are selected for their ability to manage things. This
makes for a convergent world, of administration, which destroys its own energy, and flattens into
being everywhere the frenzy and exhaustion. It is a world of entropy production.

**Myth as Musical Mind: The Overture as Introduction**

Let us visit the opposite world of the cold engine, and see how it works to protect the
great polarities of its armature, its variegation of code, and the humor of its transformations. I
particularly like Levi-Strauss’s “Toccata and Fugue” which is number three of part IV of *The
Raw and the Cooked* (1983, originally published, 1964), and the book itself is Volume I of the
four-volume *Mythologiques*.

I like this chapter best because Levi-Strauss as a writer is being carried away by the very
beauty he is describing. His composition gathers up the same powers, in parallel, as the myths
he is describing. Thus, writing can be like myth and like music:

> ... the exceptional position occupied by music is brought out still more clearly. In
> making the comparison, I referred at the outset to an attribute that the myth and the
> musical work have in common: they operate through the adjustment of two grids, one
> internal, the other external. But, in the case of music, these grids, which are never simple,
> become complex to the point of reduplication. The external, or cultural, grid formed by
> the scale of the intervals or the hierarchical relations among the notes ... already wholly
> cultural objects in themselves ... The inner, or natural, grid ... constituted by the
> visceral rhythms. (p. 27, 1983, originally, 1964)

The art of this composition is beautifully explained in Levi-Strauss’s “Overture” to *The Raw and
the Cooked* as follows:

> The musical emotion springs precisely from the fact that at each moment the composer
> withholds or adds more or less than the listener anticipates ... If the composer withholds
> more than we anticipate, we experience a delicious falling sensation; we feel we have
> been torn from a stable point on the musical ladder and thrust into the void, but only
> because the support that is waiting for us was not in the expected place. When the
> composer withholds less, the opposite occurs: he forces us to perform gymnastic
> exercises more skillful than our own. Sometimes he moves us, sometimes he forces us to
> make the movement ourselves, but it always exceeds what we would have thought
> ourselves capable of achieving alone (p. 17, 1983, originally, 1964)

Naturally, this could be taken as the art of teaching or the art of making love or the art of walking
in the woods. They are all related, yet they remain very distinct in their sensory codes:
Divergence of sequences and themes is a fundamental characteristic of mythological thought, which manifests itself as an irradiation; by measuring the directions and angles of the rays, we are led to postulate their common origin, as an ideal point on which those deflected by the structure of the myth would have converged had they not started, precisely, from some other point and remained parallel throughout their entire course (pp. 5-6)

Music is privileged for Levi-Strauss, the very key to progress about the nature of man (p. 18), because it can integrate everything into what Bateson (1979) called “the pattern that connects.” Thus, time as a forward progress and timelessness work together in music:

. . . this relation to time is of a rather special nature: it is as if music and mythology needed time only in order to deny it. Both, indeed, are instruments for the obliteration of time. Below the level of sounds and rhythms, music acts upon a primitive terrain, which is the physiological time of the listener; this time is irreversible and therefore irredeemably diachronic, yet music transforms the segment devoted to listening to it into a synchronic totality, enclosed within itself. Because of the internal organization of the musical work, the act of listening to it immobilizes passing time; it catches and enfolds it as one catches and enfolds a cloth flapping in the wind. It follows that by listening to music, and while we are listening to it, we enter into a kind of immortality. (p. 16, my italics)

With this overture in mind about what to look for, let us now follow the music of Levi-Strauss’s “Tocccata and Fugue,” if only in very broad outline. The pleasure itself is to take it up for yourself, while I am just serving as a musicologist. The density of detail and range of reference can be daunting to a modern mind. I will try to keep your eye on the cold constants, which are its great message.

The Toccata and Fugue  
Toccata

The first section of this piece is called “a. The Pleiades,” which is the toccata. Let me briefly say that a toccata is

A brilliant composition, usually for organ and harpsichord, in free fantasia style (Webster’s Collegiate).  
and The Pleiades are or were  
The seven daughters of the Titan Atlas and the Oceanid Pleione . . . The Pleiades were so distressed at the death of their sisters the Hyades that they all killed themselves, and Zeus placed them in the sky as a cluster of seven stars. It was also said, however, that Zeus turned them into stars to save them and their mother Pleione from Orion, who had chased them for seven years. He too became a constellation which appears to be ever pursuing the Pleiades . . . The word Pleiades is derived from a Greek word meaning “to sail,” because the seven stars are visible during the summer months, comprising the season which the ancients reserved for navigation (Grant and Hazell, 1993).
So this will be a toccata of the Pleiades, which plays a set of variations on their origin. The first is as follows:

M_{131a}. Mataco. "The Origin of the Pleiades." Formerly the Indians used to climb into the sky by means of a huge tree. There they found an abundance of honey and fish. One day, after they had returned from the sky, they met an old woman at the foot of the tree. She asked for a small share of their provisions, but they refused. In order to be avenged on them for their greed, the old woman set fire to the tree. The Indians who had remained in the sky turned into stars and formed the constellation of the Pleiades.

Levi-Strauss at first makes no comment on the familiar oppositions in the myth: sky/earth, abundance/poverty, young/old, male/female, greed/revenge, wood/fire, Indians/stars. I will not quote the next four variations, taken from tribes in the same region, but only note the emergence of "floating viscera" in several of them from a murdered person halfway, as it were, between sky and earth. Levi-Strauss himself comments:

The preceding myths suggest that as a code term the theme of the floating viscera fulfills two distinct functions and is, in a sense, bivalent. In the "aquatic code" the viscera are congruous with fish and marsh plants. In the "celestial code" they are congruous with the stars, and especially the Pleiades. (p. 244)

Levi-Strauss then summarizes this little series by noting two fundamental points about their structure. The first is that any variation is going to have "gaps" which are "punched out" of the entire set of possible elements for the story. For example, the first variation did not have the "floating viscera." The second is that it is as if

... the sign system had its own built-in resistance to the buffetings to which the things signified have to submit from without (p. 245)

Thus, the floating viscera in the Guyana area connects the appearance of the Pleiades in the sky with the appearance of fish in the rivers, while in Bororo country the appearance of the Pleiades signifies the ending of the dry season. They have a festival to "burn the feet of the Pleiades" to slow down their leaving and prolong the dry period suitable for nomadic activities.

Thus, the theme of the Pleiades is buffeted wildly, as it heralds different things in neighboring regions, such as the coming of the fish or the ending of the dry season. Levi-Strauss is not averse to extending his composition all the way around the world. His readers may have heard the Greek meaning of the sailing season before he even began. He slides into North American (Wyandot, Eskimo, Zuni, Navajo, and Blackfoot) and Polynesian variations. This is a brilliant composition in free fantasy style, that is, a toccata of the Pleiades.
The second section of this piece is called “b. The Rainbow,” which is the fugue. A fugue is a polyphonic composition, developed from a given theme, according to strict contrapuntal rules. (Webster’s Collegiate)

While the Pleiades allowed Levi-Strauss to let loose the powers of heraldry, the Rainbow theme will allow him to tighten the powers of precise adjustment. I could say he is playing these opposite musical powers against each other, the radiation of its energy in a free fall and the multiplication of its precision, like Bach, but then Levi-Strauss would have rightly replied that Bach was capitalizing on the archaic vitality itself. Try Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D minor for organ, for comparison. My wife happened to read three poems of Emily Dickinson to me last evening as I was preparing to write this, and I was astonished to see how her world is quite like that of the Bororo Indians, and Bach, and Levi-Strauss. I will come around to demonstrating this before we finish this chapter, and I will also come around to showing this vitality in the dreams of patients. It is our mainspring, or armature.

Levi-Strauss begins his fugue with a digression, to state the definition of the rainbow: In South America the rainbow has a double meaning. On the one hand, as elsewhere, it announces the end of the rain; on the other hand, it is considered to be responsible for diseases and various natural disasters. In its first capacity the rainbow effects a disjunction between the sky and the earth which previously were joined through the medium of rain. In the second capacity it replaces the normal beneficent conjunction by an abnormal, maleficent one -- the one it brings about itself between sky and earth by taking the place of water (p. 246)

Levi-Strauss is already operating in strict counter-point: rainbow as disjunction, beneficent // to rainbow as conjunction, maleficent. This music loves inversion, as in a variation which quickly follows:

In the Gran Chaco the Vilela have a myth (M,13) about a shy, solitary boy who used to hunt birds and who changed into a multi-colored and deadly serpent, the rainbow (p. 246)

The Author’s Dream of Caruso in Milwaukee. I often dream of the very powers I am writing about, and last night was no exception in its economy of means. I dreamt

Enrico Caruso was singing in Milwaukee.

and later

We had adopted a tame lion in our family and he pounced on me in play, which made me acutely aware that we couldn’t keep him around for fear he would go over the line from play to preying on us.
The first variation is the toccata, of the operatic powers in conjunction with the popular stages. Caruso was so well known in the 1950s that the cliche for taking down somebody singing with gusto in the shower was: "Who do you think you are, Caruso?" The first variation associated myself with Caruso, because I just had done what seemed like a beautiful demonstration of the archaic powers of the archaic mind in the dream of a patient in consultation in my Clinic with an appreciative audience behind the mirror. So Caruso can radiate even into Milwaukee, so to speak.

The second variation is an inversion of the first, in which I suffer being on the bottom of a great force, instead of on the top. This alludes to my daughter’s huge Malamute, Elko, visiting us for the summer, who loves to get over our little Shetland Sheep Dog, Athena. The strict inversion is the beginning of a fugue. It says that conjunction can be maleficent, especially if you are on the bottom.

This tiny toccata and fugue illustrates the great radiation and tight circumspection that Levi-Strauss is bringing us to consider. The radiation is exhilarating because the stops are out, while the circumspection by inversion takes my breath away. I am obliged to make the transition from being on top, to being on the bottom, of a great force. It helps me to appreciate why people run away from me when I am full of great (playful) force. To feel ourselves as others feel us, to play on Robert Burns, is a gift which we get from the power of inverting the theme. We get into the shoes of the other. For the archaic man, this is absolutely essential to help him refrain from injustice to those he must depend upon as his brothers:

... issues are only settled by unanimous decision. It seems to be believed that if, at the time of making an important decision, there existed, even in the tiniest fraction of society, feelings of bitterness such as are normally associated with being the loser in an election, resentment and disappointment at not having been supported would produce a powerful and almost magical effect and jeopardize the result that had been obtained (Levi-Strauss to Charbonnier, p. 35, 1969; originally, 1959)

Nowadays, this jeopardy wrecks every cooperative project such as seminars and teams and marriages. This is why Western man, out of touch with the archaic powers of inversion, is such a failure at these matters which insist upon equality. This is why his power grid exhausts itself.

Let us go back from my digression to Levi-Strauss’s fugue. Having stated his first inversion from beneficent disjunction to maleficent conjunction, he will now multiply his powers of inversion. Thus,

The food-bearing tree in the myths of Guyana and the Gran Chaco can be identified with the Milky Way. This would give the following equivalence

(a) Milky Way: rainbow :: life: death...

The nocturnal counterpart of the rainbow would therefore be the non-presence of the Milky Way at a point it would normally occur, hence the equation:

(b) Rainbow = Milky Way (-1)
Now he will show how the rainbow becomes the mother of diseases:

It will be remembered that the guilty woman’s brothers cut her body into two pieces, one of which they threw into a lake in the east, the other into a lake in the west. (p. 247)

The two ends are two snakes for the Timbira, which is the “dual” aspect of the rainbow. The Katawishi distinguish two rainbows: Mawali in the west, and Tini in the east. Tini and Mawali were twin brothers who brought about a flood that inundated the whole world and killed all living people, except two young girls whom they saved to be their companions. It is not advisable to look either of them straight in the eye: to look at Mawali is to become flabby, lazy, and unlucky at hunting and fishing; to look at Tini makes a man so clumsy he cannot go any distance without stumbling and lacerating his feet against all the obstacles in his path, or pick up a sharp instrument without cutting himself (p. 247)

The Dream of the Wake of the Whale. The very dream consultation I alluded to in my dream of Caruso in Milwaukee is apt to cite here because it picks up this “duality” of the rainbow from which “distance” is of absolute importance. The patient is a middle aged woman seen by one of our staff psychologists, whose story has been the difficulty of getting out from under a powerhouse mother, and later a powerhouse husband. I had first seen her four years ago in consultation when she came in for being acutely suicidal. After several years of work with one of our best residents, the patient believed in herself enough to limit her self-destruction to minor crises. Now, the psychologist had the patient and wanted to know what it would take to get out of minor crises, which continually interrupted their contemplation of her huge feelings. They had gotten out of the region of death’s door (A) into the region of continual minor crises (B), but how could they stay in the region of stable work (C)?

I will drastically simplify the epic dream text which we dropped into when we were discussing the patient’s vulnerability to being run down by her husband’s criticisms. She dreamt

Of going to an aboriginal peninsula in Australia where her hosts were being tampered with by western sailors. The shepherd dog of the natives stood up to them, and got his nose broken. Then a whale came up the inlet and his wake smashed most of the intruders and swept them away. A couple survived, and raped her daughter, and cut off her clitoris. An old lady and the patient and the people then come to comfort the dog and her daughter. The old lady sees a bone-button fall off, and niftily sews it back on.

The patient and the psychologist had already translated a number of elements: the old lady refers back to her “duality” of grandmothers when she was twelve, one critical and cutting and driving her mother from her father, and the other saving them from destitution, when the patient was twelve; the clitorectomy refers to her own hysterectomy, which seemed to rob her of her entire sphere of autonomous power of having children, which occurred the year before this consultation.
I was able to show her her own archaic vitality getting mobilized to handle these life-long intrusions of the violent critics. First, she was taking great distance to the southern hemisphere and to aboriginal time and to the intelligent sociality of these whale-people. Secondly, she was having trouble borrowing this whale power because it tended to be so huge or so unable to protect small things like the shepherd dog and the child. It’s like having nuclear weapons, and no conventional defenses. The western sailors keep tampering with you, and breaking you. Probably, this was why she was still in continual crisis.

The armature of the dream is:

whale-power: western intrusion :: grandmother-sewing: fallen bone-button

In other words, the refuge in the whale-people is still vulnerable to the critical intrusion, especially for her children. Thus, her urge to get distance from the malign power of criticism is not entirely protective for the small creatures. Only when the whale-power is distanced and scaled down to her grandmother’s eye and needle can the bone-button be mended. As she said of her husband’s power to criticize,

He is subtle.

Thus, she needs the power to recognize subtle undermining, which has been continually throwing her into crisis. The power of the whale-people is scaled down to the power of the eye and needle. When she has this, she will have stability.

Fugue Continued

Having left from the Fugue of the Rainbow at the variation of the two brother rainbows, Tini and Mawali, and in the theme of the need to distance their full powers, we pick it up again with the next variation. Levi-Strauss now transposes from the pair of rainbows in the Katawishi to the pair of rainbows in the Tucuna and then on to the Indians of Guyana:

Similarly, the Tucuma differentiated between the eastern and western rainbows and believed them both to be the subaquatic demons, the masters of fish and potter’s clay respectively. . . . At the same time the Indians of Guyana establish a direct link between potter’s clay and diseases (p. 247)

Levi-Strauss describes how they have to get their potter’s clay at night during the commencing of the full moon, or it will break and bring diseases to those who eat of the dishes (pp. 247-248).

So now he is describing how they keep in mind to distance the powers of disease, as he transposes into a Bororo myth:

The Bororo heroine (mother of diseases) is the opposite of a pregnant woman, since she is the mother of a young child. Like the western rainbow of the Tucuna, she assumes, or rather usurps, the role of mistress of the fish. She is a bad mother and leaves her child on a branch (therefore in an external position, whereas a pregnant woman’s child is internal)
and causes it to turn into an ant heap—that is, into hard, dried earth, the opposite of the supple clay found in the streams. At the same time as she enters into physical conjunction with the water in order to feed on the dead fish drifting on the surface, she creates a disjunction between the sky and earth, as the myth indicates in two ways. (p. 248)

Namely, the child who had been high in the tree goes low to become hard earth. It becomes raw, like ants the natives fed on in nature.

Meanwhile, the mother of diseases has stuffed herself with fishes which she will exude from her body as diseases. Levi-Strauss now compares this to the opossum of the last section (see “The Opossum Cantata”) and obtains his transformation of the Borora heroine into an opossum:

. . . the Borora heroine is an opossum whose positive modality (nursing) is transformed into its opposite (stinking), and whose negative modality (stinking) is raised to a high, although indeterminate power. She is an opossum whose stench (which has become fatal to the whole of humanity) completely cancels out her qualities as a nursing mother (p. 249)

He goes on to note that the Guianian Indians call the rainbow “opossum” because of the reddish color of its fur:

The opossum is characterized by ambiguity: as a nursing mother, it serves life; as a foul-smelling or rotten beast, it anticipates death (pp. 249-250)

Now Levi-Strauss has nearly the “maximum significance” of the opossum which is quite like a serpent. By this, I think he means how transitional it is between all the great powers. The great thing for the archaic mind is to be able to undergo these transitions, imaginatively, which must have prepared them to undergo them in their lives. Modern man fixes himself to a lever. Archaic man is the master, like the opossum, of transitions, of weather, of life and death, of sky to earth, of sweet beneficence to stinking malignity.

The last two variations are so dense in their voicing that I cannot possibly reproduce them without overburdening this chapter. The first of them adds the astronomical dimension, and the second is about the sacrifice of a girl. Oddly, or not so oddly, they both have elements in common with the dream of the wake of the whale. The first ends with a flooding of the world, as Venus (a male) is carried up into the sky by a whirlwind. The second ends with a gang rape of the girl by a flock of birds, who dismember her body, and take pieces of her vulva for shelter.

Levi-Strauss’s interest in them is in the wealth of transformations. In the first, Venus is covered with malodorous ulcers. He is thus a kind of opossum, because he stinks so much that the people turn up their noses at him. The wretch is taken by a man, whose daughter lets him sit on her thighs and wash him. The transformations (from other myths in the set) include: star to opossum, female god to male god, nursing mother to passive nurse. Finally, the male god
(Venus) afflicted by ulcers rapes the virgin, and saves the lives of the people under his protection.

In the second variation, the transformation from the set of myths include: a shift from the vertical axis of high and low, to the horizontal axis of water-earth -- the girl tries to cross a river on the back of an alligator, on consideration that the girl will insult him afterward! -- a shift from woman as a star come down to earth, or a rotten fruit that has undergone metaphorization, to a woman that disappears to benefit the birds! -- and finally, a third inversion, from a woman whose pieces were hung up inside huts as wives for the men to the same pieces put up outside as roofs!

When I first read these myths, I was astonished by the reveling in sheer violence. Levi-Strauss has a very different idea, which is the tremendous interest, and play, of transformation. Of course, the two levels are related, and people too alarmed by the potential of their own violence are not going to play easy with symbolic transit. They are going to fix themselves, and go around in dead circles, exactly as pictured in Dante’s Inferno.

From Myth to Dream With An Orchestral Score in Hand

Now it is time to ask about the relationship between the myths analyzed by Levi-Strauss and the dreams of my patients. A myth is something passed around by a group, while a dream need only be known to one dreamer. Yet, a dreamer may give his dream to a group, and the group makes it its mythical property. Thus, Freud’s Irma dream becomes a myth for psychoanalysis about its creation from a round in the medical world. Similarly, Jung’s dream of the Crusader becomes a myth for analytical psychology about its creation from a dying psychoanalysis.

Jung argued that the dreams that remain private are about matters of no concern to anyone but the dreamer, whereas those that become mythical property are seized for their relevance to the life of the group:

Not all dreams are of equal importance. Even primitives distinguish between “little” and “big” dreams, or, as we might say, “insignificant” and “significant” dreams. Looked at more closely, “little” dreams are the nightly fragments of fantasy coming from the subjective and personal sphere, and their meaning is limited to the affairs of everyday. That is why such dreams are easily forgotten, just because their validity is restricted to the day-to-day fluctuations of the psychic balance (p. 76, 1974; originally, 1945)

Jung contrasts the “big” dreams coming from a different and deeper level of the unconscious:

Thus, we speak on the one hand of a personal and on the other of a collective unconscious, which lies at a deeper level and is further removed from consciousness than the personal unconscious. The “big” or “meaningful” dreams come from this deeper level. They reveal their significance -- quite apart from the subjective impression they make -- by their plastic form, which often has a poetic force and beauty . . . For example,
a young man dreamed of a great snake that guarded a golden bowl in an underground vault. (p. 77)

In other words, the big dreams from the collective unconscious

... employ numerous mythological motifs that characterize the life of the hero, of that greater man who is semi-divine by nature. Here we find the dangerous adventures and ordeals such as occur in initiations. We meet dragons, helpful animals, and demons (etc.)... which in no way touch the banalities of everyday life (p. 79)

Now it is certainly true that it is possible to divide dreams into two groups by this categorical distinction between personal banality / divine adventures. Jung even reifies the distinction into two different spheres or levels in the unconscious. They become two different places, literally. It is even plausible that groups ignore messages from personal banality, while attending to them from semi-divine sources.

I take a position about dreams closer to Levi-Strauss’s position about myths. I think that dreams take place in the space-time of the group, but with gaps in them that obscure the armature of the set that they belong to. Just as any myth utilizes a fraction of the armature of its set it belongs, so an individual dream will have
gaps, so to speak, punched out of the fabric (1983, p. 245; originally, 1964)
or dream screen in which it is embedded.

How are we to know the set of myths to which any particular dream belongs as an outrider, like an obscure and highly punched out myth? How do I even know that this is the situation? Well, I don’t know, but I propose it as a working hypothesis. Its plausibility is this. We are very recently descended from archaic man, whose preoccupation (if we believe Levi-Strauss, and I do) is transformation between extremes. For this humanity, which I take to be us, suffering comes from disjunctions that keep us from going where we want to go, and conjunctions that keep us in toxic realms. Thus, the relief of suffering is a matter of transit, by disjoining (||) or distancing things that injure us, and conjoining (=) things that benefit us.

Thus, the unconscious mind is a great searching and mapping instrument of transition between all the extremes like life and death. This raises the next question of what extremes are relevant to modern man and woman? Here I have to depart from Levi-Strauss, who did not deal with this question very much. In general, I am taking as a working hypothesis that the relevant extremes for modern humanity are between the specialized foci by which one earns a living in the modern world by fixing and repeating oneself // versus the vitality of the archaic world wherein we are renewed. We all have to operate at the first extreme to have resources, whereas we all have to reach to the second extreme to have vitality.

Therefore, I think that the archaic consciousness has undergone a shift from its perennial polarities, which we visited in the Toccata and Fugue, to getting back and forth between all of
them // and the means of modern survival. This is the matter of life and death for us. It sets up
the structure, of the armature, of dreams. In general, I map any dream onto this armature, by
means of the kind of orchestral score utilized by Levi-Strauss. The particular variant is written in
the horizontal like a melody, while the vertical of the harmony is constituted by two long lines,
the right one in red to represent the emergency of specialization in the modern world, and the left
one in green to represent the vitality of which we are constituted. The divergence or disjuncture
between the two is represented by two yellow lines which start together at the top and move in
opposite and downward directions. All of this armature is illustrated in Figure 10.1.

Figure 10.1

"The Armature of Modern Dreams"

Now, I will close this chapter illustrating the use of this score with three examples, a dream of
one of my patients, a dream of my own, and a poem of Emily Dickinson.

The Dream of the Flying Chair. My patient, a doctor, had just given a test to her students. She
had taken precautions against their cheating, but was still amazed that they did not seem to care
what they were doing. They seemed amoral and amotivated. Since she is quite the opposite, she
had trouble bending her mind around them. She dreamt

She was weaving a seat for a chair, but the ballast and cornices would not come together
This is illustrated in her drawing, which is Figure 10.2.
The great puzzle of the dream was about "ballast" and "cornices" which do not belong together in any ordinary sense. "Cornices" turned out to refer to the anatomy of the "cornu" of the thyroid upon which she was testing her students. "Ballast" turned out to refer to an item in hot-air balloons, which had thrilled her on the fifth anniversary of her marriage.

The tear in the fabric of the dream began to appear at this point as tears. Because she could not get her husband to do such things anymore. He was pulled into his specialized medical world, while she was in both places, and unable to bring the two together. I will not complicate this description with the richness of allusions in this dream, all of which fell into this set of divergent problems. The green world of her beautiful ideas, and the red world of emergencies, did not come together for her.

The Author’s Dream of the Jekyll/Hyde Problem. The very night after the dream of Caruso // and the Lion, while preparing this very text you are reading, I dreamt what my unconscious has to say about this conscious text. I dreamt

Scene 1. “Baby-Faced Johnson,” a murderer, like his father, also named “Baby-Faced Johnson.”

Scene 2. I am a very passive patient in a medical assembly line in a big room with glass walls, looking out onto Massachusetts Avenue in Boston, or the Seine in Paris. I am to have an inguinal hernia repair, and a Dr. Welch comes to have the cursory look and go. I am amazed that I just took whatever doctor came along.

Scene 3. I get off my bed and go outside to have a look, and circle a large set of green playing fields, which are like soccer fields, but some are up high in mountains and some are contracted. I am reminded of Machu Picchu in Peru, of a rifugio in the Italian Alps called Roda da Vael with its green helicopter landing strip, and of soccer fields in Europe foreshortened by the speed of the train. The last of these playing fields is more like a basketball court, surrounded by bleachers which are like a maze that ascends. I enter it at the top and walk around the top and see one of my female patients as the only spectator of
the game sitting down at the level of the court. I wave good-bye to her, and leave at the top.

All of this complex space is pictured, if cryptically, in Figure 10.3.

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This dream begins with the problem of sterility in Western culture, which Stevenson mapped in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) and which I discussed at length in my last book as the quintessential problem of my patients (Gustafson, 1995b, Chapter 11, “Visual Maps”). I had just had several cases the day before, in which I was immersed in this Jekyll/Hyde world, such as that of the patient who had the dream of The Wake of the Whale.

The first scene of this dream simply means that conjunction with a world in all innocence (baby-faced) gets you wrecked like my patients // while disjunction from this world as a killer (whale) destroys what little you have. You lose double. Thus, the first scene is about the hopeless predicament in which so many end up lost.

The second scene makes me into one of these overly trusting patients, who is going to entrust his creation (inguinal area) passively to any surgeon who comes along. It is an inversion of my usual caution, which allows me to put myself in the position of my patients. I come to my senses, so to speak, to get free of this dangerous conjunction, and depart for “green fields” as it goes in the song

Once there were green fields lit by the sun.
I now move freely in very beautiful and even sacred fields that I have known, which is the conjunction with the archaic mind that is my blessing. But I must come back, and I do into a playing field in which one of my female patients is down below where I began. I stay up high, in this maze, and wave to her, and depart. I am mindful as I leave of a line from Yeats,

Horseman, pass by.

This is the noble rider (Stevens, 1965):

It is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality (p. 36).

In other words, I distance myself from passivity too easily conjoined and too low to what is awful, but I return from on high to oppose it.

**Emily Dickinson’s Poem.** This is precisely what Emily Dickinson was forever doing, as in her #229 (Ruth Gustafson, personal communication):

*A Burdock clawed my Gown -  
Not Burdock’s - blame  
But mine -  
We went too near  
The Burdock’s Den -

*A Bog - affronts my shoe -  
What else have Bogs - to do -  
The only Trade they know -  
The splashing Men!  
Ah, pity - then!

’Tis Minnows can despise  
The Elephant’s - calm eyes  
Look further on!

In other and less words, it is our own trouble if we allow too much conjunction with Burdock and Bog // we must take our disjunction and see them from the perspective of Minnows who can despise (look down on something smaller!) and Elephant who can look by (overlook). Are we not in the same armature, and seeing it by the same orchestral score?