

# **A Psychedelic Reading of Judith Thompson's *Lion in the Street* (\*)**

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## **Abstract**

The paper aims to trace some features of Psychedelic art, as a form of visual art in Judith Thompson's play *Lion in the Street* (1990). These characteristics are explored against the backdrop of C. G. Jung's theory of Individuation.

Psychedelic art corresponds to the analysis of the play as it explores the thoughts about personalized perceptions and tries to reflect them. In other words, it is a way to externalize the internal feelings stored in the unconscious.

The core of Jungian theory is "to experience the unconscious with its vital imagery, affective power and strong spiritual quality" (Martin, p. 257). The purpose of Jung's Individuation process is to increase the individual's consciousness to heal the splits between the conscious and the unconscious, bringing them to wholeness to overcome the trauma of the individual's psyche. The three stages of Individuation: Personal Unconscious, Shadow (Anima/Animus), and Self, are employed to analyze the characters process of moving from the unconscious to the conscious to reach a new realm of consciousness that boosts wholeness and freedom.

Judith Thompson (1954- ) is a renowned Canadian playwright. She has created a body of powerful and challenging dramatic works. In her play *Lion in the Street*, Thompson follows the psychedelic style to unfold the psychic trauma of her characters. She exposes the suppressed memories in their unconscious to heal the split between the unconscious and the conscious, thus helping them to attain what she terms as the level of grace that is equivalent to Jung's wholeness of

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the personality or Individuation and the psychedelic concept of freedom of the self.

**Key words:** Psychedelic art, the conscious and unconscious, Individuation process, C.G. Jung, Canadian drama.

## Introduction

*“If the doors of perception were cleansed  
Everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite”* (William Blake  
*Annotations to Swedenborg -1793*).

*Aldous Huxley, the English writer and philosopher, borrowed this line from Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793) to introduce his short book The Doors of Perception (1953) in which he described his psychedelic experience under the influence of mescaline (a psychoactive drug):*

*I seemed to detect the qualitative equivalent of breathing—but of a breathing without returns to a starting point, with no recurrent ebbs but only a repeated flow from beauty to heightened beauty, from deeper to ever deeper meaning. Words like ‘grace’ and ‘transfiguration’ came to my mind, and this, of course, was what, among other things, they stood for. (p.5)*

*Though at the beginning of the 1950s the term psychedelic was not introduced, Huxley opened the doors of perception to others interested in experimenting with the psychedelic experience to present “a world where everything shone with the Inner Light, and was infinite in its significance” (Huxley, p. 6).*

The term ‘psychedelic’ is derived from the Greek words ‘psyche’ or soul and ‘delos’ or manifest. It was coined by British psychiatrist Humphry Osmond in 1957 denoting ‘mind manifesting’. By that definition, all artistic efforts to depict the inner world of the psyche could be considered ‘psychedelic’.

*The Psychedelic art movement started with the rise of psychedelic culture in the 1960s. The artists experienced their psychedelic states while being on psychoactive drugs such as mescaline, LSD or hallucinogens. The major aim of the movement was to liberate the artists’ minds and alter the common accepted perceptions. Therefore, artists who “could pierce the layers of symbolism to read the message, either with the naked eye or with the aid of hallucinogens, became members of the ‘underground’ family” (Heller, p. 210) of underground hip hop or independent artists, who lay down their own rules.*

Psychedelic art bears a rebellious element against established conventions. It derives its strength and popularity from the fact that it was and is internalized mostly by young people who are not afraid to fight to declare their own rules. Therefore, psychedelic art explores the thoughts about personalized perceptions and tries to reflect them. In other words, it is a way to externalize the internal feelings stored in the unconscious.

Experiencing the various dimensions of the unconscious is the central focus of the theory of Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Stephen Martin (2014) in “Confrontation with the unconscious: Jungian depth psychology and psychedelic experience” draws a link between Jung’s theory and psychedelic art contending that both rely on exploring the works of the unconscious, “the core of the Jungian endeavor that is undertaken intentionally is to experience the unconscious with its vital imagery, affective power, and numinous or larger than life felt sense while maintaining a reflective or conscious standpoint in relation to it” (p. 257). In other words, similar to the psychedelic experience, Jung is concerned with the limitless realm of the unconscious and its imaginative competency.

The purpose of Jung’s model of human psyche is to increase the individual’s consciousness to heal the splits between the conscious and the unconscious, bringing them to wholeness to overcome the trauma of the individual’s psyche. He used the term ‘individuation’ to denote the process by which “a person becomes a psychological ‘individual,’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’” (Jung, 1968 a, p. 256). Judith Herman (1992) in *Trauma and Recovery* defines psychological trauma as a state when one “come[s] face to face both with human vulnerability in the natural world and with the capacity for evil in human nature” (p. 4). The psychic trauma experienced by the characters in Thompson’s *Lion in the Streets* is resolved when they bridge the gap between “knowing and not knowing” (Caruth, p. 3). In other words, they are healed when they confront their weaknesses and their misdeeds that are kept hidden in their unconscious. The present paper analyzes the characters that succeed in their process of healing - and not their traumatic experiences - in relation to Psychedelic art as a

form of visual art. The paper also draws on the three stages of the Individuation theory, namely: Personal Unconscious, Shadow (Anima/Animus), and Self, to analyze the characters in Thompson's play who manage to move towards the realm of wholeness and freedom.

Judith Thompson (1954- ) is a renowned Canadian playwright. She has created a body of powerful and challenging dramatic works. In her play *Lion in the Streets* (1990) Thompson blurs the line between reality and the remembered or the imagined that flows from the unconscious mind of the characters thus creating a realm of fantasy. When the split between the conscious and the unconscious is healed, the characters are liberated from their dark or animal sides and reach a state of 'grace' that is reminiscent of Jung's 'individuation.'

Thompson's deep study of Sigmund Freud's work allows her to "get into [the] blood" of her characters as Richard Knowles (1991) states in the introduction to the play (p. 7). She manages to enter into the minds and souls of her characters to unleash the workings of their unconscious. Yet, the present paper does not examine the play in the light of psychoanalysis or according to Freudian concepts. It is rather interested in offering a psychedelic analysis of the characters.

Previous studies of the play, to the best of my knowledge, have not tackled it in relation to Psychedelic art or to Jung's Individuation process. For example, The *Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia* describes the play as charged with expressionistic and surrealistic elements that create a nightmarish atmosphere. The nightmare is resolved at the end of the play when the central character, Isobel, forgives her murderer and is "finally freed from the world's suffering in a moment of understanding and forgiveness. Initially a prey herself to rage and violence, she watches over the living, suffers with them, and finally experiences the possibility of salvation" (par.2). Quest Sky Zeidler (2017) in *You Can't Just Be a Picture* thoroughly examines the features of expressionism in the play focusing on the structure, design, casting and interplay of gender roles. Melissa Friesen (2005) holds a comparison between the violence presented in the play and two other

plays, namely *The Love of the Nightingale* by Timberlake Wertenbaker and *Rage is not a 1 Day Thing: The Untold History of the Montgomery Bus Boycotts* by Awele Makeba. Jonna Grace Falck (1997) examines three plays by Judith Thompson, *Lion in the Streets*, *White Biting Dog* and *I Am Yours* focusing on the audience response as a result of the “cathartic theatrical experience” (p. 3). Melissa Cecilia Moser (1998) provides a postmodern feminist reading of the play in relation to other works by Margaret Hollingsworth and Patricia Gruben. Rebecca LeDrew (2012) in *Elements of the Gothic in the Works of Judith Thompson* pinpoints the elements of terror in the play such as the appearance of Isobel as a ghost that causes “discomfort for the audience” (p. 52). Richard Knowles (2005) in *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature* considers the play as a blend of “naturalistic conception” of characters and their contradictory actions aiming to “push the audiences to the other side of the dark” (p. 123) referring to Thompson’s collection of plays (*The Other Side of the Dark*). Jeffrey Gagnon (2009) examines the marginalized identity of the characters in the play such as Isobel, her parents and other characters.

### **The Personal Unconscious**

Carl Jung (1968) in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* agrees with Sigmund Freud in identifying the two major aspects of the human psyche, namely the conscious and the unconscious. If engaged in a battle for hegemony, the order and control of the conscious struggle with the chaotic nature of the unconscious and in turn human psyche suffers distortion:

Conscious and unconscious do not make a whole when one of them is suppressed and injured by the other. If they must contend, let it at least be a fair fight with equal rights on both sides. Both are aspects of life. Consciousness should defend its reason and protect itself, and the chaotic life of the unconscious should be given the chance of having its way too— as much of it as we can stand. (Jung, 1968 a, p. 268)

According to Jung, repressed memories and impulses are stored in what he termed as the ‘personal unconscious.’ Jung further explains that the ‘personal unconscious’ is different from Freud’s ‘id’; it is the reservoir of the suppressed conflicts and trauma, not hidden desires. Human psyche manages to repress these struggles because they invoke a sense of guilt or pain; therefore, a barrier is created between the conscious and the unconscious to prevent the mobility of these memories to rise to the surface of the conscious. However, sometimes the grip of the conscious is weakened, and the barrier is lowered because of using psychoactive drugs as many psychedelic artists do or due to excessive severe conditions as is the case with the characters in the play. As a result, the psyche is drifted into a state of “visual imagery” that Jung called “active imagination” (Martin, p. 257). In other words, the stored material in the personal unconscious is released causing a state of distortion, and “leav[ing] an individual in ‘the dark,’ in danger of being swamped by chaotic unconscious images” (Orbach, p. 87). A world of nightmares emerges in which an individual lives and witnesses its horrors like the characters in the play.

### **1.1. Unstable Contradictions**

One of the styles that distinguish psychedelic art is what Jonathan Harris (2005) describes as the “series of unstable contradictions” (p.15). The state of active imagination of psychedelic artists produces visual images dominated by antitheses. In a psychedelic experience as depicted in Thompson’s play, the unresolved suppressed emotions of the characters emerge releasing the repressed memories in the personal unconscious in the form of pictorial fragments. Judith Thompson employs the episodic structure and the dramatic elements in *Lion in the Streets* offering the same chaotic composition and visual fragmentation as in psychedelic art. Psychedelic art is characterized by favoring complexity, repetitions, dominance of feminine aspect, and unstable compositions. *Lion in the Streets* follows the same pattern by presenting a complex, repeated and fractured structure that consists of almost thirteen snapshots which lack logical coherent narration. Each scene reinforces the

painful relationships and the series of continuous confrontations that the characters experience in the form of verbal and/or physical violence. The disjointed episodes uncover the distorted state of the characters' personal unconscious "[that] is determined by internal states; the ways that reality, memory, and imagination blend echo the psychic trauma undergone by its characters" (Zeilder, p. 56). Moreover, the play espouses feminism by portraying twenty eight characters: fifteen of them are females and most of the males are either effeminate or homosexual. According to the playwright's notes, four actresses and one actor play the twenty seven roles of both males and females. Isobel is the only character played by one actress because she provides the only link to the disjunctive scenes: "Thus, the play may be seen to resist unity, particularly unified characterization" (Harvie, par. 9). The disjunction of the scenes and the swift change of characters' roles and genres contribute to the nightmarish atmosphere presented in the play as the case is in Psychedelic art.

Through the dramatic elements of stage directions, monologues and dialogues Judith Thompson "connect[s] disparate stories in a complex rendering of...masculinized, sexualized, radicalized and classed dynamics" (Friedman, p. 602). The characters in every episode keep changing their positions into other contradictory dynamics. These unexpected shifts highlight their psychological sufferings and disturbed mindsets.

The stage directions in the opening episode describe Isobel lost and frightened. She is presented as an adult Portuguese woman who is dressed, speaks and acts as a little girl. The stage directions unveil the mystery that Isobel was murdered seventeen years ago, but she does not realize that she is a ghost:

*[The ghost of Isobel, a deranged and very ragged looking nine-year-old Portuguese girl, runs around and around a large circle, to music, terrified of a remembered pursuer, in fact, the man who killed her in this playground*



*seventeen years before the action of the play [...] At this point Isobel does not know she is a ghost, but she knows that something is terribly wrong. She is terrified]. (Lion in the Streets, p. 15)*

The stage directions and Isobel's movement on stage pave the way for the chaotic nightmarish world to follow. It is the world of the distorted unconscious of the other characters that Isobel, being a ghost, is allowed to expose. She can 'see' inside their personal unconscious. Isobel is always invisible to the other characters except for Sue and Sherry. These two characters are oppressed and humiliated by male figures like Isobel; therefore, she can identify herself with them, and they can see and touch her. In an interview with Eleanor Watchel, Judith Thompson comments on Isobel's role in the play, "I suppose it's Isobel's journey-odyssey through an ordinary neighborhood [...] She descends into the underworld of these lives, what we don't see. You're walking down the street and you see lights and houses and you peek through and see a television or a little dinner party going on, but what's happening really, inside each life?" (p. 37).

Isobel is portrayed in her 'classed dynamic' being a marginalized immigrant (a Portuguese), "Isobel [*overlapping*]: Portuguese, Portuguese, yes ..." (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 16). She is humiliated by the other kids, beaten and made fun of, "Rachel: Go back with the nutties to the nuttyhouse [...] Scalato: She looks like a crazy dog! [...] I said there is no buses here you ugly little SNOT" (*Lion in the Streets*, pp. 15, 16). Her social position does not provide her with any kind of protection; on the contrary she is vulnerable and easily targeted. Therefore, she resorts to violence and starts to throw rocks at the nasty kids and fights with Scalato. Her descension to verbal and physical violence like the other kids highlights her psychic pain. Moreover, the change in Isobel's status from being dead to a contradictory state of being alive but as a ghost that can be seen by few characters reinforces the sense of contradiction and confusion.

Isobel's first monologue adds further distortion to her personal unconscious. She addresses the audience confirming that what lies behind her is her house where she can find her parents, sisters and brothers, but soon she shifts to negate the existence of the house, and in turn of her existence in one long sentence to intensify her sense of imbalance and loss, "Is my house but is not my house is my street but is not my street my people is gone I am lost. I am lost. I AM LOOOOOOOOOOST!" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 15). Her visual picture of home turns to be an illusion because of her disturbed personal unconscious. Memories of her previous life invoke suffering and pain. Therefore, Isobel has kept them for seventeen years hidden in her personal unconscious because she died. However, being present as a ghost, these memories float to the surface of her conscious resulting in this sense of confusion.

Throughout the play, Isobel in her ghostly state is the only character that always exists; sometimes comments on action, just views characters or responds to others. In 'the sugar meeting' episode, Isobel starts to realize that she is invisible, but still she does not know that she is a ghost. While Isobel is talking to herself, watching other characters in the meeting and wondering if she can be seen, Laura seems to confirm her suspicions as if she can hear her:

JILL: Let's let Laura continue please, so we can get out of here.

ISOBEL: I think I invisible!

LAURA: Thank you Jill. I have NOTICED... I have noticed... (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 29)

Laura's response to the invisible Isobel indicates hallucinations caused by her distorted personal unconscious. Laura is presented at work in her 'radicalized dynamic'. However, she practices her oppressive power upon her employees, deprives them of expressing or explaining their arguments: "Laura: SHUT UP RON, LISTEN TO ME RHONDA" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 31). Her resort to verbal violence reduces her status indicating her disturbed psyche that results in hallucinations. She descends from her compassionate state with her

maid's plight in the previous scene to this tyrannical condition. However, the audience is left wondering whether Laura does hear Isobel or not.

The same chaotic composition is evident in the 'Ophelia' episode in which David is introduced as the barman. Then in the following scene the 'Father Hayes' episode, he is presented as a dead man; he was drowned when he was a little boy during a church picnic. Both David and Father Hayes suffer from a confused personal unconscious that is dominated by their painful memories of the church picnic, "I looked I looked up and your hand from the sea, far away, was reaching, reaching for me far away ... oh no! I ran, and tripped, fell on my face ran again, I could not speak ran to the water and shouted as loud as I could but my voice was so tiny" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 41). Father Hayes repressed his memories of the drowning scene because they intensify his sense of guilt. He reverses roles with David who supposedly goes to the church to confess his sins, "David: I have lied to you already. I haven't been to confession in fifteen years, haven't stepped in a church in fifteen years, just [...] did it on a whim" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 38). As the dialogue unfolds, Father Hayes descends from his 'classed dynamic' as a Father to the contradictory status of being the sinner who needs to confess his sin of pride:

DAVID: Confess to me Father, come on, come on [...] Have you confessed this sin?

FATHER HAYES: No, no I haven't, but---

DAVID: God loves sinners who confess [...] I suffered, I need you to tell me! CONFESS...

FATHER HAYES: Forgive me Father for I have sinned.

DAVID: Alright. (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 40)

In one of the dialogues in the 'Dinner party' scene, Sue is presented in the context of her 'radicalized and classed dynamic.' Being a devoted mother and wife, she tries desperately to convince her husband, Bill, to join her back home to maintain their family union.

However, the action escalates when Bill rejects his wife's appeals and decides to join Lily, his mistress, instead. Though Sue is utterly frustrated and yelling, the scene suddenly shifts to display one of the phone calls between Bill and Lily in which she succeeds in seducing Bill. The reversal of roles from Sue to Lily and the sexual insinuations after Sue's vain attempts reinforce the characters' distorted psyche:

SUE [*the wind totally out of her*]: I thought he [Bill] was making ... obscene phone calls.

BILL: Hello

LILY: Hi there

BILL: You got back to me quickly.

LILY: Fucking right.

BILL: Fucking right.

LILY: Your voice makes me crazy. (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 23)

In a final attempt to regain her husband, Sue humiliates herself by performing a striptease in front of the dinner assembly. One more time, Sue and Lily exchange places where Sue places herself in a 'sexualized dynamic' forsaking her motherly 'classed dynamic' role by acting as the hyper-sexualized mistress. This shift to a contradictory role highlights her sense of confusion and loss:

And whoosh ... and ... close to you, you're hard ... and far away and ... turn ... and whoosh ... and ... let ... my ... hair ... down ... you ... love my hair whoosh and ... zipper ... whoooo down so slowwwww turn and turn .... you watching ... whooOOOOOOO Billy. Take me home, Billy and let's make mad passionate love! Please! (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 24)

Sue's desperate feelings of keeping her marital life are intensified by her inability to form complete sentences; she is overwhelmed by her early marriage memories that invaded her

conscious and leads her to produce the previous fragmented speech. The visual image of the honeymoon memory that Sue provides seems distorted. She suffers from her husband's negligence since their early marriage; she tries to be close to him but he is "hard ... and far away and ... turn." Her repressed sexual desires that she preserves hidden in her unconscious float to the surface forming a series of pictorial fragments as the case in Psychedelic art. Her final plead that is the only complete sentence in her speech stresses her agitated and desperate condition.

## 1.2. Intensified sounds, visuals and emotions

A second feature of psychedelic art is the portrayal of "magnified psychedelized imagery- intensified sounds, visuals, emotions, and symbols" (Roberts, p. 103). The release of the suppressed memories in the personal unconscious is accompanied by an aggravated outburst of emotions as depicted in the characters' reactions throughout the play. The audience is equally engaged in a process of "consciousness expansion, cognitive revision, and experimental practice that help disrupt paradigmatic modes of perception and introduce new regimes of emotion" (Cook, p. 17). Thompson aims to motivate the spectators to experience a confrontation similar to that of the characters. While watching these emotional frenzies, the spectators should learn to discharge their anxieties as well and thus to become healthy individuals.

In the 'Ophelia' episode, Isobel overhears a dialogue between the two friends Rhonda and Joanne. Joanne unfolds the seriousness of her bone cancer to Rhonda imploring her to help her die as graceful as Hamlet's Ophelia in a picture in her room. Rhonda confronts her friend with the fact that death is not as beautiful as in the picture: "how the hell do you think that I could live with that after, eh? I mean it's all very lovely and that, your picture, in your room but that's a picture, that's a picture...You can't become a picture, do you know what I mean? I mean you can't ... BE ... a picture, okay?" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 36). At that moment, the two friends "freeze" to divert

the audience's attention to Isobel's reaction; now she realizes that she is not lost; she is a ghost of a murdered girl seventeen years ago:

ISOBEL: AAHHHHHHHHHHH! I am dead! I have been bones for seventeen years, missing, missing, my face in the TV and newspapers, posters, everybody lookin for, nobody find, I am gone, I am dead. I AM DEADLY DEAD! DOWN! It was night, was a lion, roar!! with red eyes; he come closer [*silent scream*] come closer [*silent scream*] ROAR I am kill! I am kill! I am no more! ... [*to Joanne*] We are both pictures now. WHO WILL TAKE US? WHO WILL TAKE US TO HEAVEN, HA!  
(*Lion in the Streets*, pp. 36- 37)

Isobel's emotional outburst unfolds the truth of her phantom-like state. Her intensified emotions and the visual description of her murder invite the audience to share the little girl's painful revelation. The lion usually stands for power and nobility, but Isobel's lion symbolizes oppression and expected danger. Therefore, she identifies her murderer with the lion and is terrified upon remembering the incident. Throughout the progress of the play, Isobel learns to confront the lion instead of escaping from it. Being involved in the same process, the audience is invited to resist his/her lion or human vulnerability as well.

In the 'Figurative Raping' scene, Edward pesters his fiancée Sherry to re-narrate the raping incident she was exposed to many years ago. Though she feels the narration is "like excrement in her mouth" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 56), Sherry continues narrating from Edward's point of view to satisfy his notion of her, especially that he threatens to cancel their wedding. Edward forces her to repeat that she is the one who lured her rapist:

EDWARD: You told her [a lady who helped after the rape], of course, that you are the snake.

SHERRY: I ... am ... the snake?



emotionally and mentally as the case in a psychedelic experience, “Psychedelics amplify or magnify one’s awareness of subjective human experiences, both emotional and cognitive” (Roberts, p. 102).

Furthermore, both Isobel and Sherry have undergone the same hurtful experience of rape; therefore, they support each other. According to Laura Brown (1991) women and girls’ trauma is termed as ‘secret trauma’ because they are forced to sexual relations by men in their patriarchal circles. These are experiences “to which women accommodate; potentials for which women make room in their lives and their psyches. They are private events, sometimes known only to the victim and perpetrator” (121). Isobel and Sherry suffer from this secret trauma. Isobel has actually been raped by Ben in his car, and Sherry is raped twice: the first time literally by the anonymous rapist and the second time figuratively by her fiancé Edward. At the end of the play it is Sherry who takes Isobel to the graveyard to confront her murderer. When Isobel sees Ben, she produces the same deepened outburst of sounds and emotions as Sherry does. Isobel starts calling her murderer while holding her stick: “BEN... ja... men [...] BEN ja men, BEN ja men” (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 62). The intensification of the sounds and emotions of the victims of rape, Sherry and Isobel, is reminiscent of the psychedelic experience in which the artist produces exaggerated visuals in his/her works.

## 2. The Shadow

The Shadow is the second stage of the Individuation process. It corresponds with the personal unconscious and both aspects constitute the unconscious. The shadow is the Jungian term for the Freudian ‘id’: it “personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly—for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies” (Jung, 1968 a, p.265). According to Jung’s model of the psyche the shadow is an integral part of the unconscious where man suppresses his negative or inferior emotions and impulses. In other words, it is “our own ‘dark side’ characterized by inferior, uncivilized or animal qualities which the ego wishes to hide from



others” (Orbach, p. 87). Jung describes the shadow as the dark narrow passage or door that leads to “the deep well” of repressed desires. However, to achieve wholeness man has to confront and overcome his shadow, “one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is” (Jung, 1968 a, p.37). In other words, to realize one’s self to become a complete individual, one has to confront and overcome one’s dark side.

### **2.1. The confrontation**

Scott Hill in *Confrontations with the Unconscious: Jungian Psychology and Psychedelic Experience* asserts that for the complete comprehension and success of the psychedelic experience, the artist has to confront the hidden, mostly terrifying, aspects of the unconscious mind, or the shadow according to Jung. In other words, “one’s willingness to face and acknowledge long-denied aspects of one’s nature, the dark side of the personality that Jung called the shadow” (p.13) determines the accomplishment of the psychedelic experience. Ann Shulgin agrees with Hill’s viewpoint confirming that the spiritual aspect of the experience demands an acknowledgment of the shadow, “I think that psychedelics are great spiritual tools, but like a lot of spiritual experiences, they can take you to very, very dark places, and you can spend quite a lot of time wondering if you’re going to get through some of these experiences” (Shulgin, p. 24). Therefore, psychedelic artists during their trip of Psychodelia move freely with the experience; they unleash their imaginative powers. While on the process of the psychedelic experience the artists confront their shadows which take the shape of frightful visions that they portray. After overcoming their dark sides, they are liberated and claim a new identity, or rather the authentic self, “the shadow (the denied aspects of one’s nature) [...] can help us understand especially challenging psychedelic experiences and their transformative potential” (Hill, p. 6). Thus, the shadow functions as a catalyst that helps one to attain one’s genuine self and achieve freedom.

Judith Thompson presents her characters’ confrontations with their shadows and achievement of “an altered state of consciousness”

(Colombo, p. 43) in turn as in psychedelic art. She believes that inside one's unconscious there are ideas, dreams, fantasies one would hide and keep suppressed as a threatening shadow. Therefore, "Thompson describes this internal struggle as a war going on inside each of us" (Falck, p. 9). Most of the characters discussed in this paper suffer from a conflict between their perceptible states and their shadows that they long suppressed.

In 'Father Hayes' episode, the Father has always evaded the battle with his shadow, that is his sin of pride (Satan's sin). During the church picnic, Father Hayes undergoes a state of trance in which he visualizes the drowning of David (one of the altar boys at that time): "the sound of deep nausea filled my ears and I looked up and saw you [...] and I saw a red circle, a red, almost electric circle [...] spinning round your head and body. I thought watch, watch that boy, on this day he will surely drown, he *will* die, David, *I knew that you would die*" (*Lion in the Streets*, pp. 40- 41). Father Hayes ignores his vision because he wants to prove to men and women in the picnic that he deserves his ecclesiastical position. He forsakes young David for his own religious and social status: "most men hate priests, you know this is a fact, I could see them thinking cruel thoughts under hooded eyes and practiced grins; my sin was the sin of pride! The sin of pride David" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 41).

Once Father Hayes confesses his sin, he succeeds in overcoming his shadow; he feels inner peace and sleeps, as the stage directions indicate. Father Hayes achieves a new realm of consciousness: his previous identity as a sinner dissolves and a new identity of a repentant emerges. His ability to confront and defeat the evil within him endows him with inner satisfaction. In other words, Father Hayes like psychedelic artists succeeds in unshackling himself from his dark side and in claiming a new identity.

While Father Hayes combats the evil within him, Isobel fights the evil outside her; the 'evil' "is primarily a term signifying the experience of dread—the experience of wickedness, suffering, disaster, and anxiety" (Corey, p. 290). Since the onset of the play,

Isobel is terrified of an unknown; as the action unfolds, the audience realizes that she is afraid of her murderer. She keeps avoiding the experience of evil. However, Isobel warns (inaudibly) the other characters especially Sue from the expected danger of the lion. Since nobody can hear her at that time, she decides to confront evil, to avenge her murder, “[*She picks up a great crooked stick which she will carry until she says ‘I love you’ in the final scene*] Watch me! [*laughs*] ... Watch me, watch me, [*a war cry*] I WILL KILL THE LION NOW!!” (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 44). Isobel confronts Ben, her murderer, in the final scene. She asserts her presence by repeating her name while Ben thinks that he is hallucinating. She also reminds him of the whole incident, of his assaults, rape and murder. But instead of killing him, she forgives him. When Isobel rejects violence, she sheds off her ghostly state as a little girl and acquires a new realm of consciousness by being “an adult now” (*Lion in the Streets* 63). Her inner peace and satisfaction is symbolized by her ascension “in her mind into heaven” (*Lion in the Streets* 63), “Even Isobel must wrestle with her hate, her wish for vengeance, before she can find peace. The ideal exemplar, Isobel takes the next step in this moral progress; she shows us victory over passivity as well as pain” (Zimmerman, p. 204). The audience is invited to reconsider Isobel’s reaction and to realize that reconciliation with oneself is the only path to attain freedom of the self.

In the ‘Midnight man’ episode, Scarlett informs Christine of her secret love affair with her imaginary lover. Scarlett’s shadow is embodied in the social outlook towards her, being a disabled woman suffering from cerebral palsy. In other words, she is doubly oppressed by the society, being a woman and disabled:

Her [Scarlett’s] ‘abyss’ is boredom, partly the result of patronizing social attitudes and assumptions which construct the disabled as predominantly unable to participate in ‘normal’ activities like, for instance, sex. Scarlett’s objective might thus be read as the need to escape from her boredom by challenging social

attitudes which diminish the interests and abilities of the disabled and reconstructing herself as someone who can. (Harvie, par. 10)

Her combat with her shadow emerges in the form of visual illusion. Scarlett defies the social norms imposed upon her by inventing the character of ‘the midnight man’ who visits her in moonless nights. She transcends beyond her physical disability and dances with him, “[A MAN enters. He and Scarlett dance romantically around the set. He leaves her back in her chair, immobile and exits] like eels [...] I swim like that colored-up, bright and fast when my boy comes, swirlin and movin in the dark no moon” (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 47). The audience does not believe Scarlett; she cannot move. However, when dance music starts, Scarlett gets up and starts to dance to the music, “I can MOVE when my boy comes [*she swirls*] I am movin, I know I am, I am turnin and swishin and holdin...” (*Lion in the Street*, p. 47). The unexpected shift urges the audience to re-examine the common outlook towards the disabled: “In this scene, as well as in the rest of the play, Thompson appears to be engaging in a realistic fashion with social issues, such as the able-bodied viewer’s perception of the disabled” (LeDrew, p. 37). At the end of the scene, Scarlett manages to achieve inner peace by conquering her shadow and then she dies. She overcomes her disability and the social outlook that Christine represents. By conquering her shadow, Scarlett proves to herself and to the society that she is capable of enjoying her life like the abled ones; she can move, dance and love. Her death at the end of the scene exemplifies her state of inner peace and victory over established social notions.

## 2.2. The animal (lion) or dark side (anima or animus)

According to Carl Jung “in the unconscious of every man there is hidden a feminine personality, and in that of every woman a masculine personality” (Jung, 1968 a, p. 264), that he termed as the ‘anima’ and the ‘animus’ respectively. Anima and animus are the Latin names for the ‘Soul-image’, “The man’s Soul image is female: the anima [and] the woman’s Soul image is a male: the animus”

(Orbach, p. 93). Jung considers both concepts as concrete that can be observed and identified, not abstract.

Jung further explains that the anima or animus image is embedded in the unconscious; therefore, it does not stand for a particular person: “*Even if no women existed, it would still be possible, at any given time, to deduce from this unconscious image exactly how a woman would have to be constituted psychically. The same is true of the woman: she too has her inborn image of man*” (Jung, 1964, p.338). Jung was interested in the interplay between the anima and the animus; he contends that since both are equal in power, when they interact or communicate, love is the expected outcome: “When the anima and animus meet the animus draws his sword of power and the anima ejects her poison of illusion and seduction. The outcome need not always be negative since the two are equally likely to fall in love (a special instance of love at first sight)” (Jung, 1968 b, p. 30). Psychedelic artists portray the relationship between the anima and the animus, whether harmonious or hostile. In Thompson’s play when the anima and the animus meet, the anima uses her deadly seduction and the animus exercises his brutal power.

In the ‘Midnight man’ episode, Isobel introduces the scene by commenting on Christine, from the *Telegraph*, who holds an interview with Scarlett (the young lady with cerebral palsy) about her disability. Isobel identifies Christine with the “lion”, “This girl, Christine, Christine, this girl. SHE will take me to the lion, yes, for she ... she is very hard. Harrrrd. HARRRRRRRD!!” (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 45). Isobel’s comment anticipates danger and violence to be unfolded as the scene progresses. Christine’s first words describing Scarlett’s place as stinky intensify this sense of expected endangerment. Scarlett imagines being visited by a midnight lover; an act that she considers immoral according to her social and religious beliefs. Therefore, she implores Christine not to publish her love affair with the imaginary lover, “PLEASE!! PLEASE!! Please, Christine, my old lady and old man, they’re old, my mum’s had a stroke, my dad’s got MS, this’d kill em, please!! [... ] Reverend Pere and

everybody down the church, they'd think I was a slut, they'd send me to the freakhouse" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 48).

Reacting towards Scarlett's urgent and highly charged emotional pleas, Christine physically attacks Scarlett kicking her in a fit of rage releasing the animal (lion) within her. Scarlett's story with her midnight lover "that Christine wants to introduce to the newspaper would have untenable social ramifications for Scarlett. Despite the inability to transcend the restrictions of her physical circumstances, Scarlett's imagination transcends what Christine has" (Morser 83), which is the sense of belonging. Christine is jealous of Scarlett's ability to belong despite being stuck in a wheel chair; whereas Christine herself, a healthy woman is deprived of this privilege. She fails to claim superiority over Scarlett and her stinky place as she expected at the beginning of the scene.

The 'Midnight man' episode ends with a vivid manifestation of the destructive effect of the animus. The animus in Christine fails to integrate with Scarlett because both are of the same gender, and therefore, it destroys her: "[Christine returns, swooping down like a condor gives Scarlett the kiss of death, Scarlett, thinking it is her lover, responds passionately and then without air, dies]" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 50). Referring to Christine as a lion and a condor reveals her animal nature that is kept hidden under her mask of social status. When the barrier between her inner and outer selves is broken, the animal comes out ready for devastation. Therefore, immediately after this, Isobel touches Christine asserting the domination of her animalistic nature, "SLAVE! *You* are a slave of the lion! You lie with him you laugh you let him bite your neck, you spread your legs. You will take me to him now" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 50).

The following scene between Rodney and Michael reveals the destructive effect of the anima. Michael and Rodney used to be friends during their adolescence and they share lots of memories. However, Michael wants to rid himself of these memories:

QUEER!! Queer queer queer queer queer queer  
QUEER! FAIRY SISSY LITTLE CREEP!!

DON'T YOU EVER ever remember again. YOU have WRECKED my life, your slimy memory, using me over and over and over again like an old porno magazine you will RELINQUISH that memory you will wipe it out, you understand?  
(*Lion in the Streets*, p. 53)

When Rodney rejects his appeals, they fight and then after touching tongues, Rodney takes the knife from Michael and cuts his throat. The anima within Rodney refuses to reconcile with Michael's because they belong to the same sex. Therefore, it turns to be destructive. Rodney identifies himself with his anima and therefore he refuses Michael's request; according to Jung "Identifying completely with the anima can lead to effeminate homosexuality or transvestism" (Orbach, p. 94). This practice of homosexual behavior is what Michael rejects even in memory. The detrimental outcome of the animus and anima is brutal murder to which both Scarlett and Michael fall victims. The devastating power of the animus and the anima portrayed by Christine and Rodney, respectively, results in the death of two apparently weak but actually strong figures, Scarlett and Michael, who remind their oppressors by their dark sides. In other words, both Christine and Rodney are incapable of confronting their shadows and therefore their animus and anima are to remain brutal and destructive.

### **3. The Self**

According to the Jungian model of the psyche, the self is the great totality to which both the conscious and the unconscious belong, and it is responsible for keeping the balance between them. It is "this personal being who represents the higher unity of conscious and unconscious... [it is] a psychic totality and at the same time a centre, neither of which coincides with the ego but includes it, just as a larger circle encloses a smaller one" (Harris, 2016, p. 301). Identifying the self is the last stage in the Individuation process because once the self is restored the human psyche achieves integrity, "the wholeness of the personality" (Orbach, p. 88). In other words, when one succeeds in

bridging the gap between the conscious and the unconscious, one is psychologically healed and becomes a healthy individual.

The pictures (drawn by patients) that Jung used in his explanation of the Individuation process are similar to psychedelic art in bridging the gap between the unconscious and the conscious. The drawings “illustrate the characteristic psychic processes which set in the moment one gives a mind to that part of the personality which has remained behind, forgotten. Scarcely has the connection been established when symbols of the self appear, trying to convey a picture of the total personality” (Jung, 1968, p. 339). In other words, breaking the boundaries between the conscious and the unconscious help psychedelic artists to overcome the split between both aspects. Because psychedelic art is characterized by lacking definite stylistic features, it could blend the figurative and the abstract, the real and the fantastic...etc. (Rivers, p. 87) to heal the split between the conscious and the unconscious. After achieving individuation or wholeness, one transcends to a state of grace in which one’s soul enjoys a new realm of freedom. Psychedelic art portrays “representations of altered states of consciousness” (Colombo, p. 41) presented in near death experiences, meditation, trance states, or dreams.

### **3.1. A new realm of consciousness**

According to Daniel Pinchbeck, under the influence of psychedelics, the artist discovers “lost modes of sensory and extrasensory perception” (p. 52) that he/she portrays in the psychedelic work of art. These new realms enhance the artist’s experience providing a different state of consciousness in which the conscious and the unconscious are healed, and in turn the artist attains the genuine self. Judith Thompson deploys this psychedelic style to allow her characters and audience to achieve a different state of consciousness that would inevitably lead to restoring the self.

In the ‘George-Maria’ episode, George and his wife Laura are engaged in a dialogue making fun of Sue’s striptease performance. The audience discovers that Laura pretends to be Sue’s friend, but at the time of suffering she mocks and abandons her. Laura is one of the



characters in the play who would not regain her self because of her hypocrisy and oppressive nature. While talking, Laura remembers her maid, Maria (Isobel's mother), and suddenly George “[*grabs a tablecloth and wraps it around his head, like a shawl, speaking in a Portuguese accent*]” (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 25) playing the role of Maria. This shift of identities drives the audience out of his/her comfortable zone to reconsider the following scene. Maria-George starts to narrate the incident of her husband's death, while Isobel is watching. She enters her husband's body and feels his pain, sufferings and death, “I can see through his eyes, am at subway, in him [...] I am his head [...] I am his throat, tight, cannot breathe enough air in my body the floor the floor move, and sink in [...] and over and under I fall! [*Isobel falls on an imaginary track in front of her mother*]” (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 27). Maria and her husband belong to the marginalized and poor category in the society; however, their marital relationship is based on mutual affection, unlike their affluent masters, Laura and George. When Isobel falls, getting engaged in the death experience, she starts to suspect that she does not belong to the world of the living anymore. Moreover, the audience is invited to perceive human relations differently and to reconsider the established outlook towards the poor.

In the ‘Ophelia’ episode, the friendship between Rhonda and Joanne contradicts the previous one between Laura and Sue. At the moment of crisis, Rhodna is willing to help her friend; she even opens for her a new realm of consciousness when she presents to her the true frightful side of death. Rhodna is the opposite of Laura though she is her employee and belongs to a lower social status. However, she is conscious of the aspects life unlike Laura. Joanne wants to look like Hamlet's Ophelia in her deathbed. She asks Rhodna to help her copy Ophelia's suicide:

She [Ophelia] wrapped all these pretty pretty flowers round and round her body, round her head... and then she steps down the bank, and she lies, on her back, in the stream... she's not scared, she's not scared at all, she's calm, so

happy! She dies, Rhon, she dies ... good. She dies good... I want to die like that... I want you to help me, with the flowers, and with the dress, and my hair. (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 35)

Rhonda shatters Joanne's illusionary picture of death; Joanne has to confront the terrifying side of death and to be conscious of it. Ophelia's flowers "would be chokin"; the smooth stream would be freezing and filled with "sewage [...] cigarette packets [...] used condoms..."; even others would not respect the death scene, they would keep yelling insulting her and calling her "whorebag" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 36). According to Rebecca LeDrew in her study of the play, Thompson's technique "may appear disorienting, and even frightening, but it leads to a kind of liberation for the characters and even the audience. The terror and confusion experienced by the characters in the play help to perform a kind of psychical healing, similar to that practiced by contemporary psychoanalysts" (p. 56). Therefore, though the audience is not provided with Joanne's reaction to Rhonda's horrifying picture of death, Isobel realizes that she is a ghost. Isobel's awareness develops her consciousness; now she knows that she is a ghost of a little girl murdered seventeen years ago and anticipates the danger to come.

In the opening scene, Sue rescues Isobel from the harassment of the kids pacifying her and telling her that she is her helper. Ironically, Sue has previously failed to help herself and her sisters when exposed to aggression of bikers, and in the following scene she also fails to keep her husband, Bill. Sue can see Isobel, though she is a ghost; she can also see the other kids, though this incident supposedly took place seventeen years ago. Later in the scene, Sue perceives Isobel's dead father and tries to communicate with him but he refuses and orders his daughter to go inside the house in Portuguese. Using another language that Sue probably does not understand dissociates the man from Sue. In other words, every one of them is completely isolated in his/her world. When Sue returns home, her son Timmy sets the nightmarish fantasy of the play, "Mummy? Why isn't magic true? I want magic true... I think tonight's the night... that we're all gonna die. Tonight's

the night we're gonna die" (*Lion in the Street*, p. 19). In fact it is the time when masks fall down; the conscious and the unconscious are merged and the genuine self emerges. The integration between the conscious and the unconscious is reinforced by these shifts between reality and fantasy forcing the audience to reconsider the status of the marginalized and the poor (Isobel and her father) and the weak (Sue herself), "These disruptions highlight the constructed nature of Thompson's play world, where actors/characters move in and out of realistic space and time" (Friesen, p. 75). By blurring the line between reality and fantasy, Thompson succeeds in invigorating the mental faculties of the audience to reevaluate the characters and their roles. Similar to Psychedelic art, when the gap between the conscious and the unconscious is bridged, the artist's genuine self emerges and his/her creative faculties are revealed in the work of art.

### **3.2. The level of grace**

Healing the split between the conscious and the unconscious to attain wholeness would lead to freedom of the self. Once the self is liberated, idealism and hope are generated. Jonathan Harris contends that the psychedelic experience allows the artist to "see the mind afresh [sic!], or the body or the world [...] that one could or would or should abstract and 'get out of one's mind' via intense [...] cognitive stimulation" (Harris, 2005, p.11). Judith Thompson challenges the mental faculties of her audience by providing a significant tableau at the end of each act.

After Father Hayes confesses his sin of pride, David decides to forgive him. He absolves Hayes of his crime (he prefers his personal glory to the life of David), "I forgive you, I forgive you Father, it was nice on the water, you know? It was neat, so calm, as I slipped underneath I wasn't scared, I'll tell ya. I wasn't scared a bit" (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 42). Immediately after this benevolent act of forgiveness, the characters one by one joined by Isobel start to dance collectively. The virtue of forgiveness eliminates negative feelings such as rage and vengeance, and raises one to the level of grace.

David's act of forgiveness develops to another similar act, but it is more refined because it involves not only virtue but also a strong human emotion. At the end of the play, Isobel is guided by Sherry to her grave and in the graveyard she encounters her persecutor, Ben. Isobel is already armed by a huge stick and declares more than one time that she is going to take revenge on her murderer. However, Isobel suddenly decides to forgive Ben:

ISOBEL: I'm Isobel.

BEN: What ... do you want?

ISOBEL: I have come.

BEN: what do you want?

ISOBEL: [*she is about to kill him with the stick, the forces of vengeance and forgiveness warring inside her- forgiveness wins*] I love you.

BEN: NO!!

ISOBEL: *You took my last breath!*

BEN: Christ I'm sick, I'm so sick.

*Isobel: I want back my life. Give me back my life (Lion in the Streets, p. 63)*

Isobel's forgiveness is more sophisticated than David's because it is conditioned by love. She does not only choose virtue, but she also advocates noble feelings. Forgiveness is a higher human quality, but forgiveness and love exceed human limits. Therefore, Isobel deserves to ascend to heaven, "Isobel's quest can be described as the search for healing, self-awareness, and agency. Her ascension to heaven completes the journey" (Friesen, p. 167). Isobel, an adult now, according to the stage directions succeeds in achieving grace by liberating herself from negative human aspects. Both her conscious and unconscious selves are healed; accordingly, her self is liberated reaching the realm of grace. The conflict between forgiveness and vengeance within her and her conscious choice of forgiveness is reflected in Thompson's definition of grace; it is something hard to

achieve and one has to exert an effort to attain this super-human level, “Grace is something you achieve. Through work. And Grace is something you have to work and work at. It happens through penitence, through sight. Through seeing who you are and changing things. You achieve it through humility” (Rudakoff, p. 103). Thus, according to Thompson the key word to self-realization and in turn liberation is modesty or rather self-effacement. Her characters who manage to achieve ‘Grace’ are the ones who repent their evil deeds and reconcile with themselves by disposing their arrogance.

Isobel’s act encourages the audience to follow the same path, “I want you all to take your life. I want you all to have your life” (*Lion in the Streets*, p. 63). Attaining grace endows her with the ability to guide others. In other words, Isobel’s ideal act of forgiveness gives the audience hope to succeed like her because her new status is the prize of her active will power, not an inevitable outcome of the action in the play, as the case in Aristotelian drama. At the end, she is encircled by the other characters, including Ben who seems to have repented his evil deeds, and they sing a “*joyful chorale*” celebrating Isobel’s victory. Then the last thing viewed by the audience is Isobel’s veil that stands for her purity and ‘humility’ (to borrow Thompson’s word). The two collective dances at the end of the acts prove Robert Mogar’s perspective of the psychedelic experience that focuses on unity rather than individuality using non-verbal means; it increases the ability “to recognize and hence respond to fundamental sense impressions’ without semantic barriers. “The freshness of perception and feeling of unity which characterize the experience suggest that the ‘is’ of identity is temporarily eliminated” (Mogar, par. 5). This viewpoint coincides with Thompson’s interest in the collective or shared experiences as presented in her play, or what Jung terms as the ‘shared human spirituality’.

## Conclusion

Thompson's play *Lion in the Streets* is similar to psychedelic art in the sense that it provides a new definition of the self. The characters and the audience acquire a consciousness of their selves and their social perspectives. Her play world or 'Streets' is charged with scenes of violence, humiliation and injustice. It is a world that is shocking and alarming; therefore, redemption that is achieved by forgiveness is the solution that Thompson offers. Because she portrays her characters engaged in evilness and corruption, they are in need of undergoing the individuation process to regain their genuine selves. Some of them are elevated to the level of grace, and others maintain their vicious lives, but many of them are saved calling for the audience to follow. The characters, as psychedelic artists, experience the three stages of individuation.

In the first phase, the 'personal unconscious' of the characters is explored in the light of two features of Psychedelic art, namely: the unstable contradictions and the intensified sounds, emotions and visuals. Thompson exposes the psychic distortion, contradiction and painful memories of her characters and employs intensified expressions of emotions and sounds to reveal their loss and suffering.

In the second phase, the present paper examines the dark side of the characters or the shadow according to Jung. The psychedelic elements discussed in this part include the confrontation with the shadow and the destructive effects of the anima and animus. Thompson divulges the hidden 'shadows' of the characters allowing them to disclose their animal side (the lion) including the devastating 'anima and animus'. She deconstructs reality and presents a blend of the distorted and the frightening to reveal her point.

In the third phase which is the self, some characters manage to heal the split between their conscious and unconscious and in turn they realize their genuine selves. The two aspects of Psychedelic art dealt with are the new realm of consciousness that the psychedelic artist achieves, and in turn it leads him/her to a higher spiritual level which is that of grace. Thompson manages to take her repentant

characters to the stage of realizing their genuine selves and thus liberating themselves to attain grace. To conclude, by reading the play through the lens of Psychedelic art and deploying the Jungian Individuation theory the present paper finds out that Thompson succeeds in applying some techniques of Psychedelia following Jung's model of human psyche, and this blend of visual arts and psychology can be further investigated by scholars.

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