The Appearance of Archetypes in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*

Jennifer Reiten, English Major

Mentor: Dr. Hilary Fezzey, Associate Professor of English

*Thesis*

Analyzing Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* from a psychological stance allows readers to explore the meanings of certain characters and concepts in his stories. Carl Jung’s concepts of archetypes and the collective unconscious in particular offer a fruitful way to interpret Carroll’s work. Using a Jungian psychological perspective, this project argues that archetypes of water, the quest, the trickster, and the wise old man are present in *Through the Looking-Glass* and then outline their ultimate purpose.

*Archetypes*

**Water**

According to Jung, “the archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (5).

**The Quest**

“The quest usually involves a difficult search for a magical or holy item that will return fertility and abundance to a desolate state. A related pattern is that of the need to perform a nearly impossible task so that all will be well. Often found as part of both these situations is the journey, suggesting a psychological, as well as physical, movement from one place, or state of being, to another” (Dobie 67).

**The Trickster(s)**

This figure is known to be mischievous, disorderly, foolish, and able to outwit many. In some folktales, the trickster figure works to corrupt, lead others astray from their morals, and has even been described as “demonic” (Jung 255).

**The Wise Old Man**

The wise old man is also known as “the enlightener, the master and teacher,” and this archetype has also been referred to as the archetype “of meaning” (Jung 37), as it “symbolizes the pre-existent meaning hidden in the chaos of life” (Jung 35).

**Works Cited**


