PATHWAYS INTO THE DARK:
THREE WINDOWS ON JUDITH THOMPSON'S LION IN THE STREETS

by

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ABSTRACT

In the plays of Judith Thompson there is a common conflict, that of the animal caged, a metaphor for the battle that ensues between the conscious and the unconscious, between social propriety and animal desire. In Lion In The Streets Thompson explores the relationship of the individual to society. How the individual personality, through socialization in our modern world, becomes tormented and twisted.

This thesis offers three separate and distinct frames through which we may decipher the labyrinth of image and thought in Lion, and as I approached the play three main questions drove my investigation. My first interest is in decoding the true conflict of Lion. Although a great deal of violence is perpetrated between characters, this is simply a masking of the true violence which is internalized. Through the application of a Freudian framework the true conflict is identified and we come to a realization of the intense and intimate realtionship existing between the conscious and the unconscious.

The second chapter deals with the spine of the play, Isobel's journey. When reading the script I found Isobel to be the driving force of the plot, yet, in the performance of Lion at Touchstone Theatre in Vancouver, I was bemused by the way Isobel faded from focus as the numerous vignettes drove the plotline. In an attempt to clarify the throughline of the journey, I have incorporated a Jungian model that exposes Isobel's journey as the internalized
journey to self-realization.

In the third chapter, the theatrical world of Judith Thompson is discussed. A world of absolute artistic licence, disinterested in the conventions of realism, and based in the free association of image and action. Here we are thrown into a realm of imagination where there is no distinction between the real and the imagined, between life and death, between past and future. And Lion thrives on the internal dialogue of its characters where unconscious thought and feeling is exposed as the characters are stripped of their public skins. In Lion, Thompson has created a dream landscape that leaves its characters hanging perilously on the edge of nightmare.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson's Eternal Conflict:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Conscious Versus The Unconscious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey From Shadow To Light -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungian Psychology and Symbolism in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion In The Streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson's Theatrical World -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Truth Of Dream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs From The Touchstone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production of <em>Lion In The Streets.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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This paper brings to a close three years of work within the walls of the Frederic Wood Theatre, and I would like to acknowledge the talent and spirit of those who have safely guided me on my journey to greater understanding. It was Peter Loeffler who first inspired me to attend U.B.C., and who has kept me honest since. Errol Durbach has kept me afloat, both financially and philosophically, and I needed that. And to Jerry Wasserman, who took on myself and this thesis, the highest salute for courage and patience. But, at this passing, my greatest gratitude goes to Noreen Brown and Robert Lindsay for having the insight to bring me into this world. And let us not forget, the Province of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada to whom twenty-two thousand dollars comes due next month. My greatest thanks to you all. Salut!
PATHWAYS INTO THE DARK:

THREE WINDOWS ON JUDITH THOMPSON'S LION IN THE STREETS

The theatrical voice of Judith Thompson offers some of the most exciting and intense moments of today's theatre. Thompson's realm is the murky depths of the unconscious where logic is defeated by imagination, and inconsistencies, improbabilities and fantasy rule action. It is here that Thompson reaches into the audience's unconscious and pulls forth primal emotions previously hidden, transporting the audience member from the safe confines of reality to the unknown landscape and inner workings of the human psyche.

Thompson's writing finds its genesis through the tapping of her unconscious, that dark nether-realm she feels closely tied to as she describes herself as a "screen door swinging between the unconscious and conscious mind."\(^1\) Thompson's interest in the dark side of human nature is representative of our age where the ideal objective is the liberated self. Today freedom is equated with self-expression, the abolishing of external constraints and the expression of one's inner and authentic voice. In Lion In The Streets Thompson succeeds at this by developing a dream landscape devoid of all confines of realism, focused on a plotline perpetuated by the casual flow of free thought. The unconscious lives of the characters are acted out as an inner dialogue blatantly voices their most intimate thoughts and feelings, skinning them of their public facades. Through this line of
investigation we realize how extraordinary and complex the human animal is. That within us all there live evil demons, virtuous heroes, and the power of the divine.

Lion, as all theatre, rotates around the central, primal axis of conflict. Judith Thompson's conflict is psychological: a modern depiction of the human condition where it is no longer man against God, but human against self. In a world where individuals are spiritually starving, the highest challenge and greatest accomplishment is the attainment of self. In Lion we witness a succession of characters groping for understanding and meaning through the attainment of power, wealth and material desire. With the exception of Isobel, they fail miserably. Only Isobel is willing to risk the inner path and make the journey to self-realization.

My first introduction to the work of Judith Thompson occurred three years ago with the reading of Crackwalker. My initial reaction was one of utter confusion. Two years later, while searching for a thesis topic, Lion In The Streets fell into my lap. The Canadian premiere had been mounted at Tarragon in Toronto, but a Vancouver premiere was planned for December, 1991. Through discussion with the artistic director, Roy Surette, I was allowed to sit in on preliminary rehearsals, and from that moment on Lion In The Streets became a constant companion. This thesis is a culmination of both intense script analysis and personal reaction to the play in production.

As I approached Lion, my thoughts turned to three main
questions, the answers to which have produced three separate chapters offering different avenues of investigation. The first chapter applies itself to the nature of the conflict in Lion. What is the true conflict? There is an incredible amount of violence in the plays of Judith Thompson, yet it appears as only a mask, a veiling of a deeper internal conflict. I searched for a framework that would illuminate the basis for the violence and found, through Freudian analysis, an understanding of the intense, intimate relationship between the conscious and the unconscious.

My second interest dealt with the spine of the play, Isobel's journey. What does the journey depict? On the first reading of Lion I was moved by the story of Isobel and perceived the action of the play as steps in a personal journey towards self-peace. Yet, on seeing the play in performance at Touchstone, I was bemused by the way Isobel faded from focus as the numerous vignettes drove the plotline, leaving Isobel to simply react to their passing. Who instigates the action of the play? Is the play a series of actions motivated by Isobel or acting upon Isobel? In the second chapter a Jungian framework is brought to the script, exposing Isobel's journey as the internalized journey to self-realization.

The third chapter is a discussion of the theatrical world of Judith Thompson, a world of absolute artistic licence devoid of the conventions of realism and based in irregularities and inconsistencies. It is a realm where characters considered dead talk and interact with live characters; where a tense of a sentence changes in mid speech; where improbable action is accepted without
question, and where six actors play twenty-seven roles involving the changing of age, sex, and personality. It is the realm of dream that hangs perilously on the edge of nightmare.

Although it may seem inconsistent to discuss *Lion In The Streets* through both a Freudian and Jungian framework, it is not. It is in keeping with Judith Thompson's style of writing where she focuses on an unconscious mind disinterested in right and wrong, and focused on a steady flow of loosely associated images and ideas. The following three chapters offer three distinctly different frames yet they all share the same intent, the deciphering of the labyrinth of image and thought at the heart of *Lion In The Streets*. 
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER ONE:
THOMPSON’S ETERNAL CONFLICT:
THE CONSCIOUS VERSUS THE UNCONSCIOUS

It is obvious enough that psychology, being the study of psychic processes, can be brought to bear upon the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all the sciences and arts.

-- C.G. Jung
Modem Man In Search Of A Soul
THOMPSON'S ETERNAL CONFLICT:
THE CONSCIOUS VERSUS THE UNCONSCIOUS

In the plays of Judith Thompson there is a common conflict, that of the animal caged, a metaphor for the battle that ensues between the conscious and the unconscious, between social propriety and animal desire. From her first play, The Crackwalker, to her latest play, Lion In The Streets, Thompson has been interested in the relationship of the individual to society. How the individual personality, through socialization in our modern world, becomes tormented and twisted. Society is depicted as a modern day hell where our natural desires and instincts are forcibly denied, a state which brings about grave consequences of deprivation, frustration and aggression. Thompson strips away the external facades of her characters in an attempt to expose to us the raw flesh of our human nature, and this is the basis for the often uncomfortable, sexual, and violent nature of Judith Thompson's work. When asked to explain why people walk out of her plays in disgust Thompson responded, "It's this animal we all have tucked away in the corner of our unconscious and it's very frightening to see the cage unlocked."¹

Thompson is following a well-steeped tradition of playwrighting, the ever-appealing and essentially dramatic theme of inner struggle between conscious mind and unconscious self, the same conflict that inspired Shakespeare's The Tragedy of Hamlet,
Prince of Denmark and Goethe's Faust. Unlike such classical works, however, Lion In The Streets follows in the wake of Freud's discoveries in psychoanalysis and contains explicit use of Freud's theories of the unconscious. In itself the concept of the unconscious is highly dramatic as it incorporates all human nature from the bizarrely abnormal to the tediously average. Playwrights, poets and philosophers realized the existence of the unconscious centuries before Freud, but it was Freud that produced a scientific method for its study, a detailed framework through which the characters of such playwrights as Judith Thompson can be interpreted. Freud once wrote, "Our scientific work in psychology will consist in translating unconscious processes into conscious ones, and thus filling the gaps in conscious perceptions."² This intention is shared by Judith Thompson as she writes "to explore the huge chasm between the social persona and the inner life, to find out who people really are."³

The metaphor of the animal caged stands for Desire - a desire sexual or spiritual, passionate or passive, intentional or spontaneous, but always socially unavowable. For moral, religious, or ideological reasons, such as concepts of dignity and pride, the conscious self disavows the desire. This conscious self is the result of society's definitions of common morality and its attempt to control natural human desires, both passive and aggressive, as it elevates human existence above animal nature. However, as is seen in Lion, this illusion begins a battle between the conscious and the unconscious as the unconscious desire gains strength and
attempts to break through into consciousness, often resulting in violent outpourings of emotional and physical abuse. In Lion, as in her previous works, Thompson focuses on humankind as predominantly unconscious and warns us that a society out of touch with its innate nature is also out of control.

A language for the unconscious was discovered by Freud that involved the reduction of life to a battle between urging and checking forces, and included a topography of the self: the id, the ego, and the superego. In a mentally healthy person these three main systems are in balance, but should the balance falter and a power struggle erupt between the systems, the result is maladjustment. The id's function is the initial principle of life, the pleasure principle, where the aim is to relieve all tension through pleasure and release. It is the seat of the instincts, both sexual and aggressive, and it is a completely subjective system governed without reason as it holds no values or morality. It is here in the id that wishes may be fulfilled through the magic of imagination, hallucination and dream. The ego is the opposite of the id as it is governed by the reality principle and focused on the necessary demands of survival - food and reproduction. The ego thinks and is interested only in the objective world of physical reality. The third main system, the superego, houses our moral code, the assimilation of parental standards of virtuous and sinful behaviour. It is the embodiment of internal self-discipline and has two subsystems: the "ego ideal" which corresponds to the morally good, and the "conscience" which responds to the morally
incorrect. Traditional values and the ideals of society constitute the superego, and it is, therefore, the superego which regulates the natural impulses of sex and aggression. These components of the psyche will become central concepts in the discussion of the conflict in Lion In The Streets.

In Lion Thompson develops an environment focused mainly on dialogue and group situations where a large number of characters interact in a series of vignettes, each bringing forth a mini-catharsis as different animals are exposed. Here internal conflict is deduced from social action, broadening the examination of human behavior to include community as well as self. The characters of Lion, complete with their numerous frailties and fears, are seen to be social products of a modern society where concepts of introspection and self-knowledge have been usurped by materialist desire. The throughline of the play is Isobel, a young girl who comes back from the dead and threads a journey through the lives, both conscious and unconscious, of the other characters as she slowly weaves her way to self-realization. With the exception of Isobel, the characters of Lion are recognized as average faces from our modern world, and the numerous unflattering, terrifying animals they expose are native inhabitants of our human psyche.

In Lion in The Streets each character, with the exception of Isobel, preys upon another character for self-gratification. Freud studied the human desire for cruelty and organized his views into the concept of the death instinct. Freud believed that a desire for self-destruction was at the base of all aggressive instincts,
yet the aggressive instincts were only noticeable when diverted outward towards the world in acts of exterior destruction. It is this desire that he considered the "greatest impediment to civilization" and brought Freud to a grim conclusion:

The existence of this inclination to aggression, which we can detect in ourselves and justly assume to be present in others, is the factor which disturbs our relations with our neighbour and which forces civilization into such a high expenditure of energy. In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. The interest of work in common would not hold it together; instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests.

Consistently throughout Lion this hypothesis is proved true as each character threatens and acts out emotional and physical assault on another. These acts of violence occur in the conscious lives of the characters as well as in their unconscious, therefore depicting violence as not only a reality of our physical existence, but as a prime characteristic of our fantasy life as well. Violence is infectious. It increases steadily throughout the play, crossing both class and generational boundaries as it involves rich and poor, adults and children.

Lion In The Streets portrays the modern world as a war zone where hostility and abuse have become the predominant language of communication and the cornerstone of relationships. Immediately in the first scene of Lion four children (Nellie, Rachel, Scalato, and Martin) begin to verbally berate Isobel as she attempts to find her way home. Isobel retaliates with threats, throws rocks at the
children, and eventually engages in a physical skirmish with Scalato. Two scenes later, Sue is told that her husband, Bill, is leaving her for another woman, Lily, and the otherwise conservative Sue becomes enraged and beats Lily until restrained by others. In the following scene we witness the re-enacted suicide of Antonio, Isobel's father, who threw himself under a subway train. And two scenes later in the "Ophelia" scene Isobel realizes she isn't invisible but dead, the victim of a child molester, bringing the play into sharper focus as the audience realizes the plot involves the journey of a murdered child.

In Act Two the theme of violence escalates as death is portrayed on stage. The first murder involves Christine, a hardnosed reporter, who without provocation beats to death Scarlett, a severely handicapped cerebral palsy victim. Then, on the heels of this murder, we are immediately introduced to Rodney, Christine's research assistant, who loses control and enters a hallucination where he meets and kills his childhood friend Michael. The cycle of violence that is in force from the beginning and steadily gaining momentum as the play unfolds is finally broken in the last scene where Isobel, in an incredible unsolicited act, forgives and offers her love to her murderer, Ben.

A substantial amount of violence in Lion is the direct unleashing of the id's repressed natural aggression; the physical releasing of pent-up hostilities, frustrations and anxieties in an attempt to purge the self. Not all the hostility, however, is directly vented through physical violence. A great deal remains to
be released by sublimation. The superego, as the unconscious system that houses our moral code and is responsible for the regulation of the natural impulses to sex and aggression, is capable of gaining satisfaction for the id by attacking people who are considered immoral by the superego. Here we find cruelty masquerading as moral indignation.

The first example of the superego's vindication of the id is a common experience in our modern multicultural world. In the first scene where the children meet Isobel on the street not only are Nellie, Rachel, Scalato, and Martin empowered by their numbers (four to one), but also by the fact that Isobel is Portuguese:

ISOBEL: You, girl, you help to me. I am lost you see! You help!

NELLIE: She smells.

RACHEL: You should dial 911 so the police can help you.

SCALATO: Where do you live?

MARTIN: With all the other pork and cheese west of Christie street?

RACHEL: Martin that's not nice.

ISOBEL: (overlapping) Portuguese, Portuguese, yes...I catch a bus, bus maybe? To take me to my home? You know a bus?

SCALATO: No buses here.

ISOBEL: Yah, bus right here, bus right here, number ten, eleven, I take with my mother to cleaning job, where this bus?

SCALATO: I said there's no buses here you ugly little SNOT.
ISOBEL: (Points) You! YOU bad boy you bad boy say Isobel, BAD.

SCALATO: Why don't you get your ugly little face outa here snot?

MARTIN: Snotface!

ISOBEL: Shutup boy, shutup, I kill you I kill you boy.

SCALATO: Hey she's gonna kill me!

RACHEL: She's a witch.

(Isobel tosses rocks at them)

MARTIN: She's throwin rocks! Hey she's throwin rocks!

NELLIE: STOP IT.

RACHEL: Stop throwin rocks or we'll tell the police!

ISOBEL: You BAD boy you Bad I will kill you.

SCALATO: (Jumping off, attacking her) You just try it you god damned faggot! Faggot! Faggot!! (Hitting her).

Judith Thompson is depicting a familiar modern situation where children have adeptly assimilated society's acceptance of race and class antagonism. Our desire for release of frustration through aggression is brought to fruition through the hypocrisy of the superego and its moral code. Due to the differences of class and race, these children feel confident in their verbal and physical abuse of Isobel. This confidence has been nurtured by society to such an extent that the children are surprised at Isobel's acts of resistance.

The class antagonism seen in the children in the first scene
is then mirrored by adults at the daycare meeting. Laura, a well-to-do mother of twins, enters into a discussion on the dangers of sugar with Rhonda, the overweight, lower-class daycare worker who is responsible for the nutrition of the children. Under the guise of discussing meal planning Laura is undermining Rhonda's professional credibility and personally attacking Rhonda for her love of food:

LAURA: I have noticed that sugar is used as a reward. If you're good we'll make cookies tomorrow. If you tidy up you get chocolate cake as a reward. You are creating...unwittingly, I concede, you are creating TOMORROW'S, TOMORROW'S COKE ADDICTS... TO--

RHONDA: EXCUSE ME I HAVE TO SAY THAT AS THE CAREGIVER, I RESENT THIS.

LAURA: Rhonda, I'm not accusing just you, I think you are fabulous with the kids, it's our whole society...

RHONDA: I'm not creating drug addicts.

Laura continues later]

LAURA: ....LISTEN. LISTEN TO ME RHONDA. I FOUND OUT THAT JUST LAST FRIDAY, LAST FRIDAY, AS A REWARD, YOU TOOK SIX KIDS, INCLUDING MY TWINS TO A DONUT SHOP. YOU TOOK THEM TO A DONUT SHOP AND BOUGHT THEM EACH A JELLY DONUT. I think I screamed for five minutes when the twins told me that I just couldn't believe it they started harassing me every five minutes, "Mum, if we're good, can we have a jelly donut?" I don't think they'd ever HEARD OF JELLY DONUTS BEFORE THAT!! I find it unconscionable, UNCONSCIONABLE that a jelly donut
would be the sole purpose of an excursion.

Laura's contempt for Rhonda is a direct response to our society's view of desire. Through Laura's eyes Rhonda represents a lack of self-respect and self-discipline, a view resulting from Laura's assimilation of society's severe standards of female beauty and health. This social standard has been blown so far out of proportion that Laura easily equates the intake of sugar to the use of cocaine. Laura is projecting her own fear and hatred of her desire for food onto Rhonda, blaming Rhonda for fulfilling a desire otherwise disavowed. This conflict also centres on class interest as class division empowers the wealthy and debases the poor. As we see in this scene, social position is a well-honed weapon strongly entrenched in our society's superego, but Rhonda quickly exposes the class antagonism for what it is:

I feel...nailed to the wall by you lady, nailed right to the fucking wall.... I think you...are very...inconsiderate...of feelings! I brought up two kids on what I feed your kids, and they turned out just fine, are you telling me what I feed my kids isn't good enough for your kids? You know the funny thing is, Laura, you may be a bitch on wheels, but lookin at the rest of you, Laura? At least you're honest you are. Youse others, what you're thinkin is...it doesn't really matter what they get at the daycare the real learning is done at home....at home you teach your kids...to be...higher kind of people, higher kind of people don't eat Kraft slices and tuna casserole, I've seen that kind a laugh in your voices, all of you, when you say "oh, they
had tuna casserole" I seen, I have seen the roll in your eyes at the grace before meals, or the tidy up song, or the stars we give out for citizen of the week, you think, oh well we can undo all that and we can make the kids high people, like ourselves better people, more better people than the poor little teacher who reads ROMANCE.

Laura's greatest fear rests with her belief that her children may develop to be like Rhonda - a social misfit. Judith Thompson, at the same time as describing class divisions, has created a conflict that represents the eternal battle between the natural forces of the id (Rhonda) and the social control of the superego (Laura).

Rhonda leads the play into the following "Ophelia" scene where the discussion turns to the human dilemma of the acceptance of death. Joanne knows she is dying of bone cancer and has asked her best friend, Rhonda, to help her "die good" like Ophelia in the pre-Raphaelite painting. Joanne vehemently desires to control death, fearing her vision of being "under the ground, under the ground with my flesh falling off a my face" and wishing to replace it with the vision of Ophelia, encircled in beautiful flowers, singing sweetly as the water carries her swiftly downstream to a calm and tragically dignified death. This fantasy empowers Joanne to face death, and the act of suicide allows her the promise of control and dignity to the end. As Joanne explains, "it's the one thing that would make it alright - it's the one thing...." Freud's theories categorize such imaginings as wish-fulfillment, a desire formulated in the id with no consideration for the reality
principle. Judith Thompson establishes the reality principle through Rhonda who destroys Joanne's illusion and spirit with a decisive blow to the logic of the idealized suicide:

The Joanne I know is practical she...you should believe in the treatments, Jo, they do work sometimes, they really do, and the Joanne I know - would never ask a friend, to help...how the hell do you think 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, you dimwit!.... Joanne you can't become a picture, do you know what I mean? I mean you can't... BE...a picture, okay?"  

At the beginning of the scene Joanne has an exterior vision of self to cling to. The naive romanticism of her illusion lends her a strange, wonderful empowerment. Rhonda, sensing this power and desiring to crush it to elevate herself, rallies to the realm of the ego, cruelly undermining and robbing Joanne of her vital and precarious sense of self, offering nothing in return. Rhonda, previously victimized by Laura, victimizes Joanne.

The harshest scene of violence in *Lion* comes near the end of the play where Ed forces Sherry to relive her rape that occurred six years before. Not only is Sherry to relive the event but she is to take full responsibility for it. Sherry is a woman who has been raised with traditional values that encourage women to give up personal power to men in their lives. Ed only needs to threaten to cancel their wedding and Sherry acquiesces to his demands. Sherry has so little sense of self and such limited personal power that she is manipulated dexterously by Ed. By the end of the scene, after being objectified as an "it," referred to as a "flaming
asshole," manipulated into the statements that her rape was "the best fuck I ever had," and that she was "the snake oh the snake with the tongue... asking....," that rings with centuries of female guilt and repression, Sherry is destroyed to the level of non-being. Ed is threatened and envious of Sherry's powerful female sexuality, and strikes out in an attack against it to elevate his failing masculinity. Here the snake is employed as a symbol of original sin and Sherry's sexuality is debased to a level of ugliness. Ed, in a volatile projection of his own sexual insecurities, finds gratification through the emotional and sexual destruction of Sherry.

There is a devastating amount of violence in Lion In The Streets yet no concept of justice is offered. The only statement pertaining to justice is found in the ironic comment of David to Father Hayes:

God loves sinners who confess, father, you taught me that, as long as you speak up and you're sorry as hell, you're okay, you still got your ticket to heaven, but you won't you won't father, if you don't tell me, you'll wither in LIMBO I suffered, I need you to tell me CONFESS....

In contrast to any feelings of social responsibility or justice, the prevalent reaction found throughout Lion is the belief of the aggressors that their victims deserve their punishment. As Christine explains to Scarlett after beating her to the point of death:

You shouldn't have made me do that Scarlett. You shouldn't have made me kick you like that. The way you, you, you talked to me like that. Like, like, you belong. In
the world. As if you belong. Where did you get that feeling? I want it. I need it. 14

Christine, like the majority of characters in Lion, is in a state of waking limbo where a lack of self-realization has led to a meaninglessness of existence. No justice or salvation is offered for these characters as they seem eternally trapped by their human nature which breeds their aggressive animal behaviour and leaves them preying off one another for selfish need. The majority of characters in Lion are unaware of their desires and behaviour patterns. Only Isobel succeeds at the journey towards understanding.

The climax of Lion In The Streets comes with Isobel's forgiveness and acceptance of Ben:

ISOBEL: BEN ja men BEN ja men.
BEN: Who the fuck are you?
ISOBEL: Is...o...bel.
BEN: Isobel.
ISOBEL: Isobel in July July the one, CANADA day day for CANADA Birthday. I selling tickets on a Chrysler car, for boys' and girls' club, one dollar fifty for a ticket. I have five tickets left. I see you in park. It is raining on park. Don't you remember? I ask you "you want to buy ticket on a Chrysler car?" You say "yes, yes, I buy all five tickets. Come into my car, come into my silver car with dark red meat, come into my car. I will give you the money in my car you said...
BEN: I'm hallucinating.

ISOBEL: I'm Isobel.

BEN: You're a picture.

ISOBEL: I'm Isobel.

BEN: What...do you want?

ISOBEL: I have come.

BEN: What do you want?

ISOBEL: I am here.

BEN: WELL GO AWAY! You hear me? GO AWAY.

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!

It is a moment that reverberates with Christian symbolism bringing to mind the doctrines of "love thy neighbour as thyself" and "love thine enemies". Judith Thompson is portraying Isobel as a character in transition, a young girl who moves forward from a world of limbo to a state of control and understanding as she achieves self-realization. It is with this statement of Isobel's love and forgiveness of Ben that Thompson leaves behind the model of Freudian psychoanalysis intent on a further objective, as she explains: "He [Freud] does have that fairy-tale desire to make
everything fit into his scheme. It doesn't."\(^6\)

Isobel's expression of unconditional love for Ben is in opposition to Freud's statement that "a love that does not discriminate seems to me to forfeit a part of its own value, by doing an injustice to its object; and, secondly, not all men are worthy of love."\(^7\) And Freud went on to write a bitter attack directed at the Christian doctrine "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself":

Not merely is this stranger in general unworthy of my love; I must honestly confess that he has more claim to my hostility and even my hatred. He seems not to have the least trace of love for me and shows me not the slightest consideration. If it will do him any good he has no hesitation in injuring me, nor does he ask himself whether the amount of advantage he gains bears any proportion to the extent of the harm he does to me. Indeed, he need not even obtain an advantage, if he can satisfy any sort of desire by it, he thinks nothing of jeering at me, slandering me and showing his superior power; and the more secure he feels and the more helpless I am the more certainly I can expect him to behave like this to me.... And there is a second commandment, which seems to me even more incomprehensible and arouses still stronger opposition in me. It is "Love thine enemies". If I think it over, however, I see that I am wrong in treating it as a greater imposition. At bottom it is the same thing.\(^8\)

This passage accurately describes the relationships found in Lion which are based in fear and antagonism, the only exception to which is Isobel. In Freud's final view, human nature is torn between two opposing forces: eros and the instinct for life, and aggression and
the instinct for death. The aggressive instincts demand a choice between the destruction of self or other. The cultural solution is to interiorize aggression and this accounts for the "tormenting uneasiness of civilized life". 19

In Lion In The Streets Isobel and her journey towards self-realization is the spine of the play, and Judith Thompson has incorporated Isobel as a symbol of hope that humankind can evolve beyond the confines of its aggressive animal nature. This is an extension of faith not found within the Freudian model as Freud focused on scientific research and left religion and philosophy to others. Carl Jung, on the other hand, believed in the growth of personality and extolled a process of individuation that encourages the realization of selfhood. The following chapter will focus on the use of Jungian psychology as a framework to analyse Isobel's journey into the light.
ENDNOTES


7. Thompson, Lion, 14-16.

8. Thompson, Lion, 16.


10. Thompson, Lion, 21.

11. Thompson, Lion, 21-22.

12. Thompson, Lion, 44-45.

13. Thompson, Lion, 25.

14. Thompson, Lion, 34-35.

15. Thompson, Lion, 47.


CHAPTER TWO:

JOURNEY FROM SHADOW TO LIGHT -

JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM IN

LION IN THE STREETS

How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses; perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave. Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something helpless that wants help from us.

- Rainer Maria Rilke

"Letters To A Young Poet"
JOURNEY FROM SHADOW TO LIGHT -
JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM IN
LION IN THE STREETS

Lion In The Streets charts the spiritual journey of a murdered child in search of final peace. The nature of this peace evolves throughout the play from the original concept of "home" in the security of family, to the mythical salvation of heaven, and finally, to the realization of peace within the self. This journey reflects strongly the psychological theories of C.G. Jung who dedicated his life to studying and deciphering the human psyche, refining concepts of universal archetypes, and extolling the process of individuation that lays the path to self-realization. The success of the journey towards self-understanding demands making conscious the unconscious, and as Jung discovered, the unconscious manifests itself most clearly through religious symbolism, mythology and dream.¹ In Lion Judith Thompson has chosen the familiar medium of Christian myth to express to her audience the concepts of grace, salvation, and ascension to the light.

Judith Thompson is an optimist. She keenly observes the malaise of society and the demise of the individual in a world devoid of spirituality. Yet she offers a means for hope, a belief that change although difficult is possible. It is here that we must leave behind the Freudian model. Where Freud had previously
developed a psychology for the study of mental illness, Jung discovered a psychology of spiritual wellness. Jung believed in a psychotherapy that extolled growth of personality, a therapy based in an understanding of what psychic growth is, and how it may be attained. The answer lies in being aware of one's nature, in looking beyond the glaze of day-to-day life, and facing the shadow within, as Jung explains:

Personality is the supreme realization of the innate idiosyncrasy of a living being. It is an act of high courage flung in the face of life, the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual, the most successful adaption to the universal conditions of existence coupled with the greatest possible freedom for self determination.

The awareness of self is an act of courage rarely met. In Lion, although every character is searching for the same absolute goal, and succeeding at various rates, it is only Isobel that achieves self-knowledge.

Jung's concept of the psyche is based on the primary belief that a person is whole from the beginning, not an assemblage of experiences collected through time and ending in a final product. The journey, therefore, is not towards wholeness, for that is already existent, but it is towards recognizing and developing this wholeness so that it is strong and can resist external social pressures. Jung focused on treatments that recovered wholeness, a process demanding a consciousness-raising on the part of the individual in relation to the self, termed individuation. Individuation was a term coined by Jung to refer to a personality that is a separate, indivisible unity, a personality whose genesis
is founded on self-reliance. Individuation and consciousness are never mutually exclusive. The beginning of consciousness is the birth of individuation. An individual who remains oblivious to their true self and to their environment has yet to accept the challenge of self-knowledge, and risks their psychological and emotional health, as Jung wrote: "In the final analysis the decisive factor is always consciousness."

The psyche, according to Jung, is made up of three levels: consciousness, personal unconscious and collective unconscious. Jung discarded the long-held belief that both the conscious and unconscious were formed by personal experience, and showed that evolution and heredity are the determining factors of the psyche. The collective unconscious, unlike the personal unconscious, is a container of primordial images that have never been conscious in the lifetime of the individual, but originate from our human and prehuman ancestors. These contents are referred to as archetypes, original images responding to such experiences as birth, death, rebirth, and characters such as the hero, god and the devil. There are archetypes responding to every life experience, yet a few are particularly important in shaping the human psyche - the Persona, the Shadow, and the Self.

The Persona is an archetype that enables a person to portray a character not their own. It is a mask worn publicly with the intention of receiving social acceptance. The role of the Persona, although socially positive, can prove to be harmful if the role-playing dominates the personality and overpowers other aspects of
the psyche. There is also the danger of a group persona, an attempt to impose uniform standards of behaviour on an entire group or populace without regard to the needs of the individual. Ideally, there should be no deception of the self, but as we see in Lion, a society devoid of spirituality but focused on external, material desires breeds personas as both acceptable and necessary social armour.

The archetype representing true human nature, including the positive and negative forces of our animal desire, is referred to as the Shadow. It is the most powerful and potentially the most dangerous of the archetypes. The Shadow contains all the natural animal tendencies the Persona attempts to tame into socially acceptable action. This taming is achieved through surpressing desire, not eradicating it, as the Shadow is persistent and ever present. The Shadow, like Freud's id, becomes destructive when supressed. It lies in waiting until a moment of crisis occurs in the conscious life of the individual, and then the Shadow will exert its power, breaking forth with violent force. Jung describes the Shadow more fully:

The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is. For what comes after the door is surprinsingly enough, a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty.... It is the world of water, where all life floats in suspension.... [where] the soul of everything living, begins.... where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me.
The Shadow takes on great symbolic power on the stage. The movements of the characters in *Lion* are movements from the safe hiding place of the shadows, out into the light where horrible, painful realizations are made, and then back again into the dark recesses of ignorance. It is only in the light of day that the Shadow is realized, for when one is surrounded in darkness the Shadow disappears. All confrontation with the Shadow must take place in the light, and it is only at the end of the play where Isobel faces and defeats the evil side of her shadow that the pendulum motion is broken and Isobel remains in the light.

The third main archetype is the Self, the concept of the whole personality. It is the goal of every personality to achieve self-realization but it is an achievement of few. The desire for self does not surface in the individual until middle age for the personality must have time to individuate extensively before the self can become evident. To this extent all thoughts, desires, and needs must become conscious. By making conscious the unconscious, an individual will be at greater peace with their nature and find less frustration in the exterior world. Self-knowledge, peace within the self, offers an end to the vicious cycle of victim / victimizer as people stop projecting fear and anger onto others, accusing and assaulting them unjustly. Jung once wrote, "the self is our life's goal, for it is the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality," and it is only through the journey to self-realization that final peace is earned and we arrive home.\(^8\)
Isobel's journey begins in death. It is through death, the release from mental and physical limitations, that Isobel is allowed to maneuver through the conscious and unconscious of herself and others. This voyeuristic capability given to Isobel, and to the audience as we see through Isobel's eyes, allows for the principal demand of individuation - the making conscious of the unconscious. Death is not the end of psychic life according to Jung, but instead, a further possible stage in individuation. Psychic life continues after physical death because the psyche has not attained complete self-realization. Judith Thompson, when speaking at Touchstone Theatre, offered that Isobel's emergence from Limbo is provoked by the releasing of her murderer, Ben, back into society seventeen years after her death. As Lion begins, Isobel is summoned back to earth to make peace with her life.

Isobel represents the plight of human frailty in a society where people suffer from a spiritual hunger, where social systems have disintegrated and moral decay is rampant. She has been drawn back from limbo to understand and make peace with herself. The present is a process of transition from ignorance to knowledge, from pain to healing, from shadow to light, and it is a solitary journey. As Isobel learns in Lion In The Streets, change must begin with the individual, and it is not possible to wait for a passing stranger to act on our behalf and fulfill our salvation as if it is a conquest exterior to our selves and attainable without pain.

Lion begins with a re-enacted memory from Isobel's personal
unconscious. Isobel first appears running in a circle. This circle will be employed three times in the play, and with each occurrence it depicts a movement through time and consciousness. Isobel has arrived in the playground of her family's neighborhood but she has no sense of time or of her relationship to her environment. In great confusion she comments, "I think I be very old. 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 L000000000OST!!"9 This is where the memory of her personal unconscious surfaces and we witness a recreation of her interaction and skirmish with the other children of the neighborhood. The realization of the playground scene as a personal memory comes from Isobel's reaction after having spoken to her father: "My father? My father is not there. My father is dead. Yes, was killed by a subway many many years it it breathed very hard push push over my father push over to God".10 Isobel slowly begins to place herself in terms of time.

Desiring to find her way home to her family, Isobel decides to rely on Sue to be her guide. Isobel follows Sue through the following two scenes waiting patiently to be delivered home. It is only when Isobel witnesses the emotional terrorization of Sue by her husband that Isobel recognizes Sue's vulnerability and realizes Sue is unable to secure her own safety let alone that of another: "Susan, Susan, Susan. The boy with the arrow ha' killed you ha? Where's your helper now? Oh Susan, you can't help me now you can't take me home".11 As Isobel waits to find another helper, she views
from her watching place the relationship of a second couple, Laura and George, two yuppies in a deteriorating marriage as Laura experiences consecutive emotional breakdowns and George is constantly away on book tours. Within the scene George wraps a tablecloth around his head and imitates a Portuguese accent that triggers a personal memory of Laura's. Laura walks around the circle transporting herself and the storyline into flashback. George, having become Maria, Isobel's mother, tells the story of her husband's suicide. Isobel, leaving her watching place, moves into her mother's consciousness and begins to physically act out Maria's vision of Antonio's death:

I can see through his eye, am at subway, in him, he stands on the platform, is empty, empty and I am his head, circles and circles like red birds flying around and around I am his throat, tight, cannot breathe enough air in my body the floor the floor move, and sink in, rise up rise like a wall like a killing wave turn turn me in circles with teeth in circles and under and over I fall! (She continues) I fall on the silver track nobody move I hearing the sound the sound of the rats in the tunnel their breath like a basement these dark rats running running towards me I am stone I am earth I cannot scream cannot move the rats tramp... trample my body flat-ten and every bone splinter like...

Isobel at once becomes the physical embodiment of both mother and father as she falls forward onto the railway tracks at Maria's feet. Here Isobel is forced to confront painful memories of her own personal unconscious.

It is in the following scene at the daycare meeting, halfway through Act One, that Isobel begins to realize her relationship to her environment. She recognizes that she is invisible and,
pondering this realization, retreats to her watching place to witness yet another destructive relationship. This time a class battle between Laura and Rhonda. Isobel quickly sides with the victimized Rhonda, and symbolically defends Rhonda by shooting all the parents at the meeting, declaring herself to be Rhonda's army. Isobel claims Rhonda as her new saviour and follows Rhonda to the bar where they meet with Joanne. It is here, by listening to Joanne's discussion of death, and seeing death hovering in Joanne, that Isobel comes to the cruel realization that she is not invisible but dead.13 The return of this repressed memory, brought painfully to consciousness, is theatrically emphasized by Isobel's running around the circle, screaming:

I am dead! I am dead! I am under the ground for seventeen years! I am missing! 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 tear my throat out ROAR Tear my eyes out... ROAR I am kill! I am kill! I am no more! (Music) Joanne: We are both pictures now. WHO WILL TAKE US? WHO WILL TAKE US TO HEAVEN, HA?14

Isobel is now fully conscious of her past and present, and her interest immediately turns to finding her way into heaven. Even in death, the instilled archetype of home leads Isobel forward.

Isobel's journey takes her directly to the cathedral where she lies prostrate at the foot of the Virgin Mary and pleads for acceptance into heaven. She is still searching for exterior symbols to guide her journey, and prays to external saviours. What Isobel finds, however, is that organized religion is a false prophet. From her watching place Isobel discovers the first truly
nurturing relationship of the play, that of David and Father Hayes. David, who has come for confession, confronts Father Hayes on his gay sexual desires. Father Hayes is forced to confess, not to God, but to himself and David, his own past that has delivered him into his personal hell of self-hate and guilt:

I looked, I looked at you, with my red eyes... because David, I knew. When the picnic came round.... I had...a very bad feeling.... and a warning sound a terrible, the sound of deep nausea filled my ears.... I thought watch, watch that boy, on this day he will surely drown, he will. David, I knew that you would die.... my sin was the sin of pride! The sin of pride David.... You see at that moment that chicken was worth more, indeed worth more... than your LIFE, David I SHUT OUT the warning voice.... And I fell to hell.15

All characters in Lion, save for Isobel, have shut out their warning voices. They are denying their true selves in order to succeed at social ideals, and the result is a society of personas where adults are lost, frightened and frustrated, each preying upon the other in a paranoid search for power and control. Father Hayes, immediately upon venting his guilt and facing the reality of his inner demons, finds rest and falls silent.

David, having forgiven Father Hayes, admits to having claimed the unconscious as home after years of self-denial: "It was so nice on the water, you know? It was neat, so calm, as I slipped underneath I wasn't scared I tell ya. I wasn't scared a bit. The water was so ... nice."16 Water is the most common symbol for the unconscious and, "whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face. Whoever goes to himself risks a
confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter.... the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face."\textsuperscript{17} All who descend into the unconscious waters will be exposed to the beasts hidden there, but once having faced these personal demons, one gains strength and moves towards wholeness.

Both Isobel and Father Hayes are empowered by David, and Isobel encounters a moment of transition when she realizes that her aim of home relies on her own ability to accept her situation and face her fears. As Act One closes, Isobel rises from the prostrate position at the foot of the Virgin and begins a dance. A new relationship is defined as Isobel interacts with each character as an individual, representing the desired balance with self and other where peace is possible. As we leave Act One, all characters are together in the underwater world of the unconscious, all on personal journeys towards self-realization.

At the top of Act Two, Isobel has situated herself with parents and children in the neighborhood park, the very park she met Ben in seventeen years before. As Isobel watches the children play, she hears the lion roar, and attempts to intervene in the conscious lives of the parents and warn them of the danger. It is only Sue that recognizes Isobel and hears her oracle-like warning: "I say I say it's time!! He's in the streets get them out he's in the streets save your children take their hand take their leg.... The lion is here, in your streets. He is trying to kill you, to kill all of your children. He really really is."\textsuperscript{18} The lion has been a powerful symbol throughout history, but in \textit{Lion In The}
Streets there is no honouring of the lion as a courageous guardian or kingly leader. Instead, we witness only the negative allusions to ferocity and power. Alchemists of the Middle Ages were familiar with a ritual slaying of a lion where all four paws were cut off, producing the image of a lion devouring itself. The vision depicts sacrificer and sacrificed as one and the same. This image rings most true for Lion In The Streets as Isobel will come to understand her conflict is not with the lion external to her, but with the lion within her.

Isobel, in defense of the children she sees threatened, decides to personally identify herself as society's saint: "Watch me! (laughs) Watch me. (laughs) I am your HARMY! (laughs) I am your SAINT! I am your HARMY! Watch me, watch me (a war cry) I WILL KILL THE LION NOW!!!" Isobel sets off to physically confront the perceived threat. She decides to track Christine who is very "hard" for she will lead to the lion. What Isobel finds in the meeting of Christine and Scarlett are acts of incredible brutality committed without conscience. In Scarlett, however, a glimmer of hope is offered as, even on the verge of death, Scarlett still desires love. Believing Christine to be her lover, Scarlett asks for a kiss "like a lion, so hot." Even through incredible bleakness and in the face of violent hostility, desire still thrives - it is eternal. In opposition to this positive animal force, we see Isobel and Christine in the grips of the evil side of the shadow as Isobel swears to seek revenge on the lion Christine is slave to.
Isobel follows Christine back to her office where Christine acts out her hostility on Rodney, her assistant, by verbally berating him. This moment of conflict brings to Rodney's mind the memory of a past conflict with his child friend Michael. The memory takes the form of a hallucination which Isobel watches from a distance. Rodney has carried a great deal of anger and guilt for years due to a sexual act as a child. In the scene Rodney recreates a sexual act with Michael, that of touching tongues, but the sex act leads to violence and Rodney kills Michael. Rodney is projecting onto Michael his own feelings of self-hate. Isobel, in an attempt to soothe Rodney's pain, goes to Rodney and touches him. Rodney then gets up, straightens himself, and retells the story so that we realize it was not Rodney but Michael who had initiated the touching of tongues. Rodney, like many victims, has carried unwarranted blame but now, after being released of the guilt, Rodney comes to a small degree of self-awareness.

Rodney's hallucination can also be seen as a projection of Isobel's guilt and aggression. In the hallucination there are two forces represented, guilt of the victim (Rodney) and the anger of the aggressor (Michael). Isobel's emotions are warring within her, the guilt of the victim for being assaulted, and her anger and desire for revenge on the assaulter. By aiding Rodney in the purging of his guilt, Isobel is symbolically releasing herself from her own guilt as a victim, achieving a cathartic effect for herself. Isobel leaves the scene in greater peace as she focuses on Sherry, with whom she shares "the spray, the Lion's."
In *Lion* there is no direct comment to Isobel being sexually assaulted, yet Isobel states she was killed by "a starving lion, maul maul maul me to dead, with killing claws over and over my little young face and chest, over my chest my blood running out." And there is a moment of immediate recognition between Isobel and Sherry:

**SHERRY:** RODDEE! RODDEEE!! Baby Bunny.

**ISOBEL:** She.

**SHERRY:** You'll never guess what I have! Chocolate mint bar. Two squares for you, two squares for me.

**ISOBEL:** She.

**SHERRY:** One hundred and forty calories a square who gives a shit.

**ISOBEL:** She... I see, the spray, the Lion's....

Isobel immediately recognizes Sherry as a fellow victim of sexual assault. As Isobel witnesses the re-enacted rape scene between Sherry and Ed, she is brought face-to-face with her past, viewing an act of violence similar to what took her life. Instead of reacting with violence towards Ed, Isobel offers compassion to Sherry. Sherry, yet another victim who has been forced to carry the blame for her own victimization, finds empowerment from Isobel. Isobel enters the scene and offers her hand to Sherry and leads Sherry to her (Isobel's) grave. Isobel, in embracing Sherry and her vulnerability, is embracing herself. It is easier for us to heal that which is exterior to us for we have physical means for it, yet all Isobel's exterior motions are a metaphor for her
In the final scene Isobel has one challenge remaining, the need to face directly the hate and violence of her own shadow. From the top of Act Two where Isobel first picked up the "great crooked stick" with which she was going to slay the lion, Isobel has been in the grips of the evil side of her shadow. Isobel is battling with her anger and hatred for Ben, and as she approaches Ben at the graveside she holds her weapon ready to strike. It is only at the climax where "the forces of vengeance and forgiveness [are] warring inside her," that Isobel casts down her stick and embraces Ben with love. Isobel, by throwing away her weapon is relinquishing herself of all guilt and hatred, thereby regaining her personal power of self. Isobel is not offering a Christian sacrifice, for her gift of love for Ben bears an intention, that of regaining her heart, her life. Yet, as one cannot offer what they do not have, Isobel's offering of love to Ben denotes her new found self-love with her understanding and acceptance of self. Isobel completes her journey alone but offers us her secret: "I came back. I take my life. I want you all to take your life. I want you all to have your life." Isobel, who referred to herself as a picture in Act One, is now a fully-realized being once again whole.

Isobel's successful journey is seen in sharp contrast to the other characters' limited movement to self-peace. Lion In The Streets offers a vision of today's society where individuals have little interest in introspection as they compete in a world of material desires. Most of the characters in Lion are obsessed with
power, class and wealth, and offer little regard of ethics or morality. The focus is on self-interest not self-realization. As the value and strength of a society is found in the moral and spiritual fabric of its individuals, in Lion we are faced with a despairing world.

Isobel's journey can also be appreciated as the passage of a modern mythological hero. Many of today's greatest adventures are those into human psychology; the quest for understanding of the human psyche and spirit. It is also one of today's greatest challenges to find happiness as an individual in a corrupt and impersonal world. As we watch Isobel confront her austere and often violent environment, and emerge confident and strong at her final peace, we recognize Isobel as a modern hero. In her are embodied our aspirations for courage, endurance, and spiritual contentment. Joseph Campbell's research on the mythological hero in The Hero With A Thousand Faces is a direct reflection of the universal archetypes Jung refers to. Campbell's research shows that throughout history humankind has responded to the primordial hero archetype through the creation of heroic myth and symbol, and that today "we have not to risk the adventure alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero path." 28

As in most mythological adventures, Isobel has passed through the three stages in the Rites of Passage: separation, initiation, and return. In Hero With A Thousand Faces the standard path of a mythological hero is described as beginning with a hero venturing
forth from the world of common day into a supernatural world where incredible destructive forces are encountered and decisive victories won. The hero must then return to the common world with the power to bestow his prize or boon on his people.29

The first stage of the journey is referred to as the "call to adventure" or the "awakening of the self". This is the beginning of a transfiguration which will denote both a dying and a rebirth. Often the herald of this call is a dark, loathly or terrifying person considered evil by the world. In Lion Isobel is called forth by Ben's return to society. Ben represents the element of the disgusting, that of the unconscious deep wherein exists all the rejected, unadmitted, unknown elements of existence that have now surfaced and must be dealt with.30

Isobel's destiny has summoned her and transported her back into her native environment which is alien to her. This region holds many dangers and difficult realizations for Isobel but as she faces each obstacle she gains strength. Limited at first by her disbelief in self, Isobel loses the impetus of the journey and becomes a victim to be saved. She continues along a path of action laid out by a series of helpers yet remains lost to her purpose. However, by the end of Act One, supernatural aid will be offered by the nurturing figure of David through his discussion with Father Hayes. David awakes her again to the call and gives her the signal to turn the quest inside. Isobel realizes she must take the internal path to find home and to be born again. Isobel encounters numerous dangers and deceptions once beyond the threshold of the
inner journey. She faces mutilating and self-mutilating violence in the forms of Christine, Rodney and Ed, but as she faces them with courage they dissipate and she passes on. Once past these trials she encounters the final element of the second stage of the journey - the "purification of the self" - as she must come to terms with her opposite (her own unsuspected self). Here she must deal with the greatest trial of all, the discovery and accepting of her own violent desires. Isobel is forced to come to the difficult realization that she and her opposite, Ben, are one and the same flesh.

When the quest is complete, the hero must return and offer the boon to her people. The boon that Isobel returns to the world with is her achievement of god-like grace which offers life-giving energy to the world. This gift is not simple to bestow, however, for Isobel must now face a world of fragmented spirits who consider themselves whole and face their lack of interest, belief, and ability to comprehend. In our modern world the realm of gods and heroes is a forgotten realm and, in the end, Isobel can only offer us her wisdom. As Isobel ascends to heaven the responsibility falls on those left behind to accept the challenge of self-understanding and move forward to their own completion.

Isobel's journey is marked by a change in age. At first Isobel is a child, but in the final scene Thompson makes a point of stating Isobel speaks as "an adult now". This progression is in keeping with Jung's concept of the stages of life. Jung saw four stages in life: childhood, youth and young adulthood, middle age,
and old age. Jung considered children to be basic prototypes of their parents' psyches, a state where individuation is minimal. It is only at middle age that Jung believed people were prepared for individuation towards self. In middle age there is a focusing, often for the first time, on spiritual values that have previously existed but only in a latent state. This change often takes the form of a crisis where new values have to arise to replace outworn values that have led to spiritual denial. Isobel, at the beginning of Lion, is incapable of realizing her destiny but by the end of Act One, the middle life of the play, she is ready to experience the journey to self, and risks confrontation with both her shadow and the black collective shadow of society. At the end of the play she speaks to the audience as an adult, stating "I want to tell you now a secret...."32

To embrace the unconscious, our unwritten history and our undefinable self, demands the embracing of myth and symbol. Symbols are our channels to the archetypes of the collective unconscious. This does not mean, however, that symbols perfectly represent archetypes, and as we see in Lion, the choice to use Christian myth to portray a search for self-realization is paradoxical.

Isobel's journey evokes strong images of the biblical stations of the cross - the journey of Christ to suffer, to die, and to rise again. In Lion Isobel is condemned to death, she encounters great suffering to herself and others, comes to bear many crosses and, in conclusion, finds triumph over her worldly desires and animal
lusts. Yet, an obvious and difficult-to-digest paradox lies in the fact that Christian religion speaks of an ultimate external power of God over humankind where God is the saviour of all who follow his teachings. Isobel's journey towards self extols the ultimate autonomous power of individuation where the self is the centre. And the self must be regarded as the extreme opposite of God.

An example of the danger inherent in Thompson's use of Christian symbol to represent a journey to self is the employment of the veil at the end. Christ is said to have worn a cloth over his head when he ascended to heaven, and Thompson has decided to keep this image for Isobel. Yet, the veil is a strong symbol of religious order, modesty, and bondage, and a veiled figure often represents something untouchable, unfathomable, the higher mind inaccessible to lower consciousness. While ascension can be accepted as a symbol of enlightenment and the reaching of inner peace, the veil is a direct deterrent to all knowledge and spiritual growth gained in the journey. Isobel has rid herself of all need for veils and deception, and the veil image would be far better applied through a bathing of light on Isobel as she ascends than the use of a cloth veil to hide her face. Here a symbol becomes a stumbling-block in the expression of a much stronger archetype.

A strong theme that runs through Lion is the realization that only through spiritual rebirth can one conquer death. And as
Joseph Campbell realized:

We have only to follow the thread of the hero path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the centre of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world. 34

In *Lion in the Streets* Judith Thompson offers her audience a candid view into a modern society devoid of spirituality and on the edge of despair where change is the only hope for salvation. Isobel is the embodiment of our hope for the future, a metaphor for the dead spirit in all of us which can and must be resurrected.
ENDNOTES


5. Hall, 44-45.


10. Thompson, Lion, 4.

11. Thompson, Lion, 10.


14. Thompson, Lion, 22.

15. Thompson, Lion, 26-27.

16. Thompson, Lion, 27.


18. Thompson, Lion, 29.


29. Campbell, 30.


33. Jung..... lost reference....

34. Campbell, 25.
CHAPTER THREE:

THOMPSON'S THEATRICAL WORLD - THE

TRUTH OF DREAM

When you go to sleep you dream. They're your dreams, but it seems as if they're just happening to you... that's what the ideal theatrical experience is for me...
And I hope I have stumbled upon a kind of collective unconscious so that it's like a dream happening.

-- Judith Thompson
Revisions Of Probability
THOMPSON'S THEATRICAL WORLD - THE

TRUTH OF DREAM

The theatrical world of Judith Thompson is the internal, morpheus world of dream. In Lion In The Streets, as in her previous works, Judith Thompson has created a dream landscape that borders on nightmare; a modern day hell where characters grope for spiritual salvation in the dark wasteland of the soul. Thompson demands absolute artistic licence in Lion as she violates all laws and eradicates all boundaries of conventional playwrighting. The inclusion of a dream structure allows for a thorough examination of the unconscious as the play is released from the confines of realism, and the plot moves forward with a casual fluidity of free thought. This free thought is the outpouring of the unconscious inner dialogue which forms a structure both episodic and discursive. Dream becomes the omnipotent communicator of the psyche, tapping into our unconscious drives and desires, and offering forth startling images of the human animal. In Lion we are thrown into a realm of imagination where there is no distinction between the real and the imagined, between life and death, between past and future. And in dream everything is possible and probable as "time and place do not exist; on an insignificant basis of reality the imagination spins, weaving new patterns; a mixture of memories, experiences, free fancies, incongruities and improvisations." There is no objectivity to
be found in *Lion*, just pure subjective thought and emotion as Judith Thompson begins where "you rip something open and let it pour out."²

The development of the dream landscape realizes Thompson's sense for the theatrical where "you create a moment of maximum visual and verbal poetry, where you can reach into the audience's unconscious and pull forth primal emotions kept hidden because they are dangerous, but far more dangerous when they are hidden and emerge in twisted, unrecognizable forms."³ Through the dream the audience member is transported to another realm about which we know little, where we move beyond our conscious understanding into the unpredictable realm of the unconscious. Alchemists of the middle ages believed that all creation sprang from water. Water was considered to be an infinitely moveable substance able to receive and record impressions while remaining colourless, odourless and shapeless - a perfect mirror against which one can see all things.⁴ For Judith Thompson this water is the unconscious, and her works provide self-discoveries for artist and audience alike as the water exposes our most private drives and desires. Thompson's theatre communicates publically and honestly our hidden human dreams and traumas. It asks its audience to become consciously aware of self, and it is here that art assumes the role of psychoanalysis as it seeks to make the unconscious conscious.

Each character in *Lion* is suffering from a sickness - whether it be physical, mental or emotional - and Thompson is using these points of weakness as a signal to our crumbling human society. In
the numerous forms of cancer, cerebral-palsy, diabetes and sugar-fixations, we see individuals rotting from the inside out. Our human nature, mistaken and ignored, is becoming agitated and growing malignant beneath our masks of normality. It is in these cracks, these fissures in our society's persona, that Thompson seizes moments of truth. Truth is found in the critical confrontations with self where previously surpressed desires break forth into the light. And it is a stringing-together of these climactic moments of truth that structures Lion, an experience beautifully described by Ray Conlogue as "awakenings of monstrous yearnings that are as a rule only dreamed - lions escaped from cages." Lion exposes the inner dialogue of the characters, displaying brazenly their most intimate thoughts and emotions as they are stripped of their public skins.

In Lion we realize the close relationship of theatre and dream for, like a dream, Lion follows a sequential development based in its own logic. There is no linear progression of time - no careful development from past to present to future - as time exists as a continuum. Thompson's plays have always incorporated language as a door into the blood and marrow of her characters, and in Lion language exposes time as unlimited and undefineable with an inconsistent changing of tense as separate characters perceive time differently. When Sue speaks to Isobel at the beginning of Lion and mentions the boys on bikes that used to attack her, Sue states, "so we all started to cry." Isobel's reaction to this is the statement, "Cry." Sue is speaking in the past tense but Isobel is
reacting in the present. Sue continues by saying, "They kept shooting those arrows anyways! They were just mean." Isobel repeats, "Mean boys shoot arrows." In conclusion Sue comments, "I've never forgotten that," and Isobel responds, "Never forgetting." For Isobel time is in the present, tangible, while Sue is reflecting on a past memory. The mixing of tenses appears again in the rape scene between Ed and Sherry. As Ed positions the attack in the past, Sherry oscillates between past and present (emphasis mine):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHERRY:</th>
<th>In a dirty brown car--</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ED:</td>
<td>Stopped it cold in front of you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHERRY:</td>
<td>Grab me...by the throat--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED:</td>
<td>Push you into the trunk--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHERRY:</td>
<td>It was dark--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED:</td>
<td>Did you--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHERRY:</td>
<td>It was so so dark--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED:</td>
<td>I looked at you--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHERRY:</td>
<td>Hit me hit me--I was the snake, oh the snake with the tongue--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the same line Sherry moves from the present to the past. Time is seen to be in constant motion and as unpredictable in its flow as is the psychic energy in the dreaming mind.

The use of language also denotes the deepening unconscious state - the lower you descend, the more uncensored and unordered it becomes. Language on the conscious level reveals an organization and codifying of thought. In the scene between Sue and Bill at the dinner party, Sue is attempting to preserve the facade of control:

Don't worry guys this isn't real. He's just trying to scare me because we had a fight about the sofa-- Come on honey, let's go home.

But when Bill explodes in anger at Sue, degrading her femininity to
the level of a cartoon mum, he experiences a breaking through of surpressed thought that interrupts his controlled thought and speech patterns:

YOU turned your back on me!! You you-- look at you in that... sweatsuit thing you're not-- I mean look at her, really, you're you're you're a kind of... cartoon now, a... cartoon Mum a... with your daycare meetings and neighborhood fairs, you know what I mean Laura, your face is a drawing your body, lines the only time, the only time that you are alive, electric again is... when you talk on the phone, to the other mums, there's a flush in your face, excitement, something rushing through your body, you laugh, loudly, you make all those wonderful female noises, you cry, your voice, like... music, or in the park, with Timmy and John, while they cavort with the other children at the drinking fountain, spraying the water and you talking and talking with all the mothers, storming, storming together your words like crazy swallows, swooping and pivots and... landing ... softly on a branch, a husband, one of us walks in and it's like walking into... a large goup of...

Bill's thoughts trail off into silence for they are devoid of meaning; what he wishes to express is expressionless through words. The true communication of meaning is found through the mistakes in speech and the silence which surrounds them, for the silence pronounces the far more coherent discourse of the psyche.

In the dreamscape of Lion we also find abundant inconsistancy and improbability. All sense of reality moves fog-like, forming and quickly dispersing, denying the audience any comfort of realism. There is an immediate destruction of convention and audience/character rapport when the actors begin to play numerous characters involving drastic changes of age and personality. The
only character who remains constant throughout the play is Isobel. She becomes the control as the other characters metamorphis between personalities, representing the numerous social masks and inner animals we all share. The use of multiple roles moves to the extreme when Thompson gives one character, George, the ability to change sex in flashback. George, a middle-aged Canadian male, transforms into Maria, an older Portuguese woman, and recites the story of the death of her husband. And there are numerous other improbabilities of action including: Isobel, as an exposition of Rhonda's imagination, shoots dead everyone at the daycare meeting; numerous characters considered dead speak and interact with other characters; Scarlett, a cerebral palsy victim will dance, and later Scarlett will die from a "kiss of death."

Thompson accepts no responsibility for pinpointing a reality and, in fact, undermines the reality she does develop. In the scene between Rodney and his child friend Michael, Thompson sets us up to believe in their meeting, their argument, and the eventual murder of Michael. Then, with the arrival of Sherry, the surprising truth is established: "Rodney had some kinda fit today, Christine just about called the cops he was yelling and screaming at nobody all afternoon -- he's right nuts." And Thompson's play centres around a key improbability - the ability of a dead child to awake from limbo and return to earth to grow spiritually and share with us her wisdom: "I was dead ... I came back. I take my life." There is, however, one coherent reality to the play. The numerous characters that inhabit a dream are always elements of one
psyche. All the characters are born from the same consciousness and "The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, disperse, assemble. But one consciousness rules over them all, that of the dreamer; for him there are no secrets, no illogicalities, no scruples, no laws." The characters and actions of Lion are projections from Thompson's unconscious, and each character is a fragment of the whole, a single element in the elaborate makeup of the human psyche we all share.

Through the lense of dream certain objects and ideas can assume powerful significance, and the language of dream is based in image and metaphor, a language perfectly suited for the stage. Throughout Lion both circle and shadow emerge and re-emerge as powerful symbols. The circle is created in physical space by Isobel at the top of Act One as she runs in a cyclical pattern before addressing the audience. This circle will be evoked twice again, perhaps moving in opposite directions, to emphasize a change in time and consciousness. The circle, like time and consciousness, knows no beginning and end, and moves in a continuous flow. The circle is the symbol of wholeness, truth and self, the very qualities that embody Isobel's journey. And as metaphor the circle depicts a unity, the encompassing of all humanity. Yet, as we see in Lion, society is web-like with the actions of one person bringing immediate retaliations by others, and the circle not only unites but binds. As Lion ends we fear the circle of ignorance and violence will continue for those left behind are deaf to the wisdom of Isobel.
The shadow, in addition to its role in the depiction of a Jungian search for self, provides a central image for the play. The shadow image lends itself naturally to the stage as it corresponds immediately to lighting design. Although Thompson has made no direct comment on the use of shadow in her stage directions, the movement of the characters in the play is an oscillation to and from shadow. The characters move from the dark recesses of shadow, out into the light where powerful and disturbing realizations are made, and then immediately return to seek refuge in the comforting shadows of ignorance. And there are numerous realizations of shadow as symbol. Shadow represents the qualities of evil, ignorance and fear, and depicts the realms of the abyss, the unconscious and the dream state. One of the most interesting and less evident applications of the shadow is in metaphor. In each character in Lion is a shadow - not of the Jungian variety previously noted - but the shadow of a void wherein lies the unrealized potential of each person. The life that has yet to be lived; a dead space within the core of each individual that lies as a direct deterrent to the attainment of self. It is within this dead space that Isobel has returned to find her heart, her life energy.

The freedoms that the dream landscape allows structure, language and image must be paralleled in the staging. The stage realization of Thompson's work supports the development of multileveled sets that represent the multilayered consciousness housed by the characters, and the sets must allow for the fluidity
of motion found in dream. The stage must be an open plane capable of evoking different locales while permanently establishing none. Much like the alchemical water, the setting should change form with the mixings of colour, shape, texture, lighting and sound, and in many ways the original Tarragon production of Lion achieved this where Vancouver's Touchstone production did not.

Jim Plaxton's set for Lion in the original Tarragon production consisted of a central, circular platform to which settings were added and removed. The set pieces which fulfilled the different settings were left just off the sides of the circle, dimly visible in the shadows. This is a wonderful symbol representing the continuing existence of the different characters and their separate traumas that outline the play. The movement between the various scenes in Lion is quick with the immediate dispensing of one climactic moment for another, but as we leave these encounters abruptly we are not allowed to forget them. We feel the crouching tension of these lions as they wait in the shadows to reemerge.

In the two photographs of the Plaxton set (Figures I and II), it is noticable that the simplicity of the set allows for a total transformation of the scene through the change of set pieces and lighting. Figure I depicts the interior of the home of Laura and George with the simple introduction of a table and four chairs, but there is no stark division between scenes as the separate settings are visible in outline. And there is an intended inclusion of leaves on the playing area, denoting the setting as temporary, a transitory vision as the dreaming mind is easily
distracted and fickle in its attention. In Figure II we have the representation of the park where Isobel met Ben seventeen years before. A tangible change in mood is evident between these two photographs as the casting of dark blue lighting introduces a cold and forbidding gloom to the scene. In both figures a blue earth-like orb accents the upstage, casting a watchful eye over the scenes below. A sense of smallness permeates the setting as if what we are witnessing is but a small, isolated moment in the unfathomable expanse of consciousness.

The Touchstone set (Figure III) seems rigid and limited by comparison. Daniel Laskarin who designed the set for Touchstone is a sculptor. He made the decision to avoid an open-palate design and, instead, opted to portray a surrealistic cityscape. The design has many offerings - numerous levels, ladders, ramps - that produce unique acting areas, but in the end the set becomes an enclosed metal platform. The setting itself has been given such a strong persona that the separate dreams and images evoked in the script must battle to be realized.

As the setting for Touchstone was developed to remain rigid, the responsibility fell on the script to be manipulated to fit. One unfortunate example of this situation was seen at the end of Lion where Sherry followed Isobel to Isobel's grave. Roy Surette, director of Lion, could not make the blocking work for the acting area of the rape scene was too close to Isobel's grave. Instead of Sherry being led to Isobel's grave, three feet away, she was led offstage upstage left. The entire meaning of a scene, and one of
the most important scenes, for it is here that we see Isobel embracing herself through Sherry, was ignored. The set became omnipresent over the intention of the script, and the overpowering physical structure of the set impeded in the development of a fluid movement between scenes, denying the overall flow of dream. As all classical conventions of time, place and action are ridiculous in the realm of the unconscious, any attempt to impose a formal setting on the play is a direct deterrent to the dream landscape.

The movement of the dream landscape in Lion is the ebb and flow of water; it moves in waves without breaks between scenes, offering a fluidity of thought and motion. There are no separate realities depicted in Lion, no distinctions between real events and those imagined, everything is as it is imagined to be. It is important, however, that Isobel never leaves the stage and that her flow of consciousness, which is the life of the play, is never broken. It is in this waking-dreaming state that her journey is possible for it is through the connection of the conscious mind and the unconscious self that Isobel is able to obtain wisdom and self-knowledge.

There should be no fourth wall incorporated to hold Isobel within a defined playing area and, in fact, the audience area would be well-employed as part of the active stage. There is no better metaphor for Isobel's watching space than the audience area itself. A powerful connection is possible between Isobel's physical placement and her control of the gaze that develops the plot. Isobel, sitting amongst the audience, can share the same angle of
perception, and the audience's role will come into sharper focus as it not only sees through Isobel's eyes but is incorporated within her. Isobel, while viewing the characters' conscious and unconscious, is viewing the audience's nature as well. The audience becomes both perceiver and perceived.

Dreams, even the nightmarish dreams that lace *Lion* together, offer a healing capacity. A dream is recounted not only to understand it but also to rid the self of it, and there is a purging of sorts found in *Lion*. As Aniela Jaffe writes: "To dream normally means to wake up, to carry a message, to leave a closed dream space, and to emerge into daylight." 13 Thompson's dream landscape fully realizes Isobel, her journey, and the many symbolic roles Isobel depicts for us. Isobel is the child in every adult which has been wounded, humiliated and never truly seen. Isobel is the personification of the innocence of each person that has been lost or betrayed. It is Isobel who acts as our guide and takes us on personal journeys into the unconscious to find where our struggling spirits reside. And it is Isobel who offers us hope in the face of a modern world detached from dream.
ENDNOTES


7. Thompson, Lion, 45.

8. Thompson, Lion, 7.

9. Thompson, Lion, 7-8.

10. Thompson, Lion, 41.

11. Thompson, Lion, 48.

12. Strindberg, ix-x.

The theatre of Judith Thompson finds its home in the unknown, misunderstood, dark nether-realm of the human psyche. It is here that Thompson finds an image, an idea, a memory and develops it into a moment of deep insight. Although there is a great deal in the unconscious that cannot be spoken of, Judith Thompson takes us on an intimate voyage to the other side where through image, symbol, and dream, we are able to touch our self. It is Thompson's ability to articulate the previously unarticulated that drew me to her plays, and which accounts for her popularity as Canada's finest playwright.

The previous chapters have tapped only three avenues of investigation, leaving innumerable possibilities for future quests. The words of Timmy come back to me: "I think tonight's the night... That we're all gonna die. Tonight's the night we're all gonna die." Throughout the play Lion In The Streets, each character experiences a death - whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual - and the challenge lies in regenerating the self and re-emerging from that destruction with greater insight. This thesis offers a series of insights in decoding the maze of images and symbols found in Lion, and acknowledges that many are left to be found. In the end, there is more in the works of Judith Thompson than can be appreciated through cerebral investigation. The power of Thompson's theatre is in the unrelenting honesty of the living piece.
Thompson's work in the theatre is utterly subjective. Her writing emerges from her unconscious as she completely identifies with her characters, seeing life through their eyes. Judith Thompson believes in the collective unconscious and that we have all experienced everything to some extent, and that this harmony between people lends itself to a powerful theatrical moment:

There is such a sense of community, common humanity... something sometimes found in a church, through ritual and worship, pausing for a couple of hours to really see ourselves... this is what it's all about. This is... something to do with eternity, with souls, without time.

Thompson's theatre forms such an intense relationship between text, actor, and audience that a catharsis is felt. On leaving the theatre after experiencing *Lion* I felt both shaken and disturbed. I knew that there was a great deal in this play I would have to come to terms with and, in so doing, a great deal of personal enlightenment found.
ENDNOTES


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Hunt, Nigel. "In Contact With The Dark." Books In Canada, 17 (March 1988), 10-12.


----------. **Lion In The Streets**. Toronto; Playwrights Canada Press, 1990.


APPENDIX 1

The following five pages offer photographs of the production of *Lion In The Streets* mounted at Touchstone Theatre in Vancouver November 14 - December 8, 1991. The production was directed by Roy Surette with set by Daniel Laskarin, lighting by Gerald King, and costumes by James Glen. For further archival information contact Touchstone Theatre, Vancouver.
Suzanne Ristic (Isobel) in Touchstone's *Lion in The Streets.*
Tamsin Kelsey (Laura), Wendy Noel (Jill), Suzanne Ristic (Isobel), and Lanni McInnes (Rhonda) in Touchstone's Lion In The Streets. "Treats are a wonderful thing."
James Fagan Tait (Father Hayes) and Guillermo Verdecchia (David) in Touchstone's Lion In The Streets. "David, I knew that you would die."
Wendy Noel (Sue) and Suzanne Ristic (Isobel) in Touchstone's *Lion In The Streets*. "The lion is here, in your streets."