Housing Complexes: Redesigning the house of psyche in light of a curious mistranslation of C. G. Jung appropriated by Gaston Bachelard

Lucy Huskinson

Bangor University, School of Theology and Religious Studies, UK

Version of record first published: 30 Apr 2012.

To cite this article: Lucy Huskinson (2013): Housing Complexes: Redesigning the house of psyche in light of a curious mistranslation of C. G. Jung appropriated by Gaston Bachelard, International Journal of Jungian Studies, 5:1, 64-80

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19409052.2012.679744

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Housing Complexes: Redesigning the house of psyche in light of a curious mistranslation of C. G. Jung appropriated by Gaston Bachelard

Lucy Huskinson*

Bangor University, School of Theology and Religious Studies, UK

Jung’s metaphor of house as psyche is often regarded as little more than an arbitrary and reductive ‘diagram’ that imposes structure onto his conception of psyche with its various parts and underpinning libidinal processes. And yet, as this paper argues, the impact and relevance of the architectural metaphor extends beyond a conceptual consideration of psyche into a lived experience of it. It is thus also Jung’s phenomenological description of the way human beings dwell and experience their placement or non-placement within the world in which they find themselves.

This paper elucidates these different interpretations. First, through Jung’s accounts of his ‘dream-house’ in connection with the likely architectural influences of those houses in which he had lived or had designs to live; and second, through an examination of a curious mistranslation of one of Jung’s overlooked descriptions of the architectural metaphor found in the celebrated work, *La poétique de l’espace* (1957)/*The poetics of space* (1958) by the renowned French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. The metaphorical description under scrutiny is the relationship between cellar and attic rooms, which Jung uses in his essay ‘Allgemeines zur komplextheorie’ (1934)/‘A review of the complex theory’ (1948a) to expound his understanding of the effects of the complex on ego-consciousness. Bachelard’s misreading inadvertently reverts the placement of the two rooms, thereby proffering something akin to a ‘topsy-turvy’ house of psyche. The implications of Bachelard’s misreading for an understanding of Jungian complex theory is explored, and the wider conceptual and phenomenological implications for the possible redesign or renovation of Jung’s metaphor of house as psyche are ascertained.

**Keywords:** Architecture; Gaston Bachelard; Roland Cahen; complex; house as psyche; phenomenology; metaphor; translation

**House as psyche: Conceptual diagram and experience of self-placement**

Fundamental to Jungian psychology is ‘the fact that the psyche is not an indivisible unity but a divisible and divided whole’ (Jung, 1948a, para 582). One of Jung’s favoured metaphors for illustrating the many divisions of the psyche was a house of many rooms (Jung, 1961a, p. 185). While the architectural design of the house is thought to correspond to the structure of the psyche, the manner in which the rooms are used and the various movements made between them correspond to the dynamics and libidinal processes of psyche.

According to Jung, the upper storeys of the house contain rooms that are most intimately inhabited, which represent consciousness, while the lower storeys contain
rooms that are rarely visited or appropriated, which represent the unconscious. Perhaps the most well-known of Jung’s descriptions of this architectural metaphor is his account of a dream he professes to have had in 1909 when travelling with Freud to Clark University in Massachusetts. Jung offers in his writings four slightly different descriptions of the dream. It appears first in his 1925 Seminars (published in 1926); then his essay ‘Mind and earth’ (1927/1931); his pseudo-autobiographical work, Memories, dreams, reflections (1961a); and an essay written in English, ‘The language of dreams’ (1961b), which was later adapted with minor editorial changes into the chapter, ‘Approaching the unconscious’, within his introductory co-authored work Man and his symbols (1964). Although ‘Mind and earth’ does not allude to the house as having been dreamt it is clear Jung is referring to the same dream house of 1909.

In the dream Jung finds himself inspecting ‘a big complicated house with many rooms, passages and stairways’ (Jung, 1926, p. 23), the design features of which become progressively older as he descends through its several storeys. As he explores the various storeys he is effectively exploring the different realms of psyche, traversing its boundaries of consciousness, personal unconsciousness and collective unconsciousness. He thus begins his exploration on the upper storey in a room of eighteenth-century European rococo design – a design of surface frills and general busyness that exhibits an ‘inhabited atmosphere’ (1961a, p. 184) and which subsequently represents the much lived-in ego-consciousness. In ‘Mind and earth’ Jung notes that ‘we live on the upper storey […] Just as the building rises freely above the earth, so our consciousness stands as if above the earth in space, with a wide prospect before it’ (1927/1931, para 55). As he leaves this part of the building, he finds himself walking down steps to rooms of the fifteenth or sixteenth century, with a medieval red brick ground floor (1961a, para 182). A ‘careful examination of the masonry reveals that [this floor] was reconstructed from a tower built in the eleventh century’ (ibid., para 182). This ground floor represents, he says, the ‘first level of the unconscious’: the personal unconscious (ibid., para 184). Jung discovers further floors beneath ground level, which, he maintains, correspond to ‘deeper’, ‘darker’ levels of the unconscious: the collective unconscious. These appear in the dream as an ancient vaulted room, deduced by Jung to be Roman, and a more ancient room at the lowest level of the house, which appears as a tomb-like cave cut into rock, thick with dust, skulls, bones and broken shards of pottery (1961b, paras 182–183), with ‘neolithic tools in the upper layer and remnants of fauna from the same period in the lower layers’ (1927/1931, para 54). This basement represents the collective unconscious; and it is in here, Jung tells us, that he discovered ‘the world of the primitive man within myself’ (1961a, p. 184; cf. Jung, 1936, para 197).

Jung’s claim that a building is an image or structural diagram of the psyche (1961a, pp. 184, 185) is made in reference to this dream-house; and given that the dream image was of his own psychological making, he would concede that it refers to his own state of mind – the disposition of his own ‘consciousness, with hitherto unconscious additions’ (ibid., p. 184) – at the time he dreamt it. Furthermore, we could argue that it conveys a phenomenological imprint, if you like, of Jung’s own experiences of the multi-storied houses in which he himself had lived or had designs to live in. Certainly Jung claims the dream-house to be his own: ‘it was] “my house”’ (1961a, p. 182); ‘I was in “my home”’ (1964, p.42; 1961b, para 484); ‘as if it was where I lived’ (Bennet, 1985, p.118)
Of the many houses that made an impression upon Jung there are several that may have influenced the architectural configuration of the 1909 dream-house, and others that may likewise have been influenced by it in their later design and construction by Jung. For instance, as with the family house at Klein-Hünningen, we find in Jung’s self-designed family house and site of his private practice at Küsnacht features comparable to those of the upper storey of the dream-house. Jung’s house at Küsnacht was designed and built quickly, in just two years, and Jung and his wife Emma moved in on 25 May 1909 (A. Jung, 2009, p. 46) – which is to say, just four months prior to the occasion when Jung claims to have dreamt his house of psyche. Andreas Jung, grandson of Jung and a graduate architect, asserts that the correspondence between the dream-house and the provisional design of the house at Küsnacht are ‘astonishing’ (ibid., pp. 23, 25). A working sketch by Jung for the Küsnacht house, dating from about 1906, depicts a ‘baroque upper storey with its lavish volute gables [which] sits on a simple, rustic semibasement with narrow slits for windows, which may date from the early fifteenth century’ (ibid., p. 23). Andreas Jung emphasises our point when he notes that once built, the house ‘would only reflect the conventional – that is, “conscious” – layers of the image of the human psyche outlined in the dream (namely the “upper storey […] in rococo style”).’ (ibid., p. 25).

Given that Jung’s ego-consciousness was largely preoccupied with blue prints and architectural design plans for the Küsnacht building – and intensely so, with all the pressures and stresses of overseeing its construction in so short a period of time – it is not unreasonable to assume that its imagery might also have infiltrated and shaped his dreamscapes for a short duration after its construction was complete, and, notably, when he was travelling, as he was for the first time away from his new home. In short, it would be no surprise for a dream-image of a house of psyche to portray in its ‘upper storey’ (‘of consciousness’) residues of those design features that had absorbed the conscious, waking life of the dreamer.

Other houses that made an impression upon Jung, and which share similarities with the dream-house of psyche, include the house Jung designed and built at Bollingen, and his uncle’s ‘very old house in Basel’ (the priest’s house at Basel Cathedral), which Jung’s close friend, E.A. Bennet, recalls Jung having discussed in close association to the dream house. His uncle’s house, Bennet notes, ‘was built in the old moat of the town and had two cellars; the lower one was very dark and like a cave’ (Bennet, 1985, p. 118). Bennet further recalls Jung’s delight and interest in describing the excavations of this house which were undertaken in 1960, half a decade after Jung purported to have had his dream; uncannily, it was discovered that it had been built on Roman remains, underneath which was a cellar – just as his dream house was! Bennet notes, ‘This interested him very much – that somehow it was in the family’ (ibid., p. 124); which is to say, that it was for Jung like the dream-house: ‘my house’.

Perhaps the most striking of the buildings that echo the dream-house of psyche, not simply in its structural arrangement but in its phenomenological expression of inhabiting psyche (that is, of Jung’s experiences of his own psychological maturation), is Jung’s self-designed and self-built house at Bollingen. If Jung’s house at Küsnacht can be said to echo or represent the conscious aspect or ego-orientation of Jung’s personality, the house at Bollingen connotes more unconscious aspects that underpin the development of his psyche in their reconciliation within his conscious
ego-personality. Simply put, in Jung’s own words, the building at Bollingen is the ‘concretisation of the individuation process’ (ibid., p. 252). Jung notes,

Gradually, through my scientific work, I was able to put my fantasies and the contents of the unconscious on a solid footing. Words and paper, however, did not seem real enough to me; something more was needed. I had to achieve a kind of representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired. Or, to put it another way, I had to make a confession of faith in stone. That was the beginning of the ‘Tower’, the house which I built for myself at Bollingen. (1961a, p. 250)

The upper storey of this building, Jung says, represents ‘my ego-personality’, ‘an extension of consciousness achieved at old age’, and the sum of the building, ‘a symbol of psychic wholeness’ (ibid., pp. 251–252).

Jung’s architectural projects for the design and realisation of actual buildings can therefore be regarded as projections into stone of his own state of mind, or as edifices to his personal development and progress in individuation. Indeed, Jung notes that the act of designing and creating buildings is itself a ‘rite’ of passage, one that enabled him to reconnect with his youth and to begin to discover his own personal ‘myth’ (Jung, 1961a, p. 199). His ‘confrontation with the unconscious’ began with both his recollection of his early passion for building ‘little houses and castles, using bottles to form the sides of gates and vaults’ (ibid., p. 197) and his subsequent decision to take up the activity once again. And he did so almost obsessively: ‘every day, whenever the weather permitted. As soon as I was through eating,’ he notes, ‘I began playing, and continued to do so until the patients arrived; and if I was finished with my work early enough in the evening, I went back to building’ (ibid., p. 198). Jung built ‘cottages’, ‘castles’ and ‘whole villages’ ‘out of ordinary stones, with mud for mortar’, and by doing so, his ‘thoughts clarified’, enabling him, he says, to ‘grasp the fantasies whose presence in myself I dimly felt’ (ibid., pp. 197–198). The activity of designing and building the houses at Küsnacht and Bollingen can be regarded within this context as facilitating Jung’s self-realization; in themselves, they are monuments that collectively chart his progress in self-realization. The earlier house at Küsnacht renders into stone an early stage of his development which sees, as we note above, a house of consciousness – and the later house at Bollingen is an edifice to his more developed personality, which comprises ‘an extension of consciousness achieved at old age’; an incarnation of Jung’s Self in stone.

From the discussion above, we can begin to appreciate that the relevance of the architectural metaphor of house as psyche extends beyond its abstract, conceptual considerations of the psyche, into a lived experience of it. Metaphors are, for Jung, the only approach to making sense of our experiences of psyche; ‘Every interpretation’ of life, he claims, ‘necessarily remains an “as-if”’. The ultimate core of meaning may be circumscribed, but not described. Even so, the bare circumscription denotes an essential step forward in our knowledge of […] the psyche’ (Jung, 1940, para 265). Thus if we are to understand Jung’s metaphor of building as psyche more fully, we cannot simply approach it as we might an intellectual exercise where its parts are deconstructed to ascertain its overall theoretical validity or consistency. Rather, we need also to recognise it as both an attempt to make sense of the way we project these parts onto and into the world around us to help us understand our placement or displacement in the world, and, more generally, as a description of Jung’s understanding of what it means to inhabit or be dislocated from the world. As we
shall see in the course of this paper, Jung’s architectural metaphor is not simply bound up with the projection of psyche into concrete, physical forms (an alchemical process, if you like, of infusing spirit with stone), it attempts also to present Jung’s phenomenological description of the manner in which human beings dwell and experience their placement, or lack thereof, within the world they find themselves in. Although students and scholars of Jung most often associate his metaphor of house as psyche to the diagrammatic presentation of his dream house of 1909, there are lesser known architectural accounts within Jung’s work that are no less salient in their capacity to convey and illuminate important notions, features and experiences of the Jungian psyche. In this paper I will examine one such account that has for the most part been wholly overlooked by commentators of Jung, which is unfortunate, as a careful analysis of it reveals much about the affects of psyche and our experience of placement; perhaps more than Jung himself realised.

The account in question is Jung’s brief description of the attic and cellar rooms of a house, which is cited in his essay ‘Allgemeines zur komplextheorie’ (1934)/‘A review of the complex theory’ (1948a) to illustrate the effects of the autonomous complex on ego-consciousness. It is not the dream, but the complex that Jung designates as the royal road to the unconscious (ibid., para 210), and while Jung’s famous house dream of 1909 helped him to realise his theory of the collective unconscious, it was the affective nature of the complex/C1 as described in the movement between attic and cellar/C1 that helped Jung to appreciate the dynamics that underpin the many divisions or rooms of the psyche. Although Jung does not explicitly relate his illustration of the cellar and attic rooms to his wider conception of house as psyche/C1 and does not thereby make explicit the correlations between consciousness and the attic room of the upper storey, and the unconscious and the cellar room at the opposite end of the house – to regard these rooms as an extension of his metaphorical scheme reinforces the argument Jung seeks to extol in his essay on complex theory.

Bachelard and Jung: Housemates or next door neighbours?

As far as I am aware only one other Jungian commentator has interpreted Jung’s illustration of the attic and cellar in the broader, metaphorical terms of house as psyche, and this was the celebrated French philosopher of science and phenomenology, Gaston Bachelard in his highly revered work La poétique de l’espace (1957) (translated into English as The poetics of space in 1958). Bachelard sought within this work to apply phenomenology to architecture in order to elucidate the experiential qualities of the spaces in which and through which we live. Bachelard gleans much insight from Jung’s writings, and he refers to Jung’s architectural metaphor of house as psyche to support his ideas, including Jung’s description of the dream-house as recounted in ‘Mind and earth’ (Bachelard, 1957, pp. 18–19; 1958, p. xxxvii).

It is fair to say that Bachelard intends to proffer a similar house of psyche in basic design structure to that described by Jung in his dream of 1909. Thus, he is keen to espouse verticality as a principal architectural feature, which he asserts is ensured by the polarities of attic and cellar (1957, p. 35; 1958, p.17). Bachelard’s explanation for the symbolism of these rooms is similarly Jungian. Thus, the area close to the ‘roof’ correlates, he says, with ‘rationality’, as it is where ‘all our thoughts are clear’ and where ‘fears are easily “rationalized”’ (1957, p. 36; 1958, p.19). The cellar area, by contrast, represents the ‘dark entity [l’être obscur] of the house’ (1957, p. 34; 1958, p. 18), wherein ‘darkness prevails both day and night […] even when we are carrying
a lighted candle’; this dark cellar room ‘partakes of subterranean forces’ and ‘irrationality of the depths’ (1957, pp. 35–36; 1958, pp. 18–19).

For Bachelard, cellar and attic rooms must be separated to accentuate the verticality of the house. An additional storey between these rooms further emphasizes their polarity and the overall verticality of the structure. Thus Bachelard insists on a multi-storied house.

If I were the architect of an oneiric house, I should hesitate between a three-storey house and one with four. A three-storey, which is the simplest as regards essential height, has a cellar, a ground floor and the attic. One floor more and our dreams become blurred. In the oneiric house, topoanalysis only knows how to count to three or four (1957, p. 41; 1958, p. 25).

Bachelard likewise insists on a certain number of stairways to connect the floors: ‘one to three or four of them, all different’ (ibid.).

The influence of Jung upon Bachelard is unmistakable, and given the latter’s concern for the polarity or verticality instilled by cellar and attic rooms it is little wonder that Bachelard turns to Jung’s description of cellar and attic rooms to support his discussion. However, Bachelard’s depiction of Jung’s description is as bizarre as it is inaccurate and as far as I am aware this has until now gone unnoticed and without comment in Jungian and Bachelardian scholarship alike.

There are several inconsistencies surrounding Bachelard’s citation of Jung’s passage. A reading of the English translation of Bachelard’s The poetics of space leads us to assume a double error on his part. For there we find that he begins his commentary by incorrectly attributing this passage of Jung’s to his earlier work Modern man in search of a soul (1933), a collection of 11 essays by Jung translated into English by Cary F. Baynes. Bachelard then proceeds to misquote and misread Jung’s passage to the extent that he mistakes the cellar for the attic and the attic for the cellar, thereby describing a topsy-turvy house of psyche, in which the unconscious and consciousness switch places.

Let us now turn to his curious reading by comparing Jung’s description with Bachelard’s misquotation of it.

According to Jung,

> Consciousness behaves like someone who hears a suspicious noise in the attic and thereupon dashes down into the cellar, in order to assure himself that no burglar has broken in and that the noise was mere imagination. In reality he has simply not dared to go up into the attic. ('Review of complex theory', 1948a, para 206; translated by R.F.C. Hull)

According to Bachelard,

> La conscience se comporte là comme un home qui, entendant un bruit suspect à la cave, se précipite au grenier pour y constater qu’il n’y a pas de voleurs et que par conséquent, le bruit était pure imagination. En réalité, cet homme prudent n’a pas osé s’aventurer à la cave. (La poétique de l’espace, 1957, p. 36.)
Here the conscious acts like a man who, hearing a suspicious noise in the cellar, hurries to the attic and, finding no burglars there decides, consequently, that the noise was pure imagination. In reality, this prudent man did not dare venture into the cellar. (*The poetics of space*, 1958, p. 19; translated by Maria Jolas)

**Bachelard’s topsy-turvy house of psyche**

Apart from Bachelard’s seemingly uncharacteristic sloppy scholarship, why is this at all relevant or meaningful? Well, as I mentioned at the start, according to Jung’s metaphor of house as psyche, the composition of the various rooms, their usage, and the movements we make within and between them, reveal the structure of psyche and the direction of its libidinal energy. Thus, Bachelard’s topsy-turvy house seems to provide us with a model of the nature and dynamics of psyche that is different to the one intended by Jung within his passage.

I contend that Jung’s original passage illustrates the disorientating effects of the intruding complex on the psyche. Thus, upon hearing the complex or burglar break into the ‘conscious’ upper storey of the house with its threat to dispossess the homeowner of his belongings – or sense of belonging – the homeowner acts irrationally and dissociates himself from the reality of the situation by convincing himself that there is no genuine threat, but instead a trick of the imagination. But when we turn to Bachelard’s reading we find a curiously different description of events, which subsequently attributes a different interpretation of the effects of the disorientating complex. Thus, the man who lives in Bachelard’s topsy-turvy house hears a possible burglar intrude not in the upper room of consciousness but in the lower cellar room of the unconscious. Although this homeowner reacts in a similarly disorientated manner to his neighbour in the Jungian household, he turns not to the unconscious cellar for relief, but to the consciousness of the attic. It is the attic space with all its metaphorical connotations that enables this homeowner to distance himself from the worrying disturbance.

In Jung and Bachelard we find different locations for the disturbance and different sites for its temporary relief. These, I contend, correspond to different psychic mechanisms for dealing with the complex. For the rest of the paper I shall elaborate on this difference and question the extent to which Bachelard’s topsy-turvy house deviates from the metaphorical conception of house as psyche intended by Jung. Are they really so dissimilar, or does Bachelard’s bizarre misreading actually shed some light on the nature of the complex envisaged by Jung?

The answer I will elucidate is that despite such an explicit misreading of Jung, Bachelard’s description does in fact portray, and thereby inform us about, certain features of Jung’s theory of complexes. In his ‘Allgemeines zur komplextheorie’ (Review of the complex theory) Jung identifies two different kinds of complex, which he differentiates on the basis of their origin and dynamics. And it is these different conceptions that I find illustrated in the two architectural metaphors of Jung and Bachelard respectively.

Before I explain this, I want to absolve Bachelard in part for my earlier accusation of sloppy scholarship, for the mistaken description of Jung’s metaphor does not originate with him, but with the poor translation of Jung’s essay into French upon which Bachelard evidently depended.
A closer look at Bachelard’s misreading

Earlier I alluded to a double error in Bachelard’s citation of Jung’s passage: first, his attribution – claimed within the English translation, *The poetics of space* – of it to Jung’s work *Modern man in search of a soul*; and second, the troublesome misquotation we have explored that sees attic and cellar swap places.

However, we can quickly absolve Bachelard of the first error by consulting his discussion of Jung’s passage in the original French. For here we discover Bachelard does not in fact cite *Modern man in search of a soul* as the source for Jung’s passage, but *L’Homme à la découverte de son âme* (*Man in search of his soul*) (1943a), an anthology of eight essays by Jung, translated into French for the first time by Dr. Roland Cahen-Salabelle. Aside from the similarity of their titles, it is not easy to appreciate why the two works are regarded as one and the same, for only two of the essays in Cahen-Salabelle’s French compilation are among the 11 of Baynes’ English anthology (see Jung, 1944a, p. 589, n. 1). Needless to say, the essay that concerned Bachelard, and us here – ‘Considerations générales sur la théorie des complexes’ (1943b)/A review of the complex theory (1948a) – is not one of these two.

Bachelard is similarly absolved, to some extent, of the second and more troublesome issue of his misquotation of Jung. For the error can be traced to the French translation of Jung’s essay by Cahen-Salabelle that Bachelard himself cites as the reference for Jung’s passage.

It is therefore rather ironic that Jung should applaud ‘la traduction si comprehensive de M.R. Cahen-Salabelle’ [‘the perceptive translation of M.R. Cahen-Salabelle’] (1944a, para 1357) in his epilogue to Cahen-Salabelle’s *L’homme à la découverte de son âme* (p. 401).

We can conclude that Bachelard’s mistake was not to misread Jung but to fail to read Jung’s essay in the original German, and to rely instead on its poor translation into French.

Implications of the mistranslation for elucidating Jung’s theory of complexes

It is perhaps unfortunate that the curiously misquoted passage of Jung ended up in the hands of Bachelard and integrated within his celebrated *La poétique de l’espace*. Although the mistranslation does not affect Bachelard’s overall discussion, it does reveal interesting connotations from the perspective of Jungian theory. Just as Freud found linguistic parapraxes such as mistranslation to be of great psychological value in uncovering latent or hidden states, the misquoted passage of Cahen-Salabelle within Bachelard’s work is no less interesting and revealing. Indeed, when examined within the metaphorical context of house as psyche, Cahen-Salabelle’s inversion of attic and cellar rooms, which sees the realm of unconscious trade places with consciousness, helps to explain the nature of the complex envisaged by Jung.

Let us now turn to the two types of complex postulated by Jung, which I find represented within the respective architectural metaphors of Bachelard and Jung.

Two different types of complex

On the one hand, Jung identifies complexes of the personal unconscious that are associated with the ego. These were once conscious, but have been split off from consciousness by repression on the basis that the ego wanted to be rid of them
(Jung, 1938/1940, para 22). And on the other, he identifies complexes of the collective unconscious, which, he warns, ‘should not become associated with’ the ego (Jung, 1948a, para 587). These complexes are autonomous and have never been conscious before and, subsequently, cannot be arbitrarily repressed (Jung, 1938/1940, para 22). Instead, they seek to engulf and inflate the ego, causing it to dissociate from the rest of the personality.

When examining the differences between the passages of Bachelard and Jung in this context, we find the Jungian household to be within the grips of an autonomous complex, and Bachelard’s to be affected by the somewhat less disturbing personal complex. If my summation is fair, it means that Bachelard’s topsy-turvy house inadvertently supports Jungian theory, but does not embrace it to the full. That is to say, it seems to stop short at a more Freudian reading of the unconscious by recognising only those personal complexes that can be repressed by the rationalisations of the lofty attic, and not giving expression to the autonomous nature of the unconscious with its complexes that rise up from the dark cellar to threaten ego-consciousness with inflation.

Let us now try to deconstruct the two passages to address and explain these issues. The passage can be divided into three constituent parts, which we shall examine in turn. The first is the initial location of the perceived disturbance; the second, the location to which the man goes upon hearing the noise; and finally, the place, we are told, to which the man ought to have gone.

It is worth noting that immediately before citing his illustration, Jung asserts that the ‘modern mind conceives all inner disturbances as its own activity’ so that complexes are mistakenly assumed to be ‘unreal’ products of conscious thinking. We find this modern identification of all psychic activity with consciousness illustrated in Jung’s passage by the man who believes that the disturbance in the Jungian household is coming from the attic room of ego-consciousness. Bachelard’s household, however, seems to depart from this Jungian notion. Although Bachelard concedes shortly after citing his passage that there can be considerable noise in the attic (from such things, he says, as scampering rats and mice) – noises, he says, that can be silenced quickly by the sudden arrival of ‘the master of the house’ (which equates in Jungian terms to the rationalisations of the ego) – Bachelard’s master or man of the house hears the disturbance coming directly from the unconscious room of the cellar.14 This therefore assumes, contrary to Jung’s assertion, that the modern mind can and does recognise the unconscious as a source of inner disturbance.

Upon hearing a disturbance in their respective houses, both men depart to opposite ends of the house in order to delude themselves into thinking there is no disturbance to worry about. But the question arises as to why the man in the Jungian house needs to go to the cellar to enlist the unconscious in making the disturbing complex appear unreal, when his neighbour in Bachelard’s house does not. The answer I contend is that the disturbance within Bachelard’s house is of a more benign and personal nature; the disturbance is the effect of a complex that comprises material that once belonged to ego-consciousness. The man or ego in this house has more control over the disturbance; here the ego retains its own will and invests in its own resources to defend against the intruding complex. This is why Bachelard’s man can make the disturbance disappear temporarily by going to the attic room of consciousness, from where he enlists the ego’s defences to rationalise the disturbance away as if it were just another harmless attic mouse or rat.
But the man in the Jungian house has little control over the disturbance because of its autonomous nature. The man or ego can do little about it; his ego is bewitched by it into a will-less subservience. Jung asserts that all attempts to defend against this type of complex through rationalisations prove futile. This kind of complex, he says, is not ‘warded off’ or made unreal by the ego’s defensive measures alone; rather, there is, he says, an unconscious tendency to hide the complex from the ego by assimilating it with the ego, and having the ego identify with it. By doing so the complex can continue its work uninhibited; it controls the ego by dissociating it from the rest of the personality.

The man in the Jungian house is therefore bewitched by the disturbance and is drawn towards the cellar against his will in order to propagate the delusion that the disturbance is unreal and merely imagined. This man is in a bewildered state as the autonomous complex causes him to act irrationally and inappropriately to his situation: ‘it interferes with the conscious will and disturbs it intentions’ (Jung, 1920/1948, para 593). He may well have intended to go to the apparent source of the disturbance – the attic – but the complex lures him against his reasoned intention and will to the opposite end of the house, and into the depths of the unconscious cellar. Indeed, in Jung’s essay ‘The psychological foundations of belief in spirits’ (which was revised in 1948, the same year he undertook revisions of the essay containing the passage we are scrutinising), he asserts that when a complex of the collective unconscious becomes associated with the ego – or, in terms of his metaphor, when its disturbance is heard in the attic – it is felt as ‘strange, uncanny, and fascinating’, causing the ego to fall under its spell and be led astray by it. We could therefore say that Jung’s house is a house of possessing spirits; a haunted house. And its inhabitants are living in a bewildered state between conscious reality and the numinous affects of unconsciousness (cf. Jung, 1948a, para 216).

If we now return to the final part of the two passages, we find that Bachelard and Jung both insist on the homeowner’s need to overcome his delusional state by engaging with the real source of the disturbance – with the complex itself. For Bachelard, this is achieved relatively straightforwardly. Bachelard suggests the man ought to turn his attention away from the attic room and thereby rely less on the reductive explanations of reason and subsequently pluck up the courage to explore the cellar room and engage more fully with unconscious interpretations. But for Jung, the instructions are at first glance less straightforward. Jung suggests the man can overcome his delusion by going to the attic room where he can engage with his ego-consciousness. An explanation for this directive is again found in his related essay on ‘The psychological foundations of belief in spirits’. Here Jung claims that the only way to regain a sense of ‘normality’ once an autonomous complex has the ego in its grip is to extricate the ego from the possessing unconscious, thereby enabling one to regain one’s will and rational disposition (1920/1948, paras 587, 590). In other words, the man needs to leave the unconsciousness of the cellar and return to the consciousness of the attic room. Going back to the attic will enable him to engage more appropriately with the source of the disturbance. In order to discharge the affects of the complex, it must be adequately differentiated from the ego. The ego must separate itself from the complex so that it can begin to make sense of it. For as long as the complex remains unconscious, and for as long as the man continues to go to the cellar in response to the disturbance in the attic, it eludes understanding and continues in its elusive and hidden state to promote a dissociated personality (cf. Jacobi, 1925, p. 11).
However, such instruction is not so easy to follow. To go back into the attic is, we are told, a very daring act, one that incites great resistance and fear, for complexes are, Jung says, very ‘embarrassing’; ‘we are’, he says, ‘positively ashamed of them and do everything possible to conceal them’ (Jung, 1948a, para 207). Any attempt to make sense of them and have them within our control will prove arduous and tricky. An appropriate understanding of them is not achieved through abstract, rational endeavour but with emotional engagement. The man must not simply be concerned with where the disturbance is coming from but why it is happening in his house and what its intentions are. For the complex, Jung asserts, ‘consists not only of meaning but also of value’ (Jung, 1951, para 52; cf. para 61). In other words, the homeowner must begin to make sense of the disturbance by confronting its source, the possible burglar, and engaging it, him, or her in meaningful discourse. The homeowner, alas, is not able to do this, and will continue to be harassed by disturbances within his house.

**House as living psyche**

It is at this point in our discussion that the architectural analogy seems to fall short, for the topographical model on first impression appears to be concerned primarily with locality and position; with abstract questions of where (in the psyche) and how (its parts relate), and not with the more personal or existential values and questions that facilitate dialogue between ego and complex, such as why (is my psyche behaving as it is?).\(^{17}\) In other words, within architectural metaphorical narratives, such as the houses of Bachelard and Jung, we find it is the person within the building (the ego) and not the architectural design of the building itself who initiates the successful or unsuccessful relationship with the intruder (the complex). And likewise, the strength and form of the complex is determined more by the disposition of the personification of the ego that encounters it – whether it is capable of engaging with the complex, or attempts instead to flee from it\(^{18}\) – than by the location or placement of the ego and intruder within the building. And yet, this does not declare the building redundant or irrelevant to our existential concerns. To reiterate, Jung’s metaphor of house as psyche extends beyond its figurative, structural connotations, to our lived experience of it. The metaphor is symbolic of our very being and becoming – and the creative processes that self-realisation entails; and it describes phenomenologically what it means to experience ourselves in and out of place. It is therefore intimately bound with our existential concerns of development, creativity and personal transformation.\(^{19}\) In the words of Bachelard, ‘On whatever theoretical horizon we examine it, the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being’ (1958, p. xxxvi). Likewise,

\[\text{IIt is not a question of describing houses, or enumerating their picturesque features and analyzing for which reasons they are comfortable. On the contrary, we must go beyond the problems of description […] in order to attain to the primary virtues, those that reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting. (Bachelard, 1957, pp. 23–24; 1958, p. 4)}\]

Just as the homeowner’s predicament of the intruder in his house is not an arbitrary intellectual problem for us to solve, but an expression of the experience we ourselves inevitably encounter when our own complexes invade our otherwise
comfortable and familiar spaces, Jung’s metaphorical house as psyche is not simply a diagram to deconstruct for intellectual pleasure, but an account of our common place-oriented experiences of attachment, appropriation and dwelling. And Jung and Bachelard are not alone in this assertion; they are but two figures in a rich tradition, spanning times ancient to postmodern, and of both Eastern and Western providence, that seeks to expose the fundamental relationship between the built environment and our ontological concerns for human nature and our phenomenological experiences of it (see Huskinson, 2008).

Thus we inhabit a house much as we do psyche; to explore one is to explore the other. And it is perhaps no happenstance that Jung chose to describe the intruding complex as a house burglar (who seeks to rob us of our most intimate possession: our self-possession) when published reports and case studies of the psychological effects of burglary on homeowners and inhabitants themselves reveal close correlation between intrusions into the home and ruptures of self-containment and self-image. Thus, there appears to be a tendency among victims of house burglary to describe their experience of the event as a ‘defilement’, ‘violation’ or ‘rape’ of their body and ‘fragmentation’ and dispossession of self (see Serfaty-Garzon, 1985, pp. 14–17; Maguire, 1980, pp. 265–266). The attachments and intimacy, or lack thereof, that we experience with and within ourselves are projected into the buildings that are felt to contain or displace us, so that any activity within them is also experienced within us, as its inhabitants. In this way, we can say that buildings design us as much as we them; or, in Bachelard’s words, ‘they are in us as we are in them’ (1957, p. 19; 1958, p. xxxvii).

The therapeutic connotations of the interplay between house and psyche can be observed in architectural and psychotherapeutic discourses alike. Thus, in such architectural design movements as organic architecture and phenomenology of architecture we find a call for a revised approach to building design, one that reflects a more holistic concern for human experience by responding as much to our emotional well-being and physicality or bodily orientation as to our desire for buildings to be functionally efficient and visually appealing. Likewise, we find psychoanalytic parallels in such work as that of Christopher Bollas (2000, 2003, 2009), who examines the interactions between architecture and the dream life of individuals and society. Bollas argues that creativity and destruction are intimately linked in architectural art forms and our apprehension of them. Thus, Bollas claims, architectural structures have, at best, the potential to facilitate that which Freud termed our ‘psychic intensities’ (Bollas, 2009, p. 63), and which Bollas himself refers to as ‘psychic genera’ (Bollas, 2003): a disposition of ego functioning that enables new psychic possibilities; at worst, they have the capacity to incite ‘the human false self’, such as we find in ‘the empty forms’ of theme parks and ‘anodyne new towns’ (Bollas, 2009, p.47). Bollas’ work has arguably begun to develop the theoretical underpinnings of the topoanalysis that Bachelard called his readers to put into practice; that is to say, ‘the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives’, of those buildings – both literal and oneiric – that we find ourselves attracted to (Bachelard, 1957, p. 18; 1958, p. xxxvi; see also Bollas, 2009, p. 34).

**Conclusion: Revisiting the topsy-turvy house as a Jungian house of psyche**

I have claimed that Jung’s metaphor of house as psyche is not simply one abstract image among many that can be used to help us begin to think about the nature and
dynamics of psyche, but a profound psychological truth that permeates our very being and informs our experience of the way we relate to ourselves, to others and to the world we find ourselves in. Yet, one is forgiven for continuing to question the rigidity of Jung’s, and to a greater extent Bachelard’s, architectural design and blue print for their conceptions of psyche. Both thinkers conceive the psyche as a house of verticality, comprising a number of storeys stretched between poles of cellar and attic. These architectural designs suggest that planning permission for the psyche is somewhat restricted. That is to say, in their definiteness they prescribe a one-size-inhabits-all house of psyche, thereby insinuating that only a detached, free-standing house of several storeys can facilitate the experience of dwelling and being. If, however, Jung’s metaphor implies, as I think it does, that buildings design us as much as we them, then such rigid blueprints fail to convince. Indeed, as I have argued here and elsewhere (Huskinson, 2008), the significance of building as psyche cannot be reduced to its architectural design or topography; and to ask which architectural design is most fitting for a depiction of the human psyche is futile.

Nevertheless, there is value in examining different images of house as psyche in order to appreciate the different responses to human existence that are instilled within them (see Huskinson, 2008, pp. 38–39; Douglas, 1991, p. 290). For instance, an architectural survey of the ‘interior castle’ or many ‘mansions’ of St. Teresa of Avila’s mystical vision will inevitably lead to contrasting interpretations of human nature and experience to, say, the mnemonic memory buildings of the ancient rhetoricians, Quintilian and Cicero; and an exploration of the respective dwelling places of Heidegger and Levinas will lead to radically different conclusions about the very possibility of human experience. And it is no different with Jung and Bachelard: to examine the designs of their metaphorical houses is to examine their particular concerns for human experience and being. Thus, the division of their respective houses into different floor levels (and in the case of Jung’s 1909 dream, into different architectural styles) is indicative of their conception of psyche or being as itself structured into differentiated aspects. Further, that we find stairways connecting these different levels further suggests that there is movement and communication between its parts, so that each part is not experienced in isolation but as a conglomerate whole. And, as we have seen, the use of the rooms made by the inhabitant of their respective houses reveals differently nuanced interpretations of how we experience being in or out of place.

Constructive criticism of their conceptions of psyche will subsequently entail a reconstruction or renovation of the descriptions of their metaphorical houses. A striking case in point can be observed in the major home ‘improvements’ proposed by Chris Hauke’s (2000) postmodern critique of Jung’s architectural metaphor. Hauke upholds the view that the Jungian model of psyche is not necessarily structured, and subsequently criticises Jung’s image of the multi-storeyed house for its insistence on a differentiated psyche. Significantly Hauke does not dispute the validity of the building image as representative of the Jungian psyche; he simply argues that the configuration of the house-image, as it is portrayed in Jung’s 1909 dream, is inappropriate. Indeed, Hauke retains the image of house as psyche, and takes it upon himself to redesign Jung’s house image into a more apposite representation of Jung’s theoretical model. Hauke employs postmodern precepts of plurality, where lack of structure and hierarchy predominate, to replace the house’s vertical axis with a horizontal one (with what Bachelard would discount as ‘mere horizontality’ [Bachelard, 1958, p. 27; cf. Jung’s dismissal of the first stage in the
building of his house at Bollingen – the round hut – which he described as ‘a mere hut crouched in the ground’ [1961a, p. 250] and, similarly, to dismantle notions of structure in order to encourage those of accessibility: in an amalgamation or ‘mixture’ of all aspects of psyche, of ‘past, present and future’ (Hauke, 2000, p. 108). The result, I have claimed elsewhere, is to redesign the Jungian house into a one-storey bungalow, where the hitherto basement rooms of the unconscious merge with the upper-storey of consciousness (see Huskinson, 2008, p. 39).

Breuer criticises those who adopt over-simplified explanations for complicated phenomena in terms of a single-storey house: with such simplistic models ‘we shall always find a very large residue of unexplained phenomena left over.’ It is, he says, ‘just as though we tried to insert the different rooms of a many-storeyed house into the plan of a single storey’ (Breuer, 1893, p. 245). Yet, Hauke is not proposing the type of house that Breuer finds problematic: where all aspects are known and thus conscious – which is to say, where all rooms and architectural features are contained within and identified with the upper storey or attic room. Hauke’s house does not privilege consciousness and collapse cellar into attic; his one-storey building is thus not one that would otherwise be recognised as the upper storey of multi-storeyed house. In Hauke’s house different architectural styles are played off against one another so that none are privileged, with all storeys in one and the same place. We find similar notions embodied within Jung’s building at Bollingen, whereby different styles and shapes are arranged somewhat haphazardly, constructed as and when Jung’s emotional life required, built both lengthways across a horizontal plane and vertically with no prior grand plan in mind (see Larson and Savage, 2009). The Jungian concerns for human being are similarly refocused, to engage more effectively ‘with contradictions, a pluralistic co-existence and an overlapping of values rather than any simplistic periodising of “movements” or positions’ (Hauke, 2000, p.87).

Following this I contend that the topsy-turvy house that originated with Cahen’s mistranslation of Jung and was later appropriated by Bachelard, can, like the postmodern house of Hauke, be regarded as a legitimate Jungian house of psyche. Although the topsy-turvy house does not proclaim the need for such radical redesign and reconstruction of the house as we find in Hauke, it does encourage our consideration, as inhabitants of the house, of the way we might use the rooms and how we find ourselves placed within them. By standing up to the scrutiny of Jungian evaluation in revealing itself to be a fair account of the effects of a complex (of the personal unconscious) upon ego-consciousness, the topsy-turvy house likewise reveals itself to be a no less fitting interpretation or design for a Jungian house of psyche.

Notes

1. Activities that involve the building, such as its construction, reconstruction, dereliction and demolition, and its occupancy and vacancy, can likewise be construed as metaphors for libidinal processes of psyche.

2. Vaughan Hart (1994) offers an interesting discussion on the alchemical motif of the tower and its possible influence on the design features of Jung’s 1909 dream-house. Of particular interest is the image of the primitive dwelling of the cave (as a repository for the secrets of nature), which is often depicted in alchemical manuscripts as a foundation to a tower (or knowledge). Hart illustrates his discussion with the examples of an alchemical tower and cave from Nicola d’ Antonio degli Agli’s Nozze (1490), and The Mountain of the Adeptis, a
78 L. Huskinson
tower within a cave, from Steffan Michespacher’s Cabula (1654), as illustrated by Jung himself in Psychology and alchemy (1944b) (see Hart, 1994, p.42)
3. Designed by Jung in collaboration with his cousin, the architect Ernst Fiechter.
4. For a thorough account of the house and its development, see A. Jung (2009)
5. Bachelard coins this term to parallel psychoanalysis, but with a distinctive focus on the
analysis of our memories of those houses and rooms – both literal and imaginary or
oneiric – to which we find ourselves attracted. For by doing so ‘we learn to “abide”
6. Interestingly, Jung does not allude to the attic room (Dachboden) in his original text (1934)
or subsequent revision of it (1948b). He alludes instead to the upper floor (obern stock).
The translation of obern stock as ‘attic room’ is carried through into Bachelard’s reading,
and, as we shall see later, into Roland Cahen-Saballe’s translation into French (1943).
Although Jung made minor revisions to his essay in 1948, this passage remains unchanged
(see Jung, 1948b, p. 133).
7. R.F.C. Hull’s English translation of Jung’s passage omits the adjective ‘vorsichtige’
(circumspect or cautious) to describe the homeowner. The adjective reappears in Maria
Jolas’ English translation (1958) of Bachelard’s passage as ‘prudent’.
8. This translation is of Jung’s revised essay of 1948 (Jung, 1948b).
9. Roland Cahen-Salabelle, also known as Roland Cahen, was the official translator of
Jung’s works into French, and contributed greatly to the dissemination of Jung’s thought
in France. He supervised the translation of more than 20 books, including Jung’s pseudo-
autobiography (see Kirsch, 2000, pp. 157–158).
10. And the English translator of Bachelard’s La poétique de l’espace/The poetics of space,
Maria Jolas, is not the only one to confuse these two works and conflate them into one
(see, for example, Gordon, 1983, p. 271–272).
11. Although Bachelard does not provide a detailed bibliography for his source, and does not
therefore refer explicitly to Cahen as the translator of it, we can safely assume Cahen’s
anthology is his source. Thus Bachelard cites his source as a translated edition of identical
title to Cahen’s anthology: “L’homme à la découverte de son âme, trad. p. 203” (Bachelard,
1957, p. 36). Furthermore, Bachelard cites the same page number for the Jungian passage
as it appears within those editions of Cahen’s anthology that were available to Bachelard
at the time he was writing La poétique de l’espace in 1957.
12. Similarly, Jung describes Cahen’s anthology in a letter to his publisher, Rascher, as ‘sehr
überzeugend’ [‘very convincing’] (cited in Bishop, 1998, p. 271). However, by contrast,
Kirsch notes that Cahen’s translations have been criticised for taking liberties and for not
staying close enough to Jung’s texts (Kirsch, 2000, p. 158).
13. And the linguistic error of mistranslation may be indicative of unconscious motivation of
the translator (see Venuti, 2002). Thus, the substitution of conscious attic for unconscious
cellar may shine a speculative light on Cahen’s own psychological disposition when
translating this passage.
14. And yet there is a notion in which he does recognise this, as the unconsciousness to which
he alludes is the personal unconscious, which harbours the ‘products’ of ego-thinking: of
that which the ego represses.
15. Jung says that the ‘autonomy of the complex’ is made ‘unreal’ not ‘with an open avowal of
apotropaic euphemism, but with an equally unconscious tendency… by giving it a
different name’ (Jung, 1948a, para 206).
16. Jacobi summarises the point with architectural allusion: ‘The complex is so heavily
charged as to draw the conscious ego into its sphere, overpower and engulf it […] the
complex has to a greater or lesser degree become ruler in the house of the conscious ego’
(1925, p. 15).
17. It is perhaps for this reason that Jung, in his essay ‘Mind and earth’, describes the house
analogy ‘like all analogies’ as ‘lame’, as ‘just a dead relic’ (1927/1931, para 55). That is to
say, Jung here criticises analogies generally for failing to capture the ‘living’ essence or
experience of inhabiting psyche. Yet, as this paper attempts to show, there is more to the
analogy of house as psyche than its abstract diagrammatic presentation; it at least
attempts to embrace, if not capture, our existential concerns and living experiences of
psyche.
18. See Huskinson (2010) for a detailed account of the significance of the ego’s strength and disposition and the role it plays in determining the consequences for the overall personality that is being or has been attacked by a complex. This account can be read as an extended commentary on the contrasting qualitative experiences of the two homeowners of the respective houses of Bachelard and Jung, as they respond to the disturbance within.

19. Indeed, elsewhere I argue that the architectural motif of a house is integral to the creative processes within Jung’s own thinking and being to the extent that it facilitates for Jung new ideas that directly shape his theoretical work, and inform the development of his personality (Huskinson, 2008). See also Jones (2007), who analyses Jung’s 1909 dream-house to demonstrate ‘how it is first and foremost an autobiographical memory – not a narration of a dream once dreamed, but an active, dynamic, narrative reconstruction influenced by its cumulative significance for him’ (p. 208).

Notes on contributor
Lucy Huskinson (PhD) is Senior Lecturer of Psychology of Religion at Bangor University, UK. She is co Editor-In-Chief of the International Journal for Jungian Studies, and author of Nietzsche and Jung (Routledge, 2004), Introduction to Nietzsche (SPCK, 2010); editor of, and contributor to, Dreaming the Myth Onwards: New Interpretations of Jungian Therapy and Thought (Routledge, 2009); New Interpretations of Spirit Possession (Continuum, 2010), and numerous papers on analytical psychology and philosophy.

References


