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Understanding Locke & Key:

**A Semiotic and Intertextual study of the Collective Unconscious and
some of its Archetypes in *Locke & Key***

A Master's Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts (120 credits) in Visual Culture

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This thesis' focus will be on the comic book series *Locke & Key* in a semiotic and an intertextual reading through a psychoanalytical framework. The comic series is described as a "psychological horror" and a main theme running across the six volumes is good versus evil, and a lot of the narrative is helped by magical keys. The keys have specific uses and help both sides gain more power. The psychoanalytical focus that will be implemented is the Collective unconscious and some of its archetypes, as presented by Carl Jung, resulting in two main questions *How does the theory of the Collective Unconscious and its archetypes affect the understanding of Locke & Key's narrative?* and *How do Locke & Key's images affect this reading of the work?*. The theory presents a wide array of archetypes detectable in the comic, recurring symbols and imagery, like The House, The Mother, The Child, Animus/Anima and the Shadow archetypes. Through these archetypes a deeper understanding of the empirical work takes place and a new understanding of the story as an allegory for trauma opens to the reader.

Keywords:

Comic books, Horror, Intertextuality, Julia Kristeva, Psychoanalysis, Carl Jung, Collective unconsciousness, Archetypes, Roland Barthes, Semiotics

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Introduction

Background and Relevance

Locke & Key, by writer Joe Hill and artist Gabriel Rodríguez, was lauded by critics when it first got published and the comic book series has won many prestigious awards, including an Eisner award for Best Writer 2011 and Best Comic or Graphic Novel by the British Fantasy Society 2012. The comic series consists of six volumes and mainly mixes elements of horror and fantasy, which gives the comic a quite particular tone. The story of the comic is about the Locke family and their fight against an evil demon known as Dodge. The Locke family consists of the kids Tyler, Kinsey and Bode and their mother Nina, that in the wake of their father and husband's murder moves to Keyhouse Manor, the Locke family's house, in the village of Lovecraft, Massachusetts. As both the title of the series, the name of the surname of the protagonists and the name of the house imply, keys play a major part in the narrative. Through the 6 volumes different magical keys are found by the three Locke children, as well as other characters, often helping the characters in different ways. These magical keys have different properties, for example: one key opens a door that transforms a person into a ghost, one key opens the head and mind of a person and one key makes a person travel back in time. The keys are fundamentally linked to Keyhouse Manor and the house works like a hub to the magical aspects of the story.

The focus of the house was one of the first things I noticed in the comic, and it influenced me to choose *Locke & Key* as the main empirical material for this thesis. What I noticed, or rather felt, was an association I made between the house of Keyhouse Manor and Carl Jung's dream about a house.¹ As a symbol of the psyche, the House archetype offers a structured and visual aspect of the other pretty abstract ways to see the psyche. These revelations sparked my interest, even if the association between Keyhouse Manor and the Jungian House archetype was my own, I still argue that an element exists in the comic that opens to this parallel reading. Carl Jung notably uses these archetypes in his discussions and theories relating to the Collective Unconscious.² According to Jung, the Collective

¹ C. G. Jung, A. Jaffé (ed.), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, trans. C. Winston & R. Winston, New York, Vintage Books, 1989, p. 196ff

² C. G. Jung, 'Part 1: Archetypes & the Collective Unconscious', *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, trans. G. Adler & R. F. C. Hull, Volume 9, Part 1, 1980, p. 56, <https://www.jungiananalysts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/C.-G.-Jung-Collected-Works-Volume-9i -The-Archetypes-of-the-Collective-Unconscious.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2020)

Unconscious consists of archetypes relating to associations made by the unconscious parts of the psyche. In closer study of the comic, I found more and more of these archetypes in the comic, relating to different things like locations and characters. *Locke & Key* has an overarching focus on psychology, from darker and more realistic themes of sadness and trauma, to more fantastical themes like a key that opens the head and mind (known as the *Head Key*). The theme strengthens the relation between the story and the Jungian archetypes, creating a rich psychological focus and understanding in the comic.

The topic I want to bring to the forefront is a deeper and more nuanced view on the comic books genre. The comic book genre has during the last years gained a more prominent role and is now almost as natural as a legitimate artistic expression as other art forms. This tendency is also more and more apparent in academia, where comic books and graphic novels have become a serious material for analysis. Comics are relatively new in a wider academic discipline, which make them a perfect study object. With this thesis I want to widen the theoretical apparatus subjected to comic books and to find deeper ways to analyze and interpret comics.

Aim and Research Question

The aim for this thesis is to explore and apply some of the Jungian archetypes in *Locke & Key* and see what kind of context they create for the comic. This raises important issues about comics and their ability to communicate and show complex and nuanced themes in collaboration between story, image, and text. There is a stigma associated with comics, degrading them from the complex cultural expression they are, and instead relegating them to either children's literature or to a "nerdy" fringe culture, instead of looking at them as the complicated and dynamic piece of art they are.

Throughout the thesis I have two main questions:

How does the theory of the Collective Unconscious and its archetypes affect the understanding of Locke & Key's narrative?

How do Locke & Key's images affect this reading of the work?

Theory and Method

This thesis' primary focus lies in a semiotic reading of the empirical material and an intertextual reading relating the comic to Carl Jung's theories about one aspect of psychoanalysis, the Collective Unconscious and 6 of its archetypes, The House, The Mother, The Child, Anima/Animus and The Shadow. The overarching theory will be that of intertextuality, with said psychoanalytical focus, as well as a semiotic approach also being a major theory in the study. The semiotic theory will further contextualize the archetypes within the comic, and I will use a semiotic approach based on Roland Barthes and his writings in the essay *Rhétorique de l'image (Rhetoric of the Image)*. The psychoanalytical intertextual aspects are collected from what Jung himself writes about the Collective Unconscious and its archetypes and the intertextuality of *Locke & Key* will further pinpoint and problematize the archetypes and aspects present in *Locke & Key* and give a deeper understanding of the comic book.

An important step in the process is the delimitation of my empirical material. As a start I read through the six volumes and differentiated distinct themes and characters through the books several times. The story is quite complex, with both flashbacks, a sprawling gallery of characters and major side plots taking up a lot of space and focus in the story. This made it necessary for me to have several rereadings of the comic, to crystalize what was important to focus on in the story and how to recognize the unconscious archetypes within. After the readthroughs more and more aspects became clear and helped me form the delimitations on the material and to capture the essence of the most relevant and important aspects of the comic. For every archetype I chose a certain number of pictures that acts as a representative for that archetype. The purpose of the delimitation is to give as much clarity as possible to what I am studying, and to make the empirical material both relevant and poignant. For the House archetype six images will be the focus, while The Mother, The Child and the Animus/ Anima archetypes will have two images each and lastly the Shadow Archetype will tie back to all the pervious images. With this understanding of the source material, the focus shifts to the main theory in this thesis. I chose intertextuality because it connects the empirical material with a larger understanding of the work and its connections with other cultural expressions. In this case that of the Jungian archetypes and their effect on the comic.

Intertextuality is a term coined by Julia Kristeva in her text *Word, Dialogue, and Novel*, as a way of analyzing and understanding texts in a wider context. Kristeva builds her analysis and arguments on the works by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and his theories regarding Dialogism.³ Dialogism is a major term used in Bakhtin's works and relates to the notion of communication as one of the most important and elemental structures of our society.⁴ Julia Kristeva uses this notion as a groundwork in her text and further elaborates and discusses it, especially applying the theory on a literary material. She argues that there are three dimensions to "the word" in a written text, that of the writing subject, the addressee, and exterior texts.⁵ She relates this to Bakhtin's analysis of the text as consisting of two parts, that of the Dialogism (the Dialogical elements) and that of the Ambivalent (the Ambivalent elements).⁶ Kristeva relates both the writing subject and the addressee in the Dialogical elements, just because their connection to the communication between the author, text and the reader. She relates exterior texts to Bakhtin's Ambivalent elements, where she argues that the understanding of the text is understood by other texts.⁷ My theoretical framework will implement Kristeva's three dimensions, to get a clarity in how aspects in *Locke & Key* helps shape a greater understanding of the comic. In the connection between the empirical material and the intertextual theory an important understanding of the psychoanalytical aspects appears, showing deeper aspects of the comic and the comic's message. By showcasing 5 archetypes in the comic the intertextual analysis can be clear and at the same time give a considerable depth to the comic. In the choosing of the archetypes, the importance is to get a deep understanding of the comic and to connect the Jungian archetypes of the House, The Mother, The Child, Animus/Anima and The Shadow to aspects in the comic.

To further connect the theoretical framework to the empirical material, I will also use a semiotic approach. A semiotic approach to analyzing comic books is an efficient and proven method, and the theories works well on the material. The problem with comic books is that they are a hybrid, a combination between text and image, which can make them hard to analyze thoroughly. The combination of text and image and the relationship within, is fundamental to understand comics and is something that is needed in the theoretical method. One theory that combines text and image is Roland Barthes' *Rhétorique de l'image* (Rhetoric

³ Kristeva, J., 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', T. Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1989, p. 34

⁴ Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, pp. 37–39

⁵ Kristeva, p. 36

⁶ Kristeva, p. 37

⁷ Kristeva, p. 39f

of the Image). In the text there are three analytical levels, The Linguistic Message, The Connotted Image and The Denoted Image. Barthes uses these three levels to explore the text and image, but also the deeper understanding between the two.⁸ In the first level, The Linguistic Message, Barthes uses the terms *Relay* and *Anchorage* to analyze the relationship between text and image, *Relay* is when the text reaches out of the image and widens the understanding of the image, while *Anchorage* is the text solidifying the image's message.⁹ Both these relationships exist in comics and will prove very useful for the study. Semiotic theories are widely used in different forms of media to thoroughly understand and dissect the work, and in Barthes' text he analyzes an advertisement for *Panzani*. He analyzes the image in three levels, the already discussed Linguistic message, relating to the text, and two levels relating to the picture, a coded iconic message (The Connotted Image) and a noncoded iconic message (The Denoted Image).¹⁰ A coded iconic message, shows the connotations the reader/viewer makes, while the noncoded iconic message relates to the denotated image, what we can see physically in the image.¹¹ Together, all three levels of Barthes' analysis are important for the understanding of the message the images of *Locke & Key* tell the reader.

Empirical Material

Because of the extent of the material, only a few of the most important aspects were chosen for analysis in this thesis. These aspects are recurring through the whole story and are a vital part of the narrative.

The first major focus will be on the house, Keyhouse Manor, and its surroundings, especially the wellhouse and the caves that are found beneath the house are important, as exemplified by Image 1, collected from the 4th



Image 1

⁸ R. Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. S. Heath, London, Fontana Press, 1977, pp. 33-25

⁹ Barthes, *Image Music Text*, p. 33

¹⁰ Barthes, pp.34-36

¹¹ Barthes, pp. 34-36

volume of the series. I relate these aspects to Jung's discussions of the house as a symbol of our psyche. This house aspect relates to aspects found in Jungian psychoanalysis which contextualizes a deeper understanding of the importance of the House in *Locke & Key*.

After that, the empirical material will focus on the Locke family, where two Jungian archetypes will be used, that of The Mother and The Child. The main focus here will lie in the character of Nina, the mother, and Bode, the youngest son. Image 2 showcases the whole family, where they are all gathered at Bode's friend's funeral. The focus will be on the conveying of their characters in relation to the archetype of the Mother and the Child.



Image 2

Staying among the characters, the next focus is on *The Gender Key*, and the characters of Duncan Locke and Dodge. Duncan is the Locke kids' paternal uncle, who is gay, and the keeper of Keyhouse Manor before the Locke family moves in. Dodge is the main antagonist in the comic book series. Dodge is a demon without a real body, instead possessing the bodies of different characters through the story, notable, and for this study most relevant, Lucas Caravaggio. Both Dodge and Duncan have used the gender key to change their sex on and off, Duncan uses the key a lot as a child, and when Dodge is first introduced in the story he is in the body of a female Lucas Caravaggio. The Jungian archetype prevalent in this particular aspect is the Anima/Animus presented by Jung. Jung argues that the Animus is the



Image 3

unconscious masculine side of a woman and that the Anima is the unconscious side of a man.

The final archetype of the Collective Unconscious that is going to be analyzed is the Shadow (as exemplified by Image 3). The empirical

material for this archetype will mainly be about Dodge, but also the dark demons from the caves under the house present in the comics.

Previous Research

Jungian archetypes in correlation with visual mediums is interestingly quite well researched, especially when it comes to film studies. James (Jim) Iaccino, from *The Chicago School of Professional Psychology*, has written extensively about Carl Jung, the Collective Unconsciousness and its archetypes. In books like *Psychological Reflections on Cinematic Terror: Jungian Archetypes in Horror Films* (1994) and *Jungian Reflections within the Cinema: A Psychological Analysis of Sci-Fi and Fantasy Archetypes* (1998) he explores these archetypes in movies and what they do for the narrative but also what they say about our psyche. In *Psychological Reflections on Cinematic Terror: Jungian Archetypes in Horror Films* Iaccino brings up some of the archetypes, like the Mother archetype, detect them in horror films and discusses how different they can be portrayed but at the same time have a common base in a deeper understanding. There is a connection between film and comics, both are visual mediums that use visual storytelling to a certain extent, but there are also many differences. The main difference can arguably be said being that a comic is comprised of still images instead of a moving narrative. This makes a difference in how the empirical material is analyzed and understood.

General theoretical texts about the horror as a cultural expression is a wide and sprawling field of research. The gothic fiction in the 19th century was one of the cultural forms where horror really could shine and the gothic expert Devandra Varma has written several works about this influential period. One other substantial and influential work is *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart* from 1990, by Professor Noël Carroll. The book brings up important aspects of the horror genre and Carroll discusses the very nature of horror, but also offers a wider look at the genre and genre conventions. As a field of research, horror, without any connection to cultural expressions such as books and films, has also been thoroughly studied and a lot of different theories try to understand the concept. Sigmund Freud has discussed the horror aspect in his theories about *The Uncanny*, Carl Jung in his theories regarding the Shadow archetype and Julia Kristeva in her *Abjection* theory.

Because *Locke & Key* is contemporary, the academic research about this specific comic book is not substantial. The comic is the main study object in María Ibáñez-

Rodríguez's article "Myths of the Uncanny in the Contemporary Graphic Novel" in the anthology *On Fear, Horror and Terror: Giving Utterance to the Unutterable*. In the article Ibáñez-Rodríguez discusses gothic horror and its influence in contemporary horror fiction.¹² The main theories used in the article is that of Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* and Freud's research about the *Uncanny*. The main argument of the text is that the horror element, as well as Keyhouse Manor (which Ibáñez-Rodríguez relates to the haunted house trope) work together to create a trapped atmosphere that further amplifies the horror in the comic.¹³ My thesis will differ from this article in a number of different ways, first and foremost my study will have the images and visuality as a vital part of the study, in conjunction to the narrative. In Ibáñez-Rodríguez's article, the images themselves are not discussed, nor are the visuality. I argue that the visuality is essential for the understanding of comics as a genre. My theoretical framework will also differ, because of my use of intertextuality and semiotics. While Ibáñez-Rodríguez discusses the *Uncanny* and *Mythologies*, I will focus on the intertextual connection between the comic and Jung's Collective Unconscious and Barthes' semiotic collected from *Rhetoric of the Image*.

Disposition of the Thesis

Chapter 1 of the thesis will begin with a discussion regarding the comic and some of its main themes in greater detail, general information about both the story and the images will be brought up here. In Chapter 2 I will introduce the 12 images that are the basis of this study. A formal analysis of the images gives a good overarching understanding of the pictures and gives an easy but informative aspect to the main empirical material. After this Chapter 3 comes, with the central focus on intertextuality. Here is psychoanalysis brought up and discussed, mainly a theoretical discussion relating to the Collective Unconscious and the Jungian archetypes, this to showcase and problematize different perspectives on the theory. From this introduction the real bulk of the study takes shape. I will start with a comparison between the empirical material with Jung's theories regarding the Collective Unconscious,

¹² M. Ibáñez-Rodríguez, 'Myths of the Uncanny in the Contemporary Graphic Novel', P. Querido & M. Ibáñez-Rodríguez (ed.), *On Fear, Horror and Terror: Giving Utterance to the Unutterable*, Leiden/Boston, Brill Rodopi, 2019, p. 58

¹³ Ibáñez-Rodríguez, *On Fear, Horror and Terror: Giving Utterance to the Unutterable*, pp. 61-62

where I will tie his theories to the images and comic. Finally, I will take the findings of the both studies and compare them to each other, to get the final message of the comic.

Chapter 1. Locke & Key: The Story and Image of *Locke & Key*

Story: The Narrative of the Comic

The first issue of *Locke & Key* came out in 2008 and ran for six issues under the name *Locke & Key: Welcome to Lovecraft*. The comic series was written by Joe Hill and with art by Gabriel Rodriguez, and after the first volume another five were released: Vol 2. Head Games, Vol 3. Crown of Shadows, Vol 4. Keys to the Kingdom, Vol 5. Clockworks and Vol 6. Alpha & Omega. The overarching story of the comic is about the Locke children and their fight against an evil demon from another dimension, which places the story in a recognizable and quite common western narrative with the good against evil thematic. The comic implements several other thematic elements in its narrative, such as horror, drama and fantasy, but it is its dramatic angle that is the most consistent. This takes its form in the complex interpersonal drama between the characters and makes the comic much more grounded. The climactic event that serves as a catalysator for the whole story is the brutal murder of Rendell Locke. He and his family live in Willits, Mendocino Valley, California, in a little peaceful cottage at the end of the woods. After Rendell's murder by the teenager Sam Lesser, his family moves from the little "fairy-tale-esque" cottage to the old mansion Keyhouse Manor in Lovecraft, Massachusetts. Through the comic the family members handle their loss and trauma, and it is the red thread for both the somber tone of the comic as well as the series' emotional journey. As a family broken by grief, both Nina, the three children as well as Rendell's brother Duncan fight against the darkness take a both domestic as well as a deeper psychological turn, adding up on the supernatural horrors in the story. Ibáñez-Rodríguez brings up the same sentiment about *Locke & Key*'s domestic horrors in "Myths of the Uncanny in the Contemporary Graphic Novel".¹⁴ Ibáñez-Rodríguez discusses that the real horrors stand in contrast to the supernatural horrors, creating a ambience, or a uncanny aspect in the comic.¹⁵ This, I argue, is further developed in the comic because of how the narrative is structured and how the supernatural elements are handled. One good example of this narrative structure is in the first volume, where the main antagonist is Sam Lesser, the murderer of Rendell Locke, and not the demon Dodge. The demon, that is unnamed but goes under the alias Dodge, acts as a mastermind that influences Sam Lesser to do these horrible things. First murdering Rendell and later terrorizing his family in Keyhouse Manor. Dodge is the main antagonist of the series, and the presence of the demon, and the supernatural, increases in

¹⁴ Ibáñez-Rodríguez, *On Fear, Horror and Terror: Giving Utterance to the Unutterable*, p. 67

¹⁵ Ibáñez-Rodríguez, pp. 68-69

every volume as the denizens of Keyhouse Manor become more and more entangled in the unfolding events.

The supernatural, or fantastical, elements in the story belong to two main categories, keys and demons. The keys act as magical devices that have special uses, for example: one opens doors to other places across the globe, one opens up the brain, one lets you go back in time, one lets you grow into a giant and one makes you into a ghost. The keys become the thing both sides are fighting for, and in many instances, they are necessary for the narrative to move along, so in some ways they can be interpreted as a McGuffin. A McGuffin, also spelled MacGuffin, is a plot device created to move the plot along, the term made popular by Alfred Hitchcock and his use of it in his films.¹⁶ The McGuffin not only exists in films, but in many forms of entertainment, one notable example is the One Ring from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the Death Star Plans in George Lucas' *Star Wars: Episode IV- A New Hope*. The McGuffin is often well integrated to the narrative and essence of the story, and they do a lot of the heavy lifting for the narrative. In *Locke & Key* these uses of the keys are most notable in the fifth volume "Clockworks". Here, the two eldest Locke children find a key that goes back in time ("Timeshift Key"), that goes to a clock in Keyhouse. This plot development makes the kids go back in time, to when their father was young and living in Keyhouse and thus the kids learn vital information both about the origin of Dodge and that the demon is a parasite, inhabiting humans. "Clockworks" works in two distinctive ways, one for the characters and their arc, but also to fill in all the blanks for the reader. By explaining and uncovering all the secrets of the story, tying up loose ends, the comic sets the stage for the final volume and the final showdown by narrowing down to only one main narrative. I would argue that all the keys in *Locke & Key* have a McGuffin-esque quality to them, but most of them do not have a so overt connection to the narrative as the time key. Some of the keys, we can call them "the main keys", for example the "Head Key" and "Ghost Key", have prominent parts in all the volumes and are integrated into the narrative in a much more natural way than the Timeshift Key.

The keys' inclusion, apart from their narrative significance, is to highlight and tie together the themes of the comic. The supernatural themes of physical and psychological horror and fantasy become major aspects of the keys, like the "Shadow Key" (that goes to a crown that makes the

¹⁶ 'McGuffin', *Oxford reference* 2006, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198609810.001.0001/acref-9780198609810-e-4248?rsk=sOoH9n&result=4427> (accessed 3 March 2020).

bearer control shadows), the “Giant Key” (makes the user huge), the “Mending Key” (fixes broken things), Engels-Schlüssel (a key that gives the user a set of wings) and Herkules-Schlüssel (makes the user strong). All these keys are used and are important to the narrative, but they also help develop the supernatural world around the family and make the keys and their powers act like natural parts in the narrative. The keys are also tying the supernatural aspects back to the real and psychological, creating a bridge between the two.

The other supernatural elements are the demons, with Dodge as the major one. Only Dodge is out in the “real” world, while the rest of them reside behind the “Black Door” that is located in the Drowning caves, right under Keyhouse’s well house. They are formidable foes, as evidenced by how much mayhem and death one of them can make. Helping the demons escape from beneath “The Black Door” and becoming their leader is Dodge’s main motivation, while the Locke kids’ motivation is to keep the door locked, placing the door and its inhabitants in the center of the conflict. Another supernatural entity connected to the Dodge is the shadows, under his control thanks to the “Shadow Key” and the “Crown of Shadows” (That is also the title of the third volume in the series). Thanks to the shadows Dodge’s power vastly increases and their looming threat becomes much more severe for the main characters.

Image: The Visual Language of the Comic

Because of the complex narrative of the story, with many different characters that all have different motivations and agendas, as well as the time jumps, makes the art of *Locke & Key* incredibly important for the understanding of the comic and its narrative. Rodriguez’s, and therefore also *Locke & Key*, art style is made in a realistic style, but with stylistic elements that enhances the characters appearance. For example are the characters eyes larger and more expressive to make it easier for the reader to relate to the characters and read emotion in the character. The rendition of the natural and scenic elements of the comic are much more elaborate, with highly detailed houses, trees, cars and interiors. This, in context with the more stylistic characters, creates a balance in the images. It also creates a complex focus in the panel frames, creating a duality where both the scenic aspects as well as the characters become the focus of the images. Because of the small differences in stylization between the two, the reading of the images does not become overwhelming, but instead pulls the reader into the panels. This is a balancing act, not only between the characters and the scenic elements, but how the reading of the images occurs. In the ability of the images to pull in the reader, the flow of the story and

images can stagnate and become stale. Hill and Rodriguez try to rectify this by having a quick and clear focus in the page, creating an intense narrative flow in the pages. This results in a dynamic use of panel frames of different sizes as well as different angles and focus in the images, from closeups to panorama shots.

Gabriel Rodriguez blends clear line art and dynamic ink lines, with small hatchings over certain parts, creating a rich texture that also has a focus on clarity. The black ink helps the reader focus on the page and creates a momentum between the panel frames, but also places the images in a bigger comic book-context. The style of the comic develops through the six volumes, the essence of the style is still intact, but the line art and image's disposition become more assertive and dynamic. The colorization of the comic is done by Jay Fotos and are computer created. Fotos' colorization helps the images enhance further clarity, with flat colorings and soft shadows to create depth and dimensionality in the images. Because the shadows are so soft, they accentuate the line art, but because they are so soft also makes the images become flatter than if the shadows would be more pronounced. This flatness in the images helps the reading of the images, creating a clear vision for the art style of the comic. What Fotos also have done is to put a texture layer over the colorization, to create more texture in the colors and create more textured images. What he also does is giving all the colors a blue/gray hue, which creates a specific color scheme for the comic and enhances the narrative's already somber tone.

A major, if not the most important, aspect in the formation of the comic is the panel frames. These not only show the images, but they are the most important way of telling the story. *Locke & Key* has a wide array of different types of panel frames that create a dynamic page. Depending on how the design of the panel frames are, different emotions or themes can be conveyed, but there is also a difference how one reads them. Scott McCloud, in his book *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, argues that panel frames are a tool to emphasize time duration in the comic.¹⁷ One of the problems with the comic book form is that it's completely still pictures, so that time and motion have to be expressed in different ways. One of these ways is through the use of panels, and more importantly, between the panels (the between-space between two panels is known as the gutter). This is a process called *closure* and it occurs when the brain connects two images or panels and creates a mental sequence between the two, therefore creating an understanding of motion.¹⁸ Something that also affects the reading of a

¹⁷ S. McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, New York, Harper Collins, 1994, pp. 106-108

¹⁸ McCloud, pp. 64-67

comic book page is the duration of the panel, a panel can be short, implying a short amount of time, but a panel can also be longer, indicating a more relaxed and longer timespan.

Chapter 2. The Empirical Material and Semiotic Analysis

When it comes to the different archetypes I will study and analyze in the comic, a selection has been made that is both relevant and poignant to my discussion. One of the main things I based the search on was reoccurring motifs in the comic. These motifs can be both visual, what is on the page, and narrative. These two terms are coined by me and relates to how themes and aspects of the comic is shown in the art and story. The Visual Motifs relates to the image and is a visual aspect of the image. One good example of this visual representation is of Keyhouse Manor that often has a panel showcasing the house's façade, making it a clear and efficient way of visually telling the reader what is going on or where. There is also a narrative aspect in this motif, but the visuality is much stronger. A Narrative Motif, on the other hand, is a motif that majorly plays out in the narrative, with little or no representation in the visuality of the image. An example on this Narrative Motif is Nina's fight against her posttraumatic stress and depression. There is a visual focus there as well, in the form of Nina's facial expression, but the motif is much more emphasized through the story and dialogue with other characters. Bode's main motif is his innocence and his curiosity, a Narrative Motif, while Doge's main motif is their yellow eyes, therefore becoming a visual motif. The motifs can be more or less strong, but they are there to create a structure and clarity for the story and the reader.

In the introduction of the empiric material of the study, the focus will be twofold, part formal analysis of the comic book pages and part focusing on the semiotic message of the image, in the system of Roland Barthes' *Rhetoric of the Image*. The three messages (the Linguistic Message, the Uncoded Message and the Coded Message) will help clarify and develop the understanding of the images and laying the groundwork to a deeper intertextual analysis during the study's third chapter. One aspect is a vital part of all the comic book pages and is important to discuss first, that the images are drawn. This becomes a strong and prevailing message and it is relevant for each of the comic book pages. Being drawn pictures, the images work differently in comparison to Barthes' *Panzani* picture (because it is a photograph). Because of the differences, the drawn image of my empirical material becomes a central aspect that affect the understanding of the comic book pages. The drawings create a contextualization and association to the general field of comic books, further enhanced by the inked line art. Also, the computer colorization heavily leans into the well-known visuality of the comic book art by being computer made. By creating such a clear connection to the genre, *Locke & Key* constructs an easy and understandable effect permeating the comic and gives the narrative and characters more space and focus.

Keyhouse Manor

One of the main aspects I was looking for when I choose the comic book pages relating to Keyhouse manor was different but also alike pictures of the house to connect to the house’s recurring motif. This resulted in five images, three images of the house in an introduction panel of respective comic book page, one of a cross-section of the house and one of three panels of the house (Image 4-6, 7 and 8). The manor was much more visual and specific in its design, and I argue that that is because of the solid nature of the motif. The house works as both a stage, but also as a beacon that assembles the characters, this makes the house more



Image 4



Image 5

than just a location. In the comic book pages the house is in many cases shown as a monolithic structure, big and solid, reaching up towards the sky. This visual reoccurring motif can be seen in image 4-6 where the introductory panel of the

house almost is the same in every single image. Greenery and nature embrace the house and contrast the sky. Visually, the house becomes the center of earth and sky.

All three pages are built similarly, with an introduction panel of the house and three to five panels following, showing the story. In Image 4 the placing of the speech balloons is essential in how to read the panels. The white balloons draw the attention of the eye and direct the eye throughout the page. The page is heavy with dialogues and the dialogue is between Nina and Duncan (Rendell's brother) about him leaving for work, leaving Nina alone with the kids and by implication her own demons. The dialogue is understated, but there's a feeling of resentment coming from Nina about Duncan's ability to leave. According to Barthes linguistic message, there are two major aspects regarding the relationship between text and image, *Relay* and *Anchorage*.¹⁹ Relay is when the text enhances and expands the image, while Anchorage is when the text "anchors" the image.²⁰ Both are used to create a more direct meaning in the image and point to what is important. In *Rhetoric of the Image* the importance lies in the three messages' collaboration to create one combined sign, that of Italianicity.²¹ The use of the three levels/messages work in a different way in a comic. In a comic the important aspect is to tell a nuanced story, resulting in a different use than that of a clear intent of a commercial image (The *Panzani* image from Barthes' analysis for example). The building blocks are still there, but their use is much more fractured and discreet. This is arguably to create a more dynamic story and experience, but the message gets much more complex because of the use of both panels with a sequential story and the text to contextualizing said story. The commercial image is made to hammer a strong message into the viewer. In a comic the three messages have another focus, and the final message therefore becomes different.

Relay is the form of text/image relationship that is mostly used in comics according to Barthes, the text expands the context of the image and directs the reading of the image.²² This is prevalent in all three of the images, where the text mainly acts as a way to expand the understanding of the image. Image 4 is strongest in this, with both text and image telling two sides of the same story, the text is much more in focus, and is both direct and concrete, telling about that Duncan is leaving and that Nina feels abandoned. The image, on the other hand, tells the emotional story of the two characters. Not once does Nina try to turn around to look at Duncan when they talk, she is completely turned away and looking away, while

¹⁹ Barthes, *Image Music Text*, pp. 39-41

²⁰ Barthes, pp. 39-41

²¹ Barthes, p. 34

²² Barthes, p. 41

Duncan is moving and looking at her. Their body language are contrasting each other and enhances the rift between them. Image 5 and 6 have a different approach with the dynamics between text and image. Here the images are the focus. Both pages have strong visual language with Image 5 sees Sam Lesser, carrying the unconscious Kinsey, to the cellar beneath Keyhouse Manor. In Image 6, Dodge (possessing the body of Zack Wells) is threatening the young and sleeping Rendell Locke. Because of the absence of the speech balloons, the message of the images becomes more open for interpretation and its context and understanding is much more dependent on the previous and subsequent pages of the comic book. The loss of text changes the focus towards a more emotional reading of the page. Image 6 does this in panels 2 and 3, where the shadow of Dodge with an axe appears on the wall in Rendell's room. This creates a feeling and emotion of uncertainty and suspense for the reader. In the 4th panel, Dodge's intentions towards Rendell are explained through dialog and the text once again directs the understanding of the page. This dynamic between images with text and images without text creates a complex correlation resulting both in a clear understanding of the story as well as the particular mood the comic strives to convey.



Image 6

When it comes to the visuality of the three pages, the first panels of the house act as a visual center of the page. This is further elaborated by the greenery and the sky around the house, that also works in a narrative way to show the house as a nexus of all that is going on. By placing the frame of the house first, the location of the following events on the comic book pages have become clear. That the pages have an introduction shot of the exterior of the house is a trope used in many different genres of visual storytelling, from movies, television series and comics. By introducing the location first, the following action gets a contextualization and

further explains for the reader how it is connected and where it takes place. What is so special with these renditions of the house is its uniformity. The denoted image is that of a house, woods and night sky with stars and moon or dusk, but the connotation of the image tells a deeper story. The connotation of the house first and foremost associates to that of a home, a place of security. But a home is not only a place of security, it is a much more complex constellation of family. Family is home, and therefore the house connects to family. The house also has a duality, this is an old house, made in an American Queen Anne style, with porches, balconies, high roofs and towers. The association here is moving towards a more of a haunted house trope, the house as the container of something horrific. The architectural style of the house references famous horror locations like Norman Bates' house in the *Psycho* movies, but also real locations like the *Winchester Mystery House*. Because of the stylistic choices, the manor in *Locke & Key* gets a strong connection to the strange and supernatural. Both the horror and family/home connotations of the house create an ambivalence in the reading of the house, creating an uncertainty towards the reader. The house also, because of its connotations, highlights the major themes of the comic, family (the Lockes) and horror (the keys and demons). In this way the house becomes like a microcosmos of the comic, and this is further emphasized by the artist, placing the house in the center of the panels, right in between earth and sky. This visual choice is then not only an aesthetic choice, but a symbolic choice conveying the main ideas of the comic.

The cross-section of the house is collected from the fourth volume of the series and shows Keyhouse Manor from the side (Image 7). The house, that has been quite mysterious and labyrinth like until now, here gets a much more pragmatical approach almost like a map. The reader can see all the characters in the house, albeit small, and what they're up to. This view differs radically from the other representations of the house in the comic, just in its way of prioritizing clarity over mood and mystery. Even if this is a new way of showing and representing the house, some of the main aspects from Images 4, 5 and 6 are here, the centrality of the house in the panels (surrounded by sky and trees), evoking the same focus as the smaller panels of the exterior of the house. The house takes up the whole page, but is sectioned into panels with slim gutters, creating a patchwork of interconnecting images. Three panels in the house showcase the Locke family, while a larger panel below the house shows Rufus, one of Bode's friends, and the ghost of Sam Lesser, the boy who murdered Rendell Locke. What is

noticeable in the page is the disposition of all the images, all the panels with the family are located inside the cross-section of the house, or above surface, while the panel with Sam Lesser is located below ground. The structure and clarity of the image makes the emphasis different, in this image it is the house, but also what is below the house. The dark of the earth beneath the house is in stark contrast to the star filled night sky and lights of the house. Complementing this is the fact that the panel with Sam Lesser is in the darkness under the house, further clarifying the dark and threatening unknown underneath.



Image 7

Because of the cross-section, the house gets another connotation as well, that of a dollhouse. Dollhouses connote to childhood and innocence, but there also lies an association to power in a dollhouse. It is up to the person who is playing with the dollhouse to decide what is going to happen, and the person has full control of the proceedings. In some ways there is a similar aspect as in the symbolism regarding a marionette doll. Both symbols are about something else, unseen, is in control. This sentiment works very well with the narrative at this place in the story and hints at something coming in the end of the volume. One of the biggest plot developments is regarding Dodge and Bode, where the latter has taken over Bode's body with the help of the ghost key and locked out Bode as a ghost. The danger has then become a part of the family, evil has taken over innocence. This plot development is further hinted at by Bode in the panel, where he is playing with two toys. This panel can be read as a boy playing with his toys, innocence, but it also

comments on what will come, that of an evil entity playing with human lives. This further contextualizes the doll house connotation of the cross-sectioned house, creating a duality between innocence and evil that lies within the comic book page.

The page's four speech balloons are separated into two different conversations, one between Tyler and Nina, relating her alcoholism and now her ambition to get sober and one conversation between the ghost of Sam Lesser and Rufus Whedon getting to know each other. What is special with the first conversation between Tyler and Nina, is that it works as both as Relay and as Anchorage. This because the panel shows Tyler pouring out two alcoholic beverages in the sink, anchoring the text with the image. There is also a relay in the dialogue, with Nina talking about taking the remaining bottles down into the cellar. The cellar connects to the next conversation, taking place in the cellar, making the transition effortless and natural.

The next to last comic page is Image 8 from the third volume. The comic page has three panels, all three perspectives are identical and are focused on the exterior of the house. Like the last couple of images, the house is surrounded by woods and sky. What is different here is that the house opens to reveal a huge hand. The first showing only the house, in the second panel the house has gotten a glowing yellow line on its façade and on the third panel the house opens up by the help of a huge hand. The hand belongs to Tyler Locke, the eldest of the children, who is using the Giant Key to battle the shadows controlled by Dodge (with the help of the Shadow Crown and the Shadow Key). The three kids are vastly outnumbered, so in a last



Image 8

desperate effort Tyler uses the Giant Key to grow large like a giant to be able to fight the shadows.

The comic book page builds up the reveal of giant Tyler, with long panels and no speech balloons. It makes the reader focus on only the house and when it opens up. The *Closure* discussed by McCloud is thoroughly used here to create a gradual change in the images, which further emphasizes the suspense of the page. What is also important from a symbolical level, and a further elaboration of my previous discussion, is the importance of the house. The house becomes the place where Tyler's transformation happens and becomes in some way like a cocoon that is opened, and the giant Tyler is revealed. The golden light radiating from inside the house can be seen as something godly, like the house becomes a shell or a hiding place of a greater power. The cocoon-symbolism can further be understood in the context that the house is a representation of both family and horror as previously discussed. The hand can be seen as a manifestation of both these aspects, as Tyler, as a symbol of family, uses the key, as a symbol of horror. What happens is then a metamorphosis, and the narrative structure of the panel treats it as such as well, with a whole page dedicated to reveal Tyler as a giant. The concepts of metamorphosis or transformation are reoccurring elements in the series, through the use of keys like the Ghost Key, Giant Key or the Gender Key, but there is also the Animal Key that turns the user into an animal.



Image 9

The final image of the house as a motive is from the sixth and final volume, *Alpha & Omega* (Image 9). During the climactic final confrontation with Doge, Keyhouse Manor

burns down and what is left is a smoking ruin of ashes. Tyler creates a new key from “Whispering iron”, a mysterious and magical material from the demon realm. The key is known as Keyhouse Key and with it, Tyler Locke creates a new Keyhouse Manor. The new house is made in the same architectural style as its predecessor, but when the former is made almost entirely out of wood, the new house is made out of stone. Because of the masonry of the new house, much clearer association to a Gothic Revival style is made.

In the comic, the new house symbolically stands for a new beginning, the evil demon is defeated and everybody is safe. The house thus represents a rebirth, a new normal. The old house symbolically worked like a nexus or as a manifestation of the narrative themes, and after the fire and the rebuilding of the house, it works like a new beginning, an optimistic clean slate for the protagonists. The building also strengthens the Locke and Key symbolism further, as a result of the big lock that is the entrance to the house. The people that go into the house go through the lock and therefore become symbolic representations of keys.

Nina Locke

For Nina two images have been chosen, Image 10 and Image 11, both collected from Volume 1. Because of its visual nature, Keyhouse Manor is represented with more images in this study, while the other archetypes are represented with fewer images, two each (except the Shadow archetype that takes all the empiric material into consideration). The themes and symbolism within the images still have the same complexity and relevance to the study though. If the symbolism of the house as a microcosmos is used, the characters are the beings populating the world, strengthening the narrative's themes and characterization. The characters are the driving force, be it with good or evil intentions. This sentiment is reflected in my two categories, Visual Motifs and Narrative Motifs. In the analysis of Keyhouse Manor the visual motifs take main stage, and in the following comic book pages the Narrative Motifs will be the center of attention. An important distinction to discuss is that the Narrative Motif also can be a part of the image, so it works on two different plans, both visual and story wise.

A good example of a narrative motif is Nina Locke's problems with alcoholism. This narrative is important for Nina's character, and the battle against alcohol works as a characterization for the character, which in itself is a purely narrative aspect. What makes the Narrative Motif interesting is that there is a visual aspect to it, that acts as a strengthening of the themes, this is often shown as visual reminders for the readers. As an example, Image 10, Nina's alcoholism is shown in the panels as a wine glass (in other panels also as wine bottles). This is not something that the main conversation in the scene focuses on, but by having the glass in the scene, the reader is reminded of Nina's problem with alcoholism, without it being directly talked about repeatedly. This makes the characterization come across as more subtle and thoughtful, and lets the reader understand the context, which makes the whole message of the panel much clearer and genuine. Therefore, the Narrative Motif encompasses both an abstract form, alcoholism, as well as a visual form, the wine glass.



Image 10

Image 10 also mirrors Image 4, in that a conversation takes place between Nina and Duncan. In Image 4 there was a conflict between the characters, but here it is much an emotional discussion between the two. Their body language, especially Nina's, is much more relaxed and open, turning towards Duncan and looking at him while they're talking. This creates a much more peaceful mood. This mood also affects the text as well as creating a much more

pensive discussion between the two. The conversation is like Image 4 expanding the image and is an aspect of Barthes' Relay. The dialogue relates to Bode, about the death of his father and the magic doors that he drew a comic about in school, and Duncan relates this to his own childhood, that also was deeply affected by the keys (after the age of 18 one forgets all about the keys, just staying as memories of childish games). There are traces of anchoring the text within the panels as well, in both panel 2 and 4, Duncan is reading Bode's comic. The visuality of the speech balloons also becomes an important part in the image, and according to Göran Sonesson in his book *Bildbetydelser*, the speech balloons themselves become a coded part of the overall image, creating different layers of understanding in the image.²³



Image 11

The Second comic book page shows Nina fighting back against one of the two intruders that attacks and rapes her and murders her husband. One of the two violators was Sam Lesser, that later came back to haunt the family when they lived in Keyhouse Manor, and the other was Al Grubb, a classmate to Sam Lesser. It was Al Grubb that attacked Nina and raped her while Sam Lesser murdered Rendell Locke. As a desperate act of protecting her children Nina kills Al Grubb with an axe. *Locke & Key* are filled with brutal and bloody violence, but this panel is one of the first panels in the comic that shows the brutality of the story. The attack on the Lockes also acts as a way of throwing the readers into the story and defines longer arcs and problems for the characters. The rape and assault, as well as the murder of her husband, leaves

²³ G. Sonesson, *Bildbetydelser: Inledning till bildsemiotiken som vetenskap*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 1992, p.274

Nina in a destroyed state and she gets dependent on alcohol to manage to get through it all. Throughout *Locke & Key* Rodriguez uses different panel sizes to enhance the feeling he wants to convey on the comic page. As previously discussed, the size of the panels affects the reading of the page. By changing the size of a panel, the comic book page gets a strikingly different expression. By enlarging the panel out over the borders and removing the gutter all together, the reading of the image becomes much more intense and closer. This is further helped by the reading of the singular panel; Scott McCloud argues in *Understanding Comics* that the panels are dependent of each other for both understanding and reading flow and pace.²⁴ Only having one giant panel, the flow of the panels are gone and the story is interrupted, making the single panel much more strong visually and indicates importance. This is further strengthened by Göran Sonesson. He argues that because of the comic's sequential form, the artist can use different techniques to affect the reading of the image, one of these is to stop the movement of the sequential panels by just having one large, creating a stop in the flow of the comic.²⁵ Also helping this reading is the lack of text and speech balloons. As Scott McCloud brings up in his book *Understanding Comics*, the human eye is drawn to certain things in images and also read in emotion in the images.²⁶ This works like a priority list, where aspects that attracts attention of the observer are on top. If these disappears the eye moves to the next aspect on the list. One of the first things the reader often is drawn to faces.²⁷ A good example how this works practically is seen in Image 11, where the lack of text focuses the reader on the two faces. If text and speech balloons would exist on the page, the action in itself would be much less potent than it is without text. The lack of text makes the image the most important, and together all these different mechanisms make the page emotionally strong and important.

Something else that also affect the reading of the image is how the appearance of the two characters comes across. Nina wears a baby blue colored dress while Al Grubb wears a white tank top. Their clothing is in stark contrast to each other and showcases characteristics of both characters. The tank top (as well as his cargo pants with camouflage patterns) associates to military garments, which in its turn connotes to masculinity and aggressivity. This connotation is further consolidated by Al Grubb's lack of hair, which directly connects him to a skinhead, infamous for their shaven heads, which contextualizes him as a dangerous person. His whole visuality is built to indicate him as a clear bad guy, someone the reader is not meant

²⁴ McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, p. 107

²⁵ Sonesson, *Bildbetydelser*, pp. 275-276

²⁶ McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, pp.33-34

²⁷ McCloud, p. 31

to emphasize with. He is a stereotype of a dangerous man. Nina, that is a much more well-rounded and 3-dimensional character, still plays into this dynamic by wearing a very feminine dress. The dress color, belonging in the pastel category, is soft and feminine, contrasting Al Grubb in every possible way. The dress associates with femininity and softness, but the baby blue color also associates with a color mostly associated with babies. Both baby blue and baby pink are colors stereotypically associated with boys, respective girls, but by subverting the color coding on Nina, placing her in a baby blue dress, the association of the color is not so overt. The association is still there though, which connotes to a childlike innocence or the innocence of a newborn. This connotation makes the torn and bloodied dress much more powerful in its symbolism, where the association is that of innocence that has been lost. Innocence lost is also what is happening in the panel, where Nina kills Al Grubb showcasing a new darkness and maturity in both Nina, as well as the comic.

Bode Locke

Innocence as a theme is something that reoccurs in the comic, particular relating to the youngest of Nina and Rendell's three children, Bode Locke. In the ensemble of *Locke & Key*, Bode is one of the most driving characters, with his youthfulness and naivete is in stark contrast to the comic's more heavy and disturbed moments. This makes the schism when his body is taken over by Doge so much more horrible for the reader, because of the characteristics and innocence of the character. Innocence as a main motif in *Locke & Key* is arguably also one of the main conflicts in *Locke & Key*. Innocence, but also the opposite, Corruption, flows at the core of the story, and Bode is an important aspect of this core thematic. The two core extremes can be seen as a symbolism, where Bode's main Narrative Motif stands for Innocence, Dodge's stands for Corruption. By the metamorphosis of Bode into Dodge, the intensity of the core conflict of the comic intensifies, leading to the grand finale. This metamorphosis of opposing ideas is also hinted at in the likeness of Bode and Dodge's names, where both the O and the E is the same, creating a parallel between the two sides. The likeness in name also hints of a dependency between the innocence and corruption. The connection between the two themes and characters has its beginning when Bode finds a female Dodge (they have used the gender key on Lucas Carravaggio's body) in the well on the premises of Keyhouse Manor and this thematic carries through all the ways to the final volume. The thematic doesn't end with Bode and Doge either, Nina's arc is also dependent on this dynamic of innocence and corruption, with the rape of her and the murder of Al Grubb, her innocence was corrupted. The theme also

exists in the two other children, with Tyler's guilt over his dead father (that he jokingly wanted dead) and Kinsey's post-traumatic stress after the ordeal with Lesser and Grubb. The traumatic start of the narrative corrupts all parts of the family except Bode, and he becomes like an anchor of positivity for the family. Not saying he has his own problem from the traumatic experience, but he still exudes a positivity, curiosity and innocence, helping his family so they can start to heal from the traumatic events. The dynamic also exist in the supporting cast, notably the characters of Rufus Whedon and Duncan Locke, both innate innocent characters that Dodge tries to manipulate and hurt. It is also Rufus who finally defeats Dodge, by throwing the demon, still stuck in Bode's body, back into the well they came from. This does not only just defeat Dodge once and for all, but also destroys Bode's body (his soul is still stuck as a ghost), further highlighting the connection between Bode and Dodge.

For this archetype, The Child, I have chosen two images, one when Bode is a normal boy, and one when Dodge has taken over him. This to showcase the small differences Rodriquez makes to distinguish the two very different persons, but also show the two sides of the same coin, Innocence and Corruption. The first image, Image 12, is collected from Volume

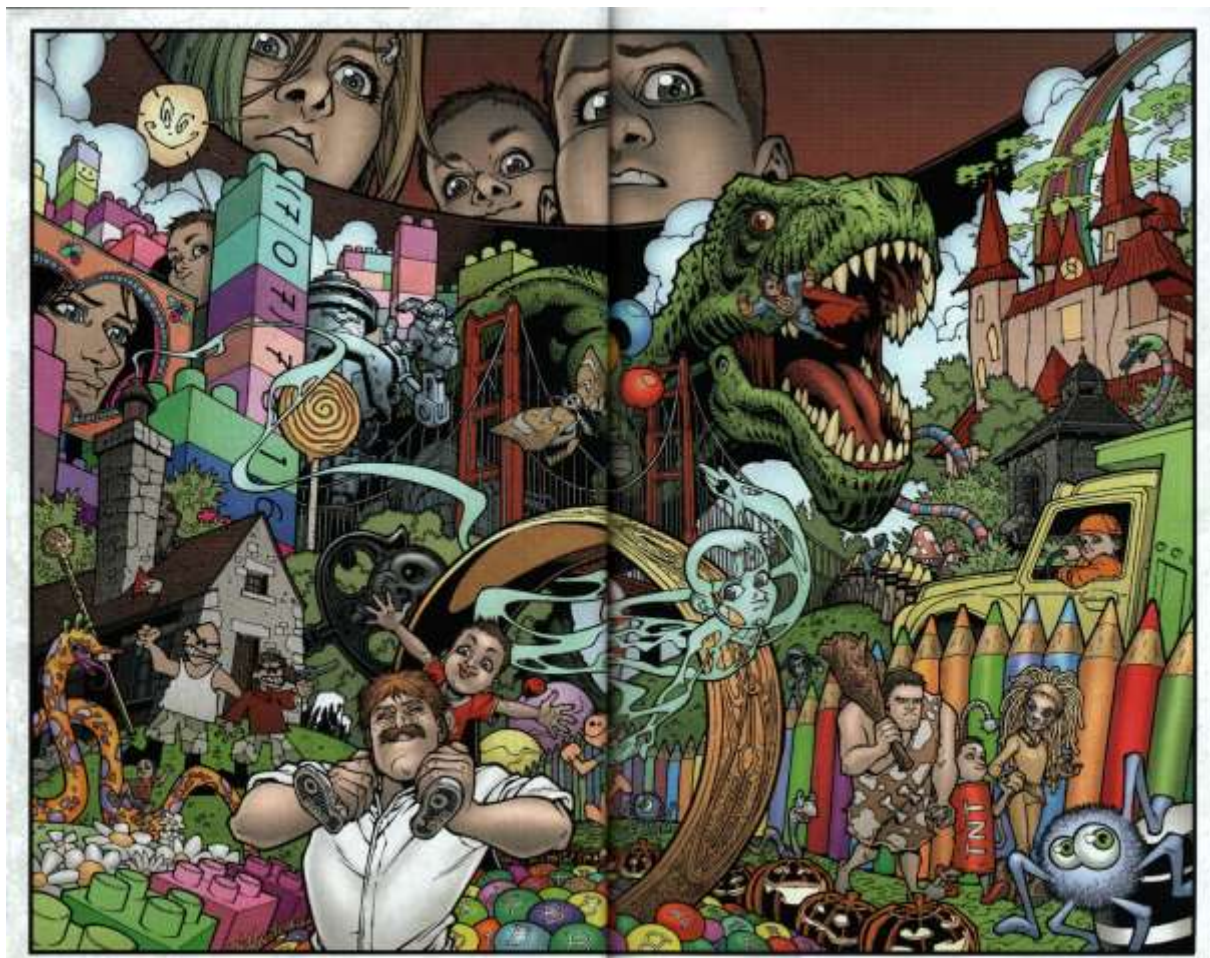


Image 12

2, *Head Games* and shows Bode, Tyler and Kinsey looking inside Bode's own head. The second image is Image 13, from Volume 5, *Clockworks*, when Dodge (in the body of Bode) have let out Kinsey's figurative fears, that she has locked into a glass bottle, and is taunting Nina in her newfound sobriety.

Back to Image 12, this image is a spread, with the panel taking up two comic book pages. Bode has opened up his head with the help of the Head Key, figuratively opening up his head to look inside it. Inside his head, his memories are represented in a both visual and colorful way. The panel is sprawling with different memories from Bode's life, some of them happening before the timeline of the comic. There is also a stylistic change in Rodriguez's artistic style in some elements, most notably Bode's memories of Sam Lesser and Al Grubb and of his perception of Keyhouse Manor. The artistic style used here is much more naïve and childish, looking like Bode himself could have drawn them. Centrally placed in the panel is also a big dinosaur that a superhero iteration of Bode is fighting against, and different iterations of Bode appears over the panel, most notably the ghost version of him the center of the panel. Together with the dinosaur he creates a circular motion in the image, further emphasized by Kinsey's bracelet. On the left side of the panel, the focus is on the Locke's old house in Willits and a memory Bode has of him and his father having fun together. Big building blocks, reminiscent of Lego, towers over the scene like a city full of skyscrapers, and Nina Locke is looking out from a heart shaped card. The Golden Gate Bridge connects the left side of the page with the right. The right side is more focused on Bode's time in Lovecraft, with Keyhouse Manor towering over the proceedings. In front of the house is the wellhouse, where Bode found Dodge, or "The Well Lady" as he calls the demon. Two lines of drawing pencils have been placed in front of Keyhouse Manor and the wellhouse, where the pencils have become poles with sharp ends, creating a palisade. The pencils are in different colors, but the association to old fortifications hints at something more sinister, with the palisade acting as a defense mechanism, protecting Keyhouse and Bode's "world" against the other, in some cases not so happy, memories.

Because of the absence of text in the panel, the understanding of the image becomes much more floating and open for interpretation. According to Barthes, images are polysemous, meaning that it can exist many interpretations of the image.²⁸ The linguistic message, helps anchor and focus the image and its signs, creating a clarity in the image's

²⁸ Barthes, *Image Music Text*, p. 156

message. By removing the text, as previously discussed under Image 11, it opens up to a different kind of focus in the image. In the case of Image 11, this focus was the impact of the moment, with Nina killing Al Grubb, in Image 12, the focus becomes something else. The understanding of the image, without the help of the text, instead becomes references, where the prior knowledge of the story becomes the main key to understand what is going on. Even then, there are aspects in the panel that is obtuse for the reader. Some of the occurrences are direct references to things or places already told by the comic, so the panel acts as to give Bode a personal voice and interpretation of the happenings. Clearest of this is the childish interpretations of Lesser and Grubb, which lessen their horrific impact to that of a child's level, with mouths filled of sharp teeth and twisted eyebrows. The impact of this change is directly connected to Bode's perception. The drawing style associates to that of a child, which in turn connotes to innocence. This is a rearranging of the Innocence and Corruption thematic, with Corruption being changed by Innocence, and showcase the strength in Bode's innate innocent personality.

The colors of the spread also help in this reading. Generally, the use of colors is generally to set a tone in the comic. Generally, the hue in the comic is blue-gray and the saturation of the colors are low, creating a subdued color palette. The panel with the inside of Bode's brain changes this color combination and favors the bright and colorful. The colors are carefully different, with some of them staying the same, like the particular skin tone color the colorist Jay Fotos uses. This makes the overall impression of the more colorful panel not to jarring in comparison to the rest of the comic, but still makes it stand out. Because of this, Bode's brain gets an unreal or fantastical aspect, and the colors help making this reading much stronger.

The second comic book page focusing on Bode, Image 13, is collected from the 5th volume, *Clockworks*. In the finale of volume 4, Dodge takes over the body of Bode and locks the boy out as a ghost, unable to contact any of his loved ones. This results in that Dodge can blend seamlessly into the daily life of the Locke family without anyone suspecting something. In the new family dynamics, Dodge plays two parts, that of the young innocent boy, and that of a low-key manipulator. He tries to get into the head of the family and get to their weakest points. Two of these strategies are detectable in Image 13, relating to Nina and Kinsey. In a way to take away her fear, Kinsey used the Head Key to open up her head (much like Bode in Image 12) and remove the physical manifestation of fear from her minds, locking them in a glass bottle. Dodge, in an attempt to attack Kinsey, finds them and destroy the glass bottle, releasing the two manifestations into the world. This is what is leading up to this page, where the bottle is already broken, and the two psychical manifestations are free. Dodge was taken by surprise by Nina, who picks him up and carries him away from Kinsey's room. Much of Dodge's mental warfare



Image 13

and manipulation against Nina is in the dialogue, with Dodge trying to provoke her to start drinking again, but she just tiredly answers him that she stopped with that.

The rebuttal Dodge's claim is perceived as a clear motive for Nina, where she has understood that she no longer can keep on drinking (She and Tyler can be seen pouring out all her alcohol in Image 7) and she is more calm and takes a more caring role in the family once again. This is clearest represented in her choice of clothing, a light blue jumper. For most of the time after the attack in Willits, she has worn black clothing, but now she is once again wearing the blue color shown before the attack. This can be understood as a visual que that Nina has found a way back to herself again, after everything horrible that has happened to her and her family. It also gives her character a strength and determination lacking before, taking a more active role in the story. This is further emphasized by her answer to Dodge's question about her drinking. She is not angry or sad but have a more pragmatcal look on her former alcohol addiction and she is sure that it will not happen again.

Dodge's possession of Bode's body is another visual que that is prevalent in the panels of the page but is handled much more discreet. Bode's body regains all its attributes and visuality, but there is one thing that changes sporadically, Bode's eyes. One of the most typical attributes of Dodge is their eyes and their yellow tone. The eyes differ from the other eyes present in the comic, part in its color, but also the shape. The shape is sharper than the softer drawn eyes of the other characters, distinguishing Dodge's eyes from the rest. This can be seen in panel two and three of Image 13 where Bode's eyes change shape, in the first panel the eye visible has a soft edge to it, while on the second panel, the edge of the two lines is much more sharply drawn. This can be seen as a small and unimportant detail, but because of the changing of the eyes, the visuality of Bode gets an ambivalence in itself, creating a creeping feeling of uncertainty. The eyes become a visual part in the Narrative Motif of Innocence and Corruption and work in the same way as Nina's wine glass, reminding readers of narrative threads and enhancing the themes and struggles of the characters. Their importance for the narrative is therefore undeniable and further elaborates and contextualizes the world of *Locke & Key*.

The Gender Key

The next to final archetype I will discuss is the Anima/ Animus- archetype, and this I relate to the gender key in *Locke & Key*. The key works on a small little door in a wardrobe in Keyhouse Manor, that if you go through it changes the person's gender. The comics representation of gender is extremely binary and omits any traces of genderfluidity. One can argue that the change of body from male to female is a gender fluid concept, but it still builds on a world where only seemingly two sexes exist. As quick as the world progresses in this type of questions today, and more types of identity and gender expressions gets recognized, the binarity of *Locke & Key's* seems stale and old. Consequently, this is one of the major changes done in Netflix adaptation of *Locke & Key*, opting to change the Gender Key to that of the Identity Key, a key that is changing the identity of the person, instead of its gender, creating a much more contemporary view on identity.

Even if the comic's portrayal did not age well, it's still a complex concept proposed by Hill and Rodriguez. What I will do is to take two visual examples to examine how this theme is handled in the comic books and I have chosen two images relating to the use of the Gender Key. One that relates to Duncan's use of the gender key and his sexuality (Image 14) and one where Dodge uses the Gender Key to change sex from female to male (Image 15). The first example is in the focus of Duncan Locke, the homosexual uncle to the Locke kids. In volume 5, in a flashback to his and Rendell's life when they were kids, Duncan is using the key to change his appearance to that of a little girl. The gest is portrayed like innocent exploration in the comic, but at the same time is used by the comic to hint towards Duncan's homosexuality. This is portrayed in an innocent way in the comic but that does not stop it from being problematical in its approach and in its conformity to stereotypes. The stereotype of homosexual men as typically effeminate, with interests cratering to more stereotypically "feminine" interests. Female Duncan is directly paraphrasing this sort of behavior, that even if it is delicately handled, is still building from a stereotypical understanding that gay men and boys are more "feminine" than heterosexual men and boys. What is helping the narrative though is that Duncan's queerness is much more elaborated in other ways throughout the comic book series, balancing the representation of him as a queer character. The balancing of his character and the queer elements mostly has to do with his relationship with his partner Brian Rogan. Duncan as an adult is not visible effeminate but has a much softer representation of his personality, he is an artist and likes Cher. Brian Rogan is not a stereotypically queer character and instead likes to go to bars and drink beers, he doesn't

like Cher and is quite brutish and sarcastic and likes football. He has also an emotional and caring side, but this side is much more subdued in the narrative. This characterization of a gay man is much more against the stereotype, and his queerness takes its form in the romantic relationship between him and Duncan.

Image 14 shows an altercation between Dodge and Brian Rogan over three panels. The perspective in all three panels are from the same angle, creating a clear depiction of the occurrences in the three panels. Interesting to note is that Rodriguez hasn't made three separate



drawings, but instead reused the same background for all three panels, only changing the characters, their poses and the speech balloons. The context around their altercation is that Dodge has visited Duncan and Brian's home, to remove memories of himself from Duncan's memory. The dialogue in the three panels further elaborates on this narrative, and further moving the narrative along. One of the main points of the dialogue is about Dodge being blindsided about Duncan's relationship with another man, which Dodge relates to "He always did like turning into a girl when he was a kid". This particular phrase has a number of meanings, primarily to portray Dodge as a haughty and quite

Image 14

biased, but there is also a strong mockery in the phrase towards Brian. The phrase in itself also paraphrases to the common trope that “femininity” is associated with gay men, which makes the phrase uttered by Dodge quite derogatory for the whole LGBTQIA-spectrum, and cements his role as “villainous” character (in comparison to the “good” characters who treat Duncan and Brian’s relationship like a normal relationship). This also further complexifies Dodge’s character, just because the demon doesn’t have a defined gender in the story, and the body Dodge inhabit changes gender (because of the Gender Key). This makes the associations to the character much more complex and ambivalent. Take this in comparison to two homophobic women Duncan and Brian met previously in the story (and that Brian talks about in Image 14), that is portrayed as both heterosexual and cis-gendered, making them much more clearly homophobic and flat than Dodge is. This ambivalence in Dodge also helps hold up the interest for him and makes Dodge a compelling and mysterious character.

The text in the page is a relay, using the text to further contextualize and creating a connection with past events (like Duncan’s use of the Gender Key and the two homophobic women). The text complements the quite dramatic happenings in the panels, creating an interchangeability in the comic book page. This helps moving the narrative along, but at the same time lets the story rest on the dramatic moment, creating a twofold complementary reading of the image. This reading is further developed by the static angels used and that Rodriguez is using the same background in all 3 panels. By using the same background, the focus naturally moves to the action between the two characters and their emotions and movements. This also highlights the characters discreet body language, as in when Brian goes from angry (in panel 1) to scared (panel 2), it also enhances the much more dramatic action when he is running away (in panel 3). The same type of attention is also given to Dodge, with him eating a banana (panel 1), to him throwing the banana and raising the machine gun (panel 2), to being frustrated when the machine gun does not work (panel 3).

The aspect of gender does not only lie in the speech balloons, but also in the character of Dodge. Because of Dodge’s transformation from a female coded body to a male coded body, the gender on a visual level becomes relevant on the page. Even if the transformation itself does not happen on this page, the visuality of Dodge as a man reminds the reader of their female persona. That makes the understanding of the image much more complex and nuanced. The visuality of the image is also suggestive, with Dodge and Brian’s clothing color further placing them on two ends of a spectrum, black and white.

There is also a play with phallic symbols happening in the picture, with both the knife, the machine gun and the banana as symbols one can associate to phallic imagery. The phallic play between the two characters involves all three, with Dodge first eating the banana and starting to take up the machine gun, whereas Brian have the knife as a defense. When Dodge takes up the machine gun, Brian realizes that his knife is useless, so he flies. The altercation between the two characters is quite animalistic, relaying on who has the most physical strength, or “largest phallus”, and therefore has more power. The standoff of the two “alpha” males associates to both masculinity and aggressivity. These both masculinity and aggressivity get further symbolic boost from the phallic imagery, with that an association to masculinity through the phallic imagery is constructed. The overarching associations of the image connotes to the stereotype of the animalistic and brutal confrontation between two males, where the only thing important is who of the two is the most well-endowed and powerful. In this altercation between the two men, the one clear association is to the notion of hypermasculinity. In the article “Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison” published in *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Terry A. Kupers discusses Raewyn Connell’s term *Hegemonic Masculinity*.²⁹ *Hegemonic Masculinity* is a term to describe toxic male behavior and according to Connell there are two so called “legs” that the term *Hegemonic Masculinity* stands on, that of “domination of women and a hierarchy of intermale dominance”.³⁰ Kupers argues that the term *Hegemonic Masculinity* can be more wide in its understanding, but he also connects *Hegemonic Masculinity* to the term Toxic Masculinity.³¹ The “hierarchy of intermale dominance” is the aspect that can be clearly seen in Image 14. The “hierarchy of intermale dominance” builds on different types of attributes in men and that some of these attributes are conceived as less desirable.³² This makes men with said less desirable traits, like for example homosexual men, much more exposed and likely to be subjected to hate from men with more “desirable” traits. This aspect of intermale dominance is for example also an underlying message in Dodge’s dialogue with Brian when he talks about Duncan’s sexuality and his use of the gender key.

²⁹ T. A. Kupers, ‘Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison’, *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 61, No. 6, 2005, p. 716, <https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/media/document/written-kupers.pdf> (accessed 14 April 2020)

³⁰ Kupers, p.716

³¹ Kupers, p. 716

³² Kupers, pp. 716–718

The visual playing with symbols is also an aspect of Image 15. The image shows Dodge transforming into a male coded body. The page consists of four panels, the first two depicting Dodge coming out from a small door into Tyler's room in Keyhouse Manor. The 3rd and 4th panels show Dodge fully transformed to a man, deciding to change clothing from the dress to a red hoodie. The scene is

a pivotal moment in the story, showcasing the lengths that Dodge is prepared to take to gain control. By changing sex Dodge becomes once again an anonymous person to the rest of the characters and makes them able to further infiltrate the Locke family. This act sets up the main narrative for the rest of the comic series and builds on the iconic presentation of the female Dodge in the first part of the comic. The female Dodge is the first contact the characters, as well as readers, have with the demon. Female Dodge stands out visually in the comic, with long black hair and a long black dress. The visuality is very impactful and can be likened to the iconic appearances of Darth Vader from Star Wars and Lord Voldemort from Harry Potter. This makes Dodge's appearance iconic, but also very stiff, and I argue that this is a Visual Motif in the comic. The

stiffness lies in the Visual Motif and the inability to change the visuality, which results in the creation of a character that is stuck in a certain role in the narrative, mostly that of a stereotypical villain character. This Visual Motif and narrative construction work well in the first volume,



Image 15

but the complex and expanding story of *Locke & Key* demands a different form of villain, something much more discreet than the Darth Vaderesque villain of the first volume. The transformation from female to male is then not only a transformation of the villain, but also a change from a Visual Motif to a Narrative Motif and with that a general change happens in the narrative towards a more complex story. As a result of Dodge's transformation, the demon's role in the story becomes much more dynamic and threatening. As a Narrative Motif Dodge was a fully-fledged visual villain, clad in dark and sweeping materials and with a particular look, in the new Dodge this strong visuality is gone (apart from the demon's cat like yellow eyes) and instead the demon's personality becomes the focus, changing the Visual Motif of Dodge to a Narrative Motif.

The page uses the same technique present in Image 14, where Rodriguez reuses the background for two panels on the page, the first and second. As in Image 14, this heightens the action on the page and focuses the reader on Dodge that comes out from a small door in the wardrobe, transformed. The following two panels further develops and contextualize the transformation, where the dialogue specifically relates to the fact that Dodge now is a man and must wear more "gender-specific" wear. The change from female to male Dodge is quite distinct but at the same time discreet. The face is more angular and sharper (much of the sharpness is part of Rodriguez's artistic stylization as well), with a greater focus on the jaw portion of the face. The eyes are completely identical between the two forms. Particular focus has also been put on the torso of Dodge, with a thick muscular neck, an emphasis on the Adam's apple, broad and muscular shoulders and the exposed breasts, that all enhances the masculinity of the new body of Dodge.

As previously stated, this depiction solidifies a much more binary understanding of gender identity, but at the same time it showcases in some ways a transgender person. The problem arises that Dodge uses the Gender Key to manipulate and hurt others, which diminishes the nuances and complexity that is gender identity. One can argue that Duncan was using the key to get a better understanding of himself, but still, he is not a transgender character. Both Duncan and Doge's characters exist in the gender binarity the comic has set up and can't break free from it. This showcases a somehow weird look in *Locke & Key* has at sexual minorities, at one hand champion for them, but also handling the themes quite clunky and stereotypically.

A good example on the latter is the placement of the door that the Gender Key goes to. The key goes to a small door connecting Kinsey and Tyler's room, through the wardrobe. When the character, as evidenced by Image 15, comes out of the door, they also

“come out of the closet”. To “come out of the closet” is a term deeply associated with a sexual minority or transgendered person coming out to their family, friends, etc. By having the characters in *Locke & Key* “coming out of the closet” when they change gender, the context of the wardrobe becomes a crude meta joke. The understanding and connotation of the action become ambivalent and can both be a playful nod to the LGBTQIA-community or as a crude joke of a real-world occurrence that can be very emotionally exposed and hurtful for many minority persons in the world.

The Shadow

The last archetype that is the focus is the Shadow, and on the contrary to all the other archetypes, here will be no more empirical material. The Shadow Archetype will instead contain all the previous material of the study, the 12 pictures. I have chosen this approach to the archetype because I argue that the Shadow Archetype is prevalent on most of my chosen empirical material. The archetype consists of both the Visual Motif as well as the Narrative Motif, and the clearest theme connected to the archetype is the Corruption (in contrast to Innocence) discussed in the “Bode”-chapter. The strength of the corruption thematic lies in that it is both a visual and narrative motif. One strong Visual Motif is the very particular eyes of Dodge (as seen in Image 13, 14 and 15). The eyes themselves become a visual cue for the reader, signaling that this is an antagonistic character as well as hinting at the corruption that the character exposes the protagonists to. In the first Volumes, female Dodge can also count as a Visual Motif, but after the change in gender this visual motif loses its potency, and the eyes instead become the clearest unchanging Visual Motif.

Another Visual Motif is having Dodge and to an extent Sam Lesser, also an antagonistic character, trying to get in or wander around inside the Keyhouse Manor as seen in Images 5, 6, 7, 13 and 15. This infiltration of the home, and safe space, for the Locke family by the antagonists reinforces the theme of Corruption. The infiltration aspects become in its clearest form Dodge’s possession of Bode. In that way, the infiltration becomes a part in the grander theme of the Corruptive thematic present in the comic. This infiltration of the house and family is also seen as a contamination (by association the meanings of the words corruption and contamination lies close, both words describe something healthy that gets sick or faulty). The contamination in the comic starts by Bode letting out the “Well Lady” (Dodge) from the wellhouse on the Keyhouse Manor premises and ends with Bode’s death and that Keyhouse

Manor burns down. In other words, there is a purge of the corruption going on, resulting in a new “uncorrupted” world (the rebuilding of Keyhouse Manor (Image 9) and ghost Bode getting back to life). This type of purge by death and fire to get rid of evil is reminiscent of the witch trials and the burning at the stake, contextualizing the happenings in *Locke & Key* to real historic events.

The Narrative Motifs of Corruption go parallel with the Visual ones, but instead focuses on more emotional aspect relating to the characters, this can be seen in both Image 6, 13 and 14. The moments are more about exposing and taunting the characters, like Dodge (in Bode’s body) taunting Nina about alcohol and Dodge taunting Brian about Duncan being homosexual. As a further development of the Narrative Motifs, these words that are describing happenings in the comic, infiltration and purging, become Narrative Motifs in their showcasing the Corruption thematic. These actions complement the Visual Motifs and creates a strong crosshatching between the two motifs. Strengthening each other to create a strong thematic rhetoric in the comic.

Chapter 3, Intertextuality and Psychoanalysis

When it comes to the discourse of psychoanalysis there are many different interpretations and points of views. Because of the abstractness and subjectivity of the psyche and our inner worlds, a discussion about it can easily become too broad and undefined. Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud argues that the psyche is divided into three parts, the Id, Ego and Super-ego.³³ Id is the part where the humans most instinctual tendencies exist, like our sexual drive and aggressive drive. The Id is repressed and is often used under the term “unconscious”.³⁴ The Super-ego works as the more ideal part of the psyche, striving for perfection but also condemns some of the other impulses from the other parts.³⁵ In the middle of the two is the Ego and Freud describes the ego as:

“It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the Pcpt.-Cs. [*Pcpt.-Cs. Stands for perception-consciousness system*]; in a sense it is an extension of the surface-differentiation. Moreover, the ego seems to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id.”³⁶

In that way, the ego acts as a mediator between the two extremes, as a common sense, controlling the more basic urges of the Id and the more perfectionistic tendencies of the Super-ego.

With this more general structure of the psyche discussed, it is easier to create the understanding and context around the collective unconscious. Carl Gustav Jung follows in Freud’s psychoanalytical tradition but evolves and finds new aspects of some of Freud’s theories. One of the more notable of these is the collective unconscious. According to the writings of Freud, the Id, or the unconscious, has a personal context, and he does not discuss more general aspects of it.³⁷ Jung takes Freud’s understanding and expands upon it by

³³ S. Freud, ‘The Ego and the Id’, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX: The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, trans. J. Strachey, vol. 19, p.20 https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/eea4/c287dc14c3a4b8876d935d0b269155a2ab1a.pdf?_ga=2.100163806.1103819725.1591695065-417972311.1591695065 (accessed 19 April 2020)

³⁴ Freud, pp. 9–11

³⁵ Freud, p. 18

³⁶ Freud, p. 10

³⁷ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, p.20

studying the more interpersonal dynamics of the unconscious. One of the major aspects he brings to the table is the use of archetypes, to describe common unconscious associations and symbols. As Freud argues, the unconscious is filled with ambiguity and uncertainty, just because of that it is not known to us.³⁸ Jung agrees with Freud and writes that the Collective Unconscious builds on instincts.³⁹ Jung delves deeper in the collective unconscious and studies the occurrence of specific archetypes in the unconscious. The archetypes are reoccurring and as Jung himself reasons: “The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere.”⁴⁰ The “definite forms” discussed by Jung associate to different aspects of the Collective Unconscious to symbols like the Mother, the Shadow and the Child archetypes. The archetypes and the importance of their form are further elaborated in Jung’s final statement about the Collective Unconscious and its archetypes:

“My thesis, then, is as follows: In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.”⁴¹

By stating this, Jung also opens the understanding and the dynamics of the archetypes and relates that the archetypes not only are something psychological, but also are manifested in our culture and cultural expressions.

To analyze and study these archetypes in *Locke & Key* properly, I will use Julia Kristeva’s term intertextuality. Intertextuality is a term coined by Kristeva in the text *Word, Dialogue and Novel* from 1966.⁴² Kristeva introduces Bakhtin’s two terms Dialogism and Ambivalence and she argues that the terms consist of three dimensions, that of the written

³⁸ Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX: The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, p. 4

³⁹ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, pp. 57-59

⁴⁰ Jung, pp. 56–57

⁴¹ Jung, p. 57

⁴² Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p.34

text, the addressee and exterior works. Bakhtin's term Dialogism relates to the communication between Author and Addressee, while the term Ambivalence relates to intertextual relationships, what Bakhtin calls "Translinguistic message".⁴³ Kristeva's three dimensions I will use to relate Jung's psychoanalytical archetypes to *Locke & Key*. It is hard to prove if the connections between the Collective Unconscious and the comic are conscious or unconscious, but I argue that these connections become apparent and relevant when relating them to how the comic, narrative and character is built up in the empirical material.

To give an example of how *Locke & Key* uses more clear allusions to help the story gain a larger context, I will briefly discuss the location and town name where Keyhouse Manor is located. Keyhouse Manor lies in the city of Lovecraft, in the state of Massachusetts, USA. Already here has the comic done two major allusions to other artistic works and persons, and in the process all three of Kristeva's dimensions are brought in. The first of the allusions concerns the Town of Lovecraft, named after the influential horror writer H. P. Lovecraft. By doing this allusion, the writer, Joe Hill, places the comic in a clear horror context. The other allusion is a more personal for Joe Hill, whose father is the horror author Stephen King, by placing Lovecraft in the north-east of USA. North-east of USA, especially the state of Maine, is where many of King's works take place, and by placing *Locke & Key* in Massachusetts, Hill honors his father's legacy but at the same time makes it separate by placing the story in Massachusetts instead of Maine. Both these allusions create a context and association around *Locke & Key* and places the story right in a legacy of horror. This context strengthens the story and makes the comic much more interconnected to the broader genre of horror. In the same way as these allusions work, works the Collective Unconscious and its allusions, but instead of being hints in names and parts of USA, it lies in the story, visuality and the very essence of the comic.

The House Archetype

In the reading of an intertextual understanding of *Locke & Key*, one of Kristeva's three dimensions stands out and gives a different perspective and context of the story, that of the "other texts". To make this correlation work properly, both the author and the addressee need to be open for different readings. The more conventional reading of the story, the actual story, is a quite straight forward task. Even if the narrative consists of many narrative threads, the core story is told in a clear and understandable way. But there is also

⁴³ Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 40

something deeper buried in the story. As the example of Lovecraft showcases, Hill likes to pay homages to influential thoughts and works. The Lovecraft connection in its form is quite overt and easy to deduce, but I argue that there are deeper readings of the work placing the story in a completely different light. Not knowing whether the psychoanalytical connection in *Locke & Key* is conscious or unconscious, still makes the perspective interesting to study and understand. By placing the texts of C G Jung against the comic, not only does a new understanding of the work appear, but also gives an interesting perspective of Jung's theories in a more tangible and visual way.

The House archetype is an archetype Jung's writes about in the book *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. The symbol of the house was the main focus in one of Jung's dreams and one that he extensively discussed with Sigmund Freud.⁴⁴ In the dream Jung wanders around a two-story house, he starts on the second floor in a very nicely furnished room and makes his way downstairs, first to the first floor, after that, the cellar and lastly to a grotto beneath the house.⁴⁵ As he progress down through the levels, he realizes that the rooms get older and older, and he deduces that the final grotto also is the oldest of the structure.⁴⁶ Jung was certain that the house he dreamt about was a visual symbol of the psyche, where the different levels represented different layers of the psyche, from conscious on the second floor, where he started, to unconscious on the ground floor as well as in the two levels underground.⁴⁷

In his text, Jung emphasizes the furniture in each room, clearly placing the furniture in different eras, and commenting that it gets older and older further down he gets. The interior of the top floor is from the 19th century and in the final grotto he relates it to as "ancient".⁴⁸ For Jung, the furniture and the feeling of the rooms became a visual metaphor connecting it to a certain time, effectively creating a visual clarity or association with every level. This visuality is interesting to bring up because its comparability to the visuality of the comic. Keyhouse Manor's architecture is in the American Queen Anne style, and as previously discussed it associates to other famous horror locations because of that. This creates an intertextual connection between the house and other famous horror houses. The very strong visuality of the exterior creates time paradoxes in the comic, because of

⁴⁴ Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, pp. 196-197

⁴⁵ Jung, pp. 196-198

⁴⁶ Jung, p. 197

⁴⁷ Jung, pp. 198-199

⁴⁸ Jung, p. 197

flashbacks to the American Revolution, 1765–1783, when the American Queen Anne style started to be used around 1880 in the USA.⁴⁹ Even if this use of architecture breaks time periods, the comic gains something else by having Keyhouse Manor as a monolithic unchanging structure, that of recognizability. This is further emphasized in the artwork as can be seen in Image 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10, where Rodriguez uses a frog’s perspective to further enhance the monolithic structure of the building. The interior of Keyhouse Manor has a cozier aesthetic, mixing the old architecture with domestic modern life. Jung describes his top floors as “Homely”, and the same word can be used to describe the Locke home. A problem that materializes fast is that of the interpersonal charges of dreams or specific aspects in the dreams. General forms as the House archetype are enough open and universal to successfully work in a larger context, while some of the minor details are more personal in its nature. The furnishings of Jung’s dream house are in a context of the world he was living, and therefore it is hard to apply the precise aesthetics of the dream onto the Keyhouse Manor and its symbolism. What becomes important here is then the words that Jung describes with, like “homely”. Homely is a world we, in the 21st century can understand, and it is abstract enough that we can use it successfully in a discussion. Because of the homely feeling of the Locke home, the context around the house can be compared to the top floors of the house in Jung’s dream. The same descriptions can be applied to the grotto beneath Keyhouse Manor, in both cases the grotto can be considered as very old.

Throughout the six volumes the house and its surroundings are thoroughly explored, from the house itself, to the wellhouse to the underground caverns beneath. By locating all these landmarks, Joe Hill uses the geography to connect different places to the comic’s narrative. The different locations are also connected physically, the wellhouse is close to the house and just precisely beneath the wellhouse lies the caves (called the “Drowning Caves” because of the tidal water that comes and goes and some of Rendell’s old friends that died there many years ago). This creates a unity between the locations and creates a vertical element in the three locations, with the house on top, below the house is the well in the wellhouse and below the well are the caves, thus creating an indirect paraphrase of Jung’s house archetype.

To see Keyhouse Manor as a physical manifestation of a psyche subverts the understanding of the narrative in *Locke & Key*. For if Keyhouse Manor was just a house

⁴⁹ V. McAlester, & L. McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York, Alfred H. Knopf, 1984, pp. 262-264

before, it is now its own personality and a symbol for something else, the psyche, and filled with symbolical allegories. As Clare Cooper argues in her text *The House as a Symbol of the Self*, the language around both houses and persons tend to use the same language and words.⁵⁰ Cooper further discusses the collation between human psyche and houses and emphasizes the outside and the inside of the house archetype:

“The house both encloses space (the house interior) and excludes space (everything outside it). Thus, it has two very important and different components, its interior and its façade. The house therefore nicely reflects how man sees himself, with both an intimate interior, or self as viewed from within and revealed only to those intimates who are invited inside, and a public exterior (The persona or mask, in Jungian terms) or the self that we choose to display to others.”⁵¹

The connection between an inside and an outside is something highly prevalent in *Locke & Key*. As previously discussed, one of the reoccurring themes in the comic is the antagonists trying to get in to Keyhouse Manor (Images 5, 6, 7, 13 and 15). This assault from the outside towards the inside in this perspective creates a completely new context, that of Dodge attacking the psyche. This sentiment is already echoing through the story, Dodges manipulation and taunting of Nina, but also Dodges possession of Bode. In the possession of Bode there is also a new context that arises with this revelation with the house symbolism, with Dodge locking Bode out of the house. Bode is then, in the form of a ghost, doomed to be a ghost and being shut out of the house and while Dodge is taking his place in the “psyche”.

The verticality existing among the landmarks in and around Keyhouse Manor is alluded to in Image 7, in the cross-section of the house. Here the verticality is further emphasized using striking vertical lines in the design of the house. The interesting part of this page is also the placement of the panels, where the panels depicting the Locke family are in the panels of the manor. The panel of Sam Lesser and Rufus is located at the bottom of the page, beneath the ground. So in that sense the placement of the panel is logically placed. By placing the panel beneath the house, in the underground, gives the comic book page another meaning, that of the threats in *Locke & Key* often come from beneath. This is a sentiment echoing through all six volumes, it notably starts by Bode finding Dodge down the well in the

⁵⁰ C. Cooper, ‘The House as a Symbol of the Self’, J. Lang et al. (ed.), *Designing for Human Behavior: Architecture and the Behavioral Sciences*, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, 1974, pp. 131-132, Available from: Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>), (accessed 2 June 2020)

⁵¹ Cooper Marcus, p. 131

wellhouse. The threat from beneath is further developed in the following volumes by placing the black door (the door to the realm of the demons) at the bottom of the Drowning Caves. If Jung's house archetype and its different levels is applied on the locations and threats of *Locke & Key*, a clear system arises. On the top, above ground, are Keyhouse Manor, representing the top level of the house, below that is the wellhouse, which can be seen as the ground floor and the first level of unconsciousness, followed by the well itself, representing the cellar in the house, and finally the drowning caves, representing the ancient grottos Jung discusses. In the context of this theory, the Black Door then becomes a metaphor for our unconscious fears and horrors that are locked within ourselves. With the structure of the house and its connection to Jung's symbolical psyche clear, the threats are easily identifiable, the further down you get the bigger the threat, and behind the Black door, the greatest horrors are locked within.

The Mother Archetype

One of the first meetings the reader has with the character of Nina is the fateful day Sam Lesser and Al Grubb attack her and her family, resulting in the murder of her husband and Nina murdering Al Grubb. This part of the comic is influential and affects the story of the rest of the six volumes. The sheer brutality drawn in the pages showcases not only victimhood but also a form of avenging. It is heavily implied that Nina is raped by Al Grubb, while her husband is held at gunpoint by Sam Lesser. This is not something that is directly talked about in the comic, but the associations in this scene are clear, everything from Grubb taking Nina to another room to her ripped clothes and bloody face speaks of this brutal violation. It also results in Nina smashing an axe into the backside of Grubb skull, killing him immediately (Image 11). This brutal end to her aggressor closes a mini arch for her character. The usual way arcs work in works of fiction is that they often span over the whole story, or at least a substantial part of the story. One example on a longer arc in *Locke & Key* is that of Kinsey and her fear. In order not to feel fear anymore Kinsey removes the psychical manifestations of fear from her head with the help of the Head Key, later she understands how dangerous it is to live completely fearless and that the fears are an important part of her psyche, so she puts the fears back into her head again. The three kids have these longer arcs spanning over the six volumes of *Locke & Key*, but in the case of Nina she has shorter and more intense arcs. The two most notable are her fight against alcoholism and the attack on her family in the beginning of Volume 1.

The violation of her and her murder of Al Grubb interestingly parallels one horror trope that has been reoccurring in more contemporary horror films, especially slasher films, that of “The Final Girl”-trope.⁵² The term was coined by Carol J Clover in her book from 1992 *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, where she discusses the prevalence of “The Final Girl”-trope in horror movies. The general form is a dynamic of the “suffering victim” and the “avenging hero”, where at the start of the film the female protagonist is exposed to some form of traumatic event, leading her to seek out revenge on her perpetrators in the latter half of the narrative.⁵³ Both the victimhood and the avenging are present in Nina’s mini arc in the beginning of volume 1, because it includes both the crime and the resolution. Because of this, the author of *Locke & Key* closes this part of her arc and moves the focus on to the three kids, while Nina takes the backseat of the action. Hill is known for his homage to horror legends, like the town of Lovecraft, so it is not hard to think that he can do the same to famous horror tropes by paraphrasing them in his own work. The story of Nina ties back to one film that Clover discusses, the film *I Spit on your grave* from 1978. Like Nina, the main character Jennifer is being horribly raped and after that she enacts her vengeance on her rapists. Even if the ordeal Nina is put through is much less graphic than the film, the parallels affect the reading of the scene in *Locke & Key*. Important to note is that the “The final Girl” trope spans much more broadly through horror movies, and it is this that the comic paraphrases. The broadness of the trope makes Nina’s arc easily recognizable and directly creates an understanding for the reader without giving to much of a context. Much of the power of the scene lies in the extreme change in Nina’s character. From an innocent and peaceful woman to someone that has been completely destroyed. In the aftermath of the attack and most notable the three first volumes of *Locke & Key*, the two sides of her character become more and more clear, one as a strong and caring mother and survivor, and a darker, sarcastic and hopeless victim of atrocious crimes.

The duality of Nina does not only reflect in the “The Final Girl”-trope, but parallels can also be drawn towards the symbolism of the mother archetype found in Jung’s psychoanalytic theories. Jung discusses the magnitude, but also the focused smallness of the archetype. Jung parts the archetype into two major definitions, a personal and a more multifaceted reading of the archetype.⁵⁴ The easiest of the two to define is the personal, which

⁵² C. J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2015, p. X

⁵³ Clover, p. 17

⁵⁴ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, p. 89

Jung relates to as the personalization-symbolism of the archetype, like mothers, grandmothers and god mothers.⁵⁵ The archetype in this definition becomes very palpable and real, and springs from mythology and religion, one example being Mary, mother of Christ.⁵⁶ The other definition of the Mother archetype is much more broad and diffuse in its scope, and relates to objects, animals and places. Jung draws parallels from the archetype to both caves and more domestic objects like ovens. The theme in Jung's reasoning and association is something I argue is a form of embrace, as both caves and ovens are objects defined by their hollowness. Hollowness is perhaps not the best word to use in this explanation because of the negative connotations the word has, but I argue that the hollowness of the caves and the ovens have the same ambivalence as Jung himself sees in the Mother archetype. If their hollowness on one side symbolizes something hollow or closed in, the contrary becomes security and embrace. In that way the caves and ovens metaphorically become part of a womb iconography.

The aspect connecting the two definitions into one archetype is the essential duality of the term. Jung choice of words swings between solicitude and sympathy to idealization, duty and fear.⁵⁷ This creates a dynamic look on the archetype, but also creates a new understanding of the character of Nina. In the empiric material she is one of the characters that has the widest range of personality, the other characters are much more constant in their personalization. Over time their personalities change, but it is not as dynamic as Nina's personality changes. These changes become explicit when the empiric material comes into focus. In Image 4 there is a bitterness in her characterization, in Image 10 there is a serenity and sorrow over her, in Image 11 she is angry, sad, and desperate and in Image 13 she is the calm and understanding mother. When all put together, the pieces show one of the most multifaceted and ambivalent characters in the whole comic. The mother archetype reinforces and highlights the themes of Nina and creates a complex pattern of a strong, but at the same time broken, woman.

This dualistic and ambivalent characterization charges the character with a strong symbolic power, first and foremost as her role as a mother, but also in the characterization of her psyche. In the end, the character of Nina becomes as mythic as the demonic Dodge, as the two become total opposites of each other. This sentiment is echoed back to in Image 13, where the two characters interact, Dodge's (in the body of Bode)

⁵⁵ Jung, p. 89

⁵⁶ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, p.111

⁵⁷ Jung, pp. 90, 99 &111

manipulation and aggressiveness standing against Nina's strength and humility. The scene can be seen as rather insignificant and ordinary, but in the dialogue and because of the charge of the two characters, the meaning behind the image becomes much more elaborate than the surface reveals. The total opposites of Nina and Dodge work quite well in putting up two sides where the three protagonists, Nina's kids, can move in between. In some ways, it becomes a tug of war between Nina and Dodge, particular in the later volumes of the series. The tug of war between them is never evident, but it runs like a symbolic undercurrent, infusing the comic with a dualistic understanding. This symbolic undercurrent becomes even clearer in the character of Dodge, or what Dodge was introduced as in the beginning of the comic, that of the mysterious "Woman in the Well". As the woman in the well, Dodge manipulates Bode to release them from the well (by the help of the echo key), and at the same time Dodge manipulates Sam Lesser to escape from the prison facility where he is locked up and attack the Locke family one more time. Even if "female" Dodge just appears in the first volume (and a few flashbacks over the course of the comic), this version of the character is the strongest in its visuality and is the shape the reader often relates the character to. This is further evidenced by the TV series where female Dodge, played by actress Laysla De Oliveira, is the one being in all the promotional materials for the show and the "major" form of the demon. To circle the argument back to the opposites of Nina and Dodge, I argue that there are two symbolic "mothers" in the story, clearly Nina, but also Dodge. Jung discusses the ambivalence of the Mother archetype extensively, particular what he coins "The Positive Mother-complex" and "The Negative Mother-complex".⁵⁸ This lies in the strong visuality of the first incarnation of Dodge, but I also argue that the negative side of the Mother archetype still is there when Dodge have a masculine coded body, the archetype in this instance goes beyond gender. This toppled with the calculating, destructive, egocentric, and manipulative qualities of Dodge make a clear opposite to the qualities of Nina.

The Child Archetype

From the first time Bode placed his foot on the premise of Keyhouse Manor, Dodge had their eyes on him. By manipulating the young boy Dodge manages to get free from the well and could once again walk free. Bode realizes soon that the "Lady in the Well" is a malevolent demon bound to destruction and death, even when his siblings do not believe

⁵⁸ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, pp. 99 & 104-105

him, he stands up for his belief and what he has been experiencing. Bode's personality and childish optimism carries a lot of the more optimism of the narrative and these parts get crucial to balance out all the horror in the comic. This also makes it so much more traumatic for the reader when it is Bode's body Dodge takes over, shifting the whole balance of the comic and raising the stakes of the narrative even higher.

The character of Bode has major likenesses recognizable in both movies and novels, mostly in the fantasy genre. Like the characters of Alice from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Harry Potter from J K Rowling's Harry Potter books and Lucy Pevensie from C S Lewis' Narnia books, Bode is a child that gets exposed to a new and magical world. The places of Wonderland, Hogwarts and Narnia become Keyhouse Manor in *Locke & Key*. Keyhouse Manor becomes a portal, in the meaning it is both an ordinary house, but at the same time a world where the magical keys have all the power. This view of the house fits within *Locke & Key*'s more subdued and domestic setting already discussed, but also twists the house into an ambivalent place of both security and adventure. Because of the recognizability of the Bode character across the plethora of medias makes the character extremely strong in the story and one that is both easy to relate to and feel empathy for. By just placing some similarities with Bode and other literary fantasy characters, the author Joe Hill quickly contextualizes his own creation into a bigger context, which is a clear connection to what Kristeva discusses about the dynamics between the Writing subject, Addressee and Exterior texts.⁵⁹

This context created around Bode is the strongest one in the whole comic, it is so strong that the comic almost slides within its own genre, from horror towards fantasy. This is a notion that the TV adaption of *Locke & Key* have taken into consideration, changing, or even removing, some of the more brutal and horrific events in their adaptation of the comic. Because of the genre slide in the comic, the understanding of the story widens and becomes more dynamic and hopeful to the reader, all because of the character of Bode and the context he creates. Because of the strength of the character, he becomes the character holding everything together narratively, and in this way, he symbolically functions as the mediator between the two symbolical "mothers" of the story, Nina and Dodge.

This sentiment is something that also echoes in Jung's theories regarding the Child Archetype. He relates this to the "futura" of the archetype, that the child archetype

⁵⁹ J Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p.36

represents the future.⁶⁰ This is one of the main aspects of the archetype, and like the mother archetype, Jung discusses that there is a plethora of different aspects constructing the child archetype. As a symbol of the future, the child archetype becomes a unifying force, uniting and mediating opposites.⁶¹ This harkens back to Bode as a mediator between Nina and Dodge and gives a further context and clarity to the complex relationship between the triad of characters. To use Bode as a mediator between Nina and Dodge not only places an emphasis on Bode as a main character, but he also symbolically signifies the future. That both Dodge and Nina symbolically fight for the future fits well within the framework of the story. Dodge's main motive is to open the Black Door in the Drowning Caves, to release more demons out into the human world and take over it. If Dodge's plan is much grander, the main motive of Nina is to protect her kids, in the process ensuing their future and wellbeing. In this way both characters have a clear ambition and view of the future, and views that heavily clash. Symbolically, Bode transforms into the very thing Nina and Dodge are focused on accomplishing, securing the future.

Even if this symbolic trio is important for the larger understanding of the comic, Bode as a character stands out in himself because of the strong contextualization and intertextual relations to similar characters in fiction. This relates to a different aspect of Jung's Child Archetype, it is a further elaboration of the aspect of "futurity", that of the Child Hero or the Child God.⁶² Both religion and mythology have widespread use of savior children, one good example is Jesus.⁶³ The savior child relates to pureness and idealism, and those qualities become important in the archetype. Bode can both be interpreted as a child god and a child hero, particular the latter one, but there are clear parallels to the first one as well. According to Jung: 'The hero's main feat is to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious. Day and light are synonyms for consciousness, night and dark for the unconscious.'⁶⁴ This clearly speaks to Bode's role in the story, but also to his optimism and pureness against the threat of Dodge. The thing that enhances this reading is the parallel understanding of Bode as a Child God, this sentiment becomes clear in the final volume, when Bode's body dies with Dodge in the well, but is later resurrected thanks to Bode's ghost, Tyler and the Animal Key. Bode's resurrection makes clear parallels to the resurrection of Jesus after his crucifixion and places the context around

⁶⁰ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, p. 160

⁶¹ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, pp. 160-161

⁶² Jung, p. 155 & 162

⁶³ Jung, p. 160

⁶⁴ Jung, p. 162

this event in the comic as a new beginning, a new future, tying the Child archetype back to the futurity symbolism. The symbolism of this new beginning is further emphasized by Tyler creating a new Keyhouse Manor (Image 9). The house now is made of stone, while the latter house was made of both wood and stone. Because stone is sturdier than wood it also signals a much more sturdy and secure future in store for the protagonists. According to Jung the futurity aspect of the Child Archetype can be symbolized by a circle, a connected form that unites.⁶⁵ The circle also symbolizes cycles and the theme that nothing is really gone, which the comic emphasizes by starting where it began, with three kids and their mother in a house, with the antagonist being thrown back into the well and dead. In that way, the circle is closed, and the new beginning also showcases a better world, albeit a world that has been built on the sacrifices of a lot of people.

Anima and Animus

The Collective Unconscious and its archetypes were something Jung developed under his whole life, through empiric studies of patients, as well as himself, and theoretic philosophy investigating the psyche. Many of the texts regarding the Collective Unconscious often have a dualistic focus, part is on the personal psychology and how these archetypes can be manifested in the psyche of singular patients, so called complexes or neuroses, but Jung analyzes the archetypes in a wider more general cultural context as well.⁶⁶ Something Jung comes back to in many texts is the wideness and sometimes diffuse aspects of the archetypes, but there is always a general symbolical imagery present that makes them applicable on a wider range of material. Because of this, there is a cultural focus ingrained in the archetypes, manifested through the use of metaphors collected from mythology, religion, and art.

Because of the generality of the archetypes they can tell something about contemporary cultural phenomena, as well as human nature, but in some cases it is noticeable that these theories are from the last century. This becomes apparent in the text ‘Concerning the Archetypes, with Special Reference to the Anima Concept’, from the ninth volume of *The Collected Works of C G Jung: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. This chapter is regarding the Anima and Animus concepts, according to Jung the Anima is a female aspect

⁶⁵ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, p. 160

⁶⁶ Jung, p. 154

of the male psyche, while the Animus is a male aspect of the female psyche.⁶⁷ These theories have their basis in a gender binary, that the male and female are in direct opposition of each other. This theory, in contemporary western society, is seen as quite stale, especially when backed up with the rapid development of human minority rights and the much more accepting views on gender identities and gender expressions existing today.

Another very stale, and problematic, aspect of Jung's theories is regarding to that of homosexuality. Jung based his understanding on Freud's theories, who believed that homosexuality (specifically male homosexuality) was a development in early childhood.⁶⁸ According to Freud children were born bisexual, and during early childhood developed their sexuality.⁶⁹ Homosexuality then emerged when the son, instead of having a sexually desire for the mother, instead identified with her.⁷⁰ To be in the beginning of the 20th century Freud's opinions were more humane and understanding toward homosexuality, especially in consideration of the rampant homophobia present in society under this time. But these theories are also a product of their time, Freud was very focused on the man and the male psyche, and the cultural views present in society under this time. Freud's theories have since then become the basis of many of the most basic psychoanalytical theories, but his theories have also been heavily criticized by other academics and psychoanalysts. In 1986 Robert M. Friedman published the text "The Psychoanalytic Model of Male Homosexuality: A Historical and Theoretical Critique" in the influential magazine *Psychoanalytic Review*, where he went in to both criticize Freud theories on homosexuality, as well as the vacuum Friedman saw in the Neo-Freudians and their rejection, and in many cases ignorance, of the homosexual aspects in the psychoanalytical theories.⁷¹ This criticism is also echoed by Jack Drescher in his paper *Homosexuality and its Vicissitudes: The 'Homosexual Other' in Psychoanalytic Theory and Praxis*, and he further discusses that the Neo-Freudians heavily distanced themselves from Freud's notion that all people were born bisexual and thus had a disposition to become homosexual.⁷² This rigidity and views on the "Homosexual Other" became weaker

⁶⁷ Jung, pp. 71-73

⁶⁸ R. M. Friedman, 'The Psychoanalytic Model of Male Homosexuality: A Historical and Theoretical Critique', *Psychoanalytic Review*, vol. 73, no. 4 winter, 1986, pp. 487-488

⁶⁹ Friedman, pp. 487-488

⁷⁰ Friedman, pp. 487-488

⁷¹ Friedman, p. 486

⁷² J. Drescher, *Homosexuality and its Vicissitudes: The 'Homosexual Other' in Psychoanalytic Theory and Praxis*, 2004, pp. 3-4,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238079111_HOMOSEXUALITY_AND_ITS_VICISSITUDES_THE_HOMOSEXUAL_OTHER_IN_PSYCHOANALYTIC_THEORY_AND_PRAxis, (accessed 21 May 2020)

and weaker during the more liberal views on sexuality during the 1960s, and a much more open and tolerant wave of psychoanalysts paved way for a new inclusivity and understanding of sexual minorities in the following decades.⁷³

This discussion and contextualization are vital to the understanding of *Locke & Key*'s portrayal and handling of these themes. As already discussed, *Locke & Key* has a binary view of gender, exemplified by the binarity of the Gender Key and that you only can change between male and female. This view hints in part at something forward thinking, to traverse between gender identities, but because it is handled in the way it has been, it seems stale and old. This can also be said for the sexual representation in the comic, and the character of Duncan. As seen in Image 14 in the altercation between Dodge and Brian, Dodge uses Duncan's use of the Gender Key when he was a child as a reasoning Duncan's homosexuality. This notion has for a long time prevailed society, part to see gay men as more "feminine", but evidenced by the previous discussion there is also a deeper context that has its roots in a ambivalence on either trying to hide and ignore it or try to study it in more or less successful ways. Jung's discussions concerning the concept of Anima and Animus proceed from theories about the gnostic syzygies, the conjunction of male and female.⁷⁴ He sees this conjunction in a lot of instances, ranging from religion to mythology.⁷⁵ One of the more notable shapes he discusses is the Yin-Yang symbol that is rooted in the male/female, but Jung also references more theoretical works by the roman author Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius.⁷⁶ His reasonings are also rooted in psychology, when he argues that the newborn baby sees its mother as an all-encompassing "hermaphroditic" goddess.⁷⁷

Apart from the binarity of it, gender in *Locke & Key* is presented as something transcendable, but only something that is allowed to go between the total opposites. In Image 15 this view on gender gets a clear visual representation, when Dodge changes their sex with the help of the Gender Key. As a female, Dodge is very feminine, with flowing dresses, softer features, an hourglass shape, long hair and thin arms and legs. As a male, Dodge is much more masculine, with muscular body, large hands, and a thick neck. Even the dress has slipped down, exposing the breasts. The exposing of the male coded breast creates a paradoxical feeling in the panels, just in the quite clear societal norm about breasts and

⁷³ Drescher, *Homosexuality and its Vicissitudes: The 'Homosexual Other' in Psychoanalytic Theory and Praxis*, pp. 4-5

⁷⁴ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, p. 78

⁷⁵ Jung, pp. 71-72

⁷⁶ Jung, pp. 71-72

⁷⁷ Jung, pp. 78-81

western society's adance to covering up the female coded breasts. The paradoxical element in this way also works like the door to which the Gender Key opens, which is in a closet. These paradoxical elements in the comic make it hard for the reader to distinguish a clear message in the representation of sexual minorities in the comic. It strikes two ways, both implying the importance of the issues, but also poking fun at them at the same time. Another problematic part of this is that it is mostly Dodge who transcends the gender binary set up in the comic. By changing gender Dodge can manipulate the protagonists further and the demon becomes an even greater threat. This selfish action on Dodge's part becomes problematic as it makes the villain almost the only form of minority representation in the comic. This is what is called a queer-coded villain. Queer-coded villains are villains with a camp and stereotypical personality that draws parallels to the stereotypical attributes associated to sexual minorities.⁷⁸ One clear example of these types of queer-coded villains are the villains in the animated films during the Disney renaissance during the 1990s, one notable example is *The Little Mermaid's* villain Ursula , that is based on the drag queen Divine (real name Harris Glenn Milstead). This use of queer-coding is very problematical, especially because of the lacking representation in other parts of the movie, relegating the only queer-coded character to the villain.

Duncan Locke and Brian Rogan are the only other form of queer representation present in the comic, and who unjustly gets the responsibility to weigh up the representation and balancing up the villain's queerness. Of the two, Duncan has more of a focus in the comic, whereas Brian appears few and far between, but Duncan is far from a main character in the comic and works more as a complement to the Locke kids and Nina. Even if Duncan's presence in the comic comes and goes, he is an important character to the protagonists and an all-around good guy. He has not many characteristics except being nice and understanding, which makes him somewhat flat, but because of this characteristic, he works as the "good" representation of a sexual minority counterbalancing Dodge's "evil" representation. In this balancing between the characters the Animus/Anima concept becomes important and how it is used in the two characters. Both characters have the most flexible attitude to gender in the comic. The difference is how they use the gender binarity, while Dodge fully blown uses it to their own selfish schemes, Duncan uses gender to understand more about himself and his sexuality. The Animus and Anima complex here becomes a highly visual and tangible part of

⁷⁸ Kim, K., 'Queer-coded Villains (And Why You Should Care)', T. Budd & L. Dexheimer (ed.), *DIALOGUES@RU*, 2017, p. 159, https://dialogues.rutgers.edu/images/Journals_PDF/2017-18-dialogues-web_e6db3.pdf#page=164 (accessed 22 May 2020)

the comic. In this way, Jung's abstract and psychological theories go through a metamorphosis to something different, something palpable. The difference lies in the much more visual use of the concept, not only focusing on psychological aspects, but now also encompassing gendered bodies. This is clearest in the case in the post pubertal body of Dodge, where the difference between the male and female is palpable. In the case of Duncan, he used the Gender Key when he was child, not changing his appearance in any way because of the likeness between pre pubertal bodies is so strong. To mark the difference female Duncan wears a stereotypical dress with a bow in the hair and this clearly showcases the problematical aspects in the comic, as much progressivity lies in the transformation between sexes, the binarity is still there and the stereotypic male and female attributes, which echoes Jung's view of gender as pairs of opposites.⁷⁹ Arguably this is made to quickly showcase the change, but in the process, it loses the complexity and the rich spectra of gender it could have been.

The Shadow Archetype

A red thread that runs through all these archetypes are the ambivalence and the two-sidedness of the archetypes. This speaks to an important and reoccurring perspective in Jung's theories about the psyche and the collective unconscious, that of the Shadow Archetype. According to Jung, the Shadow Archetype consists of the less pleasing parts of one's personality.⁸⁰ The person in question tries to subdue or not to think about parts of their personality but instead sees oneself as a "perfect" human and by that ignores a part of the personality. This creates an opposition in the psyche, and Jung discusses this as: "Opposites are extreme qualities in any state, by virtue of which that state is perceived to be real, for they form a potential. The psyche is made up of processes whose energy springs from the equilibration of all kinds of opposites."⁸¹ The opposites create a whole, but the humans are often not conscious that there are more to their psyches than they can comprehend. With the less pleasing, and in some cases forbidden, thoughts of the psyche, the brain tries to unconsciously protect it from them. This is an attempt to create a wholeness and remove

⁷⁹ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9*, p. 80

⁸⁰ C. G. Jung, 'Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche', *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 8*, trans. G. Adler & R. F. C. Hull, Volume 8, 1975, pp. 193-195 <https://www.jungiananalysts.org.uk/> (accessed 15 April 2020)

⁸¹ Jung, p.192

conflict in the psyche. The conflicts can else create suffering for the human and have a negative effect on the mental wellbeing.⁸²

This conflict of the psyche can on a symbolical level be interpreted as a good versus evil scenario. The good and evil dichotomy is a reoccurring concept in western civilization, with philosophy, religion and culture using the terms. In the 20th century, and with the rise of the more mainstream entertainment, the good versus evil has become ingrained into our consciousness through cultural expressions as in novels, films, tv-series and comics, affecting our understandings of the concepts. As in so much other artistic works, the conflict between good versus evil is the main conflict in *Locke & Key* and the aspect that drives the whole narrative forward.

Dodge is clearly most evil character shown in the comic. His deeds range from threats and assault to murder of children, making him a palpable threat throughout the six volumes. The character is accused by María Ibáñez-Rodríguez in the text “Myths of the Uncanny in the Contemporary Graphic Novel” to be a domesticated threat, not really using supernatural power, but instead opting for psychological manipulation, brute force and murder.⁸³ I agree in this sentiment, but I argue that the option to keep Dodge more domesticated in his threatening presence complements the story and keeps a balance with the major magical elements of the comic, the keys. Moreover, this domesticity makes Dodge much more like an ordinary human, albeit one with megalomaniac, narcissistic and psychopathic tendencies, and in this way the character is on the same level power wise as the heroes of the story. The main difference between the good and evil then solely lies in the characters actions, where the good characters have a moral aspect to their personalities, Dodge completely lacks any form of moral compass whatsoever. This arguably strengthens the understanding of the Shadow archetype in the comic and draws parallels between the archetype and Dodge. Because of this, Dodge’s actions, which can be seen in Image 13 and 14, become not only a message of the actual character, but also a showcase of aspects in the shadow archetype.

One aspect that also is used to create further connection between the protagonists and Dodge is the fact that Dodge’s appearance is that of a human (that the antagonistic demon has taken possession of). This further connects the supernatural elements

⁸² Jung, pp. 193-194

⁸³ Ibáñez-Rodríguez, *On Fear, Horror and Terror: Giving Utterance to the Unutterable*, p. 67

of Dodge to a domesticity and something ordinary. This also solidifies Dodge's manipulative and psychopathic "human" personality because these threats and manipulations are something very human. This association lies between the dialogue and the image, with a human image of Dodge and the connection to the text through the speech balloon. The whole context of the image would change if instead of a human, Dodge were some type of monster. As a human, Dodge's manipulations and threats are highly effective, and many humans fall under their control just because of the fear they instill on them.

Even if Dodge for the most parts is a more "human" threat to the other characters, this does not stop them from using the keys and their magic. Dodge mostly uses the keys to help them with their plans, an example of this is the way they use Bode's body (with the help of the ghost key) to further push their own agenda. By taking over the boy, Dodge can start to manipulate and terrorize the family, but never in an open way, but more through whispers and manipulations, and sometimes a magic key. Interestingly, Dodge's uses of the magic keys are quite understated and discreet, instead of bombastic. The most monumental use of keys Dodge does is controlling the shadows with the help of the the Shadow Key. This shadow action is one of a few large scale altercations, as by Dodge's use of the shadow key and crown drives Tyler to use the Giant Key (as seen in Image 8) on himself, turning himself into a giant able to fight Dodge and the shadows. This further emphasizes the connection between the characters and highlights the difference in personality. This strengthens the reading of Dodge as a symbol of Jung's Shadow archetype; as a manifestation of the things we humans try to push down into our unconscious and ignore, as our jealousy, anger, sorrow, and hatred.

This reading also further contextualizes the tug of war between Nina and Dodge, as not only being a conflict between the good and evil, but also about a conflict between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche. The same can be seen in the Anima and Animus concept and the difference between Dodge and Duncan Locke. The shadow archetype penetrates every aspect and enhances the conflict in the comic. In many ways the Shadow archetype subverts the archetype and becomes like a forbidden other side of the archetypes. The diffuse nature of the unconscious makes the conflict between the two become more complex and profound. It is possible sense this unconscious side of one's psyche, but as Jung reasons:

‘This “sliding” consciousness is thoroughly characteristic of modern man. But the one-sidedness it causes can be removed by what I have called the “realization of the shadow.” A less “poetic” and more scientific looking Greco-Latin neologism could easily have been coined for this operation. In psychology, however, one is to be dissuaded from ventures of this sort, at least when dealing with eminently practical problems. Among these is the “realization of the shadow,” the growing awareness of the inferior part of the personality, which should not be twisted into an intellectual activity, for it has far more the meaning of a suffering and a passion that implicate the whole man. The essence of that which has to be realized and assimilated has been expressed so trenchantly and so plastically in poetic language by the word “shadow” that it would be almost presumptuous not to avail oneself of this linguistic heritage. Even the term “inferior part of the personality” is inadequate and misleading, whereas “shadow” presumes nothing that would rigidly fix its content.’⁸⁴

This expands the conflict in *Locke & Key* into something more than a conventional struggle of “good vs evil” and creates a deeper psychological context. A context where the narrative not only becomes a symbol of the struggles of the psyche but undergoes a metamorphosis to become synonymous with the psyche.

⁸⁴ Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 8*, pp. 193-195

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, two different perspectives have been applied on the comic *Locke & Key*. The first perspective is a Barthian semiotic one and it is more visual in its form. The second perspective is intertextuality, with a focus on the psychoanalytical and the Collective Unconscious theories written by Carl Gustav Jung, and this perspective becomes more overarching in its form. In this final part of the thesis the focus is to unite these both sides to be able to answer the questions *How does the theory of the Collective Unconscious affect the understanding of Locke & Key?* and *How do Locke & Key's images affect this reading of the work?*.

The first question relates to the intertextual analysis of the comic, and that is a good place to start this discussion. The first most obvious understanding of the work is that of a story concerning good versus evil. This conflict is widespread in stories and is a vital part of both the structure of the narration and also acts as an element of recognizability for the readers. Letting the comic rest on this initial familiarity to the reader not only make the most vital aspects of the story easy and easily digestible, but they embrace the reader and makes the reader feel comfortable in the narrative. This notion becomes much more important as the story progresses and becomes much more complicated as well. The complexity is first and foremost both about time and characters. The most important characters for the story are the three Locke children Tyler, Kinsey and Bode, their mother Nina and Dodge, an evil demon. These five characters are most important to understand and follow the story, but more and more supporting characters are being introduced in every single volume, creating a rich world around them. From the first volume to the last, time jumps are of essence to the narration in the comic, both to show character motivations, but also to create a dramatic, intense, and captivating reading experience.

I argue that there are two forms of intertextual understanding in the comic. The first level pays homage and paraphrases different cultural expressions. The major influences of the comic come from the horror genre, but also the fantasy tropes are important for the narrative. This understanding encompasses the American Queen Anne-style Keyhouse Manor and its horror associations and the homages to H P Lovecraft (as in his surname being the name of the town), but also the magic keys and their abilities to transform and opening up the supernatural aspects in the comic. Also belonging in this level is the story around the demon

Dodge, the demons behind the Black Door and Bode, that is heavily inspired by the fantasy genre and books like Harry Potter and Narnia.

Under this more overt understanding and contextualization lies more diffuse associations permeating the comic, and it is here the symbolical aspects become more important and evident. This level is much more understated in its reading, and it is here that the connection between the comic and the archetypes of the Collective Unconscious becomes most potent. As an undercurrent on what the whole comic rests on, the archetypes infuse the characters, the locations, and the story with a deeper psychological and cultural symbolism. The first major archetype is that of the House, that expands the understanding of Keyhouse Manor to be something more than just a home to the Locke family, it gets a psychological significance. To interpret Keyhouse Manor as a visual interpretation of the psyche works very well, especially when leveling the house according to Jung's House archetype. To see Keyhouse Manor as the conscious, the wellhouse and the well as the first level of unconscious and the Drowning Caves as the bottom level of unconsciousness gives the locations symbolical significance. Keyhouse Manor and its locations in this way becomes a micro cosmos of the brain, and many of the narrative aspects of the story enhance this psychological symbology of the building. A clear examples of this is that Dodge, the shadow archetype representing the unconscious fears and the subdued and less flattering aspects of one's personality, being locked in the well and wanting to come up into the house, the conscious. This is further elaborated in Dodge's manic obsession to attack and to get into the house. The other characters living in the house then become aspects of the psyche, especially clear is this in the characters of Nina and Bode. Nina, as the Mother archetype, becomes the ruler of the house and becomes a powerful entity connected to the house and is in direct opposition to Dodge. This is much how the Mother Archetype functions according to Jung, as an all-encompassing entity that also is quite ambivalent. This ambivalence can be seen in Nina as both a caring and determined mother, but also as a broken woman who kills her assailant and starts to misuse alcohol.

Bode takes a more active role in the narration as the Child Archetype. Bode speaks to both the Futurity of the archetype, as a unifying aspect keeping all together, and to the Child Hero aspect, as the voice of naivety and optimism and the one working towards the future. This contextualizes both Bode's role as the one that discovers the keys, but also his innate optimism and belief in the good in all people. This creates a strong symbolical force in the character, and his optimism stands in stark contrast against Dodge's darkness. Jung's

Anima/Animus concept also becomes an important aspect in the story, with a lot of emphasis on Dodge's changing of gender through the comic. To balance up this Duncan also used the key to change his gender when he was a child. As Duncan, the Animus and Anima archetype becomes a humane expression and becomes about human growth and the acceptance of one's full personality. As Dodge, the archetype showcases the opposite, lies and manipulations, not only to oneself but also to other people. Through all these archetypes there is an ambivalence, there is both a light, but also a darkness.

As the Shadow Archetype, Doge becomes the dark or subdued terrors resting far beneath in us, and at the same time acts as an active corruptive part of our personality. In the end, and what solidifies this whole symbolism of the story, is the purging of the corruption caused by Dodge and the death of innocence, in the form of Bode. Through the burning, or purging, of Keyhouse Manor (the psyche), the corruption is finally gone, and a new, uncorrupted, Keyhouse manor can be built. This is further enhanced by Bode getting resurrected, symbolically showing a brighter future. What these archetypes in the end combine into, as the major symbolism going through the comic, is that of a story of a person in crisis, and a narrative about trauma and the fight against the trauma to be able to fully heal and move on.

With the first question answered and the overarching symbolism in the comic known, the question becomes how this reading affect the images of the comic, are the images enhancing this psychological perspective? During the semiotic analysis of the archetypes I found both what I called Visual Motifs and Narrative Motifs. One of the clearest Visual Motifs relate to the House archetype and is the reoccurrence of one specific panel, the one of Keyhouse Manor from a frog's eye perspective (Image 4, 5 and 6). The panels show the house in the center of it all, with the heavens above and the ground and trees framing the centrality of the house. Because of the central placing and singularity of the house, it echoes back to the house as a psyche, where the walls and roofs of the house become the shell of the psyche. This is further empowered in Image 8, when giant Tyler opens the house to go and fight the shadows controlled by Dodge.

The focus on Jung's House archetype and its conscious and unconscious levels relates to Image 7, where the cross section of the house strongly showcases a clear vertical line. The emphasis on the house as a secure place is here further displayed by having small panels with the protagonists existing in the panel of the house. Image 9 shows the new, uncorrupted, Keyhouse Manor, while the old Keyhouse Manor was mostly a wooden

building, the new one is made of stone, symbolizing stability and security. Stability and security go hand in hand in the comic's final moments and also tie into the psychological symbolism of a full healing and being stronger because of the traumatic events in one's past.

The two images (Image 10 and 11) of Nina showcase the ambivalence of the character, the motherly and secure figure and the broken person trying to survive a trauma. The total opposites of the images create a visually complex image of Nina, but it also enhances the ambivalence of the Mother Archetype. Same ambivalence can be detected in the two images relating to Bode and the Child Archetype (Image 12 and 13). One showcases Bode's inner world in all its fantastical and whimsical forms, his inner world is filled with optimism and happy memories, like the one where he is riding on his father's back. The scary memories are there, but they have been drawn in a much more naïve style, relegating the horror of reality to naïve drawings. One aspect of the image that also stands out is Bode as a superhero, flying around the psyche, associating it with both fantasies of a child, but also showcases Bode's journey through the story. It also speaks to the child hero part of the Child Archetype. As a total opposite, the other image showcasing Bode when he has been taken over by Dodge. The innocent and optimistic boy is gone and in his place is a manipulative and vicious demon trying to drag the worst out of the people. The change becomes monumental, just because how much the different personalities is, further enhancing Bode's positive qualities as well as Dodge's bad qualities.

Dodge's corruption and manipulations are further elaborated in the two images relating to the Anima/ Animus concept (Image 14 and 15). Both Dodge's taunting of Duncan's change of gender in front of Brian and when Dodge changes from male to female. Both instances showcase a clear picture of Dodge's willingness to get into the head of their victims and most importantly becoming practically a shadow by changing their body to further wrecking chaos and evil, something that is echoed back in Image 13, where the possession of Bode's body also can be seen as Dodge becoming a shadow. The shadow becomes an important part of the images and showcases corruption and manipulation, and echoes the sentiment of the Shadow archetype, that even if trauma often comes from outside, it affects one deeply and repression of these bad memories becomes a part of your own unconscious. When these repressed feelings and horrors surface it creates a conflict in the psyche, much like Dodge wreaking havoc in Keyhouse Manor, desperate to find all the keys to control the whole psyche.

In this way the visuality of the images compliment the symbolic message of trauma and healing that the comic argues for. The visuality leans on the main themes of the comic, but also leads back to an overarching symbolic theme. Even if the images have their own aesthetic, they collaborate with the story to create a seamless unity. This overarching symbolic unity or theme also makes the comic final and most important message clear and important. The final message of the comic is the message of trauma and how traumatic events affects us deep to our core, but also how to survive, deal with the trauma and to come out on the other side, living and being able to see a brighter future. Both the images, the story, and the symbolism in the comic work towards telling a story filled with symbolical allusions to trauma and to battle this trauma. In this way the comic creates an important message permeating and affecting *Locke & Key* and together the comic comes together to create a powerful metaphor for trauma, repression, survival, confrontation, and in the end, hope that everything once again can be all right.

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