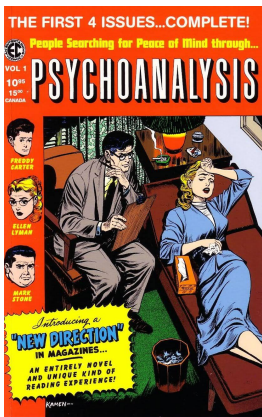


Psychology and the Comics

Dreams have been a part of comics since the beginning of the medium. From *Dreams of a Rarebit Fiend* and *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (both 1905) to Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* (1989), dreams have inspired colorful images and stories in newspaper comics and comic books alike. After World War Two, psychoanalysis itself appeared as the subject of comic stories. Still later, Carl Jung made a few notable appearances in the world of comics



A specifically psychoanalytic approach to dreams first appeared in the comic titled *The Strange World of Your Dreams* in 1951. This comic was produced by the studio of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, with work by artist Mort Meskin. Meskin had read Freud and was involved in Reichian therapy. One cover blurb read, "The messages received in sleep - what do they mean?" The advertisements were a bit more sensational, and read: "Comics meet DALI and FREUD!" The comic also offered to buy dreams submitted by readers in order to turn them into further stories. The comic featured a handsome, pipe-smoking doctor named Dick Temple, who helped his clients understand their "bizarre nocturnal visions." Temple helped his patients, but not his comic. It was cancelled after four issues.

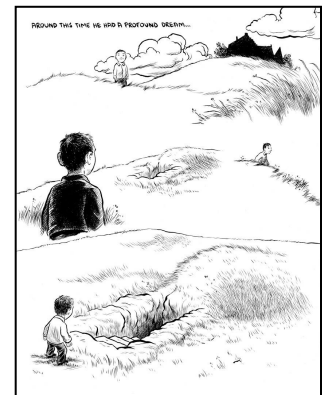


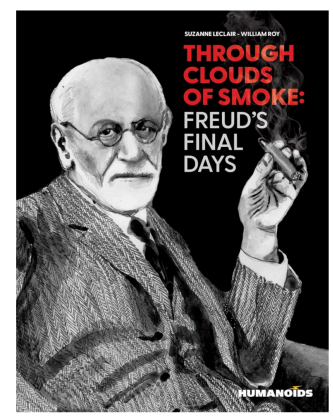
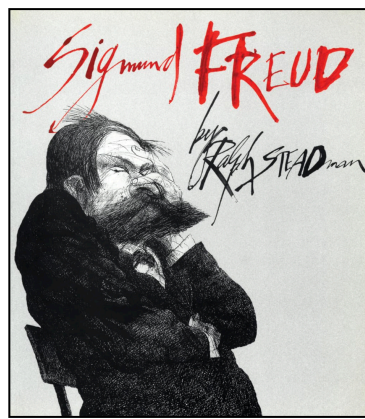
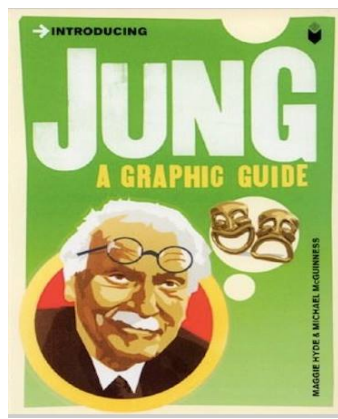
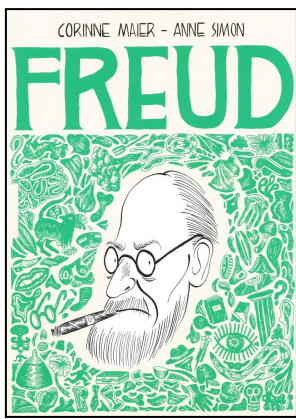
In 1955, the comic *Psychoanalysis* hit the stands. The tag line: "People Searching For Peace of Mind Through... PSYCHOANALYSIS." Much of the artwork for this series was created in a realistic mode by Jack Kamen. Each comic featured three patients who worked with the same unnamed psychoanalyst. Freddy Carter is a young man who is caught stealing by his disapproving parents; Ellen Lyman is troubled by anxiety and nightmares; Mark Stone is a television writer who has panic attacks. Each character makes improvements by the end of the story, but they all return for another installment (and another session) in the next issue. By the end of issue three, Ellen is "cured" and is written out of the series. The series itself, like *The Strange World of Your Dreams*, ceased publication after issue four.



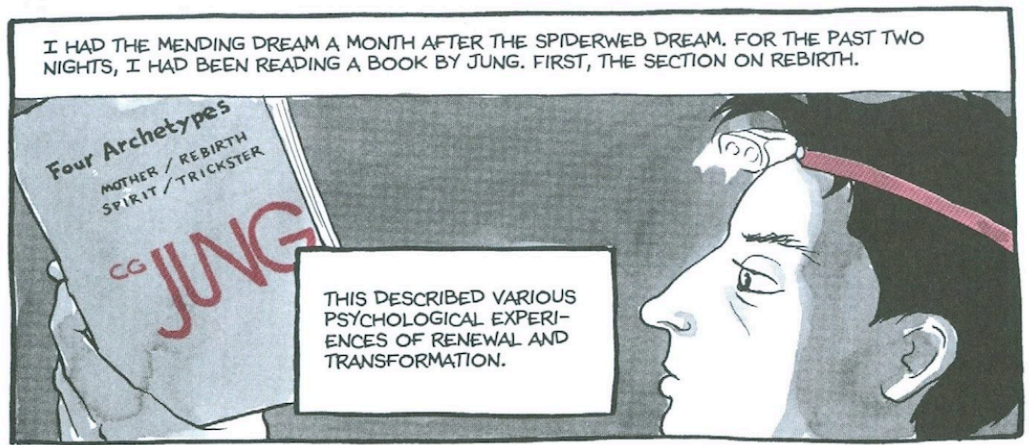
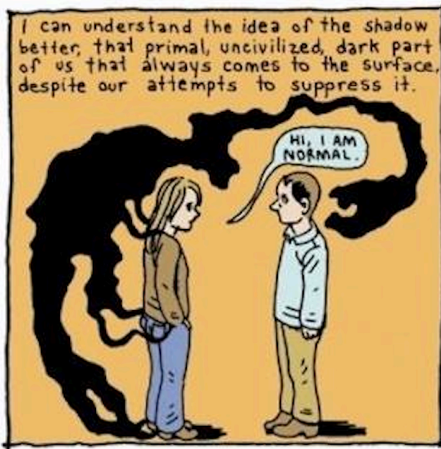
It was not until 2005 with the debut of *Action Philosophers!* that Carl Jung himself appeared on the comic page. Artist Ryan Dunlavey and writer Fred Van Lente combine humorous cartoons with accurate nonfiction in this series, which is devoted to the great thinkers of world history. Their fourth issue, centered on psychology, shows Jung's famous trip to America with Freud in 1909, and goes on to explain his theories.

Jung is the subject of a remarkable biographical comic titled "The Spiritual Crisis of Carl Jung." This was created by Robert Goodin and published in 2010 in *Mome*, the influential arts and comics quarterly from Fantagraphics Books. Goodin's work concerns Jung's childhood struggles with spirituality, as the title implies, and is adapted directly from Jung's autobiography. Goodin worked on the comic for over four years, and even visited Basel, Switzerland to do research for his imagery. His evocative use of heavy blacks and feathering, as well as the lack of a defined panel structure, add to the dream-like quality of the story.





In recent years, there have been entire books devoted to graphic interpretations of Freud and Jung, ranging from the biographical to the theoretical, and from the humorous to the dramatic.



By the 2000s, autobiographical comics and graphic novels gained in popularity and critical acclaim. The panel above left presents Jung's theory of the Shadow, from Gabrielle Bell's award-winning *Lucky*, published in 2006. In the panel above right, Alison Bechdel reads Jung in her 2012 memoir *Are You My Mother?* This book examines Bechdel's relationship with her mother through various approaches, from old memories to recent phone conversations. Bechdel's therapy sessions are integrated into the narrative, along with her readings of foundational works of psychoanalysis.

Beginning in 1994, Rick Veitch began publishing his dream comic, *Roarin' Rick's Rarebit Fiends*. In this update of one of the very first dream comics, Veitch illustrates his dreams and dream investigations. In the panels below, he references the work of one of Colorado's Jungian psychoanalysts, Jeffrey Raff. Veitch still produces his comic today, thirty years later.

Comics have become both more diversified and more oriented toward adult expression in recent years. The melodramatic stories of *The Strange World of Your Dreams* have given way to the thoughtful reflections of artists like Bechdel and Veitch. Surely this trend will continue, and we will benefit as other comic artists explore the experiences of dreams and the practice of psychoanalysis.

