Keeping Horror in Mind: Psychoanalysis and the "New Direction" of EC Comics

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In 1954, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham testified before the US Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, leading to the creation of the Comics Code Authority and redirecting the path of the comic book in the United States. Wertham and other practitioners utilized the discourse of psychoanalysis to decry comics at these hearings and in their writings.[1] Yet at the same time, many of those concepts were gaining traction in popular culture and would become a source of inspiration for comics creation as the Silver Age of Comics ushered in the psychological hero, drawing upon the rise of popular psychology in the United States led by the fame of psychoanalysis.[2] Before the Silver Age began, though, psychoanalysis itself—then the queen of psychiatric practice—found a compelling, dramatic voice in comics not through the powerful practitioners but rather the patients themselves. In particular, for a brief period in 1955, EC Comics published *Psychoanalysis*, which bore witness to the popularity and perhaps even the efficacy of the practice of this strange new method of psychoanalysis (Figure 1). The series provided a fascinating middle ground in the battle between comics as a medium and the guardians of mental health, offering insight into what would come next in comics.

The new hero with a new story and new goals—the analyst working to understand the mind—emerged as one response to the Comics Code Authority regulating the horror comics genre, one of EC Comics' mainstay productions at that point, out of existence. But if horror was to be regulated away, it had to go somewhere! Psychoanalysis provided Gaines and Feldstein with a new vocabulary for another

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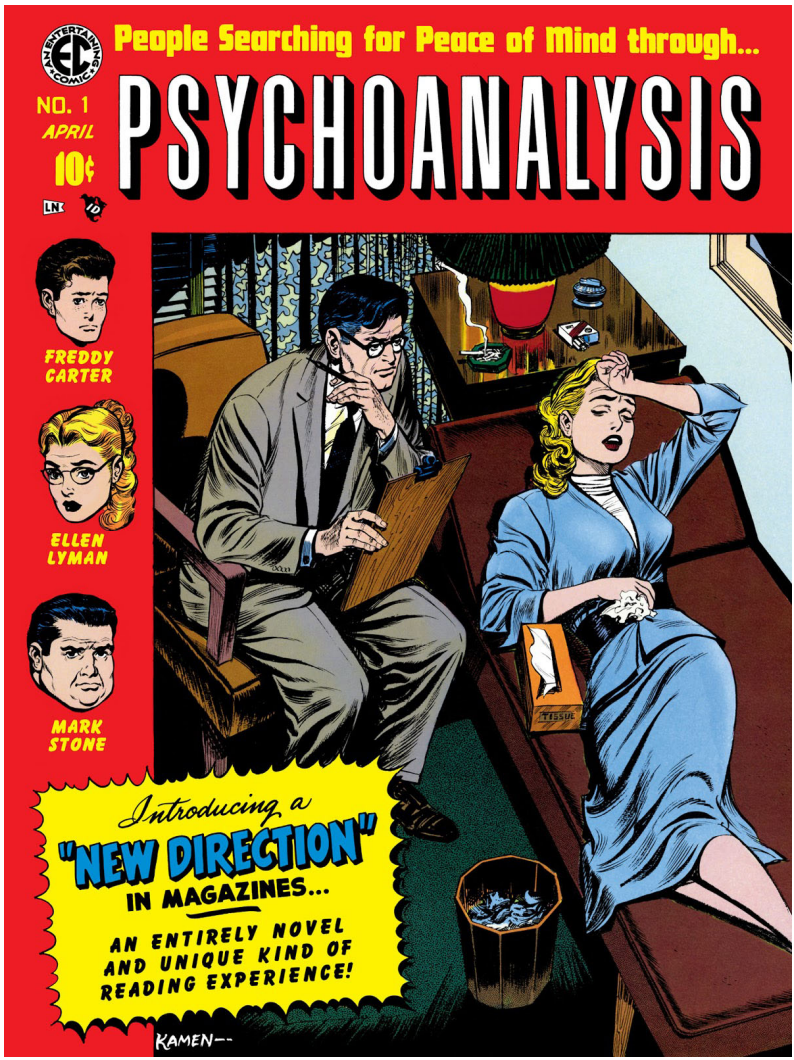

FIGURE 1. Cover of *Psychoanalysis* #1 (EC Comics, 1955). Reprinted with permission.

kind of terror they could explore—one they were becoming acquainted with in their analyses—that which was in the mind. The shift was natural because horror comics documented the anxiety of the postwar world, and clinical psychoanalysis offered reprieve from

that same problem. As Art Spiegelman suggests, "we might consider the EC horror comics that bloomed in the 1950s as a secular American Jewish response to Auschwitz" (Chute 14). The analyst in *Psychoanalysis* now translates the imagery of horror comics into metaphor, putting into words the struggles of the mind: anxiety was "as lethal as a revolver" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #1 20) and the patient feared "the horror of realizing [their] dream" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #1 24). Comics creators did not lose their interest in exploring postwar anxiety with the ban on horror comics. Rather, it was reframed[3] through psychoanalytic psychiatry, which in the United States filtered everything through the individual. These comics followed suit as creators looked inward, creating "a truly new genre" that "attempted to do what it has become clear today comics excel at: visualizing the workings of the individual mind on the page, especially memory as a process, and revealing the imbrication of past and present as a psychic structure through a visualized grammar" (Chute 101–02). The turn in comics to the tormented mind marked a shift away from the horrors of the outside world, opening a new frontier: the human psyche and the terror held within it.

Psychoanalysis succeeded in reframing the anxiety that horror comics once documented through dreams and other fantasies of characters who share their internal lives with their analysts. These comics refracted the popular turn to the interior in the twentieth century, which Feldstein reflects in his thoughts on the origins of the series:

> *Psychoanalysis*, which Bill and I had come up with as part of our "New Direction" after we were censored out of the horror because we had both been going. I was in analysis and he was in analysis. It was the '50s thing to do when you had a little money and you had problems.
>
> ("An Interview with Al Feldstein" 90)[4]

While Feldstein's comment that analysis was the "thing to do" may have been hyperbole, Gaines echoes this commentary in another interview, where he also identifies his analysis as inspiration: "I was putting out comics that I thought would not be criticized." He continues, "But I didn't do them to mollify anybody." Gaines recalls, "This whole new [endeavor] . . . we put out a whole new line of comics . . . and Psychoanalysis was because I was undergoing it

[analysis] at that time" ("An Interview with William M. Gaines" 89–90). Both Gaines and Feldstein point to their analyses as inspiration for this series and independently admit that a comic depicting psychoanalysis would be more acceptable. Moreover, Feldstein directly links the act of censoring horror to the emergence of this new type of story. Many of the "New Direction" series had antecedents in previously published genres, and *Psychoanalysis* was no different as it reframed the horror comic.

EC Comics circulated these newly popular psychological ideas in *Psychoanalysis*, yet this sequential art form remains the oft-neglected medium in the history of the psychologization of America.[5] Too often presented as a joke,[6] the series lives on in collected editions of EC Comics but is often forgotten or overlooked, and when the series appears in histories, it is often only in passing.[7] While the relation between comics creators and psychoanalysts may not have been as "overheated" as it was with Hollywood (Farber and Green), there is a history of creators in analysis. The story that remains to be told is how the popularity of psychoanalysis spurred two of the most well-recognized figures in comics history to depict a comic psychoanalysis and the insights it offers into comics history. Thus, this article features *Psychoanalysis*, a series inspired by the personal analyses of EC Comics owner, Bill Gaines, and editor, Al Feldstein, written by Daniel Keyes[8] and penciled by Jack Kamen to understand one way horror was reframed in comics through the theory and practice of 1950s US psychoanalysis.

Comic Psychoanalysis

The influence of psychoanalysis in US culture was monumentalized on the front page of EC Comics' New Direction line with the publication of *Psychoanalysis*. While the series did not define the future of comics and was only a fleeting transition, the mere publication of a series titled and depicting psychoanalysis demonstrates how the theories of this mental health discipline had won the favor of the public. As "The Editors" state in the introduction to the first issue, titled "ID BITS," these stories were their "most difficult and revolutionary creative effort thus far." They explain the concept of the unconscious and how psychoanalysis directed the focus of these comics to the

inward struggles: "It is there [the unconscious] that the roots and sources of passion and prejudice, love and hate are hidden. Most emotional disorders are the result of a tug-of-war between the unconscious and conscious minds! Through analysis, this tug-of-war is dissolved" (*Psychoanalysis* #1, inside cover).[9] The suspenseful tug-of-war once featured as societal problems in the "SuspenStories"[10] were now reframed as personal conflicts; the "roots of passion and prejudice" could be dealt with in private.

Translating into words and images this mental tug-of-war, *Psychoanalysis* places the reader behind the couch as the unnamed doctor shares his case files. As if he were our psychoanalyst, we know nothing of the doctor. He quietly listens, asks questions, provides interpretations, and invites the patient back for the next session. In many of the stories the psychiatrist vocalizes his opinions about his patient's internal life, but the reader gains no insight into his character beyond his analytic abilities. The stories feature the treatment of three of his patients, who the reader follows over four issues, beginning with Freddy, a young boy brought into analysis by his parents for stealing. Ellen Lyman, the second analysand, enters the consulting room due to headaches and trouble sleeping from a recurring dream. Finally, there is Mark Stone, a businessman experiencing acute anxiety attacks that make him feel as if he is dying. While the mental lives of the patients will soon be the feature of each story, the first issue opens with the hero of the narrative leaning against his desk, looking at the reader and inviting them into his office. The introduction by the omniscient narrator announces, "This is a Psychiatrist!" The enthusiastic declaration invokes the narration announcing the tale of a Golden Age superhero such as Wonder Woman or Superman. However, the hero is now a psychiatrist, and the foes are not the forces of evil that aim to stifle or destroy democracy but rather "fears, and guilts and anxieties." Into the psychiatrist's office, then, enter "the tormented and the driven." The language used to describe these characters resembles the description of some of the soon to be born neurotic superheroes like Spider-Man. For now, though, the psychiatrist is the hero as he uses his powers or his "map" of psychoanalysis to defeat the villains of these stories (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #1 1). This mapping of the frontiers of the mind would move characters beyond the binary of mentally ill and mentally healthy as the analyst would tell his patient, "you are both friend and

foe to yourself" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #1 20). A similar mapping of the mind would later arrive in superhero comics as the hero's history of unresolved trauma, which shaped their inner life, featured prominently in the Silver Age.

The analyst-hero reflects the transition inward that occurred across the United States as displaced social problems became personal conflicts requiring analysis and containment. Seemingly unbothered by the problems of the outside world, this analyst turns to the vicissitudes of the inner life and delimits psychoanalysis as a private medical treatment, reflecting a version of the practice which had gained popularity in the United States by the 1950s as it was taken over by psychiatry.[11] *Psychoanalysis* reinforced the idea that there was less of a need for societal change, like when the psychiatrist says to his patient in the second issue: "The world is full of cruel realities! Psychoanalysis won't change the world! But it can help you deal maturely and sensibly with your own problems! It can help you to accept the mixture of good and evil in all people!" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #2 27). But this was not the same psychoanalysis that inspired Wertham's work in the Lafargue Mental Hygiene Clinic of Harlem,[12] nor what he infamously employed to critique comics. This was the psychoanalysis Wertham warned of as he wrote: "The great discovery of psychoanalysis was the discovery of the individual. The great error of late orthodox psychoanalysis is to see the problems, the processes and the solutions only within the individual" (54).[13] Wertham was not like "most psychiatrists," who, as Bart Beaty asserts, "undervalued the way that inner conflicts in individuals were linked to social conflicts that individual and social factors in psychology were not opposing forces that were bound together" (31). Practitioners, including Wertham, were skeptical of the medicalizing of psychoanalysis, which ignored the outside world and too often imagined pathology as always self-created and emancipation as only possible through the individual. As Anne Harrington observes, referring to the "the audacious scope" of postwar psychoanalytic psychiatry, "The great social problems facing the United States (it was now believed) had their origins not in institutional, political, or policy decisions but in individual psychological deficits. Psychiatry in the postwar era was therefore crucial for any and all efforts to address the great social and political scourges of the age" (80). This expression of psychoanalytic psychiatry that took hold was a manifestation of a larger shift that occurred in

the cultural landscape of mid-1950s America toward a psychology of the individual quite radically cut off from their social and political context reflected by this psychiatrist in these comics. This shift inward illuminated a new concern: individual mental security.

Psychoanalysis thus augurs a decided, deliberate, even defensive turn away from the depiction of external monstrosity toward the internal demons of the everyday besuited characters of the 1950s. This move inward in mental health treatment further reflected the shift away from social concerns, which Qiana Whitted observes in her commentary on the United States in the 1950s: "The nation could boast of progress in industry and technology, along with extraordinary levels of economic consumption, but the prosperity also encouraged white American families to become more insular and complacent about the need for societal change" (5). The turn away from social concerns was reflected in the creation of this series as EC Comics redressed the consciousness-stimulating comics that were driven out of the marketplace using the ideas of psychoanalysis in a remedial fashion in the fabrication of this comic.[14]

Enter the Consulting Room

The analyses begin with Freddy, a young boy who has cursed his family as a "strange abnormality." In Freddy's file the analyst has written a question to himself, "How did he become a burden on their lives?" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #1 2). The parents arrive at the psychoanalyst's office door to answer this question in hopes that with treatment they will rid their family of this burden that has entered their home through Freddy's neurosis. We learn that Freddy has developed neurotic symptoms, which present in the form of stealing from his friend, Billy. The analyst will identify the origin of Freddy's suffering in his relationship with parents, who pull him in different directions, have difficulty showing love to him, and constantly argue in the home. Before the analyst identifies the source of the neurosis, though, Freddy's treatment begins when his parents begin to share his story and the pain he causes them. This detailing of Freddy's destructive acts resembles the recognizable convention where the hero learns of the action behind whatever evil scheme a villain has set in to motion, followed by the heroic efforts to diffuse and contain the

conflict. The parallel idea here is that Freddy—specifically his neurosis—holds the status of villain. Thus, it is not that Freddy should be identified as good or bad, but his mental state, which is not healthy, is portrayed as evil or at least placed in the role that a villain would classically occupy.

Freddy's unconscious plays tug-of-war with his conscious mind and the analyst must help him resolve this problem before he causes more destruction. In the analysis, the doctor reveals to Freddy that his motive for stealing emerges from a desire to punish his parents and steal love from Billy, whose parents appear to love him. The analyst identifies Freddy's parents as a cause for the problem in the first session, but in later issues the doctor helps his patient to understand how he participates in pitting his mother and father against one another, creating a family of victims.[15] While such high stakes conflicts including war or the social problems once addressed by the EC Comics past are no longer the focus, the series remains beholden to making the world a better place.[16] These stories, however, overlay morality and mental health, creating a model where the hero must heal or contain the broken mind for the good of all. This was a problem that psychoanalysis was suited for, the threat of the individual mind, as Michal Shapira recognizes, "Psychoanalysis posited itself as a science of normal mental health, aiming to maximize the abilities of individuals and to minimize their debilitating troubles. It also claimed to be able to solve the problem of the abnormal child, which posed a potential threat to the community" (17). Freddy is no supervillain, but in this story juvenile delinquency poses a threat that could bring down the family and then society.

The psychoanalyst takes the position of superhero preventing further crime, but this time through the analysis of the young boy. In order to successfully save the world—or at least Freddy's family—the psychoanalyst must contain the patient's mind and all its abnormalities.[17] If Superman and Wonder Woman were often concerned with democratic values, the public good, and the future of society in the Golden Age, the hero of *Psychoanalysis* invests in the private lives of the individual and their own personal success, capturing a drastic shift to the inside.[18] The only demonstrable return for this psychological development might be in the patient's ability to reintegrate as a functioning member of society—in other words, not villainous.

Morality filtered through psychology becomes quite simple here: heroes can contain their minds or re-contain them when their anxieties spill over, villains cannot.

A similar process of reframing the anxiety once cartooned in horror comics takes form in *MD*, the sister series to *Psychoanalysis*, as it moves the suffering body from the outside world to the inside of the hospital.[19] The medical doctors occupy the same role of container, but this time for bodily horror. The cover of *MD* (Figure 2) does not directly display the open body being operated upon but rather leaves it to the reader's imagination. If the images of suffering bodies from horror comics had to go away, the pain they captured did not. We could bear witness to bodies that were ill, amputated limbs, and other corporeal suffering not otherwise approved under the restrictions of the Code in the context of medicine. For example, one of the first stories in this anthology series features Janie, a young woman whose diagnosis is "congenital osteomyelitis," and her prognosis is "amputation!!" The reader learns more about the story of Janie, who hopes for the day when she can remove the casts enclosing her legs to protect the spread of disease, creating a particular suspense in the story: will this young girl survive the tuberculosis of the bone? In the end, the doctor amputates only one leg and provides Janie with a prosthetic replacement. As with *Psychoanalysis*, the character here experiences the horrors of illness and disease (we don't ever see her surgery, just the prosthetic leg after), but it is in the context of a doctor's office. Thus, the reader is safe and should not be frightened. The story redresses the horror comic, which took center stage at the Senate Subcommittee hearings a year earlier, where images of the loss of body parts dominated the discussion ("Juvenile Delinquency [Comic Books]"). *MD*, like *Psychoanalysis*, reframed the anxiety which the horror comic documented, but this time in relation to bodily suffering. These stories also foreshadow how disease and disability become villainous, or at the very least something that heroes (almost always) overcame—villains did not in the coming Silver Age.[20] The reframing of the anxiety of the horror comic within the discourse of mental health and surgical procedure establishes the contained body as good and the suffering body as bad.

FIGURE 2. Cover of MD #1 (EC Comics, 1955). Reprinted with permission.

Putting Horror on the Couch

The cover of *Psychoanalysis* #1, which depicts an analysis drawn by Jack Kamen, discretely displays the horror that at one time would

have been exhibited on the EC Comics' covers. The woman on the front cover of the comic (Figure 1), Ellen Lyman, is not falling to her death, being choked, horrified by a corpse, or some other shocking image. Instead, she suffers from an inner ailment: the unseen horrors in her mind. The reader gains access to the horror not displayed on the cover by looking at the responses detailed on the face of the concerned analyst and the woman in distress: a metaphor for the unconscious, which we only know by its effects—such as the ego's and its mechanisms of defense.[21] The images that once stirred shock and terror in onlookers are now confined to the patient's mind and uttered privately in the consulting room, discharging these cartoons of their critical power. For those that would recognize Kamen's art, though, this might be an uncanny experience. Horror comics drawn by Kamen were still being published less than a year before this cover was printed, and an onlooker may have done a double take seeing a fully clothed woman, laying on a couch, protected by an analyst, not scantily clad or looking upon something terrifying.[22] By covering over and institutionalizing the form, there would be fewer questions about the "good taste" of the comic, as Senator Kefauver asked Gaines during the hearings. While these comics presented less shocking tales, they did not change greatly in substance since horror would still be on the mind of the reader as Kamen's art invited the onlooker into the series, with the suspense building on the cover as onlookers imagine what terrors the patient's mind holds.

This second patient of the psychiatrist, Ellen Lyman, seeks out help because of recurring dreams. She enters the office proclaiming, "My mind isn't sound!" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #1 11). The psychiatrist responds by explaining psychosomatic disorders to her, suggesting that rather than a distinct physical ailment, her pain is caused by her uncontrollable mind. The psychiatrist locates the problem within the patient but suggests it is a disconnected part of Ellen that must be addressed and contained. Here the patient can think of the elements of their mind: she is not mentally ill, but there are parts of her that are sick, and she must recognize them with the analyst, then re-contain them. Posited as a struggle, Ellen's mind, or more specifically her unconscious, occupies the space of villainous other within her. The revolutionary work of psychoanalysis lies in its process of uncovering or bringing to the surface unconscious drives,

but once made conscious, the horror must be contained by the analyst.

Together, Ellen and the psychiatrist will explore these dreams that keep her awake (Figure 3). This storytelling device appears throughout the series as at least one patient shares a dream with a twist ending each issue, revealing the powers of the unconscious. But the critical power of the twist in the EC "Suspenstory," which asked the reader to think about ideas such as the reform of US society, falls flat as the dreams here retain no meaning beyond the patient. The twist for Ellen in the third issue of the series, like that of many of the other dreams she brings to the analyst in the series, emphasizes how the horror resides inside of her. The dream is simple: Ellen looks upon an image of herself in a mirror as she enjoys her own body dancing but punishes herself for her joy as she displaces the voices of her self-criticisms to her boyfriend (Figure 4). She awakes full of "fear and terror," reminding the reader that horror never left comics, it just moved inward. Linked to neurotic fantasy, though, the horror comic loses its critical edge, offering no insight into the unconscious structures of our society; its power is subdued by containment in the analyst's office. Turning the horror comic into a dream and then analyzing it evacuates it of its critical value. While psychoanalysts Karen Starr and Lewis Aron glibly take a stab at cultural criticism by identifying psychoanalysis as a "superpower" in this series (103), they entirely miss the point. In this comic, the power of psychoanalysis is a diffusing one, a containing one, and not a prosocial one. Ellen Lyman ultimately determines that she is the cause of her own unhappiness after the analyst helps her to analyze the dream. All of the horror remains hers and hers alone. The treatment provides Ellen a space to narrate her own dreams and the phantasies of her internal life and to keep them inside of her, containing her symptoms.

The psychiatrist became an agent of psychic security in these stories (and in American culture), assuring the patient that if the analysis works their unconscious would remain inside and no longer intrude upon their lives or others. In her second session, Ellen Lyman describes the terror of her father's anger as she spilled a container of his ink: "I can't describe the feeling of terror . . . the absolute panic I felt as I stood there . . . helpless watching the ink I'd spilled pool over daddy's desk" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #2 11). With the help of her analyst, Ellen need no longer feel panic or

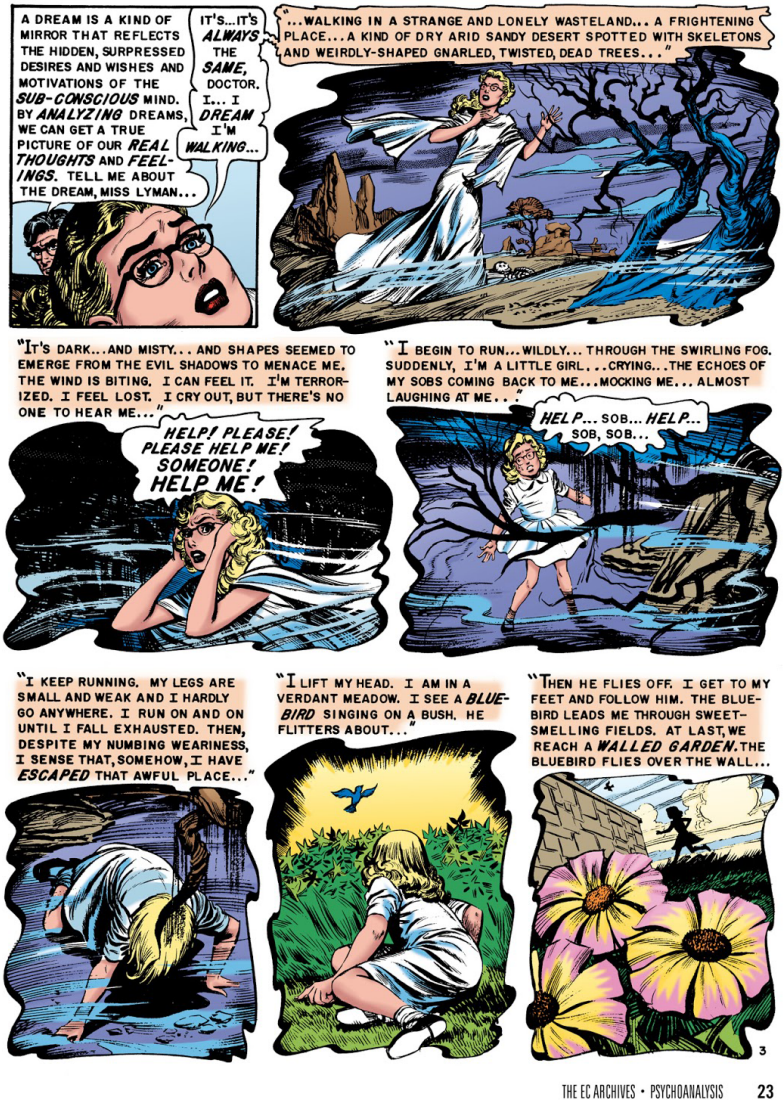

FIGURE 3. Page 11 from *Psychoanalysis* #1 (EC Comics, 1955). Reprinted with permission.

unconsciously act out her aggression toward her father by spilling his ink. Whereas the fear of the breakdown[23] of society haunted the backdrop of earlier EC stories—the memory of the Holocaust or the

FIGURE 4. Page 13 from *Psychoanalysis* #3 (EC Comics, 1955). Reprinted with permission.

terror of white supremacy that persisted in the United States—the anxiety shifted to fear of the father in the domestic space.[24] The analysis delimits the duty of the individual to society as the stakes

become personal and private. As Philip Rieff notes in his writing about the "Triumph of the Therapeutic," after the popular rise of psychoanalysis in the United States, "nothing is at stake beyond a manipulatable sense of well-being" (13). The practice of psychoanalysis served as inspiration for a generation of people to police their own minds in hopes that our society would persist. The patient now had a duty to filter all their problems through the self in an effort to be an upstanding member of society. These comics shared this idea.

The Dream and Its Discontents

The final patient whose story we follow across the four issues of *Psychoanalysis*, Mark Stone, again reinforces how the turn away from outside horror was reimagined in the internal life of the patient through the visualizing of a psychoanalysis. The patient enters the consulting room and queries, "So that's the operating table, eh, doc? That's where the big battles take place?!" While a humorous interpretation of analysis, his commentary again captures the shift described here: the major battles move from the outside world to the inside. The psychiatrist responds by moving everything further inside the patient: "like your conflict, the battleground also is within yourself!" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #1 18). Thus, it seems even the couch that Mark Stone lays on need not be considered—like the comic, it is simply a carrier—only that which resides inside of the patient matters. The psychiatrist further establishes the turn inward as the focus should remain on the patient and cultivating their inward gaze. The session between the analyst and Mark Stone will follow the pattern that all of the stories repeat over the course of the four issues: the patient walks in, demonstrates some resistance, shares a memory, a dream, or another fantasy, then the analyst helps them to explore the anxiety represented by these internal images. Once the patient and analyst have analysand as much as they can together, they move on to the next session or terminate their relationship.

In contrast to the images of *Psychoanalysis*, which offers one vision of the meeting of psychoanalysis and comics, a pre-code series like the short-lived *The Strange World of Your Dreams* by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby from 1952 published by Prize Comics imagines a different possibility for the pairing. The cover of the first issue of the

Simon and Kirby series presents images emerging from a dream including a surreal many-eyed plant and a terrifying lion chasing a woman. The dream on that cover serves as a well of imagination images that need not be contained within the individual.[25] Without a need to contain these dreams on the cover or in the comic itself, fantasies roam free and psychoanalysis does not serve as a tool to police or contain the horrors of the mind. The cover of *Psychoanalysis* #3 resembles the cover to Kirby and Simon's series: a woman lying down with surreal images bursting from her mind with a noticeable repetition of the eye motif—perhaps a metaphor for the inward gaze (Figure 5). The difference here is that both analyst and analysand appear shocked by what emerges from her mind. These are the dreams that we learn in her sessions keep Ellen awake as the horror of her unconscious scares her into consciousness each night. The analyst sitting behind Ellen, though, serves as a metaphor for containment, the strange world of our dreams will not tread upon the outside world because they will remain in the consulting room as the doctor uses his powers to contain them.

Psychoanalysis did not have a place for those more enigmatic stories as the post-Comics Code world ruled out anything "weird," as Gaines said in an interview: "and the Code forbade the use of the words horror, terror, or crime—this was all my books—and weird, even weird, [*laughter*] so that would wipe me out" (Decker and Groth 76–77). For *Psychoanalysis*, the strange world of our dreams could be displayed in the consulting room as both patient and reader remains safe by the work of the analyst. The censorious role of psychoanalysis reflected the voluntary, self-regulatory restrictions where anything dangerous or bad had to be defeated, censored, or contained. Thus, with the help of the analyst, the patients will begin self-monitoring the images that emerge from their minds. Upon termination of her analysis, Ellen proclaims, "You mean . . . I'm . . . I'm cured?" The analyst responds, "We've gone as far as we can! You know the cure of your problem! You know the facts about yourself! Do you think you can go ahead now . . . without my help!" (Keyes and Kamen, *Psychoanalysis* #3 17). No cure is offered here, but psychoanalysis provides its patients, and even those not in analysis, with tools to observe their own internal life without the presence of an analyst, ensuring the security of the mind.

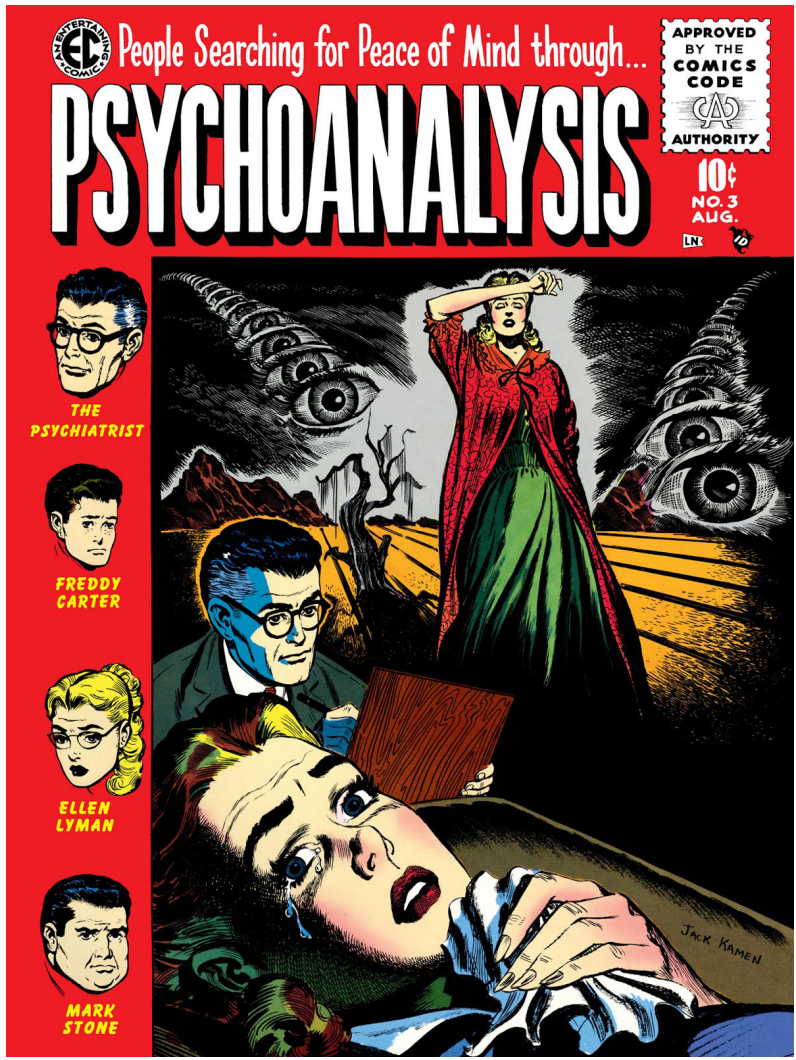

FIGURE 5. Cover of Psychoanalysis #3 (EC Comics, 1955). Reprinted with permission.

Conclusion

If the conflict in comics moved inward in *Psychoanalysis*, this became a convention by the Silver Age with Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's creation

of Peter Parker, Spider-Man, the neurotic hero who monitored his inner life. If his mind was secure, the city would be too. During this period the fights between heroes and villains became more personalized as more heroes were locked in battle with particular nemeses who placed stress upon individual psychological conflicts. This convention of storytelling reflects a one-person psychology model, as the focus of each issue was less about the negative effects the villain had on the community at large and more about what the hero was going to learn from this experience. Today, this convention has become cliché in the superhero story, most apparent in a contemporary issue of *Ms. Marvel* where Kamala Khan remarks, villains "have a way of popping up at the exact wrong moment. The moment when you're also battling something inside yourself. The moment you're not even sure who you are" (Wilson and Leon 7). Ms. Marvel self-consciously reflects upon the idea that the villain became a tool to illuminate the hero's inner life. For many Silver Age characters, the conflict between hero and villain spurs stories of self-exploration and self-monitoring rather than social critique. The horrors of the world depicted in many comics after the war shifted to a focus on the terror of the mind for the Silver Age, leading to the policing of boundaries as guilt, anxiety, and other psychic conflicts threatened to exceed the individual.

While short-lived, *Psychoanalysis* offers insight into how the turn away from monstrous horror shifted comics to the landscape of the internal assisted by psychoanalysis as it pervaded popular thought. The ideas of psychoanalysis were revolutionary in that they gave a vocabulary to think about the mind as a complex concept beyond the binary of mentally healthy and mentally ill. However, when limited in its scope, only to be used to treat the individual and promote their success, psychoanalysis became a practice that lives behind the closed doors of the consulting room and in personal self-monitoring, which this series reflected. While the creators of the Silver Age may not have been in psychoanalysis, as Gaines and Feldstein were, the way these stories dealt with the limitations of the Comics Code, particularly the move from external to internal terror, illustrates one way for the anxiety captured in the horror comic to be reframed within these new conventions. The third party of the analyst would fade away, and the reader would serve as a witness to the heroes' psychic drama through narration in the diegetic horizon and the thought bubbles of these newly psychological characters. By 1969, the *New York Times* wrote of

superhero comics: "Now heroes are different—they ponder moral questions, have emotional differences, and are just as neurotic as real people" (Braun qtd. in Fawaz 125). In this new age, characters like Spider-Man were an embodiment in graphic form of the postwar psychology, the monitoring self that had to police their own tortured minds to ensure that they were good citizens who kept their horror inside.

Notes

I am indebted to Vera J. Camden for first introducing me to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis many years ago and inviting me to study comics. This article was born out of the training, support, and care she has given me over our many years working together. I also want to thank EC Comics for permission to reprint the images contained in this article.

1. In 1948, Wertham organized a symposium entitled, "The Psychopathology of Comic Books," the proceedings of which were printed in the *American Journal of Psychotherapy* (Wertham 472–90). In 1954, Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent*, wherein he used many psychoanalytic ideas to deride comics.
2. Psychoanalysis became the gold standard for clinical practice after the Second World War, and it also became a cultural phenomenon: "From its prewar days as a bonbon among the wealthy and intellectual elite, psychoanalysis transformed itself into a populist therapy for a postwar middle class intimately familiar with the concept of repression" (Samuel xix). For further discussion of the rise of psychoanalysis, see Hale; Herzog; and Zaretsky.
3. The postwar period was known as the "Age of Anxiety." The currency of that phrase owed to W. H. Auden's book-length poem, *The Age of Anxiety*, published in 1947. Of course, anxiety existed before Freud and psychoanalysis, but now it had social currency; see Menand 189–208.
4. Stella Sigal questions the motivations behind the series (23). I believe, though, based on Gaines and Feldstein's interview, that they were both struck by analysis and inspired by it.
5. For John Burnham, "Freud, accurately or inaccurately, became the emblem particularly of that complex historical process that scholars have often referred to as the 'psychologization' of America" (1). Historical figures including Wertham remain absent from this history of the popularization of psychoanalysis despite his infamous work representing the once revered status of the psychoanalytic psychiatrist. Lawrence Samuel, in his study of psychoanalysis in popular culture, refers to Wertham as a psychiatrist interested in psychoanalysis but not in the context of comics (or the hearings) despite referencing *Psychoanalysis* in the same book.
6. Samuel refers to the rise of psychoanalysis as "undeniably funny," seeing as there were many cartoons depicting the practice, and further states that "There was, briefly, even a comic book called *Psychoanalysis*, the pulpish magazine published by EC Comics in 1955 lasting just four issues. (Its editor, Al Feldstein, moved on to *Mad* magazine the following year, something funny in itself)" (70–71, 79). Insinuating that *Psychoanalysis* was funny suggests that Samuel did not open up the comic. The analyses of the character's minds were not only complex, but the series was educational, with introductions to the theories of psychoanalysis and a biography of Sigmund Freud, as well as short essays, in each issue.
7. Karen Starr and Lewis Aron give the series its most sustained attention when they discuss Jewish belief and psychoanalysis (166–81). Paul Buhle previously pondered this idea:

"Gaines published a line of comics, EC (for 'Educational Comics'), some of which could only be Jewish (who else would put out *Psychoanalysis Comics?*)" (12, author emphasis). In response to Buhle, Sheng-Mei Ma declares, "Despite the fact that this insinuation is cast as a rhetorical question, it remains wildly speculative and totally unfounded" (124).

8. In the following decade, Keyes would write *Flowers for Algernon*.
9. Al Feldstein says, "We had this idea that we were gonna put out this proselytizing comic book called *Psychoanalysis* and tell people what it was all about." He continues, "I don't know why we ever thought it would sell, when I think about it" (Geissman 24).
10. See Whitted on the "social protest" of EC Comics.
11. Initially, Freud had hoped to keep psychoanalysis and psychiatry separate. However, Abraham Brill, the psychiatrist who first opened up a private psychoanalytic practice in the United States, fought for the connection between psychoanalysis and psychiatry despite Freud's wish to keep them separate. His concern was mostly monetary, limiting the number of analysts in the country (Shapiro). In Europe, it was a different story, as George Makari notes, "psychoanalysis in Germany and Austria rode the tide of social reformist movements and made its way into schools, clinics, and courts" (404). The limiting of psychoanalysis as a medical discipline was particularly reflective of the field after the war, though. At the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1949, the first meeting after the war, then President "[Ernest] Jones directed his listeners to focus strictly on 'the primitive forces of the mind' and to steer clear of the 'influence of sociological factors'" (Herzog 3). There are other futures for psychoanalysis. For example, Vera J. Camden recognizes that while psychoanalysis as a clinical discipline waned, there was a reparative pivot to narrative in its theoretical uses as it evolved into narrative medicine when faced with the predominance of medicalized diagnostic categories.
12. See Mendes on the history of Fredric Wertham and the Lafargue Mental Hygiene Clinic of Harlem.
13. Nyberg notes that "Wertham was also highly critical of the popularization of psychiatry after World War II, which he felt contributed to the growing feeling that the individual, not social, action was the solution to all problems. He labeled the myriad self-help books written by both laymen and psychiatrists, 'peace-of-mind literature'" (92). Psychoanalysis reflects this "peace-of-mind" literature as the cover of the first issue declares: "People searching for peace of mind" (Figure 1).
14. Bill Gaines did not immediately submit his comics to the review board. Thus, the first issues of the New Direction line do not display a stamp from the Comics Code (Decker and Groth 76–77).
15. As Philip Rieff says of the figures in Freud's case studies, "there are no heroes or villains, only victims" (x).
16. Whitted opens her recent study of EC Comics with a story from "The Horror Panel" at the 1972 Entertaining Comics Fan-Addict Convention where Al Feldstein remarked upon the goals of EC comics: "We came out of World War II, and we all had great hopes for the marvelous world of tomorrow. And when we started writing our comics, I guess one of the things that was in the back of our minds was to do a little proselytizing in terms of social conscience . . . what we called 'preachy' stories—our own term for a story that had some sort of plea to improve our social standards." (Feldstein, qtd. in Whitted 1). Notably, Feldstein would refer to *Psychoanalysis* as proselytizing as well; see note 9.
17. Wilfred Bion writes about the containing function of the psychoanalyst (90).
18. In his memoir, Wertham identifies Freud as the creator of "private practice" (*Episodes*). Brett Kahr also identifies Freud as the originator of "private practice" (106). The shift from medicine as a public good to a private interest was thus led by psychoanalysis.
19. These would not be the first comics depicting the heroism of medicine, as Bert Hansen notes of the preponderance of these stories during the Golden Age, writing, "In these comic

books, the medical history stories appeared cheek by jowl with fierce battles and exotic adventures" (159).

20. See Alaniz 26–68.
21. See Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*.
22. Kamen was known for drawing sexy women in peril known as the "Kamen Babes" (Geissman 24).
23. I invoke the language of D. W. Winnicott, who recognizes how the destruction caused by the war led to anxiety about future destruction (103–07). See McAfee for a psychoanalytic study on how the fear of social breakdown led to a rise in nationalism.
24. Qiana Whitted notes of the early EC Comics, "Readers who look to EC for stories about the interior lives of people of color will be disappointed, finding instead narratives more concerned with tracing the corrupting power of racism on white society" (21).
25. *The Strange World of Your Dreams* is, of course, not the only instance of the meeting of art and psychoanalysis, as the surrealist movement reflects burst of creativity from this pairing. See Esman 173–81.

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