This paper is concerned with the form and meaning of the dream, and the form and meaning of the folktale. Folktales, or folk legends, should be distinguished from fairy tales. The fairy tale is not obviously traceable to a specific locale, as is the folktale; and it is often characterized by a rather heavy-handed “moral,” a didacticism that seems to be lacking in the folktale. What the folktale does, is to portray, with dramatic simplicity, a common life situation which the hearer promptly recognizes, perhaps even as his life situation. And the folktale is, in its narrative form and in its content, very dream-like. It is this parallel that we wish to explore in some detail.

We shall begin with some reflections on the nature of the dream, which also seems to us basically a statement of a life situation— the dreamer’s, at the time of his dream, and as he perceives his own situation in life. In this we find ourselves in accord with the Adlerian view of dreams, which stresses the continuity between dream thought and waking thought (1, pp. 93-119; 3, pp. 239-240). It is more sensitive to the wholeness of the dream, and indeed the wholeness of the life, awake and asleep, of the dreamer. By contrast Freud at one point described the dream as a sort of chemical compound, and himself as the chemist who “isolates the fundamental substance, the chemical ‘element,’ out of the salt in which it has been combined with other elements and in which it was unrecognizable” (5, p. 160).

We also differ from Freud regarding the disguising function of the symbol and agree with Hall “that the symbols of dreams are there to express something, not to hide it. . . . The true referent of any dream symbol is . . . always an idea in the mind of the dreamer” (6, p. 95). Hence Hall spoke of a cognitive theory of dreams (7), the term adopted here.

And what can be said of the dream can also be said of the folktale: it is continuous with life itself, its symbolism is expressive and poetic rather than an exercise in camouflage, and it must be understood integrally. But whereas the dream is personal and private, the folktale depicts persons and life styles that are a common heritage of the folk who perpetuate the tale and its genre. It is rooted in its specific culture; its heroes and heroines are personality types common to the culture. Thus one might also say that they reflect the “common sense” of the culture.
In the following we shall deal with the form and content of the dream. We shall apply some general rules regarding its form and structure, by seeing it simply for its own sake, phenomenologically, one might say. Content will be derived from very specific references to the dreamer or the circumstances of the dream. We shall begin by reporting two representative dream narratives as examples.

An Outsider

I enter a (wooden?) building, into a room where people are gathered. I am by myself. A church service is in progress. People are standing in long lines. I take my place at the end of one line, which extends a bit into the hall. I recognize T., a clergyman friend, as the chap next to me. He looks at me with discomfort-disapproval, as to say I don't belong there. This line is the choir! I try to sing. T. says: "You don't belong here; can't you see, you haven't the right sort of collar." I reach up my hand to feel what kind of collar I have on. It is a turtle-neck. I make a mental note to tell T. after the service that he won't see me around here again for a long time.

The service is over, and I go looking for T. The "church" is in a corner building, stone, which I now recognize as the Chase Manhattan Bank in Tokyo. I go two stores down, it is very crowded. All these people are waiting for their cars to pick them up. But T. is not there. I look one store down from the church-bank, it is the delicatessen in my old home town. T. is not there. Finally, I go around behind the church room to find another room, smoke-filled, many men are filing out; I recognize this as H.'s parish. They are all pillars of the church, but T. is not among them.

Outside, cars are picking up waiting parishioners. It is dark, and/or raining.

This dream exhibits clearly every feature basic to the common dream. First of all, it is very explicit with regard to place setting. The dreamer, either in the course of the dream, or immediately upon awaking, can identify each setting explicitly and in some detail: the church (a church he attended recently, to witness his daughter's school pageant), the bank (whose motto, "You have a tomodachi [friend] at Chase Manhattan," figures into the plot), the delicatessen, the curb with sleek black Cedrics, the Cadillacs of Japan, pulling up, the whole corner of the block in fact.

What may be confusing to the dreamer is that the dream manages to run a number of these very explicit settings together. For example, in the first scene, the dreamer enters a building which seems to be made of wood; but he is uneasy about it, and in fact notes on leaving that it is a stone building. That is because the building is simultaneously a small New England Protestant church and a large Tokyo
bank. And the lines of people extending into the hall suggest to the dreamer also the college administration building where he daily encounters students lined up for lunch. Now he is reminded that the delicatessen is also his campus office! We have here an example of several concerns of the dreamer overlapping, forming what Freud described as a "composite picture," the work of condensation (4, p. 44).

The dream often leaves us with a feeling of having watched an improvised and rather amateurishly gotten-up drama, full of rough spots and moments of extreme discontinuity, and often seemingly aimless and groping. On the other hand, some of it may strike us as full of ingenuity. T. of the dream, for example, is literally "not there" because the "pillars of the church" became disenchanted with him and sent him packing, proving that if the dreamer truly "does not belong here," neither does T. have a *tomodachi*, a friend, in local church circles. But much of the plot seems self-generative; one action leads to the next, and the narrative ambles on, hopefully towards some sort of a conclusion. And yet it may be this very flavor of the unplanned, of on-the-spot invention, that gives the dream its air of excitement, mystery, and fascination, and as often as not leaves the dreamer with a sense of uneasiness, anxiety, and exhaustion.

*A Dawdler*

Something more needs to be said of the overall content and thrust of the dream, and about the persons who appear in it. But let us add a second example here. I shall cite only the first half of this dream, because it is very long and tedious. The dreamer is a professor with a one-semester leave to write a book, but he is in fact getting very little work done. His dream begins:

I have some important business to do in New York. So my wife drives me from my boyhood home in suburban New York to the train station, which turns out to be a station on the Yamate line in Tokyo. I go to the counter for my subway (!) token, and hand them a ten-dollar bill. A pleasant though absent-minded woman says, would I mind waiting a minute. I say not at all. She comes back with a bundle of bills, gives me two fives and bunches of singles; I correct her. After much struggle we get it right: a five and four singles. Then she goes off for change. There is much discussion among the counter people, and finally she begins picking out pastries and cakes, which she puts with care into a cardboard box, as in a pastry shop. I am vague about what I am being given for whom. She hints it is for the staff behind the counter; that they expect some gift in return for their efforts. Finally we settle on three items: a small cake, some cookies, and
another item. I ask the cost of each; she is vague. After some effort she manages
to tell me the cost of two of the three items; they are quite inexpensive. In the
middle of this operation she goes back to the kitchen, which she is always doing.
But this time she never returns! After much waiting I begin to ask the others,
who, however, don’t know where she went. She disappeared around noon; but
by the time I’m done inquiring after her, the whole day is gone.

Now I see a man enter the counter area whom I promptly recognize as the
manager. I ask to see him to explain my difficulties to him. He is very busy,
bustling about. But he is cordial and wants to hear about it; would I mind riding
a few stops with him, for it is the end of the day and he and his party are on their
way home. I say fine, and we all get on the train. I tell him my day’s experiences,
and tell him it was “Kafkaesque.” He listens most sympathetically, says little.
Then, it’s our stop; all get off. They depart; he mentions apologetically it’s a
“half-station,” with no return platform! Wondering what to do, I go through the
turnstile and up the narrow stairway-exit. I am somewhere in downtown Man­
hattan, probably at Cortland Street.

And so on and on and on. The dreamer never reaches his destination,
which seems to have been his graduate advisor; the “important business” probably had to do with his dissertation, which in actual
fact he finished a long time ago.

The continual shifts of scene accomplish the juxtaposition of
three locales important in the dreamer’s past life: his boyhood home
town in Westchester and other remembered locations in New York
City, his overseas home in Tokyo, and the shopping center and other
locations in the suburb in which he now resides. Thus a New York
Central ticket counter becomes a Tokyo ticket booth, becomes a New
York subway token booth, becomes a suburban drugstore, becomes
the pastry shop next door, becomes a Tokyo pastry shop—and in the
end reverts to being a train/subway station! The “pleasant though
absent-minded woman” the dreamer recognizes easily as the woman
at his local drugstore who gives him his New York Times every day
(one of the ways he is frittering away his precious leave!) and auto­
matically smiles and says, “Come back again!” But he also recog­
nizes that pleasant woman as the head of the women’s group at a local
church where he was invited to speak the night before (another in­
stance of wasting his time instead of writing). He recalls that it was
a cold winter’s night before Christmas, the turnout was very poor,
and the kindly lady asked if he “would mind waiting a minute” for
others to come, just as the woman in the dream asked him to “wait
a minute” for his change, and he waited all day for it.

Obviously, this is a dream about frustrated efforts. The dreamer
sees his life as an endless sequence of “waitings,” without fruition:
he wasted years waiting for his thesis advisor; he now wastes his time reading the *New York Times*, buying pastries, and speaking to church groups; he has wasted his life in train stations, buying tickets, and in small shops around the world, waiting for his change.

These two dreams, like all dreams, offer comment upon the dreamer's life situation, as he currently experiences it. They convey something of his inner mood, his image of himself, and his appraisal of where he stands in life at the time of the dream. In the first dream, the dreamer is a professor of religion who has experienced difficulty in getting and keeping a job because he is not ordained. The life situation or mood of the dreamer is often stated metaphorically: told he does not belong, the dreamer reaches up to see whether he is wearing a clerical collar, but discovers a turtleneck instead! In the second dream, the larger frustrations of life are depicted by means of the smaller ones: the dreamer's difficulty in buying a ticket, getting his change, and being on his way. The artistry of the dream often lies in its success in transforming intangible and amorphous concerns and worries into very concrete images. As makers of dreams, we seem all to be gifted poets and incurable punsters.

If the dream is more successful in presenting a condensed and graphic representation of our life situation and corresponding mood than we could customarily achieve in our waking moments, it is also more frank and more insightful. Our petty and infantile thoughts are openly admitted and expressed. And we often include in our dreams superbly sensitive observations on character traits of friends and family based on clues that we do not even recognize as significant in our waking moments.

To return to the dream work of condensation, the dream often disguises and/or substitutes one person for others. Parson T. in the first dream, for example, is the representative of a number of persons recognizable by the fact that he speaks lines which were in fact spoken by others, in the memory of the dreamer. This ambiguity of identification of the persons of the dream, permits the dream to introduce new twists and ironies into the impromptu unfolding of the plot: T. belongs to the triple establishment of college administration-church-finance (graphically represented by the muddling together of bank, church, and college administration building into a single locale as setting for the dream), yet he is the one clergyman in the dreamer's circle of acquaintances who was himself rejected by the establishment. The dreamer, by choosing parson T. as its single representative, is
able to find solace in the recognition that his own case of rejection is not after all unique.

The dream is a private, dramatic representation of the dreamer's response to his current life situation. Each dream has usually just one point to make, one theme to present. If the dream is long and tedious and in fact exhausting for the dreamer, it is because it often makes that single point over and over again, talking around it, exploring it, but continually returning to it and restating it.

**DREAM AND FOLKTALE**

The notion that an understanding of dreams can inform our understanding of folktales is not new. But its best-known advocates have been quite literal about the connection between narrative and dream. Roheim, for example, suggests that the folk narrative is a dream actually dreamed by someone, related the next day round the campfire, and then told and retold; leaving to the Freudian-trained anthropologist the elementary task of indicating how the tale may be traced back to its "primal" dream (10, 11).

The quest for origins seems simplistic now; and in any case Stith Thompson's criticism is to the point when he says: "With no knowledge of when or where or by whom a tale or an incident was first told they proceed to dogmatize as to the exact circumstance that gave rise to it" (12, pp. 385-386). Thompson is referring here not only to the Freudians, but also to von der Leyen (9) and Laistner (8). Roheim, incidentally, in his *The Riddle of the Sphinx* (10) purposely used Laistner's title over again.

Whatever their origin may be, many folktales are uncannily dream-like, as illustrated by the following, "The Tale of the Eleventh Child," from the Tōhoku district of Japan.

"Here we go along the highway! Here we go along the highway!" Shouting these words at the tops of their voices, ten children had made a circle with their hands and were going round and round in the *zashiki* [parlor]. They had been invited to the house for a feast.

Round and round they went in a circle. And then suddenly, without anyone's knowing when or how, there were eleven children in the circle.

There was no unfamiliar face among them, nor was any face repeated twice. And still, no matter how they counted themselves, there were always eleven of them.

A man came in and said: "The extra person must surely be the *zashiki-bokko* [a boyish doer of mischief]."

But which one of them was it? Each child sat there looking innocent as though declaring that the *zashiki-bokko* was anyone but himself (2, pp. 90-91).
Where should we begin in analyzing a story like this? Shall we say first that the man who came in was the father, and then begin to speculate on the identity of the mysterious little mischief maker? Or shall we begin more modestly, and ask ourselves, what is it about this tale that strikes us as dream-like? I believe the answer lies in the form of the narrative. It reminds us of what we, subconsciously only, perhaps, know to be the form or structure of all dream narratives. It begins, as dreams often begin, with a specific setting; and then, as dreams often do, it introduces an ambiguity. There are two specific settings at once. The children are dancing along on the road, and at the same time they are in that sanctuary of decorum, the parlor for receiving guests. And then something unearthly happens: instead of ten children, there are eleven. The ambiguity now is one of personal identity, as each child tries not to let on to his apprehensions that he himself may be the naughty (eleventh) child. The plot has taken a very reflexive turn, just as dream plots do, and the tale almost indicates the presence of a "self," an "ego," a "dreamer."

JAPANESE FOLKTALES AND LIFE SITUATIONS

I believe the preceding observations hold true generally for most folktales. But I shall limit myself to a discussion of Japanese folk legends, densetsu, for only in Japan have I done sufficient field work to feel comfortable with the social-cultural setting of the tales. Without some first-hand familiarity with the people and the culture, a venture of this kind would become very dubious indeed. For convenience, I shall use one source for the densetsu throughout (2).

The Young Wife and the Mother-in-Law

The young wife of a household kindly gave a piece of rice cake to a traveling priest who came by the door. Afterwards, her mother-in-law counted the pieces of rice cake and realized that the young wife had given one to the priest. She scolded the young wife and sent her to regain the rice cake from the priest. When the priest heard the young wife's honest plea, he not only returned to her the rice cake, but also gave her a face-cloth, praising her gentleness.

Acting on his suggestion, the young wife wiped her face with that cloth every day. Then her face became extremely beautiful. The mother-in-law envied her and borrowed her face-cloth to use it herself. However, the mother-in-law's face gradually became horselike and at last it turned into a horse's face.

The daughter-in-law felt very sorry for her and went to the priest and begged him to turn the mother-in-law's face back to normal. The priest said that when a greedy woman wiped her face with the cloth, her face would turn into a horse's face, and he instructed her to tell the mother-in-law to rub her face with the
reverse side of the cloth. The young wife hastily went home and relayed the instructions to her mother-in-law. When the mother did as she was told, her face became as it had been before.

And thereafter she turned into a goodhearted woman and loved her daughter-in-law (2, p. 37; two Japanese terms, mochi and tenugui, rendered by us in English).

If this were a dream, we would have no difficulty ascertaining the identity of the dreamer: she would have to be the young wife. She sees herself as loyal, compassionate, forgiving, and rather pleasant to look upon. But, as is usually the case in traditional Japan, her new home, since her marriage, is the home of the groom’s family, and is managed by her young husband’s mother. The mother-in-law is, of course, difficult, miserly, and naturally envious of her young and beautiful new daughter-in-law. She is, in fact, when the daughter-in-law is completely frank about it, a little horse-faced. And that is the life situation of the “dreamer”: she is virtuous, she tries her best, she wishes for the love of her mother-in-law, but her life is rather mean and difficult because of the old woman’s cantankerous ways.

The Feather Robe

In the following well-known densetsu, the heroine is another young woman with an equally good opinion of herself. She is a “celestial maiden” who, because she has lost her feathered robe (her colorful and delicately patterned kimono that indicates that she has reached a marriageable age?), must live for a time in the ordinary world, marry, and have children. The loss of the robe seems metaphorically to signify her passage from girlhood into womanhood, as her descent from a celestial to a terrestrial domicile signifies her entrance into maturity, marriage and motherhood. The story may be familiar to readers as akin to the Noh play Hagoromo.

On the top of Mount Ubeshi in Hanami-mura, Tohaku-gun, in the province of Hoki (Tottori-ken) there is a big stone called the “Feather-Robe Stone” or the “Stone of the Celestial Maiden’s Appearance.” A long time ago a celestial maiden descended from the sky upon this stone and danced about, fluttering her robe and, putting it on the stone, lay down to rest. A farmer who lived at the foot of the mountain happened to climb to the summit that day and saw the strange robe on the stone.

“What a splendid dress this is! I wonder if this might be the feather robe of a celestial lady,” he thought. He picked it up and carried it home.

The celestial maiden, who had been fast asleep, awakened after a time. She could not find her feather robe. Wondering if the wind had blown it away, she looked for it here and there, but in vain. She was very sad. As she was weeping she
heard a voice from somewhere saying: “You must live in the human world for a while. After some years you will be saved by your child under the vine which bears white flowers.”

When the celestial maiden heard this, she forgot all about the heavenly world where she had lived, and became an ordinary human girl. She felt the cold because her clothes were thin, and she also felt pangs of hunger. So she had to go down the mountain to the village and ask a farmer for some food. He looked at her wonderingly and said: “What a pity! She seems to be a fine girl!” In a kindly manner he invited her in and gave her shelter.

So the girl stayed in the farmer’s house and was married to him. In due time two lovely girls were born to them. They grew to be very diligent, clever young ladies. Especially did they love music and, making good progress in a short time, learned to play on the flute and hand drum by themselves.

One day all the family went on a picnic to Kamisaka (Slope of the Gods) in Kurayoshi. Before going out the father said: “I’ll show you a beautiful garment which I have carefully kept for a good long time. This is a fine occasion for you to wear it.” He brought out the celestial feather robe and dressed the elder daughter in it. Then they set out, and on arriving at Kamisaka the family all sat down on the grass. To entertain them, the elder girl stood up, saying: “Since I have on this garment today, I will dance.”

She danced to the tune of her sister’s flute. The mother, who was enjoying her daughter’s dance, said to her: “The form of your arms is not good. I’ll show you how.” So she put on the feather robe in place of the daughter and began to dance. As she did so she lost her human heart. Her body became light and rose up in the air. Astonished at this, the girls shouted: “What’s the matter with you, Mother?” The celestial lady spoke to them: “Now I remember everything. I am the woman from the sky. I am going back to the heavens now . . .” (1, p. 225-227).

In the finale of this legend, we are told that the robe of the mother has been kept in anticipation of the day when her daughters would come of age. Now the elder girl is of age (ready for marriage), and she is invested with the robe, and she dances the maiden’s dance. Here we recall the words of the prophecy, “After some years you will be saved by your child . . .” The time has now come; this moment marks the fulfillment of her years as a wife and mother, and she is about to graduate into the more independent status of mother-in-law. She will again be free, as she was before her marriage. My guess is that it is the daughter who wears the celestial robe throughout that final scene, but the mother, remembering her own youth, vicariously dances with her. As the young girl dances, the mother sees herself again as a maiden, and floats off to paradise and freedom in her daydream. She is again the “woman from the sky,” like the goddess Benten, who descended from the clouds to marry the dragon who lived in the cave at Enoshima.
The Young Wife as Kannon

One final illustration. In this tale, the heroine is a long-suffering wife with an unreasonable and perhaps unbalanced husband. Many of these *densetsu* describe the life situation of the patient, uncomplaining wife. In this very dream-like legend, she transforms herself into the Buddhist “goddess of mercy,” Kannon.

Looking up from a small village nestled at the foot of a certain mountain, one can see a little shrine of Kannon on the very top. A young couple used to live in that village. The wife, for all her youth, believed in Kannon with utmost sincerity. Every night, after she had finished her daily housework she visited the shrine to worship the image. Her husband did not know the reason for her going and became suspicious of the wife who went out and returned to the house every night at the same time. One day he finally lost patience with his wife and determined to kill her. So he hid in the dark woods by the roadside and waited for his wife to come back. At the usual time she returned. The husband watched her coming near and, carefully aiming at her shoulder, swung down his sword askance. At this moment the wife felt her blood run cold throughout her body.

The husband wiped the blood from his sword and put the sword back in its sheath. When he returned to his home, he was astonished to see his wife, whom he thought he had slashed to death. He marveled, and went back to see the place where he had struck his wife. Sure enough, there were the dots of blood on the ground. He retraced his steps homeward and asked his wife: “Didn’t you feel something strange at such and such a time in such and such a place?” Then the wife answered: “Just at that time something made my blood run cold.” The husband could not but confess all that had happened.

The next morning he awakened early and was surprised to see blood dotted all the way from the entrance of his house to the shrine on top of the mountain. When he looked at the statue of Kannon, he was again surprised to see a scar on the statue’s shoulder, on the place where he had struck his wife the night before (2, p. 38).

So, the young wife is Kannon, and Kannon is the young wife. Kannon is the *bodhisattva* who takes upon her own shoulders the suffering of others, and the wife suffers for her husband’s afflictions, willingly. And when he realizes that she literally bleeds for him, he is truly sorry, and recognizes her for what she is: a goddess. The story tells us not only something about the self-image of the long-suffering wife in traditional Japan; it also tells us something about Kannon—who she really is, and who her devotees are.

But not all Japanese folktales have to do with goddesses and celestial maidens. In any anthology of *densetsu* one encounters weird and grotesque creatures, half animal and half human, and stories of transformations from human form to monster and back again. The Western reader needs to be reminded, however, of how the
Japanese people themselves view these themes, which we find so chilling and filled with horror. Japanese tales of the grotesque belong to a people who, even in an urban setting, do not easily lose touch with their folk past, a people who have lived close to the ponds and lakes, the marshes and mountains, and the sea around their volcanic isles. The octopus, the frog, the snake, the spider, the fox and the badger, figure in their tales, because they have been their constant companions, and often have served as omens of good or ill fortune.

Fantastic creatures and funny animals serve as vehicles of the imagination, and are not necessarily as fearsome as we find them. The American fan of Japanese science-fiction ("monster") films knows that monsters are only frightening so long as they are unfamiliar. I hope to deal with this phenomenon of the grotesque in a separate paper; in the meantime, suffice it to say that the monster, as a symbol, is no more an embarrassment to our cognitive approach, in which we see the symbol as expressive rather than evasive, than any other symbol in folklore, and that tales of the grotesque do not appear to be of a special genre.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Whether or not the folktale is structured consciously or unconsciously to simulate dream structure, its special form does somehow appeal to or stimulate our dream-consciousness. We comprehend the folktale as we comprehend our dreams.

At the same time, modern man is apt to find both folktale and dream annoying and preposterous—pretty much for the same reasons. Both are full of ambiguities and misplaced emphasis; they seem to emanate from a realm that is characterized by disorderly and passionate, irrational and often fearful sentiments. We reject intrusions from that realm into our orderly lives. And so, few men nowadays make the effort to comprehend their dreams during their waking hours. Yet the dream is dreamed, and its content registered, before we are fully awake.

Like the dream, the *densetsu* has about it an air of mystery, which unfolds with the unfolding of the plot. It is full of often sudden and unexpected scene-shifts and surprises, and substitution of persons. At the same time, the dream has an impromptu, unplanned quality, full of rough spots, where the folktale presents a more polished narrative.

But many of the ambiguities of the dream are there in the folktale: Who is the parlor imp in our first example? In the story of the
feathery robe, is it the mother or is it the daughter who dances the ecstatic dance at the end? And in the story of the jealous husband, where does the young wife end and Kannon begin, and vice versa?

With regard to specificity of scene, we are aware that the action in these stories takes place in specific locations, but there is nothing like the explicitness of locales in the dreams we have discussed. I think that is partly because of the examples of densetsu we have chosen: they illustrate well some of the basic patterns and tensions of family life in traditional Japan (and that is why we chose them), but they are not representative in this matter. Tales involving animals or people who become animals, usually take place in a dank cave, or some mysterious pond or treacherous lake. They are rather more spectacular and obviously dream-like than our tales of faithful wives and patient mothers.

What is most important of all, folktales and legends seem to be basically what dreams are: condensed and graphic representations of a given life situation. Whose life situation? Obviously someone who is a familiar personality type within the culture that nurtures the tale. And the situation described must be a situation commonly experienced by many, many persons within the culture.

To recapitulate: the dream is personal and private, and the life situation it depicts is personal and private; the folktale depicts persons, life styles and situations that are a common heritage of the folk who perpetuate the tale and its genre. Whatever the parallel between dream structure and folktale structure may mean, it does seem to provide us with a very useful tool for relating the tale to the people who tell it.

References