

Thinkers, such as Freud and Jung, suggest that dreams are windows into the subconscious which provides intuitions that are sometimes unseen by the blinded conscious mind. Jung also states, "it is therefore possible that the unconscious harbors contents so powered with energy that under other conditions they would be bound to become perceptible to the ego." These charged ideas sit in the back of our minds, stewing and churning until there is a moment when our unconscious thoughts become so powerful that they break down the wall to our ego and let themselves be perceived. Now, with every morning alarm throwing sheets off my bare legs and every sip of coffee tasting more bitter, the world of dreams that could shed light on my living experience is slipping away. I wonder what truths could lie buried in my midnight slumbers that my conscious mind cannot grasp in daylight.

There is a fable that Plato tells that questions the idea of awareness. Plato writes:

"Imagine persons living in an underground cave, open to the light at one end only. They are chained in the cave so they can look only in the direction away from which light is seeping into their world. Higher up is the light of an artificial fire. Between the chained persons and the fire runs a curtain or wall of one kind used for puppet shows. Behind the wall other unseen persons carry puppets, artificial objects, dolls, idols and wood figures.

The result is that inhabitants of the cave see only the shadows of artificial objects projected onto the wall they face. For these prisoners, this is their reality.

Imagine that some persons manage to unchain themselves, to turn around and stare into the sunlight. The immediate experience would be confusing, even painful to the eyes. Some would persevere and be so attracted by the light that they scramble out of the cave.

At first the light would blind them; everything would appear out of focus, and less real than what they are used to, and most persons would happily return to the cave. But some may have the strength to persevere long enough for their eyes to adjust to the light and to appreciate that there is indeed a higher reality.

There could be some enlightened person who, having received truth, feels obligated to bring her learning back down to the cave. How will this "enlightened" person fare back down in the cave? When she starts the descent, her eyes are no longer used to the dark, and she stumbles about. Far from seeming wise, she seems dysfunctional to the cave dwellers. Her knowledge and claims to higher wisdom are of no use to them; all they can see is that this supposed learning has made the returning native a misfit in their world."

Like Plato's story of the cave, I feel stuck, my face against the wall staring at artificial shadows. I am only aware of what is two inches in front of my face when I am consciously awake. However if I took note of my dreams and what they express, I might crawl to the surface of the cave to see the blinding sun and true physical reality. I may find truth in my dreams if I attempt to understand them.

Perhaps my dreams would help me understand other aspects of my life that seem to escape my comprehension. Just as I see myself in Plato's cave in regards to my dreams, I see that I have been in a cave for most of my life and have only recently crawled out into the blinding sunlight. Living away from home for three months, I have come to realize that many of my preconceived notions about life have been questioned. For example, In the cave that I have lived

in for my childhood, the shadows distracted and entertained me, and yet some powers within compelled me to leave home. When I was awakened to this new form of education, the blinding light of unforeseen awareness seeped into my pores and I was overcome with a kind of pain. When I sleep, my world of dreams uses symbols to give truth to my living situation, and as I have been thrown into the world away from home I have been given truths, which now my job is to understand. A new world of thought has been opened up and I am diving in to see what my dreams mean to tell me. My story is one of self-exploration and self-realization, and is as follows, my dreams holding the pen, suspended above the paper.

“A patient, a young woman who clung to her mother in an extremely sentimental way, always had very sinister dreams about her. She appeared in the dreams as a witch, as a ghost, as a pursuing demon. The mother had spoiled her beyond all reason and had so blinded her by tenderness that the daughter had no conscious idea of her mother’s harmful influence. Hence the compensatory criticism exercised by the unconscious.”

-The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung, pg. 189

Dream recorded the morning of Sunday, November 13th, 2011:

I have gotten back from a very long journey and am attending a party being thrown for me at a huge house that is not mine. The rooms are bright and big and all of my friends from home are there and are happy that I was back. I am sitting on a throne of sorts, wearing a huge robe and soft cape holding a deer carcass in one hand while my portrait is being painted.

Reality. I opened the door and felt a curtain of cold mosquito bites brush my face. There was no question that it was fall. I placed my laced up foot over the door’s threshold and promptly went back inside for two more layers of thrift store wool. Once again, better prepared this time, I scribbled my initials and a barely legible “library. 1:30” on the sign out sheet. Drooping my eyes down away from the breeze, I clanged the gate shut and started walking. Pulling out my ear-buds I immediately realized that I had forgotten to charge my I-pod. It wasn’t even worth it to go back. Brown leaves brushed across the sidewalk and crunched under the soles of my oversized boots. I knew I was only leaving so I could feel like I was being productive.

With ideas racing and swarming in my head with nowhere to go, and loneliness setting in, I felt that taking in some fresh air would be good for me. I certainly did not feel like a queen, with friends gathered round and my portrait being painted like I was in my dream. Why my dream contained such images was beyond me. I felt like a disgruntled student who had no clue what to write or say, with no fellow classmate who would want to hear my petty frustrations.

Hands in my pockets, I pressed onward, gazing up into the sky along the horizon, hoping to see some truth or advice written in the clouds. When none appeared, my thoughts drifted to the upcoming Thanksgiving break. Suddenly I was filled with excitement at the prospect of returning to the safe place I once knew. I imagined dropping my bags at the Portland airport and running into my friends’ arms while streamers fell from the ceiling and the airport staff stood in formation exclaiming that they personally, were glad I was home. While I am sure the whole world is not caught up in my life, it felt like I was too caught up possibly in my frustration. I was

in the “real world” now according to my new teachers, and the home of my childhood was deep in a cave where only shadows of reality existed. This type of life education I had been swept up in had taken its toll and I could feel myself tiring of the immense moral stress I had been under. I realized that I just needed a break.

With the sidewalk cracks staring me in my face I counted the days slowly on my fingers. It was less than a week until I would be walking through my front door. I felt that like Jung’s patient, beneath the curtains of my temporary unhappiness, I knew my real situation. I had been thrown into this new life and was slowly adjusting. It was painful, but somehow I had made sense of things and I was still surviving. My dream was reminding me of this accomplishment by showing me on a throne surrounded by friends. On top of everything, soon I would be eating sushi, taking hour-long bubble baths, and would be seated on a throne of my community’s mutual support. I was doing just fine.

“In dreams as in mythology, the delivery of a child from the uterine waters is commonly represented, by way of distortion, as the entry of the child into water; among many other instances, the births of Adonis, Osiris, Moses and Bacchus are well known illustrations of this.”

-Freud’s The Interpretation of Dreams, pg. 273

Dream recorded the morning of Tuesday, November 15th, 2011:

I am at a table sitting with a friend going through a cardboard box of mummified human parts and bits of skin. A friend of mine from home walks up to us and wants to sing a song for me, but he cannot finish. I am now holding the box while standing in a crowded beach scene ankle deep in water. I smile at young children wearing tiny bathing suits as they swim by.

Reality. I ran across the pad of cement, attempting to dodge the many daunting puddles of water in my path. It had not rained for weeks, maybe months and the monsoon had finally arrived and was pounding against the earth with immense pent up force. The only thing I could think of was that this rain was nothing like the rain at home. This rain felt like a violent force of nature unlike the constant curtains of drizzle that graced the Portland streets. In less than twenty-four hours I would be caught up in the midst of home and I was seeing it everywhere I turned. I could not help but smile as I thought of walking up my driveway to the front door of my house. I thought of sleeping in my own bed which had five different blankets draped across the end, and seeing old friends smile as we went to the same old places doing the same old things that seemed exciting each time. I remembered my childhood and how each memory seemed coated in a layer of honey so that I could barely remember the details, only that it was simple, and sweet. I thought of the lake, the fir trees, and the birds outside my bedroom window. I was wishing the plane could come sooner.

Attempting to work, all I could do was stare blankly at the drops of water slowly sliding down the glass windows. The hours seemed to pass like they were stuck in quicksand and daydreaming was the only way to wait for their release. I felt like a child that had been born too early, and who longed to return to the soft warmth of her mother’s womb. However, in the back of my mind, there was a slight moment where I knew that I would not see the streets of home the

same way as I once did. My teachers had told me that I would be a different person when I returned from boarding school, like I had shed my skin and had grown into another shell. Like in my dream, I would be coming home to the origin of my childhood, staring at this infantile world with my previous self shed and placed in a cardboard box. My dream was reminding me of the womb and where I had come from. Plato said that once a person crawls out of the cave they once dwelled in, they will long to go back to the comforts of their previous life. I could sense the longing in the tapping of my feet against my chair counting the seconds. I wasn't quite sure what I would find when my plane landed, but the time came and I grabbed my bag, and I boarded the shuttle with looming clouds high over my head.

“A large number of dreams, which are frequently full of anxiety, and often have for content the traversing of narrow spaces, or staying long in the water, are based upon phantasies concerning the intra-uterine life, the sojourn in the mother's womb, and the act of birth”

-Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams, pg. 271

Dream recorded the morning of Saturday, November 19th, 2011:

I am in an old house with many different rooms and oddly shaped furniture. The house turns into a maze and I am walking through it. I walk to the end and am in front of a section of the lake that I live by but a log replaces the bridge that usually stands there. I get on the log and try to walk to the other side, but the log dips and I am plunged into the black water. I come up and get back on the log and then see that part of the lake has been drained.

Reality. My stomach was in knots. The months had passed back home and daylight hours had grown shorter since I was gone and I found myself returning to a surprisingly dark world. The Christmas tree lights downtown were already up but they seemed an icier blue than I remembered. The flight was short and I was thrown back into the lives of the people I once knew. The first dawn back home was thin, cold and softly familiar.

Light flooded my room like a soft gray curtain as I slowly and gingerly opened my eyes. For a moment I did not recognize where I was, but then I saw the fleshy pink walls and the fir trees dripping with rain just outside the bank of windows, I was indeed home. Turning over and stretching my legs I slowly peeled each layer of bedcovers off of my stomach until I could swing my feet out and place them on the ice-cold wooden floor. I felt that it wasn't real and that I was just dreaming I was home, but I remembered the shuttle, the bags, and the flustered businessman in the seat next to me on the flight. I remembered the rush of cold Portland air as I stepped out of the rotating doors into the parking garage.

The days that followed after this first soft morning were heavy. The school seemed bigger than when I had been there before, and the walls were almost bare, the art room was quiet and somber. I attended the school play and watched my friends swirl across the stage in costumes that I would have made, had I been present. The musical was Grease and was filled with slicked hair, home-made poodle skirts, and a universal high school banter that once seemed so relatable to my own life, but now just looked pasty under the colored spotlights. Afterward, friends who seemed like total strangers ran into me with open arms. One friend of mine, Allison,

who had done the musical every year since ninth grade and who had never gotten a lead, smiled and said that she would have loved to see what I had done with the costumes for the show. We chatted and I saw her familiar up turned lip, sullen eyes and petite frame. It felt like time had stopped in my tiny hometown while I was living years in the future. Nothing had changed.

A few mornings passed and it was finally Thanksgiving. I slept in late, and stumbled downstairs. My mother was in the kitchen. She slowly looked up from making her custard pie and informed me that Allison had suddenly passed away in a freak accident. I knew she had suffered from epilepsy for her entire life, so I knew her health was always in question. However, my mother explained that she experienced a seizure while no one was home, fell face down on a pillow, and suffocated. Thanksgiving was shorter than usual and the food filled up faster. The rain grew thicker, and the nights seemed longer. I was surprisingly unemotional to everyone around me. The next day I took three long showers so I could be alone.

I saw movies, had meals and all the while came to realize that with certain friends I had run out of things to say, or the things that I said were not the things they wanted to hear. I had coffee one morning with an older friend. I was exploding with excitement and exclaiming what I had learned, what I hoped to create, and what I was feeling. He stared placidly at my violent hand motions and quietly sipped his coffee. Plato said that once a person returns from the outside world back into the cave to share their knowledge, they will most likely not be accepted, but be treated as an outcast. I looked at my hands, stopped, and spent the rest of the day sipping coffee in relative silence. As in my dream, I was in agony trapped in a maze and drowning in my own home. My dream was expressing anxiety that my home was not the safe place that it was before. I clutched my temples and begged for it all to stop.

The time finally came, and I was dragged out of my house at five o'clock a.m. along dark roads to the Portland airport. The headlights shone ahead and highlighted the huge tree branches that sped by my front window. Once we arrived my dad kissed me goodbye and I went through security to the smallest and most secluded gate on the premises. I was still half asleep. I somehow managed to board the plane and shuttle and send myself through the hills of what I had known so surely before. My time at home was a distant memory, one of disappointment. My eyes closed and I drifted in and out of a daydream as the clouds parted to the right and the sun began to break between each rolling hill of vines. The farthest reaches of my mind were at work and were telling me that this was truth, I was never going to return to the dark curtains of Portland rain the same way, and the only place to go was out, farther and farther into the world. My dreams were expressing truths that were reactions to my physical experiences. I had been thrown out of the cave of my childhood for good, and as the shuttle curved around bends and the road ahead shining in the sun even in November, I knew that I must not just exist, but live, and live by my own terms.

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