

Preface

I was sitting in my front yard. Everything looked bleak; the monochromatic earth jittered. I was desperately looking for my father, but there was no one around. Everyone had disappeared. I panicked. Then, finally, I saw my father emerge from the depths of a shadow. He was not alone. Behind him staggered a tall, faceless, cloaked figure, his hand draped over my father's shoulder. They slowly crept their way toward me, my father looking uninterested and ambiguous. They loomed through my sheet of hysteria as my father told me he never wanted to see me again. He said he hated me and that he was leaving. I desperately looked for some look of regret, something to tell me he didn't mean what he said. There was nothing but stone. They slowly walked away, disappearing into the fogged distance. I woke up.

This was one of my most memorable recurring childhood dreams. Every morning, after having this dream, I would wake up crying, abandoned. The rest of the day would be filled with anxiety attacks and an inability to look at either one of my parents. One of my greatest fears quickly became being left alone; I would scream as soon as someone stepped foot out of a room to leave me. My father is my familiarity. The figure is the intruder—both archetypes that have been constant in several others' recurring childhood dreams.

I have always been astounded by one dream's ability to be ingrained into my memory for as many years as it has. Why has this particular dream chosen to be branded into my conscious instead of any other dream I have had? I refuse to believe that this is a random dream my mind has chosen to remember. As a result, I find that learning a person's recurring dream reveals something about them, whether or not they are aware of it. Personally, my recurring childhood dream revealed one of my most deep-set fears and a perspective into the reasons for my anxiety. Although, when listening to someone else's recurring childhood dream, I may not be able to recognize personal significance, because I do not know their current consciousness, I believe that I will have just taken a step forward into understanding that consciousness.

For Final Project, I chose to work in film photography. In dreams, we often experience images and scenes from our waking life. Photography gives the artist a chance to, much like dreams, take fragments of reality and transform them into a new narrative. Dreaming is often considered the definition of a surreal experience. I find the darkroom to be similar; an almost surrealistic environment. In the darkroom, you are more focused and concentrated on creating your work, bringing you closer to your consciousness. In the darkroom, I use manipulation techniques in order to make them a product of reality that, much like a dreamer's mind, has been warped by light, chemicals, and even my own hands.

The viewers and readers should be aware that the majority of these dreams are not my own. Only two of the images are from my own dreams. The reason for this is because I am not studying my own dreams. I recognize them and, at least partly, understand them and their significance. I am studying others' dreams because I am interested in recurring childhood dreams as a whole. It is also important that these people, and I, have had no interaction during the time periods of their childhood dreams. The dreams collected by random dreamers allow for a more accurate portrayal of the archetypes in a childhood dream.

For most of us, our childhood dreams have stayed with us throughout our lives. They are ingrained into our memories as much as any memory of reality. Dreams have been argued to be both representations of our subconscious and inner dialogue, as well as an arbitrary mix of insignificant details we have experienced. However, where do our childhood dreams fall in this argument? Why is it that they are often more vivid and terrifying than those which we have experienced in our adult lives? I have chosen to focus on recurring childhood dreams to analyze

these questions. I believe that through these dreams, we can uncover truths of our consciousness. I intend to make windows into these dreams through photography. I will use dreams as case studies in order to analyze recurring childhood dreams, to find any common themes between people who have had no interaction between each other in that period of their lives, and if the collective unconscious is present in these particular dreams. I believe that these windows will show themes that have carried into the dreamers' current waking consciousness, even if common themes have affected them in different ways. I also expect that, rather than having a defined set of archetypes, the dreams of children will be more individual to each person.

I. Freud and Jung

Several psychologists, professors, and scientists throughout centuries have investigated the field of dream studies. The most known and criticized of these psychologists, however, remain to be Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. Sigmund Freud was one of the most influential psychologist of the 20th century. His theory of the unconscious centered on a series of hidden desires the individual has yet to discover (Sigmund Freud Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). These desires are evident through their dreams and unconscious behaviors. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that, "An 'unconscious' mental process or event, for Freud, is not one which merely happens to be out of consciousness at a given time, but is rather one which cannot, except through protracted psychoanalysis, be brought to the forefront of consciousness (ibid)." In other words, when looking at the conscious mind, the unconscious mind is completely invisible. They are both parts of the same whole, however, the unconscious mind contains the "cause", while the conscious mind produces the "effect".

How does this play into Freud's analysis of dreams? What does this have to do with childhood dreams? Well, since the unconscious mind, where our dreams are derived from, contain our hidden desires, dreams are a manifestation of those desires. Freud states, after explaining a list of dreams, "Perhaps this collection will suffice to prove that frequently, and under the most complex conditions, dreams may be noted which can be understood only as wish-fulfillments, and which present their content without concealment." (Freud, *Dreams as Wish-Fulfillment*) In the list of dreams used as evidence to this assertion, he uses only that of adults. When he begins to explain this thesis in relation to children he states:

Child psychology, in my opinion, is destined to render the same services to the psychology of adults as a study of the structure or development of the lower animals renders to the investigation of the structure of the higher orders of animals...The dreams of little children are often simple fulfillments of wishes, and for this reason are, as compared with the dreams of adults, by no means interesting. They present no problem to be solved, but they are invaluable as affording proof that the dream, in its inmost essence, is the fulfillment of a wish (ibid).

Freud is saying that child psychology of dreams is only a less complicated version of that of an adult. Unlike adult dreams, they exclusively show desire; there is no real reason to analyze them because they do not determine anything about the waking life. Therefore, he believes that the dreams of children lack that which is more clearly expressed in his *Analysis of Hysteria*, in which he states: "The Pathogenic phantasies, derivatives of repressed instinctual impulses, are

for a long time tolerated alongside the normal life of the mind, and have no pathogenic effect until by a revolution the libidinal economy they receive a hypercathexis; not until then does the conflict which leads to the formation of symptoms break out" (Freud, *10. On Psychopathology*). This means that the dangerous dreams, which were a product of repressed instinctual desires, can be tolerated in the conscious mind and have no harmful effect in the waking life. However, as soon as there is a change in primitive biological urges, that is when the symptoms of a dangerous conscious reveal themselves.

Although Freud is one of the founders of dream analysis, I disagree with many of his arguments. First, I do not believe that dreams are solely a manifestation of intense desires. I believe that dreams are also a manifestation of fears and anxieties. I also believe that several dreams are simple compilations of random, often forgotten, fragments of your waking life. However, I do agree with Freud on the matter of where the materials in our dreams are derived from. I agree that dreams are manifestations of our unconscious; the memories and thoughts of our mind that we are entirely oblivious to during our waking lives. As for his views on the dreams of children, I mostly disagree with him. I do not agree that a child's dream is less complex than that of an adult. All of the recurring childhood dreams I have looked at have had a significant impact on that child's psyche or revealed something about their unconscious. For many of the dreamers, the childhood dreams were more complex than those of their adult lives. I do not believe that, just because a child has not experienced sexual desire, his dreams are less complicated and pose no problems to be solved. On the contrary, many of the dreams revealed anxieties that troubled the child in their waking lives; the dreams could have been used to clues to the cause of these anxieties.

Carl Jung, on the other hand, while extremely familiar with Freud's theories, held his own opinions on the conscious and unconscious. The theories of his that greatly separate him from Freud are those of the ego, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious (Boeree, *Carl Jung*). The ego is closely related to the conscious mind, the personal unconscious is the unconscious that is a direct product of our own personal memories and the collective unconscious is basically an inherited unconscious. The collective unconscious was what put Jung a world apart from Freud (ibid). Some examples of recognition of the collective unconscious include "déjà vu...the spiritual experiences of mystics of all religion, or the parallels in dreams, fantasies, mythologies, fairy tales, and literature" (ibid). The collective unconscious contains archetypes that Jung has named. While Jung states that there is no set number of archetypes for us all to name and memorize, he has found and named some that include: The mother, the shadow, anima and animus, the mana, the persona, the child, the hero, the father, etc (ibid). All of these have different meaning and symbols that remain constant between almost everyone who has experienced them. One other idea of Jung is the principle of opposites. He believed that every wish suggested its opposite. For example, if you were to dream of obtaining an ice cream cone, your subconscious is also suggesting the possibility of having one kept away from you. This principle fed immediately into the principle of equivalence, which is giving equal energy to each opposite. Referencing the ice cream example, your unconscious would be giving attention to both possibilities. Furthermore, the distribution of energy feeds into the complex, or the pattern, or suppresses thoughts and feelings that begin to cluster and may manifest themselves into an archetype (Boeree). Using the ice cream example once more, your unconscious may focus more on having the ice cream, and refuses to give attention to its opposite. In that situation, this suppression of an opposite will manifest itself into something that will certainly pull energy: an archetypal figure in your dreams.

I agree with Jung much more than I agree with Freud. I agree that dreams are not only repressed sexual desires, but are also deep, spiritual desires. I agree that the conscious can be divided into different groups that better organize our own minds and that there are certain archetypes that we have all inherently stored in our unconscious. However, I believe that our childhood dreams hold different archetypes than what are normally found in our adult dreams.

Through my recording of random individuals' recurring childhood dreams, I have found that, throughout them all, they can be grouped into containing certain archetypes. The ones I have found thus far are: the intruder, the kidnapper, the familiarity, and the abandoner. Of course there are more that become consistent in two, maybe three, dreams, but the ones I have included are consistent in at least more than three each. The intruder is easily the most common archetype I have found in childhood dreams. This person, not always a human, is usually anonymous. It is often portrayed with a concealed or covered face and shows no sign of speech. The kidnapper, more often than not, is the intruder. The kidnapper always takes another archetype, the familiarity, away from the child. The dreamers seem to always be aware of the kidnappers presence, but are always still terrified when it is revealed. The familiarity is often a person who the child is either, very close to, or has had some significance in their lives. The familiarity is always present for no more than three quarters of the dream. Much more often than not, the familiarity is somehow brutally taken away from the dreamer, whether it leaves the child or the child leaves them. Let it be known that the child does not necessarily have to have a positive emotional bond to this person. The last most common archetype thus far is the abandoner. Often, the abandoner is the familiarity, but the abandoner is the being that leaves the child. As the name suggests, the child is abandoned, left helpless, often with the antagonist: the intruder or kidnapper, to fend for herself. The dreamer is usually left with an intense feeling of betrayal. I would also like to note that these archetypes might overlap and interact with each other often. They might also shift from one to the other during the dream.

II. Artistic Interpretations

Several artists have worked with the ideas of dreaming and the surreal, and various techniques have come forward to create unreal, yet realistic, depictions of the dreamscape. I believe that illustrating and interpreting dreams into art is important because it helps us to better understand the dream, and thus, the dreamer herself. Whether or not the purpose is specifically related to dreams, techniques to make a "dreamy" look are widespread. Authors using these techniques include: Salvador Dali, James Casebere, Adam Fuss, Barbara Ess, Sarah Moon, Francesca Woodman, James Welling, Man Ray, Lucas Samaras, and Jerry Uelsmann. All of these artists use manipulations that include surreal painting, flooding of a room, pinhole camera, low shutter speeds and movement, manipulation of Polaroids and heated prints, avant-garde photography, and precise compositing.

In my work I use compositing, long shutter speeds and movement to create a dream-like effect; I set the scene, manipulating the photo to create unrealistic effects, vignette, and also physically draw in the work itself. I want to create images that are formed from reality, but still as far removed from the conscious world as possible. I am most inspired by Francesca Woodman's low shutter speed and movement combination. It is a really simple technique that creates a distortion that is perfect for illustrating dreams. I am also greatly inspired by Jerry

Uelsmann and his extremely precise composite images. I think that experimentation creates images that are entrancing, surprising and accurate windows into childhood dreams.

III. What About Now?

What have I learned from all of this? I believe that Freud is incorrect; the child's mind is a powerful and vivid one. I believe that it accurately portrays unconscious desires that are so powerful; they have been carried into the dreamer's adult life. Childhood dreams seem to be the most primitive of our fears and desires. Unlike adult dreams, they are not tainted by years of daily images and stories. In that sense, childhood dreams are able to be more pure and concentrated on the only the dreamer's unconscious. This realization of our childhood dreams brings about a new importance of them. Maybe, they should be treasured and kept; a way of knowing where our mind has been and where it will likely return to. These dreams also bring up another burning question: have our minds *really* grown at all? Have we matured as much as we would like to think? Do we still hold the exact same fears and anxieties as we used to so many years ago? Personally, since I have found childhood dreams to be one of the purest portrayals of our unconscious, I believe they show the part of us that we can never really "grow" away from. I argue that, although they were probably more relevant to us as children, our recurring childhood dreams portray the hidden part of the iceberg; the primal fears and desires of the unconscious of which it is impossible for the waking mind to grasp.

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