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Depth Psychological Approaches to Dream MS521
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THE CREATIVE DREAM PROJECT

Presenting my dream to the class turned out to be a rather rewarding experience, which was a complete surprise in light of the fact that I struggled with the class and the process all quarter long. Time and again, my dreams did not suffer analysis well, regardless of the method I used. While the dream I selected probably works best with a Freudian analysis, I used the Hillman approach of sticking with the image to yield the results for the presentation. More on that in a while, let me first share my dream.

The dream begins with an image of an ATM machine. I have inserted my card and am trying to recall the PIN—in this case, it will not let me get out of this cave. I want desperately to get out, I am almost in a frenzy. That is when I become aware of the cave itself—immense, dark, hard, wet, cold, cold, cold. I am whizzing about as if disembodied, returning to the ATM to punch in a few other numbers and then panic again. The walls of the cave are alive with forms, barely distinguishable animal forms that are largely incomplete but comprehensible as well. As I fumble with the keypad of the ATM, I hear my mother's voice, beckoning me seductively. The strange thing is that I cannot tell whether she is beckoning me back into the cave or out of it. Either way, I again frantically work the numbers but nothing is happening. Numbers, frenzy, more numbers and then finally I am falling, falling, falling. Somewhere in my fall, I wake up.

As I reflected later on this dream, rather than images, it was what Gendlin calls the “felt sense” of hard and cold that stuck with me the most. As I prepared the presentation, I created a poem that was very evocative of those feelings. I wanted to convey the sense of

isolation, desolation, and resignation that I felt. I then found images that went reasonably well with the feelings that the text of the poem engendered. Finally, I selected music that I felt would have some psychic impact. The original piece was a John Tavener piece for solo cello, which as I reviewed the presentation was probably much more intense than most people could handle. The final selection of Old and Lost Rivers by Tobias Pickers seemed to fit most appropriately. I have included the text of the poem and the images and commentary of the dream, as well as a collage of some of the visuals that accompanied the poem.

This dream is laden with a great deal of psychic content that I will probably spend a very long time in trying to unpack, certainly more than the parameters of this essay will allow. While it is intensely personal, I believe that I can share quite a bit. I will endeavor to unlock some of the background, look at some of the images and attempt to make a preliminary analysis of the dream from a mythic perspective.

I mentioned above that the primary emphasis of this dream is probably Freudian, because of the cave image (womb reference) and the voice of my mother. I am not going to say a great deal about this other than both of my parents were alcoholic and there was an outrageous amount of sexual, physical and emotional abuse inflicted upon my brother, my three sisters and myself by my parents and their drunken friends. My sisters and their children have the most convoluted and tragic family histories one can imagine. My brother has been imprisoned for child molestation and several of my in-laws should have been imprisoned for child and spousal abuse. By the grace of God, I have been spared most of the outward manifestations of the brokenness of my family legacy, but I have some issues that have troubled me from time to time. Fortunately, my children have not been subjected to the ramifications of that type of family system.

I cannot criticize Freud's focus on the Oedipus myth. Within the family system from which I emerged, all of those themes were played out on an ongoing basis for many years. I did want to kill my father, and I did possess my mother. I felt lust and shame and jealousy and rage all at the same time, as I feared for my own safety and was unable to insure the safety of my siblings. When it comes to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, I feel a great affinity for the work of Dr. Freud.

However, if Hillman is correct, the voice of my mother could actually be the voice of the "Magna Mater." [72] In that instance, it would be a wisdom voice calling me either inward or outward to some other type of psychic experience—not that of which I am afraid and ashamed, but something else. The fact that it is just her voice, disembodied, and that she is now dead, could bear significantly on how one interprets the whole thing. This is something I want to pursue as part of my work with this dream.

As I said earlier, in my presentation, I really tried to convey what Gendlin calls the "felt sense" of the dream. The ideas of hard, cold and alone seemed to be the dominant feeling clusters of the dream, and I think I was able to convey that felt sense pretty well. It is the felt sense rather than the imagery that propels the poem.

Bosnak and Adams both speak of the role of "active imagination" in working with the dream content. I found myself doing that quite a bit as I created the poem and the visual presentation. One of the things I am not quite certain about is how much the active imagination work altered the dream content itself by affecting my memory of the dream. As I worked with the whole project, it took on a great deal more power than I originally realized.

I am not entirely certain what to make of the animal images on the cave walls. Jung speaks of animals as wisdom figures in dreams [79], but in the sense of them speaking to the

dreamer within the context of the dream itself. In my dream, the animals did not speak that I can recall—but they did make those hard rock walls seem alive. I remember them as being very much like the cave paintings of Lascaux or Altamira.

The one image I really do want to focus on is the ATM. I tend to think the machine in this case is not truly mechanical metaphor, but paradoxically represents some aspect of humanity that is preventing me from leaving the cave. I just cannot find the right combination to make it happen. How much like life. We think we can slide our card into the slot, punch a few numbers and get away when we need to. Perhaps we can, but certainly not in my dream.

As far as the underlying mythology of this dream, I am tending to think of it in terms of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. The falling or flying, empty handed—the emptiness idea after emerging from the underworld makes me think that whatever Eurydice I was escaping with somehow did not make it out of the cave. The whole idea of the poem, just sitting there afraid, ashamed, alone reflects Orpheus sitting by the mouth of the cave mourning the loss of Eurydice. Perhaps it may be a little far fetched, but I think I will stick with that image for a while. I really want to be careful of that story though, because of what happens next as far as relations with young boys. That is really problematic considering my family history.

Deciding on what medium to use for the presentation was perhaps the most daunting aspect of the whole project. When the quarter began there was discussion of creating masks for the dream project, but apparently, it evolved to encompass nearly any mode of presentation. I knew that a mask would not work particularly well for my dream, and my artistic skills are quite limited. The idea of multi-media was appealing, but the technical

aspects were a bit inhibiting, as well as the problem that I could not find a workable image of an ATM. Fortunately, I just focused on the metaphor and not the concrete details of the image to suggest a machine. It was a very satisfying feeling when the technical details were finally solved and the presentation given. The response of the class was most gratifying, particularly in light of how revealing this particular dream was.

Included over the next several pages is a reprise of the presentation. I have separated the poem from the images, since they will not all render well in black and white. I've included as many as I thought would work reasonably well, but some of the images of snow, while evocative, just do not reveal enough detail to be helpful.



The dream I wish to share is a gateway dream, a dream of rock and caves, of shadow and depth. A dream that took place in a cavea cave or a womb, I can't tell. I remember the feeling of hardness, of granite.

This was not so much a dream of images, as it was of textures. Rock, hardness, unyielding, jagged, immense, ancient, permanent.



The cave swirled about mefeatureless in the motion and darkness, yet I could always see but never focus, moving, swirling like a molecule of air through the cavern.



Along corridors of rock, bent over without touching the sides or ceiling, each passage swiftly passing before me.



Occasionally, fantastic forms reached out threateningly, but these were not monsters of my psyche, just silent witnesses to the age and immensity of the processes at work.



I was vainly trying to get out of the cave, but the ATM machine wouldn't read my card and I couldn't remember the universal pin number to proceed. I was frustrated, anxious, disappointed and upset.



From the back of the cave came a voice, the voice of my mother beckoning me. Was she beckoning me back into the depths of the cave, to the shadows of secret and shame.

Or, was she beckoning me forth from the cave, out into the world of light and freedom. The voice echoed from the rocks.



The walls of the cave were alive with forms and shapes, dancing in the darkness where I could only dimly perceive them. Ancient, half-formed, yet evocative these animals and shapes brought the hard rock walls to life.



I knew somehow, that I wasn't in my regular form, I was misshapen and angular out of place yet somehow recognizable as well.

Finally as the dream ended I was falling, falling, falling.



CHILD OF SNOW

Like flint
That face of fear frowns at me
And imprisons my heart
In a glacial tomb,
Eternally,

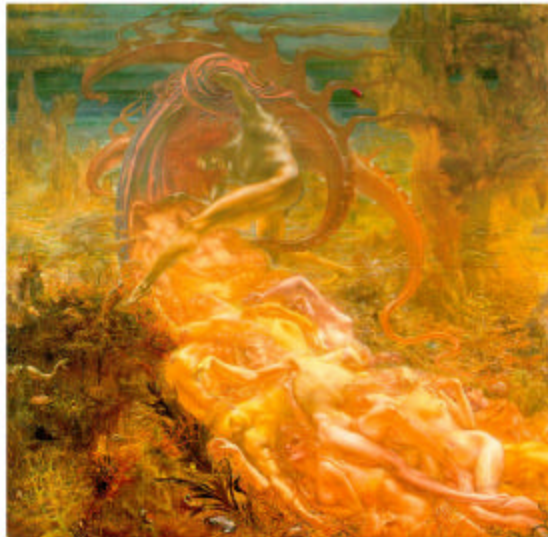
About me
The sun shines with its taunting warmth,
I see it,
But feel it not
Here in this cold hell
That envelops my heart.

In a state
Of frozen hope I wait
Like a seed beneath the snow,
I wonder in this deathless death
If that's all I'll ever know?

I wait and pray for Spring
If there is such a thing,
Or is Spring too
Just another lie
I tell myself
To help time pass quickly by.

Even if what I'm beginning to feel
Is truly spring, or even real
I'm not sure that I can endure
The thawing of my heart any longer,
I don't feel that I'm getting stronger,
Just older, weaker and more broken.

I no longer find comfort in the cold.
I can't return.
I can't go on.
I think I'll just sit here for a while,
Here amid the melting snow,
Afraid
Ashamed
Alone



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