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The Dynamic Symbolism of Dreams (I)

1. Dynamics of Oneiric Visions

The static and dualistic conception of the relations between percepts of reality and dreams benefits from a fictitious and simplistic idea, according to which the conscious mental activity and the unconscious activity of the mind both exist in their chemically pure state. In fact, consciousness in the waking state is almost constantly penetrated by flashes or spikes of unconscious elements, which, however, can be easily suppressed by the consciousness armed with rationality. Similarly, the dream does not represent a homogenous action of invariable intensity, since the depth of sleep is changeable and its upper layers can be penetrated by rational elements of the consciousness, albeit in the form of weakened echoes.

These mutual interventions and interferences of conscious and unconscious factors cannot remain without affecting the creation of dreams. If the unconscious elements penetrate to the level of consciousness during the waking state, then, while being suppressed, they also take with them back into the unconscious something that did not previously belong to them but was absorbed while they were in contact with that level of consciousness. And this appropriation, which may not be insignificant, is certainly present during the formation of dreams.

2. Weakness of Freud's Dream Dynamics

In Freud's study of dreams, the following dynamic elements take part in their formation: *censorship*, *secondary process* (a transference and displacement of the psychic intensities of the individual elements, from which results the textual difference between the dream content and the thought content) and, above all, *wish fulfilment*. Furthermore, as Freud posits, the wish to sleep must be counted among the motives of dream formation.

Freud bases this psychic activity on the assumption of a conflicting tension between dream censorship and the fulfilment of an instinctual wish, both of which he understands in the spirit of the 19th century: censorship is more or less tied to the *Superego*, while desire is oriented towards the *Id*. Due to the influence of this tension, and by undergoing a secondary process, the dream is formed, encrypted into symbols, which are expected to be decoded by analysis.

It is necessary to consider the above-mentioned Freud's scheme as illustrative and simplified for clarity right at its initial stage, i.e., at the time when the *Superego* could be identified with social and psychological rationality, while the *Id* remained purely irrational, by its very definition. However, the psychosocial concept thus defined underwent a substantial development during the twentieth century, which disrupted the purity of both concepts presupposed by Freud. The authoritative instance of the *Superego* disintegrated, and in its decomposition, the *Id* found penetrative paths to the level of con-

sciousness. Consequently, this also changed how we view the tension between the two elements, to which Freud attributed the forming function in terms of dream symbolism, conceived in a narrowly emblematic sense.

We can find a number of reservations by Freud himself against such narrow interpretation of dream symbolism. Most importantly, he states that the same dream content may conceal a different meaning for different people in different contexts, which contradicts the general lexical validity of dream symbols. He further notes that "the dream appears to be a reaction to everything which is simultaneously present as actual in the sleeping mind." Even though Freud assumes that this reaction is encrypted into the latent dream thoughts, he acknowledges a certain relationship between the actual dream stimuli and the nature or formation of the manifest dream content. He finds this stimulatory relationship especially in anxiety dreams: "an anxiety dream of examination occurs when the dreamer is anticipating a responsible task on the following day, with the possibility of disgrace." (*Dream Interpretation*).

Here we touch on the principle of analogy as a forming part of the manifest dream content, which projects into it a motif derived from an actual stimulus. Therefore, it is impossible to accept Freud's requirement that only discrete parts of the dream content, regardless of the whole, should be the subject of dream interpretation.

3. Analogy with Actual Stimuli in Dream Formation

In the study *Some Remarks On the Concept of the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis* (*Theoretical Writings*, 1931), Freud defines dream formation by paying more attention to the impact of actual stimuli: some thoughts are brought to the waking state by the mental activity during the day and they retain some of their impact, having escaped the overall decline in interest otherwise caused by sleep. During the night, these thoughts manage to find connections with unconscious desires, which have always been present in the mental life of dreams since our childhood. However, they are usually suppressed and excluded by their conscious existence. With the support of the unconscious, these thoughts—remnants of daily activity—can regain influence and enter consciousness in the form of dreams. These thoughts have undergone transformation, disguise, and

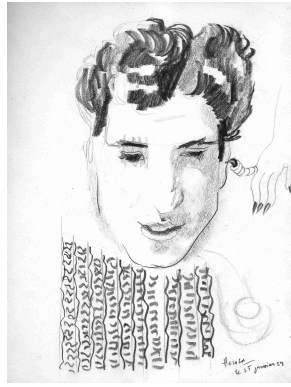
disfigurement, the qualities that indicate the involvement of the unconscious, this powerful ally.

As Freud goes on to say, if latent dream thoughts do not differ in any way from the fruits of our usual conscious mental activity, if they are preconscious thoughts which, however, due to their connection with the subconscious, have been pushed into the state of unconscious thoughts and subjected to the laws of unconsciousness, then they inevitably take with them into the depths certain rational contours, or rather nuclei, out of which they have arisen during the waking state. These rational remnants torn from the plane of consciousness

Přemysl Martinec, *The Three Fates* (2020)

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Gellu Naum



Jacques Hérold, *Portrait of Gellu Naum*, January 25, 1939

The Remembrance of Memory (II) (1943 – 1944)

(...) I enter another deserted house—a huge house, this time. I am looking for shelter, I think, and, in any event, I'm not alone. We walk around very slowly. Only then I realize that in that house lives a gigantic man (meaning force, not size), who can kill us. He sees us, and a mad race begins. I hide behind the door to the yard, a heavy massive door. The yard, paved with large slabs, is huge. I think the monster has nothing against me in particular. He is looking for the others. However, he comes toward me, pulls the door aside and discovers me. I start to roar desperately with laughter, I laugh continuously, violently, hysterically, and the monster leaves me alone, because he cannot do anything to those who laugh.

The monster is running through the yard chasing people, one by one. When he catches someone, that person starts to roar with laughter and the monster leaves him to chase someone else. Next to me there is an acquaintance, a pretentious and unbearable intellectual. I tell him that the monster likes to trigger the Leoncavallian Complex, and I seem to be delighted by this stupid *trouville*. The monster returns to me. I start to laugh. He doesn't leave me anymore. And I keep on laughing, torturously, grimacing horribly. Tears run down my cheeks, my face muscles hurt, but I keep on laughing in a sinister way. I'm afraid that he might notice that my laughter is not real, but a horrible, painful grimace.



Victor Brauner, *The Gate* (1932)

I am in a store. The saleswoman (one of the saleswomen) comes to me and rests very tenderly her head on my shoulder. We leave together. I have the vague impression that she is handicapped. In no way is she beautiful. We walk on city streets. She is still keeping her head on my shoulder. We speak French all the time. At an intersection, a blue-eyed

girl grabs me by the arm. I look at both of them undecided. The saleswoman is handicapped and very ugly, especially at the mouth. She has a crooked, awfully thin leg. I feel pity for her and remain with her.

We get out of the city. The road leads straight ahead. On both sides there are deep marshes with reeds. In boats, a few people holding nets lie in wait for birds (bustards?) that fly very low, at an amazing speed and making a big noise with their wings. In a distance, one can see some soldiers.

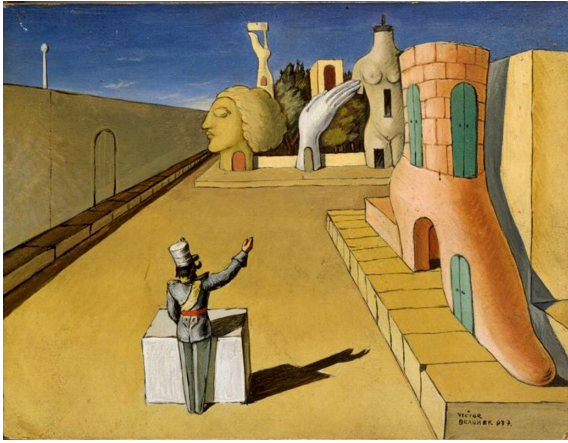
I look toward my right. There is a road there bordered by several rotten willow trees. On the horizon, one can see a hill with a smokestack. I go in that direction. I come again across bustards. (Are we looking for a place to make love?)



Victor Brauner, *The Last Trip* (1937)

I am looking for a place to sleep, for a room. I am with a very unlikely character, a stranger who is also looking for a room. We walk by a public institution (a university?). There we see a doorman full of military stripes. The stranger greets him very ceremoniously, addressing him by a curious title: STREIF. The doorman appears to be flattered by this title. When the stranger asks him, whether he knows of any free rooms, the doorman points to the nearby university, where we can occupy the students' rooms.

We enter a large hall. On the tables there are books for sale, old books. I got rid, I don't know how, of the stranger who bothered me. I check out the books. Among them, a history of costumes catches my attention. On its cover, in medallion, the portrait of Michael the Brave and others.



Victor Brauner, *The City That Dreams* (1937)

The second-hand bookseller sits in a kind of booth. I go closer to him. He calls me by name. I recognize him. He is a former schoolmate of mine. I'm glad: he will find for me what I need. I express my joy and the wish to find some texts by Hegel that I need. He says that he definitely has them. I ask him to take me to the other hall, where the storage room is. He is delighted to do so and takes me there. We slowly open the door. There are courses going on in there. A young professor, who looks like Doctor Death's-Head, is talking to the students. We enter very slowly. He looks at us and slightly sarcastically tells the second-hand bookseller that he will finish his lecture soon, so as to let him continue his commerce.

I look very closely at the face of Doctor Death's-Head, at its strange physiognomy. Presently, he is done. The students leave. He points to a bookshelf and asks for the books there, which he thinks, judging by their format, are very interesting.

I appreciate his subtlety, but when we take a look at the books we find them to be totally uninteresting.

Doctor Death's-Head turns a switch in a little niche. A short circuit happens that sets the wall on fire. Vain attempts to put out the fire from him and the second-hand bookseller—who meanwhile has become an old lady.

Eventually, I lift the old woman by her armpits and accompany her home. We walk very slowly. I assure her that there is no danger and lead her through a line of firefighters who, as it seems, are undergoing military training.

The name of the old woman is Carabella.

The old woman enters a wretched little room. I see her through the window how she is talking to an old man. There is someone else in the little room. I remain outside, at the door. I am holding, like a spear, a broom with a very long handle.



Victor Brauner, *Tandem* (undated)

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I have to go to high school, in the eighth grade. I argue with Mother because she doesn't give me something to cover the windows with. At school, it is mandatory to bring objects that can cover the windows completely. Eventually, I get two blankets and I leave.

I arrive at the high school. I wander through vast corridors. I don't know where is the classroom I am looking for and am tortured by the thought that I am too big for school. I wonder how I will be received by my unknown classmates.

Upstairs, among candidates, I undress and show off my torso. I am extremely strong. The candidates look at me, worried. They are skinny, anemic. Obviously, they will be rejected. I think that I don't need to pass any examination, I will enter directly the last grade.



Victor Brauner, *Prestige of the Air* (1934)

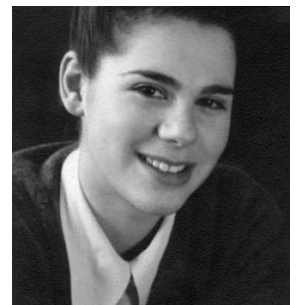
I dress on a narrow street, next to a table. There comes a dirty wretched child (I am sure he has lice). The child sticks to me. His father lies down nearby, next to a fire. I hit hard the child, who falls down screaming. I explain to the father, through gestures, that he fell by himself. The father remains motionless by the fire. I leave.

I am looking for the high school secretarial office. I am told that it is all the way at the other end of the street, in a separate building, which is white, old and small. I get there, when the sirens sound the air-raid alarm. I calmly walk away. Numerous students tie their boots or walk about, indifferent. When the airplanes are very high, far away above us, I take shelter by crouching behind an iron gate.

The gate is pushed aside. Then I see that I am in a stinking room, a kind of kitchen, with Nadine and Titu. Nadine lies stretched out lazily in a bed and asks what food is being prepared for us. Potatoes and compote. Enters the maid, who asks what are we doing there. We tell her that we take shelter. Nadine puts the compote into the oven. Enters the mistress of the house; she wears loud makeup. She is a friend of Nadine's. The more I look at her, the more I am disgusted: she becomes more and more deformed, her legs get crooked, shorter and fatter.

I ask for compote. Nadine says that we should eat fingernails: she has a lot of them, finely cut and resting on a larger fingernail.

I start eating, repulsed and disgusted. I eat because Nadine is eating with obvious pleasure.



Nadine Krainik
(to be continued)

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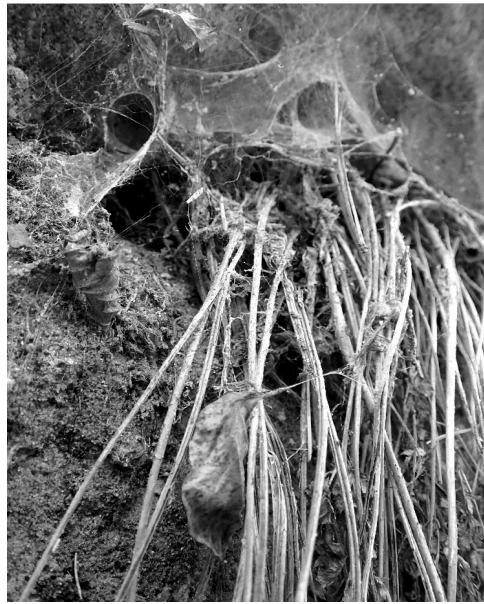
and thrown into the flow of unconscious thoughts, can color them with emotional or affective components, from which they arose in the preconscious, and influence dream formation by the principle of analogy. The symbolic function of dream elements, enlightened by this analogy, which will inevitably reveal itself in the manifest form of dreams, will then require that the pre-conscious elements that participated in dream formation be considered in the analysis.

The mutual penetration of conscious and unconscious components also becomes one of the sources of movement in the formation of dreams.

4. Associations of Dream Ideas. Dynamics

Pierre Mabilie once developed the idea that the dream reworked oneiric images by putting the individual fractions on a common denominator, which is light. If the uniform, diffuse light of a dream changes, it is due to a certain internal tendency. Grey means fatigue, glowing brightness means euphoria; color reflects irritation, anger, calm, or hope. Organic restlessness, passion or fever, are interpreted by the predominance of red and yellow. Mabilie was convinced that the examination of light facilitated the search for the transition between ordinary perception, consciousness, and dream. Associating this inner brightness with the sun then surpasses that artificial, habitual isolation of the inner and outer worlds. (*La Conscience lumineuse*, in *Minotaure* #10, 1937).

Even if we approach Mabilie's theory of color symbolism of the dream with the reserve imposed on us by the relatively rare occurrence of color dreams, it remains indisputable that changes in light intensity in a dream, as well as dimmer or sharper outlines of dream scenes are functions of



Přemysl Martinec, *The Vampire is Your Friend* (2021)

dramatizing dream content. It belongs among the forming components of the dream thought and simultaneously to the dynamizing factors of imaginary associations.

5. Dynamics of Dream Ideas. Associations

The dream would not be able to achieve its dramatic effect if it was composed of scenes that would fall into oblivion immediately after taking place in front of the sleeper's inner vision. It is, however, true that in a dream "every previous reality melts away from the reality that follows it," as Marcel Proust notes (in his novel *In Search of Lost Time*), but not to disappear completely. It continues to affect dream plot formation; besides it often returns either in a new form or in a new dramatic function.

Also, motifs, mostly associated with certain places that are repeated in dreams, suggest that linking dream elements, which form parts of the dream content, does not represent only temporary bonds, but that psychic structures

are strengthened into a kind of sintered tufts of images, which are capable of emerging from the ocean of the unconscious onto the stage of the dream. Probably, the contiguity of a dream element with one of those that belongs to this imaginary bunch is enough for its more or less finished formation to be taken into the dream content, which then adapts it according to current trends resulting from the actual stimulus.

Associations of dream images are probably only partly produced by unconscious mechanisms. Leaving aside associations brought about by consciousness, when dreams are recollected subsequently, what applies here are the associations evoked by the echo of the actual stimulus and integrating its analogy into the motif of the dream content.

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ONEIRIC ECHOES

Hybrid Dreams

From the surrealist-oriented publishing house *Sonámbula* in Montreal comes an intriguing book entitled *Hybrid Dreams*, which offers an exciting new way of exploring oneiric phenomena. Its authors are Antoine-Vincent L'Amor and Sabatini La Siesta. Here is the blurb from the back cover:

"This book is addressed to anyone that a fervent hunger for delirium will have pushed to explore those passageways that the Dream, unceasingly, in its nocturnal ascent, provides us as the expression of a preciously vital world. You who believe yourselves confined to living the oneiric experience in solitude, a collective path is now open to you."

The proposed experiment is explained as follows:

"It is by a series of analogies, correspondences or parallelisms present in the manifest content of dream accounts, and also guided by an intuitive and delirious state of mind, that we have *hybridized* two dreams together. We have called the unified dream account resulting from this experience "hybrid dream," and its working method is to merge two (or more) dreams from different people."

Here is an example of such "hybridized" dream (the two merging parts are clearly indicated):

"I find myself alone in a desert. The landscape opens up before me in all its splendor, but a few centimeters in front of me a door made of bees blocks my way. The buzz of the bees reverberates persistently. The infuriated door vibrates intensely. The fear sets in immediately, because I know that if I want to enter that place, I have to go through the door. So I approach the door, I open it and *enter the corridor of a theater dimly*

lit by a row of candles. I am now in the company of my wife. We walk quietly in the corridor and discover, only a few steps away, the corpse of a man lying on his back. I immediately clutch my wife's hand and hold her behind me. Amid the hubbub of the spectators, we stare together at the bloodied body of the dead man."

