

# A Struggle with Wishful Thinking

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This is my dream: *I am delivering newspapers in a strange, urban place. It seems physically safe and the buildings are tall (three stories) and adjacent. I am near the end of the route.*

*I reach into my bag, pull out a newspaper and try to toss it over a building so that it will land on the balcony of a building about 50-100 feet in on the next cross street. I have the feeling I do this all the time. Someone gets in the way and it lands on the street, which is a little wet. As I go over to get it, I realize there is something wrong with my bicycle.*

*I am stopped at a corner. There is a father and son with another bicycle. My bicycle is up high on a stand and the father is explaining it to his son, and pulling and poking. After a while I ask for my bike back. He is fairly friendly. I am angry. I don't finish delivering the papers, but go home. I feel bad. The next day someone asks me to deliver them again. I admit I didn't finish yesterday. They tell me to deliver those papers first today. I missed some sort of hospital.*

At first I didn't like this dream, but the way I understood the assignment forced me to use it. My work, delivering newspapers, was not interesting. I also prefer dreams with beautiful and/or sensual women and this didn't have one. Instead a nerdy father and his son are taking up my time looking at my bicycle. The dream ends with me feeling sad. I felt this dream was a loser and did not at all reflect the optimism of my life situation.

In the first session of our dream group it was hard to not read meaning into our scenes, but we were trying to follow Hillman's approach, in which "the key here is indirection: if the soul wanders from the body in sleep, then our way of letting the soul return to concrete life must follow the same wandering course, an indirect meandering, a reflective puzzling, a method that never translates the madness but speaks with it in its dream language" (Hillman p 109).

Jeff and Laurie helped me think more about the father and son and the bike, as well as who was blocking the newspapers and why I gave up delivering them. I wondered why I was so mad at the father and son.

I used to be able to throw the newspapers over those buildings. Why I can't do something I could do before? This isn't just a bad day. I know those days are over. I looked more carefully at what was blocking the newspapers and saw a huge, looming, shimmering, pulsating, electromechanical creature.

My group brought me back to the intersection, which was now empty. I was disappointed the creature wasn't there to fear and instead I had to take some initiative. I didn't know what to do. My head told me to get the bicycle so I could roll it around and pick up the newspapers. Then I saw the sun rising in one of the quadrants. I wanted to follow it and forget my responsibilities.

Helping my fellow group members explore their images helped me learn how to explore mine, possibly because it's easier to stay away from meaning with their images since I can't as easily imagine meaning as with mine.

I started thinking about my dream as I did the assigned readings. If "...most of the dreams of adults are traced back by analysis to erotic wishes" (Freud p 70), then what are my erotic wishes? Perhaps the large creature that prevents me from continuing to toss my newspapers is my sexuality, in the shadow of which I am helpless. This is a very different perspective on my sexuality than my conscious one, but upon reflection I can see that my sexuality has frustrated me.

If everything in the dream is about me, then do the newspapers represent a headline oriented level of relating? Am I a person from a different neighborhood who doesn't really go in depth about themselves? And is something no longer working with that way of relating? It seems pretty far fetched, but it may be true.

Because "the dream work has carried out a work of compression or condensation on a large scale" (Freud p 27), I felt free to expand on my bicycle and look at it erotically. In addition to being a way for me to get places, it is also a carriage for my news and "...carriages ... may represent the uterus"

(Freud p 72). I tried looking at my sexuality as a way of getting places with women. In my first two relationships after breaking up with my wife, I eventually came to feel like a sex object. But I wonder if I'm not stretching things. This is, after all, just a dream. However, I've just entered a new relationship and this is an interesting dynamic to which I should probably pay attention.

My skeptical side wondered whether the dream really contained all this or if it was just my imagination. But since a free wheeling approach to the dream is what started my imagination, the distinction may not be that relevant except as an indication of my ongoing inner tension between mythological and coldly rational thinking.

I read

By paying careful attention to the unconscious, as manifested in dream and fantasy, the individual comes to change his attitude from one in which ego and will are paramount to one in which he acknowledges that he is guided by an integrating factor which is not of his own making. ... This integrating factor, expressed by the emergence of quaternity or Mandala symbols, is named the Self (Storr p 229)

and wondered if the intersecting streets represented a Mandala. The two quadrants on my left are fairly barren. The only thing in either of them is the hospital so I went inside and was shocked to find myself. I don't think of myself as hurt, so why have I taken shelter in a hospital? I was surprised to discover I didn't want to leave. If I could get the nurse to fall in love with me (by using my sexuality) I could stay forever.

I'm not really sick, but people might assume I am and not ask me to participate in the world. There's some truth to the idea that I like to be overlooked because it's a way of avoiding the world. How am I going to come back to the world and finish my job when things are changing so much? I'm afraid the shimmering creature, my sexuality, is going to come for me. I think of it as my nemesis.

Between the first and second class meeting, I looked at the term paper assignment and saw some questions to answer if we're going to write about the group process. These gave me some ideas for working within our group. I sent Jeff and Laurie an email discussing them.

Is there a mythology to our approach? I may still be acting as if dreams mean something and there will be a coherence bringing everything together. This is a very strong urge in me and one that is

causing me endless anguish as I work on my paper for Jungian Depth Psychology. Yet, from what I gather from The Dream and the Underworld as well as A Little Course in Dreams, I almost think meaning should be a dirty word for us. I decide to replace the mythology of coherent meaning with a mythology of something else, but I'm not sure what. I try to concentrate on the images.

I had another dream. *I am walking up a hill behind a group of people. They seem friendly with each other. I am surprised when they start turning off at different places because I realize they were not connected.*

This speaks to my mythology of coherence. Again, I wonder if I'm reading too much into dreams, but can't escape the fact that however I get to these questions, they all seem relevant. Perhaps I should concentrate less on their theoretical consistency and more on dealing with what they bring up. But I don't like what they bring up!

I don't know what to do. This dream gets more and more unsettling and I really don't think I'm in such bad shape. I admit this used to be true, but I want to be over it. I'm not feeling so good about myself and discover that we have more freedom than I thought in which dream we choose. I have another dream I like more and start considering.

I was terribly disappointed that I didn't get into Harvard College 35 years ago and have never gotten over it. Within the last year or so I've had a few dreams in which I was accepted and started to attend. This dream series seems much more relevant to my future than the dream I've been working with. It's optimistic, full of cute co-eds who like me, upbeat and full of water (for some reason, the dorms are always flooding.) It doesn't bother me that it's infantile wish fulfillment.

I tell myself it's more important to understand the Harvard side of me than the wounded side. That's just not me, so why waste my time? The current me is dynamic, not this wounded guy in a hospital. He's nobody (What a discomfoting choice of words! I really don't want to explore that even though it seems to beg for it.) I don't want to do this hospital stuff. I've processed all that stuff about my

wounds. It's time to move on. Harvard is really a much more relevant dream than being in a hospital, which is totally not my situation.

On May 21 I had another dream. *I am lying on a bed or cot. A Valkyrie is walking along a concrete wall in front of me. She really doesn't notice me but I want her attention. I want her to step down from that wall, bend over me and do something sexual. I don't remember if she does. I realize that this woman is the same thing as the metallic, robot structure in the dream I am working on for Pacifica.*

I started to wonder if I had the original dream under circumstances that made me feel like your instructions forced me to use it for interpretation because I need to work that dream. Is it possible that I'm not ready to go to Harvard? I had gone so far as to prepare a creative presentation about the Harvard Dream that was very clever, but started having second thoughts about cleverness. I began to look at this as an opportunity and not an assignment.

Where am I willing to go? Can I "think about anything that comes to mind?" (George) If I take this yucky dream, I'll need to be honest in my creative presentation and with myself. Am I willing to be vulnerable instead of witty? I'm too old to waste time so the answer is yes.

I start thinking about the medium for my creative presentation. I can't paint, play music, draw, sculpt or work with wood. I am a good computer programmer and decide to animate my dream on the computer. I get excited at the prospect of moving figures that do things when you click on them. I order a computer graphics programming language so I can build all this animation. Then I realize I am turning my dream into an opportunity to learn a new computer language. It reminds me of the witty Harvard presentation and isn't what I really want to do, so I'm still stuck.

I am becoming very interested in the anima figure. In class, the professor tells us about someone who put trees all over the classroom (did I hear that correctly? Does it matter?) I start thinking about using flowers for my creative project. Because the assignment was to do a project inspired by the dream, I decide to explore my anima with flowers. It seems pretty weird, but the newspaper in the dream and what's going on in my other classes makes me think it may be time for a radically different way of

approaching material and life in general. I wonder if I am at that point in life when my inferior function needs to take over.

This project idea is radically different and even if it's a complete flop I think I should try it to sort of blast me into a new world. Logically (superior function-wise) there is no reason not to because the presentation is pass-fail and all I have to do is show up. It's probably not so horribly stupid that Dawn will make an exception and fail me (although I do have my fears.) I read "the anima consciously confronted and related to may lead to the realm of flowers" (Whitmont p 198) and take it as a mandate.

The project made me uncomfortable. Indirection is not my superior function, so it was hard to wander around the farmers' market in a forced daze so that my unconscious could choose the flowers that represent my anima. I felt better when I researched the associations with the flowers and was quite surprised by some of the connections I was able to make with my life. I enjoyed writing and rehearsing my presentation. I felt a little ridiculous delivering it because I still don't give a lot of credence to the underlying philosophy here at Pacifica (This changes a little bit in each course.) However, I felt my audience enjoyed it and that gave me a rush.

## Works Cited

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