



# The Interpretation of Dreams

*Sigmund Freud , James Strachey (Editor)*

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## **The Interpretation of Dreams** Sigmund Freud , James Strachey (Editor)

What are the most common dreams and why do we have them? What does a dream about death mean? What do dreams of swimming, failing, or flying symbolize? First published by Sigmund Freud in 1899, *The Interpretation of Dreams* considers why we dream and what it means in the larger picture of our psychological lives. Delving into theories of manifest and latent dream content, the special language of dreams, dreams as wish fulfillments, the significance of childhood experiences, and much more, Freud, widely considered the “father of psychoanalysis,” thoroughly and thoughtfully examines dream psychology. Encompassing dozens of case histories and detailed analyses of actual dreams, this landmark text presents Freud’s legendary work as a tool for comprehending our sleeping experiences.

Renowned for translating Freud’s German writings into English, James Strachey—with the assistance of Anna Freud—first published this edition in 1953. Incorporating all textual alterations made by Freud over a period of thirty years, it remains the most complete translation of the work in print.

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## **The Interpretation of Dreams Details**

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# From Reader Review The Interpretation of Dreams for online ebook

## Alexia says

Written with scientific denseness, but lacks scientific rigor or clarity. Can be tedious, vague and confusing. Freud will say he's going to do something (like not use personal examples) only to forget he said that and do it anyway. Or he'll acknowledge the flaw with his approach and then do nothing to correct it (which is better than not admitting it, I guess). For example, he uses his patients, "neurotics", for analysis and comments on how that makes his conclusions not drawn from a representative sample. But that comment is where it stops, there's no correction or real analysis on how that impacted his conclusions.

Or he'll start out with a clear sentence and then explain it until it descends into an illogical jumble. Or he'll refer to something not obvious as something obvious. Or he'll say there's numerous instances of something and then not list them. I could go on. He gives too many examples, belabors the points he does end up making, references confusing German word play...

I'm not going to make the same mistake as Freud. I'm going to stop talking once my point is made. And I think it's made.

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## Rebecca McNutt says

Is it just me, or was ol' Mr. Freud the biggest perv in the world of psychology? Don't get me wrong, this is an interesting read from a historical perspective, but it's so difficult to take seriously! It's also very dated and seems to follow the average family of the time, without taking into account anyone who doesn't fit into what was "proper" back then.

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## Owlseyes says

A major book (of 1900) as one of the possible approaches to the world of dreams. Freud starts with Aristotle (and the demoniac view); then, the (biblical) approach viewing dreams as "Divine inspiration".

Next, he proceeds with a very exhaustive sample of dreams of his own, of historical characters (Napoleon I, Xerxes....) or from his patients (or friends) to illustrate/prove his point: **dreams are the fulfillment of (unconscious) desires**; though "absurd" they may look, they are meaningful, they can be interpreted.

This absurdity is due to unconscious mechanisms which disguise the true meaning of the dream, namely, via "displacement" and "condensation". Our language is also an obstacle: due to its inaccuracy. Yet language is paramount for the interpretation démarche. And Freud was good at it.

(Tom Paine's nightly pest)

It's a pity he ends the last paragraph\* of the book considering the value of dreams regarding the future (should have written: prophetic aspect) concluding: "*that* we cannot consider". Curiously, he took some lines on this woman telling his mother about how a "great man" he would become; he speculated about a "minister"... .

('The Interpretation of Dreams' by Rod Moss)

The fact is that this "wish-fulfillment" approach proved not to be totally true. With the great war (1914-1918), Freud had patients/soldiers who suffered from recurrent dreams /war-traumas...and he concluded later on, that **these types of dreams [nightmares!] had no relation to the Eros impulse, rather to Thanatos: a destructive force/drive operating within the psyche**. So he made some changes on his model of the psyche.

(Hypnos and Thanatos: Sleep and His Half-Brother Death, by John William Waterhouse, 1874)

Today [15th of June] I was listening to someone\*\* speaking about dreams of the "USA in flames...and riots in the streets". Those dreams happened to people before the 2012 Obama election. They perceived a link between the re-election and the feared "upcoming events". Surely, those were dreams of the future; no pleasure-principle operating.

I'm glad they didn't "materialize".

**UPDATE** :I would be glad to hear of any help (interpretation) on Chief Golden Light Eagle's dream about Obama:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sywLXE...>

\*"And how about the value of the dream for a knowledge of the future? That,of course we cannot consider. One feels inclined to substitute:"for a knowledge of the past". For the dream originates from the past in every sense. To be sure the ancient belief that the dream reveals the future is not entirely devoid of truth. By representing a wish as fulfilled the dream leads us into the future; BUT THIS FUTURE, TAKEN BY THE DREAMER AS PRESENT,HAS BEEN FORMED INTO THE LIKENESS OF THAT PAST BY INDESTRUCTIBLE WISH".

\*\*<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zZSJ7...>

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**Jana says**

This was one of those books I tried to read on my own back as a young college student. It wasn't a part of

any coursework, so I didn't have anyone to help tie it to larger ideas. If I remember, I think I ended up making my own wacky meaning out of it... which was some sort of Jungian collective UNCS thing or another.

But then I re-read it in grad school in the context of Freud's other work and it began to make a bit more sense. I liked his hypothetical "primal language" because it suggests the existence of symbols as independent of verbal language, which as a visual artist is a notion I'm deeply invested in. This "language" is not then something that is "used" in dreams as a translation from CSNESS, but rather its own more subtle and fluid independent organization of meaning. The "language" is non-linear and non-chronological.

When I think about this idea, I'm reminded of Rapael's Transfiguration:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfig...>

This is one of those pieces where the artist is able to represent (in images one above the other) simultaneous occurrences which can only be read in the original text as one after the other (and then reflected upon as simultaneous).

This play with time is something I like to do in my own work, especially in pulling stills from time-based media so the viewer can enter the work at will rather than be held captive by it (as in, watching a sequence from beginning to end). Internet media satisfy a similar urge.

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## Dimitri says

Interpretation of Dreams by Sigmund Freud is filled with Freud's theories about the connections between dreams and real life that he has discovered through his research. Freud covers everything from the content within dreams to the strategies needed to interpret them, as well as diving in to the finer aspects such as memory in dreams and connections to everyday life. Freud often quotes the extensive research that has already been done in the field of the analysis of dreams but points out that all of the work so far has been inconclusive and in essence raised more questions than it answered. In this work Freud does his best to definitively answer the questions that we still had about interpreting our dreams.

I thought that this book was really fascinating because it answered many of my research questions about the way our subconscious mind is connected to the events of our everyday lives and our memories. The most interesting part to me was the chapter entitled "Memory in Dreams" because he answered so many questions about different obscurities that appear not to be connected to any singular event. He pointed out that people often have dreams about some finite detail that they would never have expected to remember. This passage was so striking because he answered some of my questions about whether our subconscious thoughts are connected to our everyday life. It also made me realize how powerful our mind is and the fact that we actually pick up so many details in everyday life that we might toss away as insignificant but arise in our dreams.

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## Agir(????) says

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This was a much more interesting book than I thought it might be. The nature of dreams is something that is hard not to find fascinating. The thing is that we spend quite a bit of time dreaming – not the third of our lives we spend sleeping, but enough time to make us wonder why we dream at all. It seems incomprehensible that our dreams would be completely meaningless. But then, they can be so bizarre it is hard to know just what they might mean.

Freud starts with a quick run through how dreams have been interpreted in the past – from Aristotle on. Aristotle is a good place to start, as he says we dream about things that have been left unresolved from the day – and this is a core idea that Freud also includes in his theory of dreams.

Essentially, Freud sees dreams as playing a key role in helping us to process stuff that happened during the day. But dreams are a truth that likes to hide. Their meaning covers itself in remarkable allusions and images

that are often amusingly apt, but sometimes it is as if we are determined to hide the true meaning of our dreams even from ourselves.

Freud makes it clear that this will not be a book of off-the-shelf interpretations – ‘oh, you dreamt of a lion last night, that means you should have been born Leo and spent time chasing gazelle’. To Freud it is impossible to understand and interpret dreams from a list of standard symbols. This doesn’t mean that if you are going to interpret dreams you don’t have to know a lot about symbols and their common meanings – but this knowledge is never enough. Symbols develop their own meanings within the text that is the dream. Just as in Blake’s *The Sick Rose* the rose can be read to mean anything from nature, to the Christian Church, to female genitalia, so in dreams the interpretation is meaningful within the context of the dream and to the life of the dreamer. And the dream is relevant to the immediate life of the dreamer. It is generally a response to what happened that day – even if the imagery used may well refer back to the childhood of the dreamer so that the deeper significance is a life’s work.

The other remarkable conclusion Freud draws is that dreams are wish fulfilments. Now, this seems anything but obvious. Sure, when we have dreams we are having sex with super-models it is pretty obvious that Freud is onto something. But these aren’t the only dreams he sees as being wish fulfilments. Even dreams where loved ones die are seen by Freud as being fundamentally the realisations of wishes – but again, the dream isn’t always as easy to interpret as it might initially seem and the wish may not be as easy to understand as might be immediately apparent from what happens in the dream. The fact we wake screaming and shaking from a dream may not mean there is no wish involved in the thing that terrifies us – although, I would have to say I don’t think he dealt with nightmares nearly as well as he ought to have.

It is here that Freud discusses the Oedipal Complex – how our first sexual attraction is toward the parent of the opposite sex to ourselves and therefore we desire to remove one parent from the scene so as to take their place. While we are children the full implications of this desire are obscure to us – but as we grow older the taboo associated with this desire helps suppress our recognition of these desires, or repress them, rather – but only from the conscious mind. The subconscious mind still remembers what we might prefer to forget and so uses these images, as the first images of our awakening desires, as potent images in our dreams. The meaning of the image may not be anything like that we want to kill our father and have sex with our mother – it might actually refer to an awakening of sexual interest in someone else we have only recently met – but the dream uses this ‘primal’ image as something to help it make sense of our current world and desires, even if the image then goes on to confuse the hell out of us.

Time for a story. I once worked with a woman called Frances Nolan. She was really lovely, one of the nicest people I’ve ever worked with, but I didn’t really fancy her. I mean, she was pretty and incredibly nice, but she was quite a bit younger than me and I just wasn’t really all that interested in her in that way. But every morning I would be walking to the train station and when I got to a certain part of Church Street she would suddenly jump into my head as large as life. I was starting to think that I must have been starting to fall for her – it was the strangest feeling, and quite confusing. Until one day I realised that there is a shoe shop in Church Street that is called Frances Nolan Shoes – and the sign is huge and I would walk under it every day. I really struggle to believe I didn’t consciously notice this sign in all the time I had walked up that street and imagined I was falling for poor Frances.

This book is interesting as I had assumed it would be a much harder read than it turned out to be – I also thought it would be a much sillier book than it turned out to be. It is extremely well written. I don’t think I agree entirely with Freud, but he makes a very strong case. My main problems with his theory have to do with Sherlock Holmes. Because that’s what a lot of this sounded like to me. Someone has a dream and Freud does the whole ‘Elementary, my dear Watson’ thing. It even gets to the stage where he says that sometimes

things mean the opposite of what they seem to mean in the dream. When that is the case then any interpretation is basically about imposing ones preconceptions on the meaning of the symbols in the dream.

I tend to think that dreams probably don't mean nearly as much as we like to think they do – but what they do do is throw up lots of random images, images which we try to make sense of and it is that 'making of sense' that says interesting things about us. And whether it is dream images or tarot cards or ink dots on paper – our making sense of random images says interesting things about us. But we should go gently into this stuff. We should go on tip-toes. Because stories have lives of their own and we are weaker than a good story and always will be.

I once read a book called *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. I think in that book she says that lines have a momentum that is very hard to control – but controlling the momentum of lines is a large part of what drawing is about. Stories also have a momentum that is very hard to control. The narratives we tell about ourselves are one thing – the narrative we tell about our dreams are quite another.

Personally, I think I prefer Freudian readings of novels to Freudian readings of people – but I can certainly see why this book made such an impact. If the problem with the book is Freud playing Holmes, it is only a problem because he is so damn clever he gets away with it. I'm surprised I'm going to do this – I would never have thought I would have when I started reading - but I think I would recommend this book. It is a fascinating read, even if it has left me somewhat less than convinced.

## Ahmad Sharabiani says

## Die Traumdeutung = The Interpretation of Dreams, Sigmund Freud

The Interpretation of Dreams (German: Die Traumdeutung) is an 1899 book by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, in which the author introduces his theory of the unconscious with respect to dream interpretation, and discusses what would later become the theory of the Oedipus complex. Freud revised the book at least eight times and, in the third edition, added an extensive section which treated dream symbolism very literally, following the influence of Wilhelm Stekel. Freud said of this work, "Insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime."

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## Glenn Russell says

Sidney wobbled backwards, nearly toppling over the edge but regained his balance and shoved Mr. Verea

back. A rapid-fire shoving match ensued along the entire length of the roof. At the same time Sam fluttered down on tiptoe, scooped up an armful of shingles and started putting them in place.

A fully-dressed Mrs. Verea made her appearance at the head of the ladder. "Get back down here," she railed at her husband. "Let those men finish their work."

"Nobody is going to push me on my own roof," he replied.

"I say come down," insisted Mrs. Verea.

"Come down yourself," said Mr. Verea.

Stepping up from the ladder to the roof Mrs. Verea kicked her husband in the pants. He stopped shoving Sidney, turned around and started shoving her, whereupon she too started shoving him furiously.

Sidney fanned himself with his baseball cap and looked over at his brother – just now, between acrobatic leaps of a saltarello, Sam placed the last of the shingles on the tar.

As if he were at the court of Louis XIV, Sidney curtsied gracefully, then pointed to the ladder before climbing down himself. Sam followed, hips swinging but fell between the rungs. There was nothing for Sidney to do but guide the ladder, with his brother stuck in it, to the van.

The kids approached; they held the distended seed, the shape and length of a garden hose now: translucent with flecks of gold, sparkling, radiating light in their hands. When Sam jiggled and kicked down the driveway, the kids shook the magnificent seed, each shake casting out fine gold dust that turned to streams of water when it touched the earth.

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## Warwick says

I dreamt that I had written a huge modern rewrite of *Moby-Dick*, except instead of a whale they were hunting a badger. It was full of gothic scenes of Ahab staring moodily into some light woodland, reminiscing about how the white beast had bitten his foot once, and how he would ultimately ‘earth the hated brock in his dank and stinking sett, and finish him utterly’. Instead of the Pequod, Ahab and the narrator cycled through the forest on a tandem bicycle, studying tracks and peering through the shrubs. Every now and then, one of them would point through the branches and shout, ‘Lo! The white badger!’, and they would pedal off.

In my mind this was a serious literary project. Unfortunately I have never finished *Moby-Dick*, and so the book just devolved into chapters full of interminable facts about badger biology, lifestyle and cultural history, and the foundational role they play in the mythology of countless woodland societies (which is not true). I remember copying out a quote from *King Lear* where someone is said to be ‘like unto the brindl'd baddger’, but sadly upon waking I have discovered that this line does not exist. On the other hand, I also remember repeatedly using the adjective ‘meline’ which does, in fact, exist and is not a word I knew that I knew.

If anyone can interpret this for me, I am all ears. In the meantime, if you'll excuse me I now have 200,000 words to write about badger-hunting.

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## SmarterLilac says

This is one of the books that helped me understand Freud's genius, as well as the value of psychoanalysis. It hurts me so that fewer and fewer people want to understand or appreciate Freud. Yes, I realize that the Freudian perspective, especially on things like dream interpretation, has limited value in non-Western cultures, and that for some, dream interpretation itself may not be the most insightful way to understand the subconscious.

Still--come *on*. This book changed Europe, and the course of history, as well as humankind's awareness of our inner lives. I love it.

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## Gada says

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It saddens me, that unless you have taken psychology courses or have done a fair amount of research into the field, you hold a very narrow view of Dr. Sigmund Freud. A doctor, with a medical degree from the



University of Vienna, Freud later shifted his focus to psychiatry, realizing that his patients' mental health was at risk. He truly wanted to help people. That does not come across, even in psychology textbooks. However, you can definitely feel that in this book. I was surprised to find Freud's voice as an author (translation may have affected this) quite inviting.

Many of Freud's findings about dream psychology were drawn from his own dreams. This creates a bias in his thinking. I will not deceive you, Freud did not try to be objective.

However, I read this book casually. I did not study it. I did not look for flaws. What I did do however, is enjoy it. It was actually a very pleasant read, cover to cover.

If you are interested in dreams, you will enjoy this book. Even if you don't agree with the conclusions Freud draws, I bet you will find his journey into dreams fascinating.

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