

Rhea Prabhu  
Mosaics I, Professor Chavers  
October 12, 2013  
Two Means to One Same End

Though the approaches that both Sigmund Freud and Ninsun take to expound Gilgamesh's dream of Enkidu's inception are vastly different, they ultimately lead to a common interpretation. Freud believes that the elucidation of dreams comes from the dreamer himself, and as such, he approaches the analyzation of dreams, as would a stimulus- eliciting a reaction from its object. Ninsun, however, ascribes meaning to Gilgamesh's dream and then confirms her hand in the occurrence of the happenings in the dream, thus playing the role of a fortuneteller.

The particular means by which Freud would evoke meaning from Gilgamesh's dream is free association, upon which he would build latent content from manifest content. As defined by Freud, latent content is the essence of a dream, since it reveals the true meaning behind a dream (VII, 149). In contrast, manifest content is "made up predominantly of visual images and more rarely of thoughts and words", due to which it is what a dream appears to be saying (VII, 149). Comparably, the former is found upon delving into a dream's possible meaning, and the latter is just the face value of a dream, and is therefore seemingly nonsensical.

To filtrate a dream from manifest to latent content, Freud suggests sticking to the grassroots of his theory of psychoanalysis and investigating viable meanings until coming to a plausible deduction. Freud's approach however, is subject- intensive, in that he heavily relies on the dreamer to arrive at the latent content of a dream. Freud conveys this in the following lines: "Psychoanalysis follows the technique of getting people under examination so far as possible themselves to produce the solution of their riddles. Thus, too, it is the dreamer himself who should tell us what his dream means" (VI, 123). According to Freud, a dreamer should associate the first things that come to mind from a symbol or image, the manifest content of a dream, that

he or she remembers from the dream. When done quickly, and incessantly, this exercise will reveal what the dreamer was truly thinking of, thereby exposing the latent content of the dream.

A quintessential element to Freud's theory of dreams is that "the dreamer always says he knows nothing" (VI, 123). However, Freud asserts in the following quote the need for an interpreter to contest this: "But in general if the dreamer asserts that nothing occurs to him we contradict him; we bring urgent pressure to bear on him; we insist that something must occur to him- and we turn out to be right" (VI, 129). This quote depicts the dynamic that must exist between an interpreter and dreamer- charged, as it is the job of an interpreter to push the dreamer to a breaking point where he utters something telling of his dream. Another quality of this dynamic is persistence, which leads to a long and tenuous interpretation process.

Ninsun's omniscient nature allows her to ascertain the meaning of Gilgamesh's dream with relative ease and ascertain a set of actions with which he should respond. She is described as "clever and wise, well versed in everything", and it is in such a fashion that she tells Gilgamesh, "Like a wife you'll love him, caress and embrace him"(I, I<sub>266-271</sub>). The diction in the latter quote is in the imperative tense, hence serving as both a command, and prediction for the future. It also sets a condition on Gilgamesh, since he must behave in such a manner to have "mighty comrade" who will be his "savior" (I, I<sub>268</sub>).

The use of the imperative in this instance is an imposition, one that constrains not only Gilgamesh's actions but also his ability to freely associate images and words with the symbols in his dreams such as a falling star. Ninsun additionally points out that it was she who made Gilgamesh's companion, Enkidu, his equal (I, I<sub>265</sub>). In doing so, Ninsun both associates with and affirms part of Gilgamesh's dream, thus validating her powers of discernment and interpretation. Though Ninsun ultimately arrives at a correct interpretation of Gilgamesh's dream, as she is in

part responsible for certain happenings in the dream, she prevents Gilgamesh from reaching the conclusion himself. In doing so, she diverges from what Freud believes and bases his theory of dreams on: “One learns more from one’s own: the process carries more conviction” (VII, 140).

Freud’s analysis of Gilgamesh’s dream is overall, wholesome; it accounts for the symbols, and, to an extent, establishes the relationship between Gilgamesh and the symbol. Freud strongly believed that “For the male genitals as a whole, the sacred number 3 is of symbolic significance” (X, 129). In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh describes his dream about Enkidu to Ninsun in exactly three stanzas, vaguely referring to male genitalia if assessed by Freud’s standards.

Freud also poses that “The male organ, finds symbolic substitutes in the first instance in things that resemble it in shape- things accordingly, that are long and upstanding” (X, 190). This, as applied to Gilgamesh’s dream, also forms a link, since Gilgamesh states that he tried to “dislodge” from the ground the star that fell from the heavens. By definition, dislodge means to remove something concrete, as by lifting, pursing or taking off. In order to dislodge something, it must be standing up in some way. As a result, the star that fell from the heavens, Enkidu, landed and was lodged on Earth in an erect manner. Similarly, Gilgamesh in the recountal of a subsequent dream, says, “An axe was lying with a crowd gathered round” (I, I<sub>278</sub>). In the first dream, Gilgamesh described the crowd to be standing around the fallen star. The star is replaced in the second dream by an axe, hence still representing Enkidu. Freud’s third and final argument for the symbolic representation of male genitalia in dreams is the presence of “sharp weapons of every kind” (X, 190). This once again implies a male’s presence in the dream.

In identifying the various references to male genitalia, Freud also establishes the type of relationship Gilgamesh has to Enkidu. This is because Freud’s argument for the presence of male

genitalia was a way he could explain the pervasive nature of sex in dreams. Resultantly, the presence of male genitalia in Gilgamesh's dreams would signify a sexual relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Sexual has multiple connotations, one of which is occurring between or involving the sexes. The activity that occurs between the sexes is not identified definitely as sexual intercourse, and thusly need not be sexual intercourse. It can also imply that the relationship between two individuals can be physical, creating a bond between the two.

Freud's interpretation would not be baseless, since in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh and Enkidu meet in the face of sex, or rather "coitus interruptus", the interruption of sex. The act of sex is an act of consummation, which would mean that in stopping Gilgamesh, Enkidu consummates a bond with Gilgamesh. Since the word 'consummate' means to complete, Gilgamesh and Enkidu complete each other in the figurative sense of the word and the literal.

Freud's interpretation of the type of relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu coincides with that of Ninsun. Ninsun herself states, "Like a wife you'll love him, caress and embrace him" (I, I<sub>271</sub>). This quote creates a bond between Gilgamesh and Enkidu that is both physical and emotional as well, since the word love can pertain to both the physical act of sex and the figurative act of consummation. Furthermore, Ninsun designates the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu as that of man and wife who are joined in holy matrimony. This can also refer to both the physical and emotional aspects of marriage.

The Freudian analysis of Gilgamesh's dream yields a highly similar interpretation as the fortune telling ways of Ninsun. Though the final analysis is not as clear a picture as the one Ninsun paints, Freud's analysis certainly creates a discernable image, one that is just slightly more pixelated.