

Marie-Louise von Franz

Marie-Louise von Franz was a Swiss psychologist who collaborated with Jung for more than thirty years, and was particularly clear and concise in her writings about dreams.

THE STAGES OF A DREAM

IN JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGY, we have a technique. We compare the dream to a drama and examine it under three structural headings: first the introduction or exposition—the setting of the dream and the naming of the problem; second, the peripeteia—that would be the ups and downs of the story; and finally, the lysis — the end solution or, perhaps, catastrophe. And if I don't understand a dream, I use that scheme. First I say to myself, "Now, what is the introduction?"

The first sentence of a dream generally gives the setting and introduces the major characters. For example, a dream might begin, "I am in my childhood home with my friend Bob." You take the first sentence and ask the dreamer for his associations. "What was your childhood home like? How did you feel there? Were you happy there? How long did you stay there?" And then you ask about the friend, "How is your friend Bob? What was he like? . . . Oh, I see, he was a bore, but you did all your childhood mischief together." And then you insert these *associations* into the text, which then becomes, "I am psychologically still in my boyhood situation, and I am with a part of myself which is boring, but also mischievous."

Once you have that translation, you have naturally to think about how it applies to the moment of the dream and to the dreamer's life. In what way does the dreamer still have one leg in his childhood home? Where in his life situation is he still reacting as he reacted as a boy? You have to assume that the dream is speaking about that corner of his personality.

After you've looked at the exposition in this way, you then go on to the *naming of the problem*. Let's say a car comes up the driveway and two dark burglars jump out. Now you have a dramatic development, which means a specific story is now being told. The two dark men would be an

invasion, something which is breaking in. Burglars very often represent something breaking into one's conscious system. So the dream would then translate, "In the corner of his psyche where the dreamer still has childish reactions, something from the collective unconscious is breaking in."

In this way we slowly go through the whole dream. Now the ending of a dream, the *lysis*, is always what the dream is driving at: a solution or a catastrophe. I know these rules of interpretation so well that I follow them half unconsciously. But I always pay particular attention to the last sentence of the dream, which gives the unconscious solution if there is one. Some dreams just peter out and they are not favorable.

Although von Franz finds those dreams that end without a solution to be unfavorable, I find them useful in indicating movement toward resolution. If the solution was not presented in the dream on a particular night, the next dream, or the next, may fill in the blank.

In the preceding selection, von Franz outlines three dramatic sections of a dream: the setting, naming the problem, and solution. See Gerhard Adler's concept of the sections of a dream on page 30.



DEATH

Here von Franz addresses one of the most disturbing images that can arise in a dream or nightmare—death. She views death in a dream as a positive indicator of some aspect of the self that must die if psychic balance is to be achieved. My clients have found this concept comforting; more importantly, it often seems to fit their circumstances.

[Interviewer] I REMEMBER A DREAM in which I was shot dead, stone cold dead, with one shot right through the heart. But my murderer fired four more shots. Each bullet he fired killed me anew. I remember thinking in the dream that it was pointless for him to continue, for I was already dead. He'd killed me with his first shot. What does it mean when the dreamer actually dies or is killed in a dream?