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8. *ibid* p 303 - 305
9. Hervey de Saint-Denys, *op. cit*
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Morton Schatzman is an American psychiatrist practising psychotherapy in London. Among his publications are "The Story of Ruth" (Penguin 1982) and **Dreams and How to Guide Them** (Edited) by Hervey de Saint Denys (Duckworth 1982) currently he is writing a book on dreams and would be interested in hearing from lucid dreamers. Correspondence should be addressed to him, 14 Laurier Road, NW5.

Hilary Scaife

DREAMWORK WITH CHILDREN

It was my own children, then aged eight and six, who suggested to me in the spring of 1979, that I lead a "dream group for children". At this time I was studying at the Jungian - Senoi Institute, in Berkeley, California, and as part of the professional training I was undertaking in Dream Analysis committed me to leading at least one dream group during the four month course, this seemed to be a good suggestion.

I decided to lead two dream groups. One for adults and one for children. I had already had a year's experience of leading dream groups for adults in Edinburgh, but I had never before attempted dreamwork with children. It was to be the beginning of a new adventure!

In the area we lived in, there was a Community Centre run by the local people for themselves. There were many activities for all age groups consisting mainly of the outdoors, physical classes eg. tennis and the traditional crafts eg. puppet making, baking, etc. Dreamwork was a new and to many, a rather startling choice!

However, the first advertisement in the Community Centre's Newsletter attracted nine little boys, age range 6 - 9 years, and one seven year old girl. So, with the addition of my two daughters, the first group was formed. The group was to meet for an eight week period, once a week, for a one hour session.

On reflecting how best I could use this time with such young children and help to make it an enriching experience for them, I decided to use the medium of clay. Through the making of their own "dream theatre", in which they could place their clay figures and symbols from their dreams, each week, I hoped that the effect of this technique, that of seeing into the inner world of their own psyche, could be truly educative for each child.

We met in a spacious, sun-filled room in the large Community Hut. There were few "rules" but all proved to be useful, especially at the beginning!

- 1) No throwing of clay or any other objects.
- 2) Any child behaving in a disruptive manner, eg. making too much noise, would be removed from the room for a while, until calm enough to join the group again.
- 3) Each child was to clean up his/her own work-space at the end of every session.

We used two large rectangular tables, joined together as one. Each child had free access to as much clay as he/she wanted to use, there being three large mounds of clay down the centre of the table. I had collected a variety of tools which could be used in addition to hands; tools which were designed for use in modelling clay, plus other useful things like, old pieces of comb, twigs, pine cones, corks, bottle-tops, shells etc.

We began each session by lighting a candle which remained lit until the ending of the session, when we would all hold hands until the candle was finally blown out, marking the end of our time together that week. After the lighting of the candle each child in turn would describe the dream figure or symbol he/she had chosen to make that day.

At our first session we introduced ourselves and said what we liked or did not like about dreams. Lucas, aged six, said that he liked a special dream he had about a little, black, soft cat who was always wanting to curl up and go to sleep. Peter, aged nine, said that he always dreamt about rockets and **even though** some of the dreams were scary he still liked rockets more than anything else right then. Tony, aged nine, said that he had a really scary dream about falling down a hole in the road and he always woke up sweating about it; he told me that he had had the same dream "for years and years". Anna, aged eight, said that she only remembered a few dreams and that she liked "plain" ones best. "Plain" ones turned out to be that, Anna knew, on waking, that she had had a "good" dream, but she could not remember any images from it. Anna also said that all her remembered dreams were "bad" ones, so she did not like dreams very much. Mary, aged six, described a flying horse in a dream she had remembered from the night before and at this point every child appeared fascinated by this horse and several questions were asked about it.

Then we began to make our first clay figures and symbols. Some children spent all the rest of their time on one figure, others made several. Peter managed to make six rockets of various sizes! The time passed very quickly for all but one small boy, whose big brother kept criticizing everything Paul attempted to make. At this point the group came up with a new rule, which was that none of us were to criticize each other's dream work. Paul came to stand beside me. He made a "strong looking" lion, "and he doesn't want to chase me in my dreams". After the blowing out of the candle and once the cleaning up was completed, it was agreed that next week we would all make our own dream theatre for our dream figures and symbols. Each child was to bring a medium-sized cardboard box with him/her. Some of the children took their figures and symbols home with them, others decided to leave them to dry until the next session. The clay could be fixed at home in an ordinary oven and it was possible to paint it when dry, if they chose to.

The making of the dream theatre the following week was a wonderful experience for the whole group. When the time came, towards the end of the session, for each person to place their figures and symbols from the week before, inside their freshly painted theatres, there was a moment of complete silence. Everyone then took it in turns to show the group their own dream theatre and to say a few words about it if they wanted to. When it was Lucas' turn he said that he now had somewhere to keep his own things he made for himself, because usually his mummy put them on the sitting room mantlepiece and "I can't have them any more". Tony agreed that this was a good thing,

because in his house it was his little sister, aged three, who was always getting hold of his things and breaking them. He planned to put his dream theatre on a shelf in his room which he could see from his bed and "she can't reach it there". I told the group that I was really glad to have made my own dream theatre at last and that maybe I would not have got round to making one if this group had not begun. Peter said that he had painted his dream theatre black inside because then he could see his light coloured rockets "just as they are in my dreams!" Andrew, aged seven, painted his in "watery colours because I often dream about the sea and rivers and pools".

There were to be six more sessions for this particular group.

During this time several interesting changes occurred. Firstly, the two boys, who had been "the wise guys", "the ones who knew it all", became increasingly involved in their own work, as each week passed, so that by the last few sessions they were really using every available minute of the one hour they had. Secondly, a major difficulty we had experienced at the beginning of the group, that of the older children coming straight from the end of their school day, to the dream group, and therefore having an inclination to want to "let off steam", completely disappeared by the third session. Thirdly, the children who at the beginning had been the most self-conscious when it was their turn to share something of themselves, in the group, showed a noticeable gain in self-confidence, towards the end of the eight weeks. Something was happening for Anna too. A large fountain stood in the middle of her dream theatre and around it there were "all sorts of flowers and plants which I am watering as well as the fountain. The fountain was like a shower of sparkling diamonds in my dreams".

The group had become a group by our last session. There was less looking to me and more mutual and self-help amongst all of them; even the youngest child, Lucas, showed signs of a newly gained sense of self. This was confirmed by his mother's observations of how different Lucas' behaviour was at home, these past weeks. "He seems so much happier in himself; it is like a heavy load he has been carrying around. This last year has at last fallen from his shoulders and he can stand up straight again!" We both realised that Lucas, who eight weeks earlier, had indeed looked as though he were carrying a heavy load", with his hunched up little back and bent shoulders, was by now walking around with a perfectly straight back.

Towards the end of the eight week period another interesting development took place. Four of the children's parents came to request

a "parents' dream group". Some of the reasons they gave for making the request were: "When I see what Tony is getting out of this working with his dreams it really makes me want to learn something about it too". "I really have a feeling for the clay, like trying to make the actual figures from my dreams made me feel so excited I cannot explain why, I just know I want to make a dream theatre too and put my own figures in there". "I've always been interested by the symbolism in my dreams and I really want to find out more about it. It's fascinating". "I would like all the members of our family to be working with their dreams, not just one of us".

I was unable to start any new dream groups at that time, due to my returning to Edinburgh the following month, but I was able to encourage them to apply to join a dream group at the Jungian-Senoi Institute and suggested ways they could begin to work with their dreams meanwhile.

"Civilized man pays little attention to the thinking he has the power to do in his sleep through dreams. Western Society is rife with war, crime and wasteful economic conflict, insanity, neurosis and chronic psychogenic physical ills. The Senoi make their dreams the major focus of their intellectual and social interest, and have solved the problems of violent crime and destructive neurosis, and psychogenic illness. They have done this without the help of a written language or of the scientific method as we think of it".

Kilton Stewart
"Dream Theory in Malaya".

"In every adult there lurks a child - an eternal child - something that is always becoming, is never completed, and calls for unceasing care, attention, and education. That is the part of the human personality which wants to develop and become whole".

C.G. Jung
