

FREUD'S CONTENT OF DREAMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE MINDS OF THE CHARACTERS: A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF KAREN THOMPSON WALKER'S THE DREAMERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the state of crisis leading towards trauma and fear in the backdrop of a pandemic that spreads in the form of sleeping sickness in Santa Lora depicted in The Dreamers by Karen Thomson Walker. As the sick sleep prevails, the characters are trapped in their dreams in the narrative. This trope of dreams is to be examined through the Freudian lens of contents of dreams i.e., manifest content and latent content to trace out the thinking patterns and abilities of the affected characters. The dreams lead them to entirely different situations when they wake up from the sleeping sickness that has prevailed in the whole town. The nexus of crisis, trauma, and fear is further navigated through a transformative phase that brings growth after the pandemic. There is a positive mindset by the end of the narrative of The Dreamers which helps everyone heal.

Keywords: *trauma, sickness, dreams, fear, crisis..*

INTRODUCTION

The novel The Dreamers was written by an American author and was published in 2019. In the Age of Miracles is the first novel of Karen Thompson Walker which was published in 2012 and was nominated for the Waterstones 11 literary award in 2012. The narrative of The Dreamers deals with the theme of transformation during loneliness. The story has a setting of a global pandemic as the crisis, trauma, and fear are inevitable which are similar to the times of Covid-19 that paralyzed the world in 2019. A lockdown is imposed on the people of the town and they are quarantined. The loneliness has affected the thinking capabilities of the people but it has also given them the chance to transform themselves. The primary objective of this study is to interpret the dreams of the characters in order to analyze their psychological condition in the wake crisis and trauma that transforms them in the face of fear as they develop post-traumatic growth. The situation in the world of the narrative of The

Dreamers is similar to the times of the Covid-19 pandemic and transformation in the lives of people can also be seen which is also relative to the growth after the global pandemic that struck the world. Some people have lost their loved ones and face the same state of mental breakdown that can be seen in the story of the narrative.

Freud believed that dreams are related to wish fulfillment and he further suggests that there are two kinds of dreams i.e., manifest content which explains the actual images of thoughts while the other is considered to be the hidden meaning or the psychological interpretation of the dream and is known as latent content. The characters suffer due to the sudden sickness that has prevailed but their sufferings transform their lives. At first, all of them are afraid to help each other and touch anyone else's belongings. As time passes by, there develops a sense of sacrifice and responsibility to help others. Many people began to volunteer and join paramedics

to help people who are suffering. Mei and Mathew began to rescue the ill people even though illness could kill them.

The characters have faced some unusual circumstances and have become the victims of a sleeping sickness that causes them to sleep for a long time and lost in their dreams. They dream about different situations according to their desires, experiences, and memories. To analyze the workings of their brains, a strand of psychoanalysis i.e., the manifest and latent content of dreams, has been used as their dreams are interpreted.

Karen Thompson Walker's narration depicts the tale of Santa Lora in which a sickness spreads which further takes the form of a pandemic. The disease starts in the college dorm where Kara falls asleep and doesn't wake up for weeks. The second girl to fall asleep is Amanda who is two doors down from Kara's room. All the students of the dorm become worried as the illness affects two girls who are sleeping a long slumber sleep. As sickness brings crisis, fear and trauma become prominent. Thomas, the father of two girls i.e., Sara and Libby, is always afraid of any crisis or disaster and he has stored food in the basement of their home. He always tells his daughters what to do during the time of crisis. He never knew what the crisis could be. But he always plans one thing or the other. Despite all his preparations, he is afraid of the prevailing conditions. His fear is prominent when he returns from his work and stands on the lawn to take a bath so that the sickness may not reach his home.

The environment is fearful as people are afraid to touch each other. The paramedic staff is also afraid to touch the ill ones and they can be seen wearing plastic suits and gloves with their faces covered with masks. Other people are afraid of the contaminated air too. The place that was lovely once, lost all its charm and fear spreads everywhere. People are afraid to touch sick persons and their belongings. As the sickness spreads, the characters of the narrative who fall asleep are lost in dreams. Some of them dream about their present life, a few dream of their past while some other characters dream about their future life too.

The interpretation of dreams concerning manifest content and latent content that is depicted in the dreams has been analyzed in this study. Along with dream interpretation, elements of fear, crisis, and trauma can be traced in the narrative which further affects the psychological

health of the characters and cause them to suffer in unusual conditions. The significance of the study is to provide insight into the human minds during the time of pandemic that has alienated them from one another. Through the perspective of academic significance, this study helps to learn the importance of dreams, the content of dreams, and their implication in the interpretation of dreams, fear, crisis, and trauma that transform lives that help the characters to grow and spread positivity. Many previous studies reveal pandemics in numerous contexts but this study specifically highlights the fear, crisis, and trauma that have caused alienation and the characters' fear of touching or talking to one another. This investigation would further help future researchers to understand psychoanalytic concepts as a glimpse of human behaviors can be seen in the context of psychology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The narrative of *The Dreamers* deals with a pandemic that paralyzed a fictional town in the form of sleeping sickness. Many scholars have researched *The Dreamers* and every research shows a different perspective as "What to Expect When You are Expecting Epidemic: Ling Ma's *Severance* and Karen Thompson Walker's *The Dreamers*", "Dangerously Deep Sleep is Contagious in *The Dreamers*", "An Ominous Sleeping Sickness Paralyzes a Small California Town in *The Dreamers*" and "There is no Rest for Anyone in *The Dreamers*". This research deals with an entirely different perspective of the narrative as it deals with the manifest and latent content of the dreams of the characters while doing interpretations through psychoanalysis linking crisis, trauma, and fear.

The narrative of *The Dreamers* deals with the suppressed desires and emotions of the characters along with pleasant and unpleasant memories. Their hidden desires, wishes and memories are depicted in their dreams. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, "Dreams are successions of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that occur usually involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep" (Morris). The suppressed desires are fulfilled in the dreams of the characters that remain unfulfilled in their real lives. Few characters dream of the pleasant memories of the past because they long for those days. There is a hidden desire in their unconscious mind that they want to spend that

life once again with their loved ones. Their veiled aspirations are reflected in the dreams during the sleeping sickness that has caused fear and crisis in the whole town.

Karen Thompson Walker used dreams to show the relevance of the post-COVID world with the world of the novel to depict the havoc that the virus has caused: "Psychoanalysis's motivation for maintaining the tradition's mainstay in therapeutic theory and practice consists of many reasons. First, psychoanalysis is a theory and technique for treating psychological disorders; it deals with the relief of mental suffering (Herzovich and Govrin 01). Psychoanalysis deals with the interpretation of the workings of the human mind. It helps to analyze what is going on in the mind of a person and depicts his pleasant and unpleasant memories or experiences which further enlighten his fears or anxieties. Psychoanalysis gives a preview of human thinking.

The dream serves as a source of escapist fantasy as the dreamer gets relaxed after observing himself in the desired situation. The mental frustrations of the dreamer get lessened and further, the dreamer gets rid of the anxieties and depressions. So, the dreams give a way to get rid of the tensions. Sometimes the dreams are not pleasant and the dreamer gets terrified. A horrible experience is reflected in the dream or it can be his fear as well. But after dreaming about something unpleasant, the dreamer gets to relax. So, dreams serve as some kind of operation that helps in cleaning the mind. Dreams are a source of catharsis as well. "Our dreams are often a reflection of our 'actual' desires and needs, more real than the needs we perceive in waking life. So, by analyzing and interpreting our dreams and, through this, our spiritual needs and wants, we can focus our attention on these things in our day-to-day lives and attract the synchronicity of the universe to bring these things into our lives!" (Malory 01). Dreams represent our wishes or repressed desires and thoughts that can't be fulfilled in real life. Such thoughts appear in the dreams and those dreams provide calmness and smoothness in the hardships of real life.

Dreams represent the activities of the sleeping brain. In the narrative, although human beings are sleeping because of sleeping sickness, their brains are active. There is some unusual activity in the brains of people which reflects the fact that "...dreams are not independently functional but rather a co-product of the sleeping brain, reflecting the dreamer's physiological and

psychological activities such as memory consolidation, emotion regulation, and reception of external stimuli" (Zhang and Guo 01). When people wake up from the sickness that has prevailed in the narrative, some sort of memory consolidation and emotion regulation can be observed and this is the result of the stimuli of the external environment on their minds. The experiences of human beings leave a permanent impression on the minds. Sometimes it is not easy for individuals to get rid of the experiences they have been through so their dreams revolve around their experiences as "...strong effect during sleep evokes existing images that are loaded with similar effect and hence activate relevant earlier experiences to form a dream" (Zhang and Guo 01). During sleep, dreams appear in the mind constituting the images that already exist in the unconscious mind. These images and dreams are relevant to the experiences of the characters.

Dream content is an important constituent of psychoanalysis. The content of dreams is categorized by Freud into two modules i.e., manifest content and latent content. In the narrative of *The Dreamers*, these two aspects of dream analysis play a significant role as the dreams of the characters represent the actual as well as the symbolic meaning of the dreams. Some characters enjoy pleasant dreams while others dream about unpleasant things which indicates the experiences of their lives. These dreams serve as symbols of the wants and needs of the characters.

The narrative of *The Dreamers* not only gives an insight into the human minds or their lives and tells the story of transformation from isolation but it gives an instant to self-reflection as well. It also gives a glimpse of life during the time of pandemic: "Life comes with a multiplicity of understandings, and therefore, an infinite number of meanings. *The Dreamers* does an excellent job of hinting at the infinite reality of life; Karen captures a mystical otherness that hints at the majesty of the universe and enlightenment" (Sarah 01). It leaves the reader with several questions as to what could be the possible reaction if the reader is put into the relevant situation. "Karen isn't concerned with giving her readers an answer, but that makes *The Dreamers* even better: every reader will draw their own conclusions. The reader finishes the book contemplative, recognizing clever moments of foreshadowing, and perhaps leaves with a desire to self-reflect: during a crisis, are

you able to do what is necessary, even if it is as simple as #stayinghome? “(Sarah 01). The reader draws many interpretations as the narration takes a turn at every instance. Every moment in the narrative suggests what will happen next and leaves the characters with a desire for self-reflection. This is identified only through the content of dreams that indicates the symbolic and actual meaning of the dreams.

Psychoanalysis discusses the problems of dream interpretation with the help of manifest and latent contents of dreams which further highlights repressed memories and desires. “Freud theorized that thinking during sleep tends to be primitive and regressive. Repressed wishes, particularly those associated with sex and hostility, were said to be released in dreams when the inhibitory demands of wakefulness diminished” (Webb and Catwright 01). He explained that the wishes or the desires that remain unfulfilled shape the direction of dreams. In dreams, human beings get those pleasures that they can’t get in real life. He also faces the fears that terrify him in the real world. If an individual is disturbed by something that he does not want to face in the real world, his dreams can provide him solace and he finds himself at peace.

As the sickness spreads, there is a crisis in the narrative. There is an air of contagious sickness that started affecting college students, paramedics, and the general public. The lockdown was imposed in the town and everyone is advised to stay at home. The characters avoid public gatherings and mental frustration can be easily observed. The disaster has come in the form of sleeping sickness. This sickness has affected the thinking or the psychology of the characters as there is fear and depression due to this sickness. People do not want to talk to each other nor do they want to sit together as “...disasters like pandemics cause depression and complexity, which happen because we may not be prepared to deal with such pandemic and emotional effects attached to it” (Fofana et al. 01). People have become more emotional and sensitive in the narrative. They want to protect their children or beloveds at any cost. In trying to do protection, they have become depressed, emotional, or sensitive. Even a small thing could remind them of the pleasant and happy days.

In the narrative of *The Dreamers*, Walker has introduced a pandemic in the form of a sleeping sickness that has caused havoc. The characters of the narrative are indulged in a long slumber

sleep and their unfulfilled wishes or desires, emotions, and suppressed memories are reflected in their dreams. Meanwhile, the characters who do not suffer from the sickness are transformed into more humble and helpful individuals who have gone through fear of sickness, crisis, and trauma due to the prevailing circumstances. By the end of the narrative, the lives of the characters are entirely changed and the dreamers find themselves in entirely different situations. A few characters lost their lives due to sickness but as a whole, the positive growth can be seen.

FREUD’S CONTENTS OF DREAMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE MINDS OF THE CHARACTERS

Freud’s contents of dreams i.e., the manifest content and the latent content are employed to analyze the working of human experiences because they are concerned about wish fulfillment. The brain of human beings works at three levels and these three levels are conscious, sub-conscious, and unconscious. There is a storehouse of repressed emotions and memories in the unconscious level which comes into the consciousness sometimes in the form of dreams. The actual dream and the hidden meaning of the dream formulate together to depict the working of human experiences as they dream about their present, past, or future. As they dream about their present or past life, their experiences are depicted in their dreams. Sometimes the characters dream about a situation they have never gone through but only think about.

The dreams are analyzed first as the actual dream consists of the successive events that appear during sleep and this actual dream is the manifest content of the dream. “The manifest content refers to the remembered narrative that plays out in the dream itself. The latent content refers to the underlying meaning of the dream. During sleep, the unconscious condenses, displaces, and forms representations of the dream content, the latent content of which is often unrecognizable to the individual upon waking” (Freud 205). So, Freud’s contents of the dreams i.e., the manifest content and the latent content are important tools for analyzing the workings of human minds. The manifest content is the actual literal meaning of the dream while the latent content deals with the hidden meaning or the symbolic meaning of the dream. When a person dreams about anything, the interpretation is done while keeping the actual meaning or the

symbolic meaning of the dreams at the front. However, the latent content is much more important than the manifest content because latent content represents the underwater structure of the iceberg that is very little visible from above while it is very huge in the depth of the water.

It is the manifest content of the dream that gives primary information and leads toward the latent content of the dream interpretation. The manifest content is as important as the latent content because, without the manifest content, the dream interpreter couldn't reach the latent content and hence can't interpret the workings of the human mind. The images that appear in the dreams are the result of the actual or the original image that an eye has ever seen. In dreams, only those images appear that are present in our conscious or unconscious mind. Those images appear as a manifest content of the unconscious desire or repressed memory of the dream: "We are generally surprised on awakening from a dream ("it was only a dream") mainly because we didn't consciously will that we would dream it. In fact, during dreaming there is a prominent reduction of voluntary control of action and thought" (Nir and Tononi 01). The dream is a natural process that is beyond control and often surprises the individual who is dreaming as it is not a conscious action or thought. "We cannot pursue goals, and have no control over the dream's content. The fact that we are so surprised, excited and even skeptical about lucid dreaming" (Nir and Tononi 01). The dream is formed by the images of thought memory or experience that the part of the unconscious.

In the narrative of *The Dreamers*, the manifest content and the latent content of the dreams are quite inevitable. Thomas Peterson, a father of two girls, Sara and Libby returns to his home from the college dorm where the sickness has spread. He has stored several food items and water cans in the cellar of his home. He has always been suspicious about some kind of sickness or virus that would spread in the town and might cause a shortage of food. When the sickness spread, it affected Thomas as well despite all the precautionary measures and he is lost in his dreams. He dreams about fire as it is depicted in the narrative, "“Did they put it out?” he shouts. ‘Is it out?’ You were dreaming for a long time, they tell him. ‘There was a fire,’ he shouts again. ‘At the library. The whole place was on fire.’ His voice grows louder and louder, but the sleep of those around him continues

undisturbed” (Walker 243). This dream is the manifest content as the character tells his actual dream. He sees the fire in the library in his dream. “He keeps pulling at his beard. ‘I’m thirsty. I’m so thirsty.’ He drinks and drinks” (Walker 243). The manifest content of the dream makes the character anxious that he goes on drinking more and more water. The manifest content of the dream is disturbing and the character keeps on imagining that the fire is still around him. “He drinks so much water that the water comes right back up, splashing the rubber boots of the nurses, as if, after a while, a body grows to prefer even the worst of circumstances to any sudden change. ‘A fire,’ he shouts again. ‘It was a huge fire’ (Walker 243). The character again talks about the manifest content of his dream in which he sees a huge fire and that fire further becomes the cause of worries for Paterson. Through the manifest content of dream analysis, his fear or possible danger in the unconscious mind is reflected. The dream analysis of Thomas according to the manifest content or the latent content indicates that the manifest content is the fire that can burn and harm anyone. However, according to the latent content, it is symbolic of destruction. Thomas has been thinking about some kind of destruction that would spread in the town. But in his dream, this destruction is symbolized by fire that can burn or comfort in coldness. His dream can be linked to the reality in the narrative as a fire breaks out in the forest and burns so many trees and other inhabitants. But the difference is that in reality, it is a forest while in the dream it is the isolation ward that is burning.

In the narrative of *The Dreamers*, the experiences of the characters and the workings of their minds are depicted in their dreams. The characters are in different situations and their dreams lead them to other situations sometimes it is very hard to believe the characters if they are witnessing real situations or if are they dreaming. The characters can be seen dreaming about different situations and some of these situations reflect their past experiences and their wishes as well. For example, the dream of Rebecca. During her sleep, she dreams that she will give birth to a baby boy. But she gave birth to a baby girl. It was her unconscious desire that she may give birth to a baby boy and spend her life enjoying with her baby boy. During the sleeping sickness, she gave birth to a girl while she kept dreaming about the boy. She dreams, “Rebecca, five years older, is holding her little

boy's hand as they walk one day in the woods. His fingers pull dandelions in a field" (Walker 284). The manifest content of Rebecca's dream is the repressed desire that pursues her in the dream. Rebecca dreams of enjoying her life with her son which soothes her. "He blows the seeds through the air. She sees wisdom in the sight of him, his growing body announcing it every day: life goes on. Soon he is a boy at six years old, standing on a diving board in aqua blue swim trunks, calling: 'Mama, Mama, watch this' (Walker 284). When she is awake from a long slumber sleep, she begins to question her baby and is very disappointed when she comes to know that the baby is a girl, not a boy. "Where's my son?" Rebecca asks her. But her mother does not seem to understand the question. 'I don't know what you mean,' says her mother. 'You've had a baby girl,' she says. 'Look.' 'Did something happen to my son?' Rebecca says again, a sob growing in her throat" (Walker 287). The manifest content of the dream reflects that Rebecca is anxious about her son and something has happened to the baby boy. She wakes up from the sleeping sickness and shows her motherly concerns that are the product of the manifest content of her dream.

In the narrative of *The Dreamers* Nathaniel, a biology professor dreams about his friend Henry. In his dream, Henry is searching for poison. Nathaniel knows where the poison is but he does not want to tell this to his friend. His friend is young however his eyes look like the eyes of an old man. The dreams of the professor can be interpreted through the content of dreams as if there is some sort of disturbance in the memories or the repressed desires of Nathaniel. Walker stated in the narrative of *The Dreamers*: "When Nathaniel wakes, his whole body is tense. He is sweaty in his sheets. Had he dreamed this dream at a different time, he might have considered it a prophecy. Or perhaps, at certain moments in history, he would have taken it as a message from God" (Walker 115). His unconscious is reflected in his dream. In Nathaniel's dream, the use of poison by his friend Henry indicates that there is some sort of disturbing memory in the unconscious of Nathaniel's mind. The disturbance of his unconscious is traced through his dream or it can be an upsetting distraction. "If he had dreamed it fifty or a hundred years ago, the era of Freud, the leading experts might have argued that the dream is not about Henry at all, not really, but about Nathaniel's childhood, some repressed

sexual desire from infancy, the dream's true meaning concealed from his conscious mind, and in need of analysis" (Walker 115). Nathaniel's repressed desire appears in his dream which is not part of his conscious activity of the brain but the unconscious activity that can be analyzed through the latent content of the dream. The latent content shows that it is a repressed memory or childhood experience that is disturbing the character at a later age.

The activities of the brain are reflected in the dreams of the individual. The thought process of human beings has traces of their unconscious thinking or desires. The unconscious activities shape the direction of dreams. Human beings think of something but at times they are not capable of fulfilling that desire. Such desires become part of their unconscious activities which are later reflected in their dreams. Freud stated that "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (Freud 604). In the narrative of *The Dreamers*, it is the unconscious mind that is redirected in the dreams. Reminiscence sometimes becomes the pivotal point of dreams which is also the unconscious activity of the brain. This unconscious activity is interpreted with the help of Freud's content of dreams. These dream contents are very important in analyzing the workings of the human mind. The manifest content of the dreams gives primary information while latent content traces out the figurative meaning of the dream through which it can be analyzed what is in the unconscious mind. So, the interpretation of dreams gives us the chance to look at the unconscious desire or unconscious activities of the brain. The contents of the dreams depict the actual working or memory or anything else that is stored in the unconscious. It can be a wish or a desire too. That repressed thing can appear in the mind and trace out the latent content that is associated with the desires, emotions, or memories of the person. The experiences of human beings can also be part of the manifest content or the latent content of the dream which further highlights the unconscious desires that illuminate the workings of the human mind. In the narrative of *The Dreamers*, there are many instances where it can be traced that unconscious desires, repressed memories (pleasant or unpleasant), and experiences are revealed in the dreams of dreamers.

One of the two daughters of Thomas, Sara is lost in a dream although that dream is not the result

of the sleeping sickness yet it unveils her unconscious longing to unite with her mother: “Sara is still a little in her dream—something about her mother, the idea of her, anyway. She was wearing the green cardigan from the picture of her that Sara has in her drawer. And the kitchen” (Walker 168). In the unconscious mind, Sara misses her mother who died a long ago. Her unconscious thinking reflects that she wants the care and attention of her mother. Sometimes she wears her clothes to feel the warmth of motherhood. Sara and Libby live with their father. Their father loves them and is caring towards them but still, the love of motherhood could not be replaced. “They were sitting together in the kitchen. But matching the words to the dream only dissolves what is left of it, the way certain stars vanish from the sky if you look directly at them (Walker 168). In the unconscious mind, Sara misses her mother who died a long ago. Her unconscious thinking reflects that she wants the care and attention of her mother. Sometimes she wears her clothes to feel the warmth of motherhood. Sara and Libby live with their father. Their father loves them and is caring towards them but still, the love of motherhood could not be replaced. There is a longing at the back of her mind to reunite with her mother. It is the latent content of the dreams through which her hidden desire is traced. When Sara wakes up, her dream is gone but it leaves sadness as, “Now the dream is gone from Sara’s head—only a tracing is left, like skates on ice, a sadness” (Walker 169). Her mother’s memories are suppressed in the unconscious corner of her mind and those memories are reflected in her dream. Sara needs her mother during the menstruation period as her father is isolated in the hospital and she does not know what to do. Nobody is there to guide her. An image of her classmate Akil’s mother comes to her mind and wants her mother to be at her side. It is hard not to wish for her mother. “Akil’s mother flashes into her mind—maybe she would know how to help” (Walker 169). The image of Akil’s mother is symbolic of the longing and desire for her mother that is present in her unconscious mind of Sara. In her time of need, Sara desperately wants the company of her mother which is not possible as her mother is dead. Sara tries to find the motherly image in Akil’s mother. The manifest and the latent content of dreams play an important role in accessing the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious thinking that is present in the brain. “Dreams could be a way of

accessing information about the subconscious and then using that information to better understand a person's needs and difficulties. Manifest content, for Freud, was the first step in dream analysis” (Blakeley 01). Dreams provide information about the unconscious or the subconscious mind that comes into conscious awareness. To analyze the dream, manifest content is of primary importance as this content gives basic information about the dream. “To analyze their dreams, dreamers needed to recall a dream’s manifest content. This surface-level part of a dream would show the dreamer’s desires in an altered or disguised form, making analysis without expert assistance difficult or impossible” (Blakeley 01). After getting information from the manifest content of the dream, latent content is explained which has symbolic significance as it may explain the symbols that are part of desires, experiences, or memories. The dreams of characters not only reflect the desires but they can represent the memories and perceptions as well. It is very hard to get rid of the memories that become part of the unconscious mind as those memories keep themselves alive in the suppressed corner and get fresh whenever human beings face similar circumstances. Memories or terrible events have an effect on the psychology of human beings and remain forever in the unconscious mind and keep disturbing human emotions at one time or the other.

A young professor and his wife Annie also become the victims of the sickness that has prevailed in the town. Their daughter is only a few months old and they are worried about her as in case if they are affected by the virus, no one is there to look up for their daughter. Along with their concerns about their daughter, Ben has a secret desire to live a life that he has already lived. “Later that week, back home in their bed, while Annie gives the baby a bottle, Ben finally tries to tell her about the dreams. ‘They were like premonitions,’ he says. Worry comes over Annie’s face. ‘I know it sounds weird,’ he says. But he goes on” (Walker 277). He wants to spend his life just like the way he has spent his early days with his wife enjoying their honeymoon and this is the unconscious desire which is revealed through the manifest content of the dreams. “He begins with the dream about the canoe and the paddles, the way they floated out into the water while he and Annie were drinking beer under a tree. ‘Are you all right?’ she says. She shifts the baby in her arms”

(Walker 277). This is the dream which is part of the beautiful memory that Ben thinks about. This memory is the unconscious part of his memory that Ben doesn't even remember. 'I know,' he says. 'But listen.' He half closes his eyes to remember, shutting out the low light of the bedside lamp. 'In the dream, we are somewhere where there's water. And trees. Pine trees that grow right up near the water' (Walker 277). Ben's dream constitutes the natural surroundings comprising the image of trees and water that are symbolic of serenity and calmness. As Ben tells Annie about his manifest dream content, Annie instantly remembers the honeymoon period that is spent happily in the natural surroundings. "Annie begins to laugh a little, a low and nervous laugh. It was a mistake, he suddenly knew, to tell her any of this. 'That's not the future,' she says. 'That's the past' (Walker 277). The desire of Ben is revealed by the contents of dreams. It is the manifest content that Ben explains his dream and with the help of the latent content of the dream, it is analyzed that Ben wants to live those happy days of his married life with his wife once again. Annie makes him remember that he doesn't dream about his future life nor it is his long-lost wish but it is his past that appears in his dream because the reminiscence of those days is still present somewhere in the repressed section of his brain which is revealed with the help of manifest content and the latent content.

The emotions of the individuals are fundamental points in his dreams as they lead them in the relevant situations and dream content is formed based on the thinking of the dreamer or his emotions. "Several investigations have revealed that dreams are often accompanied by emotions, especially negative ones" (Zhang and Guo 01). In the narrative of *The Dreamers*, the emotions of the dreamers can be seen which further affects their mental conditions, and their dreams are shaped accordingly. Along with emotions, existing images in the minds of the characters also leave an impact on their thinking even though those images appear in the unconscious minds of the characters. Those images further form the manifest content in the dreams of the person and in turn, the manifest content helps to interpret the latent content of the dream which further unveils what is going on in the unconscious mind of that person. "Reiser (1997) further conjectured that strong effect during sleep evokes existing images that are loaded with similar effect and hence activate relevant

earlier experiences to form a dream" (Zhang and Guo 01). The thinking of Thomas and his actions clearly show that there is some kind of disturbance in the mind of the dreamer as always thinks of the unseen disaster that could cause food famine or brought some kind of quarantine. In his dream, he saw fire. The contents of his dream indicate some sort of fear or disturbance that is present in his mind.

There is a fear of losing the beloved in a time of sickness and everyone is afraid of losing the most beloved relations. The case seems similar to Ben who is the father of the baby girl and he loves his baby so much. One time or the other he keeps thinking about the spread of sickness and becomes worried about his baby and his wife. So, in his unconscious mind, he keeps thinking about the safety of his baby as well as he is overwhelmed by the fear of losing his baby. He dreams about different events of his life but along with his life events he dreams of losing his baby girl in the large ocean which is symbolic of the unfamiliarity of the world that stays outside of his house. "The night before this day, he dreamed that he was floating in the ocean with the baby. No raft. No land. He was holding her with one arm, paddling with the other. Her head kept slumping forward into the water. That's what the dream was about: the keeping of her nose above the swells" (Walker 130). In the dream, Ben finds his baby in a terrible situation and tries in every possible manner to save her. No matter how hard Ben tries to save the baby girl, he still loses her. "But she soon fell away, and the rest of the dream was just the thrashing of his arms in search of her in that dark, cold water. It went on for hours, this thrashing, but what do we know about the physics of dreams? Perhaps, in the room where he was sleeping on the floor beside her crib, only a few seconds ticked by on the baby's whale-shaped clock" (Walker 130). In the dream, Ben lost his baby and he kept searching for her in the entire ocean with the splash of his arms that pushed the water but he couldn't find his girl. He swims here and there and the latent content of his dream reflects his unconscious thinking that he wouldn't be able to find his baby once he lost it. But he is not able to understand the physics of that dream like what could be the possible meaning of the dream. Unusual dreams not only disturb dreamers but can reflect the experiences, wishes, or workings of the human mind. Such a dream is associated with the manifest content and it can be explained at the level of latent content because it is the

latent content of the dream that tells us about the underlying hidden or symbolic meaning: Freud believed that by uncovering the “meaning of one's hidden motivations and deeper ideas, an individual could successfully understand his or her internal struggles through eventually resolving issues that create tension in their lives” (Nagera 31). The manifest content explains the surface meaning of the dream and the actual dream content. The latent content of the dream is in contrast to the manifest content of the dream as it unveils the layers of hidden meanings. “In contrast to the information easily recognizable, latent content makes up everything underneath the surface, revealing the deeper underlying thoughts within an individual's unconscious” (Nagera 31). The dreams serve to provide the situation in which a person wants to live. When a person lives in the desired situation in the dream, he faces the consequences of his wishes in his reveries. In this way, he avoids the possible consequences in reality. “Perhaps the most perplexing feature of the nightmare revolves around the issue of wish fulfillment. If a dream is the disguised expression of an unconscious wish represented as fulfilled, how is one to account for the generation in the dream life of an unmodified replay of an experience of sudden and overwhelming trauma?” (Lansky 01). The content of a dream explains the underlying or hidden meanings that revolve around wish fulfillment or secret passions, emotions, or desires. The dream appears to be a different kind of experience as it recreates the experiences. “The dream, in recreating the terrifying experience, seems to act in ways utterly different from that in which stimuli or wishes are represented as fulfilled by the consummatory act of hallucination that we call dreaming” (Lansky 01). The content of the dreams helps to interpret the desire that is present in the unconscious mind. At first that suppressed desire becomes conscious in the dream and then the person finds himself in the desired situation.

Conclusion

The Dreamers by Karen Thompson Walker explores the workings of the minds of human beings through the content of dreams. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis is used to analyze the workings of the minds of characters during the pandemic through the manifest and latent content of dreams. The dreams are interpreted through the manifest and latent content of the dreams as explained by Freud and are analyzed

through literal and figurative meanings. The sickness has not only caused physical damage but has affected them mentally. Crisis, trauma, and fear can be seen in society, and social life is completely damaged. In toxic circumstances where everyone is suffering and nothing is certain, a sense of responsibility comes into the characters. People begin to grow and help each other and a sense of serving humanity overcomes trauma and fear.

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