An Alternative Interpretation Suggested by Data in Three Cases

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Dr. Antonia Mills is an academic researcher who uses a methodology similar to that of Ian Stevenson. She works independently, specializing in cases on the West Coast among the native Americans of the Northwest. This is one of the few academic papers we have found that relates the enigma of night terrors and nightmares to past lives.

Abstract

Children (and some adults) suffer from nightmares and night terrors, regardless of the culture in which they were raised. In Western culture they are attributed to unresolved conflicts or posttraumatic stress, which treatment attempts to alleviate. However, there are some vivid nightmares that do not relate to any concern of the dreamer that can be identified. Non-Western interpretations of nightmares include the possibility that some disturbing dream elements can concern memories from a previous life. This paper presents 3 cases of North American (nontribal) children who had recurrent nightmares that did not seem to relate to the present life of the dreamer. In one of those, treatments involving a past-life interpretation led to the remission of symptoms. Although no conclusions can be drawn from this single case, it is suggested that anthropologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and physicians maintain an open yet critical mind to the possibility of previous-life etiology for sleep disturbances and phobic behaviors.

Many children (and some adults) in both Western and non-Western cultures suffer from recurrent nightmares. Like diagnosis of mental and physical illness, Western and non-Western explanations of nightmares sometimes differ (cf. Angel & Thoits, 1987; Hughes, 1985; Kleinman, 1980). Western interpretations of dreams posit that unresolved or problematic material may surface from the subconscious during the dream state as nightmares. Some of these nightmares relate to posttraumatic stress (e.g., induced by warfare, assault, or rape) and respond well to exposure therapy (Geer & Silverman, 1967; Marks, 1987). Bishay (1985) has reported the efficacy of imagining a masterful conclusion to the threatening experience.

However, some vivid and realistic recurrent dreams that may be frightening do not relate to anything identifiable in the dreamer's waking life. In such cases, attempts to probe the cause of the nightmare or to reassure the child that the nightmare is just a dream and not real are seldom effective. Because the content of night terrors (nightmares of which the dreamer is never conscious) is unknown, their source is often equally puzzling.

Non-Western interpretations of nightmares often include the concept that some dream material can relate to previous-life memories. Belief in some form of rebirth or reincarnation characterizes both tribal and complex non-Western societies, except the Judeo-Christian and Sunni Moslem traditions (Obeyesekere, 1980; Parrinder, 1957; Stevenson, 1987). However, previous-life significance is only one of the numerous
interpretations non-Western cultures ascribe to dreams.

Stevenson (1987) has noted the similarity of some vivid and recurrent dreams to the spontaneous, apparent past-life waking memories of some children, who may also have nightmares and/or phobias related to these memories. In 7 out of the 64 (11%) of such cases that Stevenson (1974, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1983a) has described in detail, the child had nightmares related to the previous-life that he or she seemed to recall. Three of these cases also involved sleep-walking. In 36% of 387 cases of children with apparent previous life memories analyzed by Cook, Pasricha, Samararatne, U Win Maung, and Stevenson (1983), the children had a phobia of the mode of death of the deceased person with whom they identify. Such apparent previous-life memories are reported most often in cultures in which belief in reincarnation is widespread, but they occur in Western cultures as well (Stevenson, 1983b, 1987).

Forty-nine cases of vivid and realistic dreams seemingly referring to a previous life and without any identified present-life referent have been reported to the Division of Personality Studies of the University of Virginia by nontribal North Americans. Of these, 19 first occurred between the ages of 2 to 11 (with a mean of 3 1/2 years), 8 in the teen years, and 22 at or after the age of 20. In 4 of the 19 childhood cases, the vivid dream was accompanied by a phobia of the apparent cause of the trauma depicted in the dream; among the 22 adult cases, 2 persons reported a related phobia.

This paper presents three cases of North American (nontribal) children who had recurrent nightmares that did not seem to relate to any experience the child had had.

CASE REPORTS

THE CASE OF HEIDI

Heidi Hornig (pseudonym) was born in Smithers, British Columbia, Canada, on July 21, 1982; she is the eldest of the two daughters of a European-Canadian couple. I became acquainted with Heidi and her parents during three years of field work for and with Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Indians who lived in the same area of British Columbia, Canada as Heidi. She was a healthy and normal baby, although her mother noted that from infancy she cried strenuously whenever anyone felt the fontanel; and she continued to resist having her head touched, or later, her hair washed. A series of ear infections beginning when she was a few months old suggested that the cause of her delayed speech development, noted when she was 3 years old, might be a hearing impairment. Consequently, when Heidi was 4 years and 2 months old, she was given a series of tests at a children's hospital in Canada (although her speech had already improved, perhaps because her trilingual parents had begun speaking only English to her).

The tests showed that Heidi's hearing was normal, but she had "no major language disorder, autistic behavior, nor mental retardation ... a long attention span and no fear of heights or strangers," but that she had "perceptual problems." For example, when asked to duplicate a three-block bridge structure or a tower of blocks, Heidi would always make a two-dimensional structure horizontally along the floor. Heidi's mother had noted that she showed the same unusual response to blocks at home and that she became very upset when her younger sister made, and then knocked down, vertical block structures. Continued assessment by an occupational therapist indicated that Heidi had difficulty perceiving or drawing certain letters such as T, F, and L. Heidi's parents were told that Heidi would not be able to ride a bicycle and that her school
The concept of previous lives was not something with which Heidi's parents were familiar, and her engineer father found it unacceptable. However, her mother noted that this interpretation of Heidi's nightmares accounted for Heidi's complex set of problems: the nightmare, her phobia of having her head touched, her resistance to making block structures, her distress when blocks were knocked down, and possibly her difficulty making or recognizing the letters T, F, and L—which appear unstable if perceived as the walls and roof of a house. Heidi's mother questioned her about her dream images, and Heidi said that she was big like her mother when these events happened.

Heidi's mother began a pre-bedtime routine of massage, soothing music, talking about positive things, and telling Heidi that she did not need to be worried about bricks falling on her head because that was an experience that had happened in another life that was over. Heidi's mother told her that only she could make the unpleasant sensations stop. (The mother was not confident that this technique would work.)

Four months after the onset of the nightmares, Heidi woke up early in the morning, went to her parents, and announced, "It is over. I'm not having that anymore." Two days later she asked her mother about how you knew when someone was dead, a question which her mother interpreted as part of Heidi's integrating the concept of death with her experience in the nightmare.

Heidi's behavior changed strikingly, from sometimes inhibited and fearful to exuberant and confident. The onset of the change was first noted by her teacher even before Heidi announced that the nightmares had ceased. After their cessation, the change was noted by the parents, the family physician, the occupational therapist who worked with Heidi, her kindergarten teacher, and myself (I have observed Heidi since she was 3). Heidi was no longer afraid of having her head touched or her hair washed. Her kindergarten teacher noted that her school performance had improved to average (she mastered the letters T, F, and L) and her self-
confidence had increased markedly. Heidi was no longer fearful and tearful when her younger sister made and broke block structures, and she learned to ride a bicycle with ease.

Over a year later, in March 1989, Heidi's mother reported that Heidi had had no recurrence of either the nightmare or the phobia but that her learning disabilities had not entirely disappeared. Sometimes Heidi would write whole phrases backwards. Heidi was diagnosed as having dyslexia and was demoted from first grade back to kindergarten at the end of 1988. Furthermore, she began to suffer from occasional headaches, a symptom she had not had before the onset of the nightmares. Indeed, the record of the children's hospital indicated that in mid-Grade 1 "she became increasingly emotional and nervous. She could not sleep at night and was quite irritable. She started to complain of headaches frequently. Her parents kept her at home for a couple of months and put her back in a full-day Kindergarten program in the public school system. Her speech was difficult to understand at times, but otherwise she got along quite well with other children in the Kindergarten."

In the fall of 1989, Heidi underwent a second series of tests at a children's hospital to assess the nature of the persistent problems. That testing indicated that Heidi was a "high functioning slow learner in the borderline to low-average range," with: "Language disorder with poor auditory memory, word retrieval and language processing difficulties; mild visual-perceptual and visual-motor integration difficulties, leading to additional learning disabilities." Heidi began seeing a language therapist twice a week in 1988, and an occupational therapist once a week, and doing a home program created by the therapists as well. The last report indicated that Heidi was responding well to this program and was functioning well in public school in 1993.

Heidi's mother also reported that when a neighbor died unexpectedly in April 1989, Heidi took the news calmly and later commented that the neighbor had left her body for awhile but that some people return after being away for awhile. Heidi's mother felt Heidi understood and accepted the concept of past and future lives more readily than she herself was able to. Heidi's mother noted in her most recent letter, dated June 14, 1993, that "Heidi's sudden onslaught of severe headaches has stopped again-Mom's old recipe, massage, soft music--works as usual."

THE CASE OF GERALD

Gerald Jardin (pseudonym) was born in February 1975 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and is the youngest of the four children of Dr. Peter Jardin and his wife Elizabeth. The case came to my attention because Gerald's sister was a student in a class taught by me at the University of Virginia.

Gerald was born with a rabbit-shaped birthmark at the nape of his neck (which his mother says characterizes many of the males in the family), a port-wine mark on one eyelid, eyes of different colors and slightly different shapes, and a mark on his right buttock that his parents thought resembled the scar that a gunshot wound would produce. The mark on his buttock has since faded away.

Gerald's development was normal in every way. His peculiarity was having night terrors that would cause him to start screaming in the middle of the night. Gerald had terrifying nightmares several times before he was a year old. From the time he was 2 to 8 years old, the night terrors occurred at least once a week and sometimes three or four times a week, always between midnight and 2:00 a.m. Gerald's night terrors gradually diminished in frequency, and they stopped by the time he was about 10 years old. At the age of 14
(when I met him), Gerald recalled being awakened by the sound of (his own) screaming. His mother recalled that sometimes Gerald would yell, "No!" and carry on arguments during these night terrors.

Every time these night terrors occurred, Gerald's mother would come to him and try to comfort him, but she found he could not be reached or consoled because "he was in such a deep state he never fully woke up. At the infrequent times when his mother could get him to apparently wake up, he was unable to say what he had been dreaming about. Usually he would go to the bathroom in a somnolent state and then go to his parents' bedroom where he would go back to sleep. In the morning he would not remember what had troubled him in his sleep.

Once, when Gerald was around 2 or 3 years old, his mother went to his bedside when he was screaming from a night terror and tried to reassure him by saying, "Mother's right here." Gerald replied, "You are not mother." His mother was unnerved by this response and did not try to comfort him using the same phrase after that. In his waking state, Gerald showed normal affection for his mother both before and after making this statement. Gerald's mother never mentioned these night terrors to the family doctor (Gerald's father is also a doctor) because his waking behavior seemed unaffected by them and was normal. Mrs. Jardin surmised that they might be related to some form of tendency toward night seizures that might in turn be related to his minor birth defects and birthmarks. All of these she suspected might be related to Gerald being born when she was 37 years old.

Gerald was about 4 years old when his family took a trip from Arkansas, his natal state, to a number of places, including Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. While the Jardin family was visiting the Civil War Battlefield at Gettysburg, Gerald came running up and said to his parents in a matter-of-fact tone, "That's where I died." His parents asked him what he meant, but Gerald did not say anything else. His father noted that the place he was pointing to was where some of the Confederate troops had been deployed. Although the concept of reincarnation was not one the Jardins entertained, they could think of no other interpretation of what Gerald said.

Aside from his night terrors, his single denial of this mother, and the statement made at Gettysburg, Gerald was a normal, healthy, personable child with above average intelligence. He had no phobias, other than a minor one of having his hair cut. As he grew older he explained this by saying he was afraid that it would sap his strength like Samson. By the time he was 2 he had a long attention span and would work 100-piece puzzles. He had an affinity for arithmetic. His mother reported that at age 3 he commented that he could see arithmetic problems in his head. Before he went to preschool his mother had found that she could give him a page of addition and subtraction problems to keep him occupied. She thought his attention span was longer then than later and noted that this early precocity did not last into junior high school algebra. From an early age he also had a good memory of streets and could point out the directions to places he had been infrequently. He had a keen interest in flags from the time he was 3 or 4 years old, and he knew the flags of all the countries portrayed in his World Book of Flags. He also had a special affection for animals.

As a young child, Gerald was very definite and particular about how things were done. He corrected the Bible School teacher if he or she left out any part of a Bible story, and he insisted that his playmates accurately enact the dialogue from Star Wars. He seemed more adult than some children in liking vegetables and not sweets. He was also more religious than the other members of his family.
When he was in second grade, he had a gray cotton jacket on which he had his mother sew numerous badges, including those of a flag of a southern state showing the Confederate flag. He kept the jacket long after he had outgrown it. (The Confederate or Southern army wore gray uniforms in the Civil War.) Other than that, Gerald showed no particular interest in or aversion to the Civil War, the Confederate cause, or any other war. Gerald's relatives on both the maternal and paternal side are from the South, but no one in the family is aware of whether any of their ancestors were in the Civil War. [Note: Stevenson (1983b, 1987) reports that of the relatively rare cases of American children who apparently remember a verified previous life, in nearly all the child is related to the previous personality. I suspect that this occurs because parents who are not used to the concept of reincarnation are more likely to take note if the child mentions details about the life of someone they know well, such as a relative. Verification also is easier if the child seems to refer to someone the parents already know or know about.]

Mrs. Jardin noted that shortly after they had returned from the trip to Gettysburg, Gerald saw the body of his great-grandmother at her funeral. He looked in the casket and said, "She's not there," meaning she was not in the body.

**The Case of Thomas**

Thomas Mather (pseudonym) is the eldest of the three sons of Stephen and Diane Mather of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He was born there on January 17, 1982. We are fortunate to have an excellent record of what Thomas said because his mother wrote the salient events of the day in her journal and she began paying particular attention to Thomas's statements after mid-August 1985. I interviewed the parents and Thomas in August 1989, and I have learned of further developments through correspondence since then.

During the time Thomas was having recurrent nightmares and making puzzling statements, Thomas's parents learned of Stevenson's studies of children said to remember previous lives. In late September 1985, Mrs. Mather wrote Stevenson, asking for advice. Her letter says in part: "What has struck us about his stories is the matter-of-fact manner in which he speaks. It's really like he's talking about events that happened. We know that children have fantastic imaginations and that leads us to our conflict. Is what Thomas is relating the typical imaginings of a three or four-year-old?"

Thomas began talking volubly when he was 18 months old, and from this age he sometimes mentioned an imaginary playmate called Bowdey, and later another named Dowie. Thomas was rather private about these imaginary playmates but mentioned them on occasion until he was about 2 1/2. His later mention of Bowdey is described below.

When Thomas was about 2 years old, he woke up in the middle of the night, crying and very upset. In response to his mother's queries he said he had had a bad dream about Cisco. Thomas continued to have nightmares that woke him up for several years, and he would often climb into his parents' bed in the middle of the night after being awakened by such a dream. The nightmares increased in frequency after Thomas was three. Beginning in August 1985, when Thomas was 44 months old, he began falling out of bed while still asleep, sometimes twice in one night. Sometimes he would fall out of bed without waking up. This persisted for a number of months. The nightmares themselves continued until Thomas was 4 years old and then began decreasing in frequency. When Thomas was 7 he occasionally had a nightmare, but their themes related to television programs he had seen, unlike the earlier nightmares.
Thomas did not often mention the content of his nightmares. However, in April 1985, when Thomas was 27 months old, he woke up crying and said that he had had a bad dream "about Africa and San Francisco." On October 3, Thomas said his bad dream was about "San Francisco. They want me to come back but they won't let me."

From the time Thomas was 28 months old he began describing events when awake that did not relate to his own experience. Recurrent themes were several kinds of accidents, fires, airports, airplanes, San Francisco, Disco, bridges, moving, and being "big like Daddy." I present the record of what Thomas said in some detail to depict the complexity of what he said.

The first time Thomas mentioned participating in events that he had not been in occurred in May or June when he saw something about the British royal family on television. He remarked, "I know Diana, another Diana. Diana and I were running and there was fire all around. Diana got a fire on her foot. She didn't stop running. That was a long time ago when I was big."

In July 1985, Thomas heard his mother describing a car accident she had been in some years before. Thomas commented that he had been in a car accident once, "when I was big." Several days later he repeated this, saying, "I was in a car accident when I was big, big like Daddy." When asked, "When?" Thomas answered, "When I lived in San Francisco and was big like Daddy. I lived by a bridge over a big river." He added that there were two little ones in the back of the car when he had the accident. Thomas talked about driving with a friend on another occasion three months later and having car seats in the back of the car on a third occasion.

In mid-August, Thomas said, "When I was driving at the airport all the people waiting for planes saw me crash." The same day Thomas also said that a jet plane crashed into his house. He also said, "My uncle and me lived in Disco. There were jets with big tired mouths that opened so that cars can go inside."

On August 31, Thomas again said he had been in a car accident. Asked when, Thomas said, "In San Francisco. My car had wings that you could attach and there were other people crashing into the jet." On October 13, Thomas said to his mother's sister, "I don't like flying." Asked why, Thomas said, "Some cars fly." Thomas's third mention of wings attached to a car is described below.

In mid-August, Thomas saw the lights on a jet plane and said, "Maybe the plane is going to Disco airport." His mother asked if he meant San Francisco. Thomas said, "No, no. San Francisco airport is much bigger, like this (gesturing with his hands)." His mother said, "So it's small." Thomas said, "It was big, but not so big." Thomas then described the layout of the Disco airport, saying there was somewhere to eat and a place to buy things. His mother asked him who he was with. Thomas said he was with his uncle. His mother then listed his uncles, and Thomas said, "No, no. Not those uncles."

On August 21, Thomas's father mused in his presence, "I wonder what San Francisco is like." Thomas said, "it's very nice." His father asked, "How do you know?" Thomas said, "I used to live there." Thomas's father asked when. Thomas said, "When I was big."

Later that day, Thomas's mother broached the subject. Thomas mentioned Richmond and Chinatown and clarified that he meant Chinatown in San Francisco and Richmond near there rather than the Richmond that is adjacent to Vancouver. He said that he was scared of Chinatown and had splashed in the water. Mrs. Mather
had noted that Thomas was afraid of Chinese people and apprehensive in Vancouver's Chinatown. The next day Thomas said, "Richmond in San Francisco is near the water. You cross a small bridge and then a big bridge." Asked the name of the bridge, he said it was just the San Francisco bridge. He said that he lived in the San Francisco Airport so he could fly lots of times, in an apartment with lots of furniture in or near an old house and "people could come on the stairs to see me." On August 30, Thomas said (unsolicited) to his mother's sister and her boyfriend that he worked in San Francisco, then added, "Not in San Francisco, near San Francisco."

On September 7, Thomas repeated a statement he had made in mid-August, saying, "A jet plane crashed into my house." Asked about this, Thomas said that he had a big house by the airport and that he was moving; he also said that he had a mother and a father called Mamotz and Babotz, but they were just visiting. Thomas said he was big, but he was called Bamboozle Baby by his mother and father. Asked "Where is Disco?" Thomas said, "About two miles, near the river, actually you have to cross the river but there's a bridge which has bumpy bits on it. Actually it's not right across the bridge, you have to go along the road and after the road curves around—there's Disco."

The next day Thomas' grandfather was saying something about Thomas's younger brother being a baby, and Thomas said, "He used to be big. He was in San Francisco in the back of the car. There was no room in the front because a friend was sitting there." He described how one had to fold the seats to get in the back and said the car had wings attached. Thomas gave other details that his grandfather could not remember.

On September 26, Thomas's mother asked him if he had a car. He said yes. She asked what color it was. He said gray, and he added that he had left it at the airport and that it was still there. Thomas said, "I went in the back of an ambulance to help a man who had sore legs and talked like a robot. I gave him medicine for his sore throat. He got better and didn't need a wheelchair." When asked, Thomas said that he had only a few friends in San Francisco but "lots of friends in Disco." He added that there were little kids who stayed with him in Disco, but he didn't know their names.

On October 1, Mrs. Mather asked Thomas what the river was like near Disco. Thomas answered, "Richmond." He then said he took his car on a jet plane, a special kind of jet, and he sat in a passenger seat with another man, and there were a few seats for passengers. Asked why his car went on a jet plane, Thomas said, "Because I was moving."

On October 26, Thomas asked how far San Francisco was and if you had to fly a jet to get there. Later in the day he said, "I used to be big." Asked when, he said he didn't know.

On October 31, Thomas asked if his mother had ever seen beds that fold up and said, "I would sleep in one at Adam's house in Richmond." Thomas had a playmate named Adam, and Mrs. Mather asked if that's who he meant. Thomas said, "I would drive to Richmond in his car over a bridge, it wasn't very far, when I was big, big and strong like Daddy."

On November 22, Mrs. Mather asked Thomas about the folding beds he had mentioned earlier. Thomas said he would talk about it later. The next day she asked him again, and Thomas pointed to the bookshelves in the living room and said that the beds were like the bookshelves but that they didn't have supports under them. Asked where, Thomas said, "Japan. I've been there," and said a nonsensical-sounding word. Asked what he was doing there, Thomas said, "Looking." He said that he was neither on holiday or working, nor was he with
anybody. Asked who take care of him, he said a strange word that sounded like "Nazagan." Thomas's mother noted there were Japanese children in his school from whom he could have heard Japanese words.

On January 17, 1986, Thomas talked about a door he was lifting, which he did not realize would fall down on him. Asked if this happened when he was smaller, he said, "No, when I was big." Later that day as they were walking to the park, Mrs. Mather asked Thomas about the name of the boy with whom he used to play who lived nearby. Thomas said, not smiling, "Not Bowdey." His mother responded, "No. Who is Bowdey? Was Bowdey your imaginary friend like Snuffleupagus is Big Bird's, or at least that's what adults think?" Thomas said, "Bowdey lives in San Francisco." Asked if he was a friend of his, Thomas said yes.

On February 18 Mrs. Mather was reading a book to Thomas that asked if the child had seen certain kinds of trees. Thomas said no to all the kinds of trees. His mother asked if he had seen palm trees in Vesley [France]. Thomas answered, "No, but I have in Richmond." Asked if there were many trees like that in Richmond, Thomas said, "Yes, hundreds." His mother noted that hundreds to Thomas means a lot. This statement is correct for Richmond, California, where palm trees have been introduced and grow, although they do not thrive in neighboring San Francisco. Neither Thomas nor his parents have ever been to California.

After this Thomas made no other statements referring to Disco, Richmond, or San Francisco. However, he continued to think of himself as older than he was chronologically. Thomas's preschool teacher noted that he strongly resisted being defined as a little boy and often tried to justify wanting to act in a more independent and adult manner than his classmates. He felt "little singing games" were beneath him, and he had to be held by the teacher when his mother left him at the preschool, so strong was his resistance to staying there. His preschool teacher wrote, "He seems to think he can do more than he is really ready for." His teacher noted that he seemed to identify with another place as well as with an older status. She was struck by his statement that the mail deposit boxes were the wrong color (they are blue in the United States and red in Canada).

Thomas's parents also noted his expectation of being older than he was chronologically. He could not understand why he was not allowed to do things that adults were, such as staying up late or going places on his own. Thomas has consistently preferred friends who are older than he. When I interviewed him when he was 7 years old, his best friends were boys 10 and 12 years old. He no longer had any special interest in (going to) Disco, San Francisco, or Richmond. However, when I asked if there was anything of which he was afraid, he said he was afraid of flying. This surprised his parents as he was calm on the plane trip to and from England, the only plane trip he had taken. The nightmares had increased in frequency after Thomas made this return plane trip.

Thomas's parents only recently had occasion to note his fear of fires. In October 1989, Thomas went with his father near the Vancouver airport where there was a pile of burning slash. Thomas grew very frightened and implored his father to get away. Shortly after that the family went to investigate a fire in a church near their home. As they drew nearer, Thomas stopped and would not go any closer, although his mother and younger brothers wanted to approach closer to see the hoses spraying.

Thomas has no birthmarks, but he began getting grey hair when he was about 3 years old. At the age of 7 he had salt-and-pepper colored hair.
Discussion

The three cases described above of children who had recurrent nightmares have both common and disparate features. In the cases of Heidi and Thomas, the child spoke when awake about the content of the nightmares. For Heidi, the alarming nightmare continued to be experienced as something that was happening to her when she was awake, but she added only slight bits of information in response to questions asked by her mother. Thomas spontaneously spoke about the same themes that recurred in his nightmares and when he was awake. The record kept by his mother allows us to see the nature of the statements made over some months and their relation to his nightmares.

Conversely, in Gerald's case, his parents never associated his two anomalous statements (disavowal of his mother as his own and pointing to where he had died) with his recurrent nightmares, and as Gerald never spoke about the content of his night terrors, it is impossible to know whether they were related or not.

All three cases are similar in that the child has not made statements specific enough to permit a search to ascertain if a person corresponding to the statements in fact existed. If the statements had been verifiable, this would have helped to answer Thomas's mother's pertinent question about whether his statements were about events that actually happened or only expressed the typical imagination and fantasy of a young child.

The three cases differ in the degree to which the child's waking behavior was disturbed. Heidi experienced severe distress from her nightmares that affected her waking life for some months, and she continued to present some headaches and learning difficulties up to the age of 7. This level of pathology is unusual (but not unknown) among the many cases that Stevenson (1987) has studied. Thomas's preschool teacher found his insistence on being treated differently from the other children troublesome, and his parents noted that his desire to act adult required considerable guidance on their part, but he was never diagnosed as a disturbed child. Gerald was noted by his parents and teachers to be a very distinctive individual with some precocious traits who was otherwise normal despite his night terrors.

There is no doubt that fantasy enters into waking and sleeping constructions, natural and pathological, in both adults and children. Hilgard (1977) and Watkins and Watkins (1986) have demonstrated that people under hypnosis can create convincing alternate personalities. Conversely, Krippner (1987) has reported instances in Brazil in which alternate personalities in persons suffering from Multiple Personality Disorder are interpreted and relatively effectively treated as intrusive or unintegrated previous-life memories. Bourguignon (1989) has demonstrated how similar symptomatology in different cultural contexts is differently interpreted as either Multiple Personality Disorder or useful possession by discarnate beings.

In cases of the reincarnation type reported among people who implicitly believe in the concept, one needs to assess to what extent the cases are fostered by paternal assumption that anomalous behavior related to a previous life. This question is pertinent to the cases reported by the Beaver, Gitksan and Wet-suwt-en tribal peoples of North America and the Hindu population of India whose attitudes towards and cases of alleged reincarnation I have been studying (Mills 1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1989, 1990a, 1990b).

However, in the three cases presented above the parents were not in the habit of thinking in terms of reincarnation. Heidi’s father opposed the mother’s asking questions designed to clarify whether Heidi could be talking about a previous life. Heidi’s mother herself had not considered the idea until her physician suggested that a reincarnation hypothesis might explain the origin of Heidi’s nightmare.
Gerald’s parents were equally unused to the concept of previous lives. Gerald’s mother believed “the Bible is the absolute, inspired and revealed word of the one God.” She had heard mention of the story of Aubrey Rose, which involves a previous life, although she had not read it, before Gerald disavowed her as his mother. Afterward she recalled the story of Aubrey Rose, and wondered if Gerald’s statement that she was not his mother could be related to a previous life. Gerald’s father, a professor of medicine, had been more skeptical, but both parents felt that his statement at Gettysburg was unequivocal and could only be referring to the end of a previous life. Gerald’s mother has come to accept, on the basis of Gerald’s two statements, that in exceptional cases in which a person died suddenly and violently God might allow that person another terrestrial life.

Thomas’s father was raised in India by his British parents and had learned of the Hindu belief in reincarnation while there, but he had never entertained the idea that reincarnation takes place. However, as the events Thomas described when awake and mentioned in his nightmares did not relate to any present-life experience and did not seem to be wish fulfillment, his parents gradually began to wonder whether mixed with his fantasies there might be references to a previous life in which he had been "big" and had work related to airports. When Thomas’s father and mother asked him questions about his statements, both parents carefully avoided concluding or suggesting to Thomas that he was talking about a previous life.

Taken together, these six Western parents were less familiar with the concept of reincarnation, especially as an explanation of individual differences, than the Moslem parents of children in India among whom some cases of the reincarnation type have been identified (Mills 1990a, 1990b, 1993).

The evidence in Stevenson’s (1974, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1983a, 1993) detailed studies of children with apparent previous-life memories, some of whom have related phobias and nightmares, compiled from data on more than 2,400 such cases from a variety of cultures, implies that some children may have memories of the life and death (often violent) of a verifiable deceased individual about whom the child had no normal means of knowing. Such cases suggest the survival of some aspect of personality after bodily death.

My replication study of Stevenson’s field research (Mills, 1989) confirms that although no single case is unflawed, in only one case (Mills 1990b) was there any evidence that a case was based on spurious identification of an apparently appropriate previous personality with a child’s fanciful statements, coupled with the parents’ willingness to interpret anomalous behavior as related to a previous life. None of the other cases appeared to be explicable on those grounds.

I am not proposing that one should indiscriminately suggest to children that the source of unexplained phobias and nightmares may lie in a previous life or draw conclusions about the therapeutic value of suggesting a previous-life cause for disturbing nightmares from the single case of Heidi where this technique was tried. Given the recognized fact that neurotic behavior improves after a wide variety of therapeutic measures and sometimes after no intervention whatever, one must be cautious in attributing Heidi’s relief from the nightmares to her mother’s diagnosis of a previous life etiology. Her mother’s increased attention to Heidi before she went to sleep may have contributed to her improvement. However, Heidi’s question to her mother about how one knows when someone has died strongly suggests that her mother’s interpretation of a previous life and death contributed to the cessation of the recurrent nightmares. In Biscay’s (1985) terms, her interpretation offered a masterful conclusion to the recurrent nightmare. In Heidi’s case, positioning the frightening experience in her nightmare in a previous life alleviated the nightmare but not all of her learning
problems. The case requires further study to assess to what extent any future relief from the headaches and emergent dyslexia results from maturation or from the extra learning assistance and attention Heidi has had and will continue to receive.

Furthermore, in two cases of children with recurrent nightmares that the child and his parents thought were related to a previous life, the subject continued to have nightmares or sleep disturbances up to the time they were last contacted (age 13 years for Wijanama Kithsiri [Stevenson, 1977] and age 23 for Salem Andary [Stevenson, 1980]). This suggests that placing the cause of the nightmare or sleep disturbance in a previous life does not necessarily have the effect of providing therapeutic closure.

I am proposing that anthropologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and physicians maintain an open yet critical mind so that they can assess the validity of some non-Western explanations for phobic behavior and sleep disturbances in both Western and non-Western populations. The Western cases that are recognized as possibly related to previous-life etiology are of particular note because they are less likely to be the result of cultural expectations and unconscious interpretations than cases in cultures that habitually think in terms of previous-life causation.

REFERENCES


An Alternative Interpretation of the Stone Tablet with Ancient Hebrew Inscription Attributed to Jehoash, King of Judah. By Yuval Goren

Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures Tel-Aviv University
February 2003.

Three experts from the GSI studied the stone tablet and the patina coating its surface by using various chemical and mineralogical methods. In addition, tiny carbonized particles within the patina were dated using the radiocarbon AMS technique in the Beta Analytic Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory in Miami, Florida (Ilani, Rosenfeld, and Dvoracheck 2003:109). Prior to the interpretation of the GSI data, we need to define some terminology. Overall, the findings suggest why fighting corruption in many countries has proved so difficult. The distant past appears as important as — or more important than — current policy.

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Democratization has to be radical and long-lived and trade liberalization has to be extensive to decrease corruption much. The Transparency International data are particularly useful because (a) they are available for recent years unlike most other indexes in the literature, which were gathered in the 1970s or 1980s, (b) they are based on a broad range of different sources, and the variance of country ratings across surveys is published, making it possible to weight more heavily those observations with. interpretation Explore alternative interpretations. © 2000-present, Dewayne E Perry. 33. The case study should include consideration of rival propositions and the analysis of the evidence in terms of such rivals. This can avoid the appearance of a one-sided case.