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## MEETING MARY – MEETING YOUR SELF THE FUNCTIONS OF DREAMS IN THE MARY POPPINS BOOKS

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The purpose of this paper is to explore dreams in the Mary Poppins books and propose that they are the location of another reality, the manifestation of wish fulfilment and punishment, that they assist in the individuation process as well as being a tool for the recollection of ancient knowledge. It is suggested that one of Poppins's tasks, as a magical nanny, is to lead Jane and Michael on a journey of personal development and offer them a glimpse of the world of the collective unconscious and self-understanding. To this end, this paper, on the one hand, approaches Sigmund Freud's and Carl G. Jung's concepts of dream, (collective) unconscious and archetypes; and on the other, deals with Joseph Campbell's comments on the hero's journey of self-discovery.

*Keywords:* dream, collective unconscious, archetypes, wish fulfilment, punishment, recollection, individuation.

The functions and the features of dreams in the Mary Poppins collection have already been analysed in Cristina Pérez Valverde's and Giorgia Grilli's papers; they approached these experiences from a theosophical standpoint (Travers was a follower of this school of esoteric philosophy), demonstrating amongst other things liminality and threshold. This paper expands on Valverde's and Grilli's thoughts with reference to Joseph Campbell's ideas about the mythological hero's journey and his self-exploration as well as approaching the dreams from the point of view of the individuation process, thus describing the collective unconscious and pointing out the revelation of the forgotten and hidden self with respect to the dreams in the Mary Poppins stories. Furthermore, the paper comments upon several archetypal figures – the Self, the Shadow, the Coyote and embodiment of the wise old man and woman – in accordance with Mary Poppins's and other characters' personalities. Those archetypal characters – i.e. the Sha-

man, the Dandy, the Trickster, and the Goddess – already discussed in Grilli's book titled *Myth, Symbol and Meaning in Mary Poppins* and in Valverde's paper, "Dreams and Liminality in the Mary Poppins Books" are not covered in any great detail in this paper.

It is mostly those stories and chapters in which dreams are analogue to each other that form the basis of my analyses. The common aspects of the dreams are the following: 1. they all take place at night, 2. each involves a ceremony of celebration (birthday, new year, Halloween), 3. the universal unity, the collective unconscious and the individuation process are manifested in all these dreams. Thus, the discussed chapters are: "Full Moon" (*Mary Poppins*), "Evening out" (*Mary Poppins Comes Back*), "High Tide" (*Mary Poppins Opens the Door*), "Happy Ever After" (*Mary Poppins Opens the Door*), and "Hallowe'en" (*Mary Poppins in the Park*). The only exceptions are: "Bad Tuesday" (*Mary Poppins*), "Bad Wednesday" (*Mary Poppins Comes Back*) and "Lucky Thursday" (*Mary Poppins in the Park*) in which other distinct functions of dreams are expressed.

Literary dreams "reflect not just their author's insights into the human mind, but also contemporary theories about dreams (from both scientific and popular sources), as well as conventional literary representations of dreams and visions" (Glance 2001). Since Travers was enthusiastic about Victorian (fantasy) literature and she followed its representation of dreams, the Mary Poppins books reflect some features that are akin to several Victorian works which take place in a dream-state. This explains why strange, extraordinary characters, the act of shape shifting (growing and shrinking) and self-discovery can be found in both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the Mary Poppins stories; moreover, allusions to indigestion (as a possible determining factor of the dream) and the revelation of the truth are present in *A Christmas Carol* and on Jane and Michael Banks's dream journeys as well.

Furthermore, dreams in the Mary Poppins stories are not only based on P. L. Travers's thoughts and fantasies but, intentionally or unintentionally, on the dream theories of Freud and Jung. While Freudian theories were well-established by the time Travers's masterpiece was written, (from a chronological point of view) Travers could not have been aware of the Jungian concepts of the unconscious until her later works. Consequently, the fact that the author independently adopted ideas of the unconscious, the

imperishable myth and archetypes in her essays proves the existence of the collective unconscious (Koralek 1999, 37; Travers 1999, 193, 194).

### 1. Theoretical Background: the Collective Unconscious and Archetypes

The concept of the (collective) unconscious had been laid down aptly by Jung who asserted that the unconscious is the unknown in the inner world. Moreover, everything of which we know, but of which we are not at the moment thinking; everything of which we were once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by our senses, but not noted by our conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, we feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things that are taking shape in us and will sometime come to consciousness: all this is the content of the unconscious (Jung 1987a, 185). In my analysis, I emphasise the *forgotten* content of the unconscious.

In the Mary Poppins stories the Moon projects its light onto all dream spots or foreshadows dreams, and indicates the unknown, hidden thoughts since the “moon often symbolizes the unconscious, illuminating the dream-time” (Bowen 2012, 9). Therefore, before the dreamy adventure was about to begin Jane was wondering about a likely circus in the sky “[t]he pointed roofs of Cherry Tree Lane were shiny with frost, and the moonlight slid down the gleaming slopes and fell soundlessly into the dark gulf between the houses” (Travers 2010, 255). Similarly, on New Year’s Eve the silver rays of the white moon “poured down on the wide lawns of the Park” (Travers 2010, 465) and on Halloween when “[e]very house was fast asleep the full moon filled the world with light” (Travers 2010, 651). The Moon is frequently in its ‘full phase’ when there is a “perfect equilibrium” (Travers 1989b, 44) since the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon are aligned with each other which could be a manifestation of the universal unity and the collective unconscious which Jane and Michael are about to discover on their journeys. The full moon is not the only natural phenomenon which indicates the presence of the (collective) unconscious. The elder Banks children become aware of the stars Castor and Pollux, who introduce themselves in the following way: “[w]e have a single heart and mind between us. We can think each other’s thoughts and dream each other’s dreams” (Travers 2010, 259).

This strong harmony between the Twins could be explained by the existence of the collective unconscious. Since this deeper layer of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the persona psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals (Jung 1980a, 3–4). Moreover, the “collective unconscious comprises in itself the psychic life of our ancestors right back to the earliest beginnings” (Jung 1987b, 112).

Concerning its content, instincts and archetypes together form the collective unconscious (Jung 1965, 485). Archetypes (or mythological motifs) are meaningful, inherited patterns, forms of situations, thoughts and figures which always repeat themselves and in which the collective phenomena are experienced (Jung 1980b, 183; Jung 1981, 219). We fill in the content of the same inherited forms differently according to our individual life experiences (Coster 2010, 5).

Since “the archetype is, in itself, invisible” (Cicchetti 2006, 42) archetypes are manifested in symbols because a true symbol (without any fixed meaning) “points to a greater reality that can never be totally understood because it contains wisdom that transcends the knowing mind” (Cicchetti 2006, 43). These symbols – symbolic thoughts, situations, figures – are apparent in fantasies, in trance states and in “the dreams of early childhood, from the third to the fifth year” (Jung 1936, 103). Furthermore, “a child’s earliest dreams often manifest in symbolic form the basic structure of the psyche” (Jung 1988, 165). It is noteworthy that Jane and Michael are the same age when they undergo their adventures and are exposed to the ancient knowledge in their dream-like situations.

“When a situation occurs which corresponds with a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness appears” (Jung 1936, 102). Similarly, archetypes embodied in Mary Poppins show themselves in accordance with the situations and circumstances. Therefore, Poppins either shows her mother side (Earth Mother) by taking care of the children and nature, or her wise old side (Crone) by giving advice and delivering maxims to the children, or her daemonic self by taking revenge on her enemy; or she can behave like a Shaman, a Trickster, even a Coyote.

## 2. Jane and Michael’s Dream Journey

In order to understand the Banks children’s dream better it is necessary to contemplate upon their dream journey and ask such questions as: what do

their dream journeys look like? How can their rites of passage be described and classified? Who is responsible for helping them on the dream journeys? Joseph Campbell who built his ideas upon Jungian theories can assist in providing answers to such questions.

In the rites of passage of the heroes' journey, Jane and Michael's dream travel can be divided into: Separation, Initiation and Return (Campbell 2004, 28). I suggest that to some degree Jane and Michael follow the mythological or fairy tale hero's journey yet they are neither heroes on all levels nor do they participate in all the rites of passage (e.g. no fights, enemies and perilous adventures await them).

## 2.1 Separation and Initiation

When Grilli introduced Mary Poppins as a Shaman she cited that the shamanic miracles demolish the barriers between dream and present reality (Grilli 2014, 52; cited from Eliade 1972, 511). Since in the dreams with the magical nanny we are unable to see when exactly the children leave reality and their dream adventures begin, it is difficult to discern Jane and Michael's journey stages; thus, the first two rites of passage, separation (call to adventure) and initiation (crossing the threshold), are discussed together here.

Throughout the dream adventures Jane and Michael are always aided by a Herald and a *Threshold Guardian*. The latter is always Mary Poppins who "acts as mediator between the mythical world and everyday reality" (Grilli 2014, 59). She is a sort of door who separates these two worlds but also allows contact between the real and the magical (Grilli 2014, 60). Thus, she performs the task of the Threshold Guardian who protects "the Special World and its secrets from the Hero" (Coster 2010, 10). Anyway "threshold [or the in-between time, beyond place] is the frontier between two worlds where sacred and profane at the same moment oppose and communicate with each other, when one world begins and another ends" (Travers 1999, 190). In Mary Poppins the threshold is explicitly depicted and described, for instance when the children are told where they are celebrating, Sleeping Beauty explains the threshold like this: "The Old Year dies on the First Stroke of Midnight and the New Year is born on the Last Stroke. And in between – while the other ten strokes are sounding – there lies the secret Crack" (Travers 2010, 469). Similarly, other extraordinary dream experi-

ences take place ‘beyond’ and ‘in-between’: when the relation between the living and the dead is renegotiated (Halloween), between night and day (Heavenly circus, Full Moon), between the land and the sea (High Tide).

*Herald*, the former aide “make[s] their appearance anytime during a Journey, but often appear at the beginning of the Journey to announce a Call to Adventure” (Coster 2010, 10). In the children’s dream-state the herald differs in each scene: it is a whispering voice, a shooting star, a Sea-Trout’s voice, a living toy or a message on leaves. They move and lead the Banks children toward the dream spot, and they guard them after the threshold has been crossed, as well: right after Jane and Michael fell asleep “they heard a low voice whispering at the door” (Travers 2010, 104) which guided them to the Zoo; “A very bright star, larger than any they had yet seen, was shooting through the sky towards Number Seventeen Cherry Tree Lane” and urged Jane and Michael to follow it and step onto the stars in the Park (Travers 2010, 256); similarly a Sea-Trout’s voice from the Cowrie Shell brought them under the sea; furthermore, Michael’s Golden pig which came alive led them to the Park to celebrate New Year. The children received more hidden but allusive signs about the Halloween journey. Mrs Corry and her daughters, as Mentors, prepared Jane and Michael for their journey by talking to them about the importance of their shadows; then whilst crossing the threshold the children found messages ‘Come’ and ‘Tonight’ on two leaves in the Nursery, later they followed their shadows to the Park where characters were celebrating with their shadows.

## 2.2 Return

At the point of their return, the music dies away, the actions slow down and extraordinary figures dissolve in the air. Thus, when the party was about to finish in the Zoo “[t]he cries of the swaying animals dwindled and became fainter. Jane and Michael as they listened felt themselves gently rocking too, or as if they were being rocked” (Travers 2010, 118). Similarly, when it was time for the children to return from the heavenly circus “the sounds of the ring were growing fainter. Their heads fell sideway, dropping heavily upon their shoulders” (Travers 2010, 273). Furthermore, at the end of the Halloween party, right before midnight “[d]arkness dropped like a cloak on the scene and before the eyes of the watching children every shadow vanished, the merry music died away. And as a silence fell upon the Park the

steeples above the sleeping City rang their midnight chime” (Travers 2010, 666). Once they are sent back to sleep by the supernatural characters, it seems that Jane and Michael are never really aware of their return, instead suddenly finding themselves back in the nursery the next morning.

This progress of return does not correspond with a certain explanation which claims the final images of the dream are vivid because they are near waking (Freud 2010, 179). In *Mary Poppins* the opposite is true, the closer the children get to reality the further they move from the vivid pictures, instead the whole scene becomes fainter and more opaque. Although events ‘beyond the door’ in Poppins’s stories are primarily “sensory experiences enriched by a heightened perception of taste, smell, colour, and touch” (Grilli 2014, 9). This is already in accord with the Jungian dream concept since “images produced in dreams are much more picturesque and vivid than the concepts and experiences that are their waking counterparts. One of the reasons for this is that, in a dream, such concepts can express their unconscious meaning. In our conscious thoughts, we restrain ourselves within the limits of rational statements – statements that are much less colourful because we have stripped them of most of their psychic associations” (Jung 1988, 43). Thus “sensually powerful descriptions grant the reader a truer and more disinterested reality” (Grilli 2014, 20). Dreams also make use of auditory images (Freud 2010, 18). It means that when “in a dream something has the character of a spoken utterance [...] then it originates in the utterances of waking life” (Freud 2010, 135). By the same token children meet their questions, sentences in their dreams which have been uttered in their waking life.

By the end of their journey the heroes have already learned and found something in the supernormal range of human spiritual life, and then come back and communicate their gifts after the return (Campbell, “The Shoulder We Stand On”, § 17). In the case of Jane and Michael this reward is acquired and unveiled at a special moment and in a particular place but is not exercisable, since after the return, their existence in reality is no longer comprehensible. Only objects remind them of these boons: a belt from the Zoo, a brooch from under the sea, a cowrie shell, Sand Dollars, etc. But what are the boons which are apparent only for a short time? This is the question that can be answered by examining the function of dreams in the *Mary Poppins* stories.

### 3. The Functions of Dreams in the Mary Poppins's Books

*Dreamtime is a timelessness and spacelessness state which includes matter, spirit, life and death, everything and always. (Travers)*

Travers's thought above mirrors the traditional belief of her homeland with respect to dreamtime. In the Australian aborigine dream belief, there are at least four aspects of dreamtime: the beginning of all things; the life and influence of the ancestors; the way of life and death; and sources of power in life (Crisp 2010). They all occur at the same time; Jane and Michael Banks appear to be experiencing dreamtime.

With respect to this I suggest there exist five functions of dreams in the Mary Poppins collection. In the first place, Jane and Michael's dreams fulfil their daily wishes; secondly, in the form of nightmares dreams punish children for their bad behaviour and thus educate them; thirdly, these dreams offer an opportunity to encounter another true reality (the unconscious); fourthly, dreams make the children reveal ancient knowledge thus recollecting thoughts from the collective unconscious; finally, the Banks children's dreams promote the individuation process.

#### 3.1 Wish fulfilment

"The dream is the (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed, repressed) wish" (Freud 2010, 55). According to Freud, one of the possibilities for the origin of a wish is that "it may have been excited during the day, and owing to external circumstances may have remained unsatisfied; there is thus left for the night an acknowledged and unsatisfied wish" (Freud 2010, 173). Regarding the Banks children's daily wishes and reveries Mary Poppins stands for the 'external circumstance' since she does not let the children ask questions and does not satisfy their curiosity. So, although they 'acknowledge' their wishes, they remain 'unsatisfied' until the dark night descends and the moon appears.

Freud asserted that the simplest dreams of all are to be expected in the case of children whose psychic activities are certainly less complicated than those of adults. Thus, the little children's dreams at the beginning are often simple, undisguised and frank fulfilments of wishes which are not satisfied during the day (Freud 2010, 45–46). Although it is not sufficient to claim that Jane and Michael's dreams only depict simple and frank wishes. Since

as I have already pointed out, on the one hand, early childhood dreams reflect archetypal symbols, on the other hand, “conscious wish becomes effective in exciting a dream only when it succeeds in arousing a similar unconscious wish which reinforces it” (Freud 2010, 173) or it may happen that the waking activity and the unconscious wish coincide. In other words, on the surface the Banks children are interested in the world around them and have their childish questions, on a deeper level (probably once their waking activity has been aroused their unconscious) they yearn after past memories and the forgotten unity with the cosmos.

Therefore, all the journeys begin with the children’s questions that then move them toward the dreamy adventures and deeper understanding: Michael wonders “what happens in the Zoo at night, when everybody’s gone home?” (Travers 2010, 104); before the experience in the circus in the sky Michael asks for the Moon and comparing the star-shower to a circus, being interested whether there are circuses in Heaven too. At the same time his sister Jane wishes they were among the stars and is wondering “what makes the stars shoot” (Travers 2010, 254). Furthermore, before the children take a journey to the sea and drink wine Michael wishes he “could have a Glass of Port” (Travers 2010, 439); at the end of the year, waiting for the New Year, Michael is interested about what happens in-between the first and the last stroke of twelve.

### **3.2 Education and Punishment**

Jane and Michael Banks, just like other children, are not always kind and pleasant. On one Tuesday, Michael behaves very rudely and is unsatisfied with everything, he even steals Mary Poppins’s compass which they have found in the Park. Similarly on a particular Thursday he has to stay inside because of his illness and cannot play outside like his siblings do. This makes him angry. Finally, Mary Poppins evokes nightmares in Michael in order to make him become aware of his bad deeds. Once he has stolen the compass he dreams of monstrous animals standing in his nursery; on the Thursday after stealing Poppins’s silver whistle he dreams about cats (living in the future) who force him to live with them far away from his family on the Cat Planet – one of his wishes was to go miles from home. When Michael awakens Mary Poppins is always with him (she is the one who rescues him) and he feels peace and behaves well again.

Similarly, on one special Wednesday (the day when she was born) Jane is very rude, naughty and fed up with the duties she has to do around the house because she is the eldest sibling. She even wishes she was an only child and breaks the family's Royal Daulton Bowl. Then Mary Poppins leads her into a nightmare situated inside the broken bowl. Eventually frightening figures – the patterns of the bowl who have come from the past – do not let her go home and want to keep her as the only and the youngest child in that family. When she gets up (rescued by Poppins) she is well-behaved and dutiful again.

These dreams all function as means of education. Instead of preaching and rebuking, Mary Poppins highlights the children's bad behaviour in their dreams thereby warning them that their wishes and deeds have their own outcome: they realise they have to be more careful about what they wish for otherwise it may come true. The only thing with which she foreshadows that something bad is going to happen is expressed with her sight and short remarks: before Jane's nightmare was about to happen Poppins's "voice was gentle, but there was something very frightening in it" (Travers 2010, 189). Before Michael 'travelled' to the Cat Planet, from his nanny's look he guessed that something was going to happen but then he did not care about it (Travers 2010, 558). Similarly, after the nightmares she concludes the moral only with short remarks like "I told you that was my compass, didn't I?" (Travers 2010, 73) and without any further comment she continues her housework.

Thus, Mary Poppins both educates and punishes the children. However, she cannot be the only initiator of these dreams because children themselves also make these dreams happen since "the essential characteristic of punishment-dreams that in them it is not the unconscious wish from the repressed material (from the system Ucs) that is responsible for dream-formation but the punitive wish reacting against it, a wish pertaining to the ego, even though it is unconscious (i.e. preconscious) (Freud 2010, 175). The children's guilt is manifested in their nightmares: Michael turns round guiltily expecting to see Mary Poppins in his dream after he has stolen the compass and before dreadful animals appear in front of him. The wish to be good again and their apology for being bad always arrive by the end of the nightmares. Finally, even though Poppins's teaching method is unusual and extreme, it is also very impressive since Jane and Michael learn to appreciate what and who they have.

### 3.3 Encountering the other Reality

*There are worlds beyond worlds and times beyond times, all of them true,  
all of them real, and all, as children know, penetrating each other.*  
(Travers)

In the Mary Poppins stories one can observe reality and approach it from two points of view: by separating real from unreal actions and by differentiating the physical (outer world) and the psychic reality (inner world, unconscious).

With respect to the first, children try to find and explain the true reality and place a border between reality and their dreams. This border always remains blurred for them. One cannot disregard the strong connection between dreams and reality. Since “[w]hatever the dream may offer us, it derives its material from reality, and from the psychic life centred upon this reality. However extraordinary the dream may seem, it can never detach itself from the real world, [its material] must be taken from that which we have already experienced” (Freud 2010, 6).

The search for truth manifests itself in children’s questions. While Mary Poppins, Mrs Corry and her daughters Annie and Fannie are sticking gingerbread stars onto the sky Jane is wondering: “Are the stars gold paper or is the gold paper stars?”(Travers 2010, 92). As Jane hurries through the garden toward the adventure to the heavenly circus she is thinking to herself whether she could be dreaming or not (Travers 2010, 257). In the circus the Sun answers these questions by emphasising a relative reality and denying an absolute one: “What is real and what is not? Can you tell me or I you? Perhaps we shall never know more than this – that to think a thing is to make it true” (Travers 2010, 271). Imagination and different perception is able to create a relative reality. The Sun’s thought and advice is analogue to Theosophy and thus Travers’s concept of reality according to which “everything that exists has only a relative, not an absolute, reality, since the appearance which the hidden noumenon assumes for any observer depends upon his power of cognition. Nothing is permanent except the one hidden absolute existence which contains in itself the noumena of all realities” (Blavatsky 2003, 39). The way of perceiving reality is not absolute, only an individual action – that is why there is no *one* definite answer to everything for Jane and Michael. The only absolute perception of all

the realities is possible in a certain unity (e.g. in the Crack). When the children understand this, Jane acknowledges that celebrating in the Crack, for that moment, knows it is true that she is happy for ever (Travers 2010, 472). Since any Secondary World is true, because “it accords with the laws of that world” (Tolkien 1939, 12).

Concerning the second viewpoint (physical and psychic reality), the bout with the unconscious is the encounter with the ‘other’ reality (Jung 1965, 18). As dream and reality correlate with each other, outer and inner reality do the same. Since the “unconscious [...] in its inner nature it is just as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is just as imperfectly communicated to us by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the reports of our sense-organs” (Freud 2010, 190). What I call physical and psychic reality others called ordinary and non-ordinary reality. “Ordinary reality is the day-to-day reality that most of us usually inhabit or are aware. It is the reality of the five senses and the left-brain [...] Non-ordinary reality, perceived by the intuitive mind of the right brain, lies beyond our five senses” (Coster 2010, 17).

Once when the children return from that psychic reality, Mary Poppins does not let them interpret their dream lest it becomes a narration. She rebukes Jane and Michael because “back in the realm of logic and order, any narration would give those fantastic experiences a compromised and imperfect form” (Grilli 2014, 19) since language limits the capacity for full, accurate representation (Kilroe 2000). Yet what the children intend to do is a normal human deed since “[t]he human mind so greatly tends to perceive everything in a connected form that it intentionally supplies the missing links in any dream which is in some degree incoherent” (Freud 2010, 18). Once the dreams have come to an end the children immediately want to continue or narrate them. Thus, the statement “I had such a strange dream last night” (Travers 2010, 118) or asking for objects which were present in their dreams is an acknowledgement of an “isolatable experience with temporal and local boundaries” (Kilroe 2000).

Finally like guardians of a sacred knowledge Jane and Michael understand that they must experience their dreams and the other reality rather than narrate them (Grilli 2014, 19). They have learnt that there “were things, they knew, that could not be told” (Travers 2010, 670).

### 3.4 Recollection: Back to the Long-Forgotten Realm

*Everyone who goes down to the sea brings something back. (Travers)*

Joseph Campbell, in connection with myth and fairy tales, points out that both adventures and misfortunes move the characters toward learning and transformation (Campbell 2004, “Introduction: The Mystic Question”, § 7). Learning and transformation is equivalent to becoming aware of the hidden self and thus the revelation and recollection of memories from the long-forgotten past, which are actually manifested in the unconscious and in dreams. In dreams by going down to the unconscious, as the wise Terrapin said, we can bring something back. Travers also believed that everything that is known is in the bloodstream, which gathers itself from the vital centre of the human what Australian aborigines call the *dreaming* (Cott 1999, 164).

Therefore, the main task of dreams is to bring back a sort of recollection of the prehistoric right down to the level of the most primitive instincts (Jung 1988, 98–99). We can reveal our ‘dead selves’ since “[w]hen asleep we go back to the old ways of looking at things and of feeling about them, to impulses and activities which long ago dominated us, in a way which seems impossible in the waking hours, when the later self is in the ascendant” (Sully 1893, 120–121). We can also recollect our undeveloped, rudimentary self. Heroes neither discover nor find anything throughout their journey: “They remember. They remember that they are remembering. They tell what has been since the beginning of time” (Campbell, “The Shoulders We Stand On”, § 7). Thus, the heroes’ wisdom and recognition of the unconscious attained on the journey reflect the knowledge that they once possessed but have forgotten by stepping into their physical reality. Similarly, Jane and Michael are active and involved, they gain knowledge through an epiphanic revelation of truth. The revelation is held for those who are accepted into the new world as guests but do not remain there (Grilli 2014, 15). Jane and Michael are not only guests but more, “Special Visitors” (Travers 2010, 105) at the Zoo and “Guests of Honour” (Travers 2010, 444) under the sea which indicates the importance of these occasions.

Furthermore, in the psychological approach, digging into the depth symbolises the revelation of the unconscious (Antalfai 2002, 3). Jane and

Michael also dig into the depths or approach the ‘up’. Both directions account for the same act: they go deep (under the sea) to their unconscious and attain a higher spiritual state (circus in the sky). When they “hurried up to the frosty sky, leaping over the gulfs between the stars Jane paused, and glancing down, caught her breath to see how high they were” (Travers 2010, 257). Jane catches her breath because meeting the unfamiliar, approaching the way toward the recollection of what has been repressed are both comforting and frightening (Zipes 2010, 12). This upward progress is a series of progressive awakenings, each advance bringing with it the idea that now, at last, we have reached ‘reality’” (Blavatsky 2003, 40). Therefore, psychic development brings one closer to absolute reality and the individuation process.

### 3.5 The Individuation Process: Wholeness and Unity

#### 3.5.1 The Loss of Unity

*There is something I wanted to remember [...] it was something important.  
Something beginning with B. (Travers)*

The main task of the pre-oedipal – phase of the infants’ first few months, when they still turn inward by perceiving themselves – is to regain the lost unity of the Self (Grilli 2014, 97–98). The Self is the totality of the personality which embraces both conscious and unconscious personality (Jung 1965, 481). “The self, as the symbol [archetype] of wholeness [and order], is a coincidentia oppositorum, [the unity of opposites] and therefore contains light and darkness simultaneously” (Jung 1986, 368).

Since in dreams we are free to regain this unity and Anabel as a newborn baby is in her pre-oedipal phase, she recollects the experience of the perfect unity with the Universe. She “remembers past lives and foresees ones before the moment of birth” (Valverde 2007, 70) while Mary Poppins is cradling the baby, in her dream-state:

I am earth and air and fire and water [...] I come from the Dark where all things have their beginning [...] I come from the sea and its tides [...] I come from the sky and its stars; I come from the sun and its brightness [...] I come from the forests of earth. As if in a dream, Mary Poppins rocked the cradle – to-and-fro, to-and-

fro with a steady swinging movement [...] Slowly I moved at first [...] always sleeping and dreaming. I remembered all I had been, and I thought of all I shall be. And when I had dreamt my dream, I awoke and came swiftly [...] I past the beast of the jungle and came through the dark, deep waters. It was long journey. (Travers 2010, 227)

However, this state does not last a long time. Mary Poppins and the Starling warn Annabel that she will lose the sense of unity: “By the time the week’s out you won’t remember a word of it” (Travers 2010, 228). That is why it is possible that when she wants to remember something beginning with B, she is no more able to recall her memories of Birth from the unity.

The loss of unity is further depicted with the story of the Banks Twins. John and Barbara insist that Jane and Michael are stupid since they neither understand the language of the Starling nor that of the Wind. Mary Poppins explains to them that their elder siblings did once understand, but they have forgotten it all since “they have grown older” (Travers 2010, 97); furthermore, the Starling says to the Twins that they will forget that language too because they “just can’t help it. There never was a human being that remembered after the age of one” (Travers 2010, 98).

This means that as a child is growing up the “sense of [cosmic] unity and wholeness quickly transforms itself into a fading memory” (Grilli 2014, 95) and they lose their primitive psyche (Jung 1988, 98). The reason for forgetting is that as human consciousness develops the conscious mind loses contact with some of that primitive psychic energy and original mind. Fortunately, the unconscious is able to bring back all the elements from which the mind freed itself as it evolved – illusions, fantasies, archaic thought forms, fundamental instincts, etc. (Jung 1988, 98). The other consequence of the evolving consciousness is that the man is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional “unconscious identity” with natural phenomena which have slowly lost their symbolic implications (Jung 1988, 95).

Regarding symbolism, man “produces symbols unconsciously and spontaneously, in the form of dreams” (Jung 1988, 20). The interpretation of dream symbols enriches the poverty of consciousness so that it learns to understand again the forgotten language of the instincts. The symbol-producing function of our dreams is thus an attempt to bring the original

mind of man (the Self) into “advanced” consciousness, where it has never been before (Jung 1988, 52, 98). By the same token, Mary Poppins uses dreams and archetypal characters for the representation of those things which children would not have comprehended in other ways, and she helps find a new understanding.

### 3.5.2 The Individuation Process

“Dreams function to promote the most important developmental process of human life, namely, the uniting of consciousness and the unconscious in a healthy, harmonious state of wholeness (Kelly Bulkley 1993). Jung calls this process individuation, the “complete actualization of the whole human being” (Jung 1966, 160). This life-long process takes place in the unconscious; it is a process by which man lives out his innate human nature and in which one must repeatedly seek out and find something that is not yet known to anyone. Furthermore, the individuation process is a unique and individual process; each of us has to do something different (Jung 1988, 162–165). Presumably another reason is concealed here and explains why Mary Poppins does not permit the children to ask and why she does not allow them to get but one answer: we are all different, our mission, life and personality differ – we all require distinct answers to our questions.

“[I]n dreams we put on the likeness of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night. There he is still the whole, and the whole is in him” (Jung 1965, 475). Mary Poppins in the children’s dream offers them an opportunity to get an insight into the whole state. Thus, her gift is the “gift of a greater, fuller life” (Grilli 2014, 19) and a new, more positive approach toward life. Since “for the individual to enter seriously into the process of individuation [...] means a completely new and different orientation toward life” (Jung 1988, 229).

For the successful and real process of individuation it is essential to be aware of it and make a living connection with that, respecting and listening to the inner totality of the Self (Jung 1988, 162–164). By the same token, on Halloween Mrs Corry draws the children’s attention to taking care of their shadows:

They feel twice as much as you do. I warn you children, take care of your shadows or your shadows won’t take care of you [...]

what's man without a shadow? Practically nothing, you might say.  
(Travers 2010, 649)

### 3.5.3 The Realisation of the Shadow

The unconscious contains all aspects of human nature light and dark, beautiful and ugly, good and evil, profound and silly (Jung 1988, 103) since “man’s real life consists of a complex of inexorable opposites” (Jung 1988, 85). The importance of the opposites, the dark are considered valuable phenomena in Theosophy as well and it adopted the following idea from Eastern Occultism: “[D]arkness is the one true actuality, the basis and the root of light, without which the latter could never manifest itself, nor even exist [...] Darkness [...] is subjective and absolute light; while the latter in all its seeming effulgence and glory, is merely a mass of shadows, as it can never be eternal, and is simply an illusion” (Blavatsky 2003, 70).

The Shadow is our other selves, the inferior, repressed, hidden part of the personality, which also displays both bad (fears) and good (normal instincts) qualities and which can be realized in dreams (Jung 1988, 168 and 481–482). “Only the integration of good and evil and the stern acceptance of opposites will change the situation and bring about the condition that is known as Happy Ever After” (Travers 1989a, 268). In the psychological approach we could decode this thought as an enunciation of the importance of the reconciliation of the opposites due to the ‘happy ending’ – the successful individuation. Moreover, that reconciliation leads one to “an expansion of awareness and a broadening of the personality” (Cicchetti 2006, 44).

The state where the opposites meet each other (e.g. the Crack, the Full Moon) is being in the continuous present, in which past and future are never again separated (Antalfai 2002, 11). In Australian aboriginal dream theory, this continuous present is found in dreaming since “[t]he dreaming is objective Now, the everlasting nonexistence from which existence rises” (Travers 1989c, 34). It is a “condition beyond time and space as known in everyday life and the aborigines call it the ‘all-at-once’ time [which means that] they experience Dreamtime as the past, present and future coexisting” (Crisp 2010).

Mary Poppins uses Halloween to demonstrate the reconciliation of the opposites (within one) and thus the individuation process. Herself, Mrs Corry and the Bird Woman make Jane and Michael encounter their hid-

den self, their Shadow and make them aware of the importance of their connection with it. Eventually Jane and Michael dance with their shadows like friends do with each other. “Whether the shadow becomes our friend or enemy depends mostly upon ourselves. The shadow becomes hostile only when he is ignored or misunderstood” (Jung 1988, 173). That is why Mary Poppins tells the children that it all depends on them whether they will live happily afterwards: if they concentrate on their inner selves they could be happy and live healthily, if they ignore it problems may arise.

“[T]he function of the shadow is to represent the opposite side of the ego and to embody just those qualities that one dislikes most in other people” (Jung 1988, 173). In other words, our shadow mirrors our other real self as well, as Miss Lark’s does it when she rebukes it when it is making merry with strangers in the Park: “I’m gayer than you think, Lucinda. And so you are. If you but knew it. Why are you always fussing and fretting instead of enjoying yourself?” (Travers 2010, 661). Thus, the shadow also holds a mirror against its owner and judges him, tries to guide him: “Well, you needn’t be so high and mighty. You are only a Lord Mayor. You know – not the Shah of Baghdad!” (Travers 2010, 665).

The Shadow, as the part of our unconscious is the human’s wise part, smarter than our mind, our rudimentary selves since as Cock Robin asserts “You can have a substance without a shadow, but you can’t have a shadow without a substance” (Travers 2010, 653). Since the shadow is invisible the appreciation of its existence is difficult. That is why the Banks children claim that shadows are not real since they are made of nothing and they go through things. To persuade the children that shadows are crucial phenomena, the Bird Woman explains that

Nothin’ is made of nothin’, lovey. And that’s what they’re for – to go through things. Through and out on the other side – it’s the way they get to be wise [...] when you know what your shadder knows – then you know a lot. Your shadder’s the other part of you, the outside of your inside. (Travers 2010, 656)

Thus, the crone admits that the Ego (belonging to our outside, small part of the total psyche) must submit to the Self to fulfil the process of individuation (Jung 1988, 161,163): the Shadow goes through the Ego by filling it with wisdom which the Shadow already possesses.

The importance of the shadow is pointed out further by describing characters after they recognise that their shadows have been lost (they have gone to celebrate in the Park). They are all anxious, Admiral Boom is even roaring, because as Miss Lark said they “can’t get along without it” (Travers 2010, 660). The Professor is also very glad when he finds his shadow, and makes a promise to never let them part again since it remembers what the Professor forgets (Travers 2010, 662). This also strengthens the concept that in the unconscious dwell the hidden, forgotten memories.

Finally, by the end of the party, approaching midnight, all the characters learn to be reconciled to their shadows: they recognise the other (forgotten or repressed) part of their Self and they set out on a journey toward successful individuation and harmony with the Universe.

### **3.5.4 In Harmony with the Universe**

In the primitive vision of the world, the forces of the universe were felt so strongly by each individual that it was impossible to talk in terms of an external physical experiment: the individual was seen to be bound to the cosmos. Mary Poppins’s ‘beyond’ journeys on a very profound level are seen to be in harmony with the cosmos as a whole and its own ‘logic’. These experiences belong to a greater life, to the universe and they always take place at very particular moments (solstices, equinoxes, full moons, midnight), following special astral movements, and being linked by a series of coincidences that create a sense of harmony and reach out to the idea of the eternal (Grilli 2014, 89). This (individual and universal) unity is manifested in an unrepeatable, special moment and place otherwise it would not be comprehensible in the physical every-day reality. Jane and Michael encounter the unity “when [Mary Poppins’s] Birthday falls on a Full Moon” (Travers 2010, 106); when Mary Poppins’s “Second Thursday fell upon our High Tide” (Travers 2010, 453); by the same token shadows are free on Halloween because it is the Full Moon which even falls on Poppins’s Birthday Eve.

Before the memory of unity fades away, the harmony with the Universe is depicted in Jane’s, Michael’s and Annabel’s relationship with nature. Mary Poppins is also able to understand and speak the animals’ language (talking to Ms Lark’s dog and Ms Andrew’s bird) and she takes care of nature (sticking gingerbread stars onto the sky, changing the winter into

spring). These things actually refer to the Shaman's task who "enters into contact with the whole of the natural world and the entire cosmos" (Grilli 2014, 47). Similarly, "young children experience an intimate, immediate bond with the natural world whose language is by no means alien to them" (Grilli 2014, 94): John is complaining to the Sun that it is right in his eyes, but the Sun answers that this is its task, to move from East to West. Barbara and Anabel are enjoying the feel of the sunshine. Annabel even gets curly hair from the Breeze and John is complaining to the Starling that his growing teeth hurt so much. Both Barbara and Annabel give crumbs to the bird, while they all talk about everyday things and behave in a casual way with each other.

Since the eldest Banks children lose their intimate, pristine bond with the Cosmos, Mary Poppins and other extraordinary characters aid them to comprehend, remember and recollect the memory of that. Experiences, like dancing and celebrating emphasise this idea. Moreover, in these actions not only the unity but the reconciliation of the opposites and the perfect human state (individuation) are reflected as well. This is evidenced in the descriptions of dancing or celebration scenes.

At the Zoo, in their dreams, Jane and Michael "learn that animals, people, imaginary characters, and stars are all made of the same substance, and that all elements in the world can in fact communicate with and understand each other" (Grilli 2014, xvii). Their teacher here is one of the crones, Mary Poppins's cousin, the lord of the animal's world in the Zoo, the Hamadryad who says:

We are all made of the same stuff, remember, we of the Jungle, you of the City. The same substance composes us – the tree overhead, the stone beneath us, the birds, the beast, the star – we are all one, all moving to the same end. Remember that when you no longer remember me. (Travers 2010, 117)

The serpent intends to help children retain their memory of the unity and recall the ancient knowledge. Moreover, it reflects the theosophical idea, namely that there is "One Universal Element, which is infinite, un-born, and undying, and that all the rest – as in the world of phenomena – are but so many various differentiated aspects and transformations [...] of that One" (Blavatsky 2003, 75).

The wholeness is further depicted in the rituals like dancing in a ring. Jane and Michael are having fun under the sea by dancing the Sailor's Hornpipe as the fish swam round Mary Poppins in shining rings. Furthermore, in the Zoo in the 'Grand Chain', animals are singing their Jungle songs, "leopard and lions, beavers, camels, bears, cranes, antelopes and many others all forming themselves into a ring round Mary Poppins" (Travers 2010, 116). This Grand Chain (in Theosophy the Great Chain of Being) symbolises the development from the least conscious to the highest consciousness (Wenger 2001, 108) which can be interpreted as the process of the individuation.

Furthermore, in the circus the magic nanny and the Sun are waltzing with arms outstretched, opposite each other, thus they mirror each other as representatives of the earth and heaven. The star and the nightlight in Number 17 also stand for the shadows of each other (Travers 2010, 668) and the land and earth, earth and heaven reflect each other. The Terrapin, another wise animal, intends to interpret this mirror reflection which leads us back to the pristine unity of the universe:

The land came out of the sea, remember. Each thing on the earth has a brother here – the lion, the dog, the hare, the elephant. The precious gems have their kind in the sea, so have the starry constellations. The rose remembers the salty waters and the moon the ebb and flow of the tide. (Travers 2010, 456)

### 3.5.5 The Embodiment of the Self

In dreams the Self is personified as a superior female figure, masculine initiator or guardian. By the same token, in Jane and Michael's dreams the presence of the Self is apparent for instance in Mary Poppins, Mrs Corry, Annie and Fannie. They are the only ones whose shadows would never leave them. It means that if the shadow stands for the hidden side of the self, these crones live in harmony with their unconscious. Mary Poppins even got a butterfly as a birthday present which "settled on the left shoulder of Mary Poppins's shadow" (Travers 2010, 663). Butterfly also refers to the inner side since in several cultures, among other things, it is the symbol of the soul (Haynes 2013, 28). Mary Poppins, Mrs Corry and her daughters are able to be reconciled to their shadows since they have reached a higher spiritual state, they are sage, they are Crones.

A crone is a Wise Woman who always appears to help lead a dream quest of self-knowledge (Coster 2010, 31). Furthermore, a crone has both good and bad facets, “she takes on one aspect or the other according to the laws of the story and the necessity of events [...] They change with changing circumstances” (Travers 1989a, 267). Therefore, Mary Poppins can be really strict and offensive, but also very nice and helpful: she kindly helps Gaia the star with Christmas shopping, she behaves very respectfully with other wise creatures like the Terrapin and the Hamadryad; but she is rude to Mr Banks’s former governess, Ms Andrew (the Holy Terror). With Ms Andrew’s criticism of Poppins, the magic nanny’s evil side is evoked. She uses magic to punish the Holy Terror. However, since the dark and light goes side by side, Poppins’s revenge also serves a good deed: she releases the Holy Terror’s bird Caruso from its cage.

In this situation Mary Poppins does not behave like a Crone, rather like a Coyote who is probably the most notorious Trickster from Native American Mythology: “The coyote represents both foolishness and wisdom and the balance between the two [...] Coyote allows people to see their weaknesses through foolish acts, allowing them to become aware of their mistakes and learn from them” (Coster 2010, 28). For the same reason Mary Poppins enchants Ms Andrew and locks her in Caruso’s cage. She feels extremely threatened and experiences the same as Caruso did in the cage. After this the frightened Ms Andrew apologises to Poppins and leaves the house.

It is discernible that Mary Poppins, Mrs Corry, the Bird Woman (and the Balloon woman of whom now I am not discussing) are not the only wise characters, crones in the stories. There are other wise creatures in whom the wholeness, the Self is embodied, who are not humans but animals. Terrapin, described as the “oldest and wisest thing in the world” (Travers 2010, 452), introduces himself like this:

I am the Terrapin. I dwell at the roots of the world under the cities, under the hills, under the very sea itself, I make my home. Up from the dark root, through the waters the earth rose with its flowers and forests. The man and the mountain sprang from it. The great beasts too, and the birds of the air [...] I am older than all things that are. Silent, and dark and wise am I, and quiet and very patient. Here in my cave all things have their beginning. And all things return to me in the end. (Travers 2010, 454)

Thus, in him the wholeness, the ancient knowledge, the cosmic unity, the beginning and the end of everything are revealed: since in his cave all things have their beginning and their end.

The Hamadryad, since it is a serpent is another example of the embodiment of the wholeness, wisdom, perfection and regeneration (Blavatsky 2003, 65, 73). The wholeness, the reconciliation of the opposites is reflected in his eyes: his deep eyes are long and narrow, with a dark sleepy look in them, and in the middle of that dark sleepiness a wakeful light shines like a jewel (Travers 2010, 113). Furthermore, the renewal is depicted when through a ritual movement he casts his skin and gives it to her cousin, Mary Poppins, as a birthday present.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has been built upon the tenets of theosophy (Blavatsky, Valverde), mythology (Campbell, Grilli) and psychology (Freud, Jung). My research reacted to and commented upon Valverde's paper, which analysed the Mary Poppins collection from a theosophical standpoint. Jane and Michael's dream journeys were examined in light of Campbell's and Grilli's theories about the mythological heroes' journey, the rites of passage the children underwent and the figures that guide them during these situations. Furthermore, Freud's theories on dreams and Jung's definition of the (collective) unconscious, archetypes and the individuation process aided in analysing the aspects and functions of dreams in the stories of Mary Poppins.

The functions of dreams in the Mary Poppins books are varied and appear to encompass a mix of aims including wish fulfilment and punishment. The former verifies one of the basic Freudian assertions of the functions of dreams, since Jane and Michael's wishes always serve as inductions of dreams. Furthermore, the magical heroine, the nanny both educates and punishes her protégés in an extraordinary way: giving them nightmares which, according to Freud, are initiated by the children's worries (in this case about their bad behaviour).

However, the dreams in the Mary Poppins collection also work at more profound levels explored here with the assistance of Jungian theories on dreams. Consequently, dreams aid Jane and Michael to recollect knowledge from the ancient past and to become aware of the collective unconscious; furthermore, to meet with their unconscious and get closer to the

individuation process in a special and unrepeatable moment and place (e.g. in the Crack). Finally, one can view the Mary Poppins collection as a work of fantasy both in the sense that it is entertainment but also as evidence that fantasy literature is able to offer more than a depiction of a supernatural world and miracle. It can also reflect psychological and philosophical truths as well.

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