

The reality of an
unnerving dream:
analyzing theodore
faron's nightmares
within p...



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The Children of Men by PD James depicts the life of Theodore "Theo" Faron alongside his five acquaintances Julian, Miriam, Rolf, Gascoigne, and Luke as they embark on a harrowing mission to privately birth the child that will likely become the future of all mankind. In two distinct instances James uses nightmares that visit Theo in order to symbolize a variety of emotions, as well as development within Theo's rapidly changing life. Initially, as Theo's late father stands ominously at the foot of his bed, the manifestation of nightmare derives from feelings of regret and loneliness due to a multitude of factors. Although this original nightmare eventually fades away, a new nightmare plagues Theo after a multitude of occurrences- leading to the beginning of his journey with the group of five acquaintances, known as the Five Fishes- begin to trouble him. This second nightmare again symbolizes a multitude of Theo's emotions, but further portrays development within Theo's life as related to the changing nightmare, as well as exposes James' deliberate choice of each nightmares timing. In this case, rather than his father haunting his slumber it is Luke portentously looming in front of Theo. While the initial nightmare stems from significant feelings of abasement, the succeeding nightmare that Theo encounters seizes similar feelings in a differing form that when comparing the two instances reveals Theo's development as a character, as well as the pivotal aspect of both nightmares timing.

Primarily, the initial nightmare is utilized by James in order to symbolize Theo's lack of relationship with his father, as well as feelings that coincide with the absence of the typical father-son relationship. As Theo explains prior to detailing the nightmare, " I wish that my remembrance of my father was

happier, that I had a clear view, or at least some view, of the essential man which I could take hold of... I wish that I could name even three qualities which characterized him" (26). Clearly Theo has essentially nothing to base the features of the father-son relationship upon, leading to a deep feeling of depression. This is especially apparent when Theo explains the nightmare, claiming that, " For months after his death I was visited by a recurrent nightmare in which I would see him at the foot of my bed pointing at me a bleeding yellow stump... He never spoke; he stood mute... His look was sometimes an appeal for something I couldn't give, but more often gravely accusatory, as was that pointing" (27). As the terror occurs night-after-night Theo is routinely humiliated. On one hand, Theo's father's expression of appeal for something he couldn't give leaves him feeling isolated and lonely as any potential relationship is now impossible. Consequentially, on the other hand, the accusatory nature of Theo's father's expression leaves him with an entrenched feeling of regret and guilt. Along with the burden of something Theo couldn't give, the accusatory expression forces all the burden of anguish upon Theo. Night after night Theo experiences significant pain deriving from what he interprets as his inability to attain a meaningful relationship between he and his father.

Theo's depression concerning his father via the original nightmare coincides wholly with the accidental killing of his daughter Natalie. This is obvious as Theo reveals, " After I killed Natalie he visited me weekly..." (27). Stemming from the inadequacies of his relationship with his father Theo has little to base the proper qualities of being a father upon. Many years after Theo killed Natalie he wrote in his journal, " I did feel affection for my child, although I

would have felt more had she been prettier... I still think of her with complaint" (29). Certainly Theo may have loved his child, but he was not a proper father, as he never learned how to be one. Just as when his father died Theo's initial nightmare infested his slumber due to feelings of pure seclusion and disgrace. Again Theo would see his father expressing what he clearly interpreted as an, "... appeal for something I couldn't give..." (27). Evidently, the nightmare resurfaces to constantly bother Theo, due in part to the fact that he could no longer give his wife the daughter she loved so dearly, nor his daughter another life to live. Yet, most importantly, Theo could not give himself a second chance to remedy a poor situation, just as when his father had passed. Corresponding to Theo's feelings of humiliation and isolation, the original nightmare after killing his daughter again bestows the expression of his father being, "... gravely accusatory" (27). Although an accident, Theo recognizes that he is at fault, and with this fault the accusatory nature of the initial nightmare returns to haunt him. Collectively, both after his father's death, as well as due to the accidental killing of his daughter, Theo experiences the grave and nagging nightmare of his father at the foot of his bed, a symbol of an emotional flood highlighting isolation, regret, and guilt.

Upon his return to Oxford from a lengthy trip around Europe that was preceded by his initial communications with the Five Fishes nightmare again visits Theo. However, the new nightmare is totally different in form, as James employs this round of terrors in order to depict a change of character in Theo. Rather than Theo's father standing at the foot of his bed Luke is staring at him, "... and he wasn't in bed but sitting up in his car... The

windows of the car were closed. He could hear a woman screaming as Helena had screamed. Rolf was there... pounding his fists against the car and shouting: ' You've killed Julian, you've killed Julian!' He was unable to move... He sat there staring with blank eyes through the windscreen at Luke's accusing finger" (139-140). All of the events that had led to Theo's temporary departure clearly trouble him. As nightmares often derive from fears, it is the new nightmare that begins to explain who Theo truly is, and what he will become. For example, " Rolf was there... pounding his fists against the car and shouting: ' You've killed Julian, you've killed Julian!'... He heard their angry voices, ' Get out! Get out!,' but he couldn't move. He sat there... waiting... for hands to drag him out and confront him with the horror of what he, and he alone, had done" (139-140). After all he has experienced alone, such as the Quietus, as well as all that the Five Fishes have made him an accessory in, such as conspiring against the government, Theo is overtaken by both his constantly growing role within the group, as well as his infatuation with Julian. Thus, the fear that is being detailed via the new dream cannot be simply characterized as a solitary entity. Rather, Theo's fear for Julian's safety, and perhaps to a greater extent his fear of not taking action for something he is becoming to believe in, forms the new nightmare that, "... left its legacy of unease, which deepened day by day" (140). This is to portray that day by day no matter what measures he takes Theo becomes more sympathetic to, as well as willing to be involved with the group, their ideals, and their plans. At its core, this second nightmare is where Theo begins to transform and truly reveal himself as a dynamic character, going from a man with little hope for the future, to the beginnings of a

revolutionary that will be an integral part of the first human birth in twenty five years.

The second nightmare is further employed by James as symbolism similar to what is featured within the first nightmare yet differing in form. For instance the narrator explains within Theo's second nightmare that he was, "... unable to move, locked in a rigor like a rigor of death... waiting for the door to be wrenched open..." (140). Just as Theo had felt regretful after the death of his father he recognizes via the symbol of being locked in the car that if he is to not re-associate with the group, as he was gone for such a significant amount of time, he would never get a another chance. Essentially, Theo does not want his memory of the Five Fishes to be, "... less memory than reincarnation... one of horror" (27), as it was with his father. Determinately, differing symbols, as the form of the two nightmares are converse, in reality portray comparable symbolism.

It is paramount to recognize that timing significantly differentiates the two nightmares, as this variance it is somewhat complimentary to the comparable symbolism. Timing, being utilized as a subtle maneuver by James, means a great deal to the framework of the narrative. Specifically, the fact that after his father's death Theo was wrought with the guilt that led to the surfacing of the nightmare. In addition, after Theo accidentally killed Natalie, " Horror and guilt subsumed grief" (29). Contrastively, the second nightmare allowed Theo to experience the plausibility of similar grief prior to any disaster. This is distinctly demonstrated in the similarity of Theo's accidental killing of Natalie in relation to the symbolism within the second nightmare of him being trapped in a car after killing Julian (139). Although <https://assignbuster.com/the-reality-of-an-unnerving-dream-analyzing-theodore-farons-nightmares-within-pd-james-the-children-of-men/>

obviously similar, the timing of the first nightmare occurred after the tragic death of Theo's daughter, while the second nightmare, as explained previously, transpires prior to any tragedy concerning those featured within the nightmare. Such a shift could then be indicative as to why Theo joins Miriam the night she comes to his home, as he does not want his nightmare to become reality. Thus, the comparable symbolism and differing timing of the two nightmares, in unison with the emotions that coincide with both nightmares, are a vital tool of James' used to tactfully justify and explain Theo's actions.

In *The Children of Men* PD James employs nightmares in two separate instances as an integral device pertaining to the overall narrative. The first nightmare, taking place both after Theo's father's death, as well as after the accidental killing of Theo's daughter Natalie, features widespread symbolism that portrays where Theo lies emotionally. While the second nightmare, materializing upon arrival back home after a long vacation, illustrates symbolism similar to the first dream, yet in a completely different form. Furthermore, when compared with the first, the second nightmare reveals Theo as a continually dynamic character and puts a subtle emphasis on each nightmare's timing. The first nightmare is the root of Theo's actions. That is, up until the second nightmare that leads Theo down a completely separate path than he would've taken had he not experienced such. Overall, nightmares often derive from fears and anxieties, making them, as well as all that Theo experiences within them, the perfect tool in order to utilize symbolism, development, and timing as related to the narrative framework. In reality one can often wake up from a nightmare and disregard it by

morning, but in the case of Theodore Faron a nightmare has profound meaning and can dictate his life outside of the comfort of slumber.