UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

"What Might Be Lurking:"
Wish Fulfillment and the Violence of Cuteness in *Whipped Cream*

Thesis
submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS

in Art History

By

Anabelle Natividad Gunderson

Professor Jeffrey Wasserstrom
Assistant Professor Seungyeon Gabrielle Jung

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

Abstract

Whipped Cream is a two Act ballet performed by the American Ballet Theatre, with choreography by Alexei Ratmansky and sets and costumes designed by pop-surrealist, Mark Ryden. The story follows the protagonist, The Boy, after he overindulges on whipped cream following his First Communion. As a result, he has a series of dreams that become progressively more bizarre as The Boy descends into a fantasy world. The emphasis on subconscious combined with the 1920s Viennese setting of *Whipped Cream* immediately recalls Sigmund Freud and his Dream Theory. By using Freud's Dream Theory as a point of departure, the paper argues that the main 'want' of The Boy lies in a craving for control and a need to escape the confines of reality in favor of a fantastical world. He conjures up an alternative life for himself, a future in which he has power and resources otherwise unavailable to him. Buffered by Mark Ryden's grotesquely cute set, props, and costumes, and reinforced by the cuteness theories of Daniel Harris and Sianne Ngai, we see how The Boy seeks to control the fears of growing up and the pressures that come with it, by recreating the world as he sees fit. By the end of the ballet and despite The Boy's desire to reshape the world, his mental breakdown and the inherent violence present in such a cutesy facade, expose a darker ending and the enduring presence of the reality The Boy is actively trying to escape.

Introduction

In March of 2017, the American Ballet Theatre premiered an outlandish ballet in two acts by choreographer Alexei Ratmansky at the Segerstrom Center in Costa Mesa, California, based on a story and score by Richard Strauss: *Whipped Cream.* Mark Ryden, the visual artist who dreamed up the fantastical set and costumes, in an article for the *Los Angeles Times* says about his designs, "I was trying to depict what might be lurking in [The Boy's] deep subconscious, what was swirling around." A glance at a one backdrop in Act 2 shows this subconscious on display. Floating organisms and cells, as well as fantastical designs on a black screen, are peppered throughout the dark backdrop, giving the impression of the inner workings of the mind.[1] The darkness of the background makes the shapes and swirls stand out, and we as an audience can begin to see peculiar objects in shades of red and white (Figure 1). What appears to be single cells, numbers, geometrical shapes, and neurons are placed in different orientations across the backdrop. As the background evolved from painting to stage, sweets and cutesy characters also were embedded in the design (Figure 1). While the cells and geometric shapes invoke the more scientific interpretation of the mind, the sweets and characters reference the imaginative aspects of the subconscious. This swirling of the subconscious is where we center our investigation of the Mark Ryden-Alexei Ratmansky creation.

The emphasis on subconscious combined with the 1920s Viennese setting of *Whipped Cream* immediately recalls Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theories. The focus on dreams and hallucinations within the ballet itself bears an uncanny resemblance to Freud's Dream Theory, a concept that posits that dreams act as wish fulfillment for the dreamer. In other words,

[1] Deborah Vankin, "Mark Ryden's Foray into Set Design Is a Fantastical Ballet of Candyland Delights," Los Angeles Times, March 15, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-mark-ryden-whipped-cream-20170303-story.html.

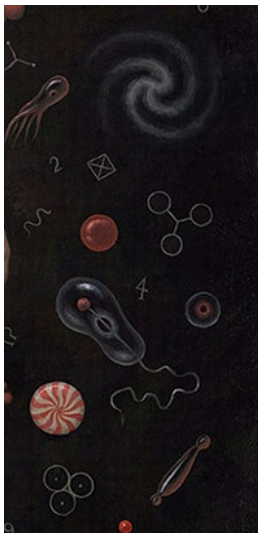

Figure 1. Detail from Mark Ryden, *Parfait Man,* 2017, oil on panel, 19 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches, 50.2 x 34.9 cm.

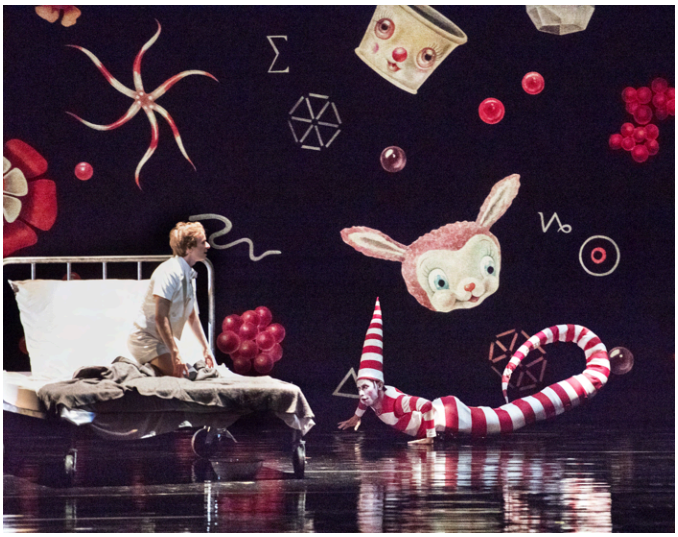

Figure 2. Subconscious Backdrop*,* Photo: Gene Schiavone, Stage and Cinema, https://stageandcinema.com/wp-content /uploads/2017/03/American-Ballet-Theatre-Whipped-Cream-Daniil-Simkin-and-Richel-Ruiz- in-Whipped-Cream.-Photo-Gene-Schiavone..jpg.

Freud postulates that dreams manifest the repressed desires and wishes of the dreamer's mind.[2] However, if *Whipped Cream* is indeed a fantastical rendition of the Freudian Dream Theory, what is the wish that is being fulfilled with the fantastical candyland of *Whipped Cream*? *What does the boy want*? How is this desire manifested through the set design and costumes created by Mark Ryden? And from what repressions are his desires liberated?

By using Freud's Dream Theory as a point of departure, this paper investigates the protagonist of *Whipped Cream*—The Boy's—primary motivation. I argue that the main 'want' of The Boy, which ultimately drives the entire plot of the ballet, lies in a craving for control and a need to escape the confines of reality in favor of a fantastical world. He conjures up an alternative life for himself, a future in which he has power and resources otherwise unavailable

[2] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill, *The Project Gutenberg* (The Macmillan Company, 1913), https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/66048/pg66048-images.html#Page_260.

to him. Hence, The Boy is able to control and mitigate the fear present in his life. But this control comes with a cost: the loss of his grip on reality.

The Boy's coming of age via his First Communion at the beginning of the ballet is the catalyst for his descent into madness. Communion acts as a vehicle for the character's integration into an adult community, and all the expectations that come with his maturation. This turning point in The Boy's life primes him for more responsibility and obligation within society, despite his desire to stay a child. The Boy responds to these unwieldy expectations with an excessive consumption of sweets, which ultimately hospitalizes him. His experience in the hospital ignites a fear that comes with not only witnessing the institutional structures of society but also being integrated and dominated by them. Buffered by Mark Ryden's grotesquely cute set, props, and costumes—the bulbous heads, recurring motifs and societal signposts, immobile stuffed creatures, and the ever-present eye—The Boy seeks to control these two interrelated fears of growing up and the institutional pressures that come with it, by recreating the world as he sees fit, picking and choosing what to take with him. I contend that by the end of the ballet, we see that despite The Boy's desire to reshape the world, his mental breakdown and the inherent violence present in such a cutesy facade, expose a darker ending and the enduring presence of the reality The Boy is actively trying to escape.

This paper consists of five sections. The first section starts with an overview of *Whipped Cream* and the original 1924 Strauss production *Schlagobers,* briefly discussing the changes between the two and how these changes shift the overall meaning of the ballet. Additionally, I will review Strauss' reasons for producing *Schlagobers,* as well as the critical reception it received. I will also discuss Alexei Ratmansky's rationale for reviving the ballet and his collaboration with Mark Ryden, as well as the reception of the 2017 production.

In section two, I take Sigmund Freud as my chief interlocutor in examining the world of *Whipped Cream*. I will not only lay out the order of *Whipped Cream's* three dreams, I will also analyze the relevant sections of Freud's theory and examine points of connection between it and The Boy's dreams. I will also counter Freud's claim that children's dreams are not complex or interesting enough to be studied, as this statement stands in opposition to the aim of this paper.

As the original story *Schlagobers* was conceived in Interwar Vienna and revived in 2010s America, section three lays out how the societal circumstances of the present time still inform the plot of *Whipped Cream* and the characterization of its protagonist. Through mapping out some of the societal anxieties of 2010s America, namely a hostile healthcare system and mistrust of vaccinations, which translates into a palpable fear of the unknown, I discuss why The Boy's desire and fear are still painfully relevant now despite the distance of both time and space from the original production.

In section four, the paper will continue with a discussion of the intrinsic fear and overbearing nature of authority within institutions in the ballet. Additionally, I discuss how the Boy initially attempts to deal with this fear: through excessive consumption of sweets. I explain how his consumption is an antisocial behavior and furthermore, how this consumption primes the boy for his eventual escape. I will explain how the overwhelming pressure of these authority figures prompt The Boy to over-consume and, when that does not work, how The Boy is forced to dream of a more permanent escape.

Finally, in section five, I conclude by discussing the facade of cuteness and the way that Ryden's inclusion and foregrounding of cute characters and designs provide a buffer that allows The Boy to transition into his dreamland. Daniel Harris and Sianne Ngai's works on cuteness show how the grotesque nature and violence inherent to cuteness are present in Ryden's designs

and how the presence of cuteness within this ballet entices The Boy away from his reality into a fantasy at the end of the story. When the societal pressures and institutional overlords come bearing down on the protagonist, his choice to break from reality, I argue, comes from not only the desire to escape such fears but also the allurement of the cute and manageable alternative. Toward the end, I contend that this desire and allurement results in the Boy's mental break from reality and complete transition into the cute and fantastical, but ultimately imaginary, violent new world.

Review of Literature

Little in the way of academic research has been conducted on *Whipped Cream*. I have found that a majority of works concerning the ballet come by way of theatre reviews from various newspapers and magazines or from Mark Ryden's book *The Art of Whipped Cream: For American Ballet Theatre*.[3,4] This small pool of research is likely because the ABT production is so new. In order to get a fuller picture of the circumstances that created *Whipped Cream*, it is necessary to cast a wider net, diving into research within multiple disciplines. Zooming out from a singular focus on the ballet and searching for literature related to Ryden and Ratmansky, I discovered more material, though research and analysis on these creators are still quite scarce.

Elvira K. Katić, in their essay, "Flesh for Fantasy: A Semiotic Contemplation on the Paintings of Mark Ryden," looks at the symbolism and recurring themes and motifs in Mark Ryden's artwork. Katić focuses on a collection of paintings that center on children and takes a semiotic approach to their investigation of the pieces. The author concludes that the childlike, nostalgic, and innocent nature of Ryden's painting belies a more dangerous, voyeuristic, and impure instinct underneath.[5] Ideas of consumption and "adult proclivities" permeate his works as young girls are objectified and put on display next to cuts of meat, implying that the girls are yet another 'thing' to be sacrificed and consumed.[6] This inclination, which we also find present in *Whipped Cream* is a hallmark for the artist's work.

---

[3] See Joan Acocella, "A Dance of Sugar and Cream." The New Yorker, June 12, 2017. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/19/a-dance-of-sugar-and-cream., Marina Harss, "Backstage at Whipped Cream." Pointe, August/September, 2017, Roslyn Suclas, "A Sweetly Disturbing Confection: Arts and Leisure Desk." The New York Times, March 12, 2017., and Vankin, "Mark Ryden's Foray into Set Design."
[4] See Mark Ryden, *The Art of Whipped Cream: For American Ballet Theatre* (Paris, France: Cernunnos, 2019).
[5] Elvira K. Katić, "Flesh for Fantasy: A Semiotic Contemplation on the Paintings of Mark Ryden," *The International Journal of Arts Theory and History* 12, no. 2 (2017): 13–26, https://doi.org/10.18848/2326-9952/cgp/v12i02/13-26, 22-25.
[6] Katić, "Flesh for Fantasy," 24-25.

Moving from Ryden to Ratmansky, Kristin Boyce in her essay "Beyond Petipa and Before the Academy: Plato, Socrates, and Alexei Ratmansky's *Serenade After Plato's Symposium*," touches on the deeper meanings of some of the choreographer's work. As the title suggests, Boyce focuses on another work of Ratmansky's: *Serenade After Plato's Symposium.* The author investigates this work in conversation with Plato and Socrates.[7] Most importantly, Boyce hones in on the choreographer's, "larger artistic project of 'going back to go forward.'"[8] This is shown in Ratmansky's tendency to either revive older ballets, such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Firebird* or unearth old and forgotten original works, such as *Whipped Cream.* Ratmansky's interest in revival and desire to investigate past theorists and artists in his pieces, opens the door for my investigation of Freud in conjunction with *Whipped Cream*. From my perspective, *going back to go forward* takes on multiple meanings, both in literal terms, with the choreographer going back to revive an old ballet in the present day, but also in figurative terms, with his protagonist reverting back into his childhood imagination in order to find a path forward. Ratmansky uses older works to investigate current anxieties and trends in modern society. He uses the past to inform the present, paving a path for future that both reveres that which came before and reinvents it for audiences yearning for more.

Finally, "Whipped Cream—Viennese Ballet and Pop Surrealism Meet Dark Medicine," by Jason F. Wang, Nicholas A. Soter, and Simon A. Morrison is a rare instance of academic research into *Whipped Cream*. This brief essay focuses on the dark side of medicine and the healthcare system present in Ryden's and Ratmansky's art and choreography and how it underlines a general fear and anxiety surrounding medical practices in contemporary American

---

[7] Kristin Boyce, "Beyond Petipa and Before the Academy: Plato, Socrates, and Alexei Ratmansky's *Serenade After Plato's Symposium*," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 44, no. 1 (December 2019): 260–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/misp.12132, 261-262.
[8] Boyce, "Beyond Petipa and Before the Academy," 261.

thinking. Wang, Soter, and Morrison argue that this new version of *Whipped Cream* emphasizes the hostility of the healthcare system, with the music, props, and choreography all working to heighten the panic and alienation of this contemporary world.[9] My essay builds on these scholars' musings, which succinctly highlight the dread and unease simmering beneath the surface of the ballet.

One aspect that is vitally important to our investigation is the idea of cuteness and its manifestation in the art of Mark Ryden. While Ryden is singular in his collaborations with the ballet, his style of art was not created in a vacuum. His grotesquely cute visuals are characterized by pastel colors and young or stereotypically cute subjects depicted with large heads, large eyes, and small mouths. This style has a prominent place in pop culture, exemplified perhaps by Margaret Keane and her "Big Eyed Waifs," and has had a recent resurgence within the Pop Surrealist or Lowbrow art movement, of which Ryden is affiliated.[10] Artists in this movement, like Yoshitomo Nara and Naoto Hattori, embrace the violence and eeriness that undercuts such overtly cute subject matter.

Yoshitomo Nara, whose works are not only very well known but perplexingly enigmatic, remarked, "I'm convinced that I am mainly influenced by invisible elements. Beneath the surface of the visible lie many things that remain imperceptible, apart from when we try hard to perceive them."[11] Described as, "Allegories for violence, revolt, and perhaps revenge," Nara's works illuminate ideas of underlying and invisible violent impulses connected to childhood and adolescence (Figure 3).[12] In a similar vein, Naoto Hattori utilizes images generally perceived as harmless and adorable—young women, cats, bunnies, and teddy bears—and twists them into

[9] Jason F. Wang, Nicholas A. Soter, and Simon A. Morrison, "*Whipped Cream*—Viennese Ballet and Pop Surrealism Meet Dark Medicine," *JAMA* 321, no. 7 (February 19, 2019): 630–31, https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2018.19502.
[10] Keane Eyes Gallery, "About Margaret," accessed March 28, 2024, https://www.keane-eyes.com/about-margaret/.
[11] Pen Magazine International, "Yoshitomo Nara: What Lies Behind Insouciance and Appearances," January 5, 2021, https://pen-online.com/arts/yoshitomo-nara-what-lies-behind-insouciance-and-appearances/?scrolled=1.
[12] Pen Magazine International, "Yoshitomo Nara."

"unnervingly surreal" characters.[13] His blending of nature and fantasy, focusing particularly on large and blown-out eyes, draws out the eerie nature of such whimsical elements (Figure 4).

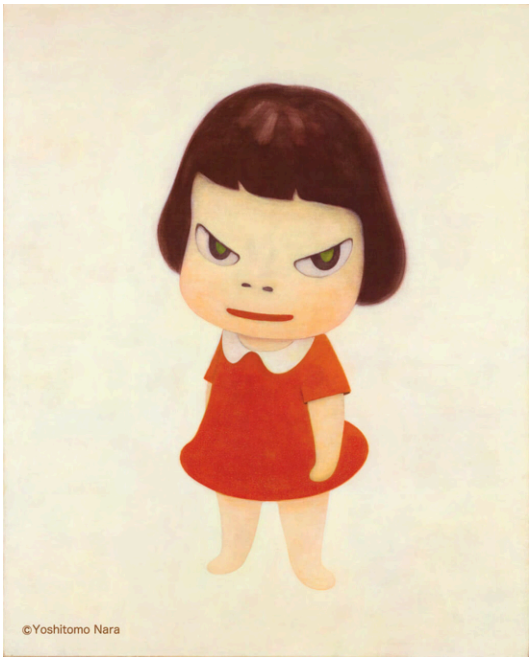

Figure 3. Yoshitomo Nara, *Missing in Action*, 1999, Acrylic on canvas, 180.0 x 145.0 cm, https://www.yoshitomonara.org/en/catalogue/YNF2389/.

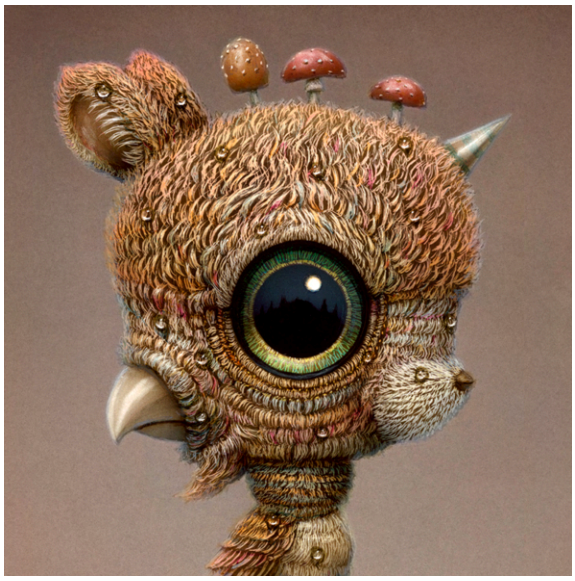

Figure 4. Naoto Hattori, *Lucid Dreamer 162*, 2020, Acrylic on board, 4 × 4 in | 10.2 × 10.2 cm, Haven Gallery, Northport, NY, https://www.artsy.net/artwork/naoto-hattori-lucid-dreamer-162.

Ryden, Nara, and Hattori, as well as other Pop Surrealists like Camile Rose Garcia, Tara McPherson, and Marion Peck, who all—to a certain extent—engage with cuteness as a form of violence, eeriness, and transgressiveness, have permeated the art scene. The fact that many artists are engaging in this style reveals that there is a demand for art that points to the underlying darkness masked by the adorable faces and the pretty pastels. There is something in the wide-eyed stares that confronts the viewer and captivates the audience, something that pulls us in and will not let go. The utilization of this violently cute style is intentional, not only for its popularity and its ability to draw people in, but for its capacity to inspire an emotional and

[13] Grace Ebert, "Bizarre Wide-Eyed Hybrids Reflect Imagined Landscapes in Naoto Hattori's Miniature Paintings," Colossal, September 4, 2021, https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2021/09/naoto-hattori-hybrids/.

psychological response from its viewers. It is simultaneously relatable and uncomfortable, and this dichotomy confounds and intrigues people to no end.

The inherent psychological matter of such cute images lends itself to Sigmund Freud and the Dream Theory, as he argues that dreams manifest desires through censored and disfigured images, removed from their original visage. Using an analogy that equates the dreamer to a writer fearing government censure, the dreamer, according to Freud, "modifies and disfigures the expression of his opinion … Or he must disguise his objectionable statement in a garb that seems harmless."[14] This idea of disguise and disfigurement leading to the necessity of dream interpretation to parse out significant meaning is particularly relevant when discussing *Whipped Cream,* as everything in the ballet is shrouded in layers of grotesque cuteness.

The idea of disfigurement and mutilation, not only applies to dreams, it lends itself directly to theories of cuteness. In the chapter "Cuteness," from Richard Harris' book *Cute, Quaint, Hungry and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism*, the author looks at the effect cuteness has on advertising, focusing on how it appeals to consumers. While this paper is not about consumerism or advertising per se, a lot of Harris' ideas are applicable to our discussion of cuteness, namely the dark and grotesque side of such images. In particular, Harris spends time discussing the misshapen nature of cute things, and how such grotesqueness invokes pity and concern in the consumer, which makes them want to care for—and ultimately buy—the object of their sympathies. What is most important to this paper, is the revelation that features which are associated with cuteness and trigger the viewers' softheartedness, like big eyes and small mouths, are anatomically incorrect, unnatural, and visually bizarre.[15] These deformities invite

[14] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 121.
[15] Daniel Harris, "Cuteness," in *Cute, Quaint, Hungry and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 1–22.

violence into the aesthetic of cuteness, paving the way for mutilation and domination at the hands of the owner, something Sianne Ngai elaborates on in her work.

Ngai further complicates the idea of cuteness in her article, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde." She acknowledges the pitiful nature of cute things but expands on the idea by contending that the soft and unbreakable materiality of cute things inspires violence and aggression in those who play with them. Not only are they malformed by design, they are further mutilated by the hands that hold and care for them.[16] Ngai draws on Yoshitomo Nara's bruised children as a physical representation of this concept.[17] This further mutilation underscores an subconscious desire for control, for domination over something, which reveals a sadistic streak in the consumer.[18]

Cuteness itself is a disfigurement, a mutilation of form that is further mangled through human interaction with the object. Although they appear harmless, the cute object is a hotbed of desire, sadism, control, and violence. The dark undertones present in cuteness may be disguised, but they do not disappear entirely. They are merely warped into something more palatable, much like the manifest dream content in Freud's Dream Theory. There is a throughline from Freud to Harris and Ngai, in which darker thoughts and expressions are hidden behind a layer of harmlessness, and this idea is visually represented in the work of cute artists like Nara, Hattori, and eventually Ryden, who seems to synthesize dreams, cuteness, and underlying darkness into his work on *Whipped Cream.*

The three essays by Katić, Boyce, and Wang, et al., while not obviously connected, all work to paint a picture of Ryden, Ratmansky, and *Whipped Cream* as full of analytic possibility.

---

[16] Sianne Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 4 (2005): 811–47, https://doi.org/10.1086/444516, 815-16.
[17] Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," 821.
[18] Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," 816.

They, and the visual artists mentioned above, all deal with the darker underbelly lurking underneath the pristine facade. By playing into the general popularity that comes with this cute art, Ratmansky pulls their dark nature into his own work, both appealing to an audience that hungers for such art and drawing on the unspoken symbolism present in the style. The references and symbolism employed by the two collaborators both inside and outside of *Whipped Cream*, are rich with psychological and philosophical contemplation. Finally, the theoretical background concerning the facade of cuteness provided by Freud, Harris, and Ngai paves the way for a deeper analysis of *Whipped Cream*.

Since the undercurrent of darkness has been established in the academic work presented, I will use this frame of reference to conduct my own reading, by not only bringing Freud, Harris, and Ngai into the conversation, but making my own claims that both draw on and, in the case of Freud, challenge his theories. While there has not been a lot of academic inquiry into this ballet at the time of writing this paper, it is clear that there is much potential for scholars to investigate both the work and the creators behind it.

Section 1: A Brief History: From *Schlagobers* to *Whipped Cream*

While *Whipped Cream* is, from a visual standpoint, an entirely new and innovative creation, the ballet itself finds its inspiration from a 1924 Austrian ballet entitled *Schlagobers.* The original ballet, with a story and score by Richard Strauss, choreography by Heinrich Kröller and performance by the Vienna Ballet, follows a very similar—albeit loosely defined—plot as *Whipped Cream*. In both ballets we follow our main protagonist, The Boy, as he receives his First Communion. While celebrating in a *Konditorei,* or confectionery shop, The Boy consumes too many sweets and falls ill. Here begins our foray into the fantasy, with the sweets from the shop becoming sentient and performing a number of individualized dances, ending with the full corps de ballet dancing in an entirely whipped cream wonderland to close out the first Act.

Act 2 opens with The Boy in a hospital, where he is dosed with medicines that cause him to hallucinate fantastical, sweet-oriented characters, the most prominent of which being the character Princess Praline, as well as a trio of lovesick liquor bottles that cause chaos in the hospital. The mayhem clears to produce a celebration at the hands of Princess Praline, with The Boy welcomed into her world of sugary delights.

This basic framework held up between the 1924 and the 2017 production, but not without some changes. Disregarding for a moment the overall look of the ballet, which of course shifted from Strauss' designs to Ryden and Ratmansky, there are a few changes to the plot and characters that separate *Whipped Cream* from *Schlagobers*. Much of the problematic political and racial undertones, most notably present in the nationalized liquor bottles and exoticized confectioneries, are removed or otherwise sanitized. For example, the "Dance of the Chinese Teaflowers," in *Schlagobers* becomes Princess Teaflower and her court in *Whipped Cream*, eliminating the harmful ethnic stereotype of the original. Other characters, such as the liquor

bottles, are not devoid of nationality but are transformed into objects so removed from their original intention as to render their identification meaningless. Originally perceived as a loose metaphor for European relations after World War I, the trio of French, Polish, and Russian liquor, already watered down in *Schlagobers* from the original score notes, are essentially declawed in *Whipped Cream,* becoming a comic relief love triangle placed in the middle of an otherwise tense second act.[19]

From *Schlagobers* to *Whipped Cream,* the ending and subsequent characterization also undergoes significant changes. In *Schlagobers,* the liquor bottles produce a sort of generalized chaos within the hospital, causing drunkenness with no clear motive. In *Whipped Cream,* the chaos is targeted, specifically at The Doctor and hospital workers, who in turn take on a more prominent and antagonistic role in the new production. *Whipped Cream* heightens the fear by enhancing the discord between The Boy and the hospital, integrating the conflict between The Boy and The Doctor into the plot and otherwise raising the stakes of the related scenes. The liquor bottles may be devoid of their political meaning but they gain plot significance in turn, as the drunkenness they bring about becomes a means of escape for The Boy, who uses the chaos in the hospital to be free of The Doctor's clutches. By heightening the fear in the second act, *Whipped Cream* gives The Boy a motivation to escape not present in the original iteration. Even without looking at the design of the ballet, we can see how *Whipped Cream* delves into the darkness in a way *Schlagobers* never did.

That *Schlagobers* remains, for the most part, a lighthearted production is entirely intentional, indicative of the desires of its creator as well as the grounds for its poor critical reception. Richard Strauss says about his creation, "Haven't I the right, after all, to write what

[19] For more on the original iteration and intention of the liquor bottles see Wayne Heisler, "Recipe and Indigestion," essay, in *The Art of Whipped Cream* (Paris, France: Cernunnos, 2019), 18-20.

music I please? I cannot bear the tragedy of the present time. I want to create joy. I need it."[20] Indeed, it seems that for all the tragedy of World War I, Strauss intended for his ballet to be a force of positivity in an otherwise downtrodden Interwar society. This desire was ultimately the ballet's undoing, as Strauss' blind optimism, extravagance, and pricey demands, came across as entirely tone-deaf and disengaged from the world around him, with one critic saying, "there has not been a nastier desolation of the spirit even of the ballet or a more thoroughgoing degradation of theater to the level of a preschool than this *Schlagobers*, in which the droll old master, ever the joker, comes to terms in his own fashion with the social question."[21,22] Strauss' desire to produce a sickly sweet vessel of positivity only managed to highlight the disparity between his imagination and the world at large, transforming *Schlagobers* into an unintentional anxiety-inducing, detached pipe dream of a ballet.

In contrast to Strauss' intention when creating *Schlagobers,* Alexei Ratmansky, the Resident Choreographer for the American Ballet Theatre at the time of the production, desired to revive the ballet because of his own experience with scarcity. A chance discovery of a CD in a shop in Japan brought *Schlagobers* to the choreographer's attention, jumpstarting his interest in the production at a pivotal moment in his life. Ratmansky in Roslyn Sulcas' article, "A Sweetly Disturbing Confection: Arts and Leisure Desk," discusses his and his wife's move from the Ukraine to Canada saying, "At the time, food was scarce in the Ukraine, you could buy nothing, and suddenly [in Winnipeg] there was all this stuff."[23] The desire for consumption in the absence

[20] Byron Adams. "Richard Strauss, Schlagobers." American Symphony Orchestra, 2012. https://americansymphony.org/concert-notes/strauss-schlagobers/.
[21] Heisler, "Recipe and Indigestion," 17-21.
[22] Adams, "Richard Strauss, Schlagobers."
[23] Roslyn Sulcas, "A Sweetly Disturbing Confection: Arts and Leisure Desk." *The New York Times*. New York, N.Y: New York Times Company, 2017, Late Edition (East Coast) edition.

of food security and the sudden ability to have whatever one desires is embedded in Ratmansky's intention with *Whipped Cream.*

This is not to say that Ratmansky and Strauss did not also have similar intentions. Ratmansky clearly respects Strauss, and appreciates both the music and his reasons for creating the ballet. "It's Strauss at his craziest, amusing his listeners and hoping to change the mood of depressed, postwar Vienna. [Richard Strauss] said, 'My duty as an artist is to entertain.' I believe that, too."[24] It seems that both Ratmansky and Strauss, with their respective works, wanted to create a ballet that would provide joy for the masses. However, where Strauss fails to captivate the audience, Ratsmansky, by nature of his experiences is able to attach deeper and personal meaning to the superficial story. The authenticity at the core, as well as Ratmansky's willingness to dive into darker themes, imbues *Whipped Cream* with more palpable feeling and higher stakes, a ballet while still anxiety-inducing—albeit for different reasons concerning the characters and their circumstances and choices rather than its insensitivity to the audience—seemed less in poor-taste and better received by the audiences and critics who viewed the revived ballet.

Whipped Cream fared much better with critics upon its premiere. Alastair Macaulay's review in the *New York Times* praises Ratmasky's complex choreography saying, "you could spend hours analyzing all that's going on here in music and dance."[25] At the *Los Angeles Times*, Laura Bleiberg similarly commends Ratamansky's handling of Strauss' music and libretto as well as lauding the collaboration between Ratmansky and Ryden.[26] However, not all reviews

---

[24] Sulcas, "A Sweetly Disturbing Confection."
[25] Alastair Macaulay, "Review: Alexei Ratmansky's Ballet 'Whipped Cream' Is a Candyland Triumph," The New York Times, May 23, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/arts/dance/review-ratmansky-whipped-cream-abt-gala.html.
[26] Laura Bleiberg, "Review: We're Still on a Sugar High: Run (or LEAP) to American Ballet Theatre's 'Whipped Cream,'" Los Angeles Times, March 17, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-abt-whipped-cream-review-20170317-story.html.

were as generous. Sarah L. Kaufman at *The Washington Post* in particular brings up similar criticisms to those that were directed towards the original production—that it is overly sweet, flimsy, and created with the goal of diverting the audience's attention away from the present struggles.[27] Despite her overall dislike of the ballet, Kaufman does find merit in Ratmansky's choreography and Ryden's set and costumes, calling the artist's designs the "the focus and chief reward of the ballet."[28] However, it seems that despite some less than favorable critic responses, the general audience enjoyed the revamped Whipped Cream. In an opinion piece for *The Washington Post*, and in direct response to Kaufman's review, several audience members oppose the critic's opinion. Providing various interpretations, the audience members both praise the joyful and lighthearted nature of the ballet and outright refute the claim that there is no substance or social commentary in the ballet.[29]

Despite the mixed reviews, what seems to be the general feeling amongst critics and audiences alike is a high appraisal of Mark Ryden's set designs and costumes, with a reviewer for *Bachtrack* saying the ballet should be seen for the look alone.[30] What is more, the darkness present in Ryden's pieces comes through for the critic and casual viewer, with more than one observer directly citing the unsettling nature of the disembodied eye in the hospital in Act 2.[31] Even if reviewers do not dwell on the dark and unsettling nature—some even disregarding it in

---

[27] Sarah L. Kaufman, "American Ballet Theatre's 'Whipped Cream': A Fleeting Sugar High ," The Washington Post, February 2, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/theater_danc/american-ballet-theatreswhipped-cream-a-fleeting-sugar-high/2018/02/02/15ad3106-0828-11e8-ae28-e370b74ea9a7_story.html.

[28] Kaufman, "American Ballet Theatre's 'Whipped Cream.'"

[29] Robert Allnutt, Russell Frye, and Heather S. Foley, "Opinion | A Salty Review of Sugary 'Whipped Cream' Left Some with a Bad Taste - The Washington Post," The Washington Post, February 16, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-salty-review-of-sugary-whipped-cream-left-some-with-a-bad-taste/2018/02/16/62681b88-112d-11e8-a68c-e9374188170e_story.html.

[30] Jeff Slayton, "Ratmansky's *Whipped Cream* for ABT Is Pure Eye Candy," Bachtrack, March 17, 2017, https://bachtrack.com/review-whipped-cream-ratmansky-american-ballet-theatre-segerstrom-center-cosa-mesa-march-2017.

[31] See Allnutt, et. al, "Opinion | A Salty Review of Sugary 'Whipped Cream,'" Bleiberg, "Review: We're Still on a Sugar High," Kaufman, "American Ballet Theatre's 'Whipped Cream,'" and Slayton, "Ratmansky's *Whipped Cream* for ABT Is Pure Eye Candy."

favor of forefronting the initial superficiality of the plot—it is clear from my perspective that the sheer amount of mentions of the strangeness of Ryden's art indicates its impact, and furthermore prove that there is more to the ballet than joyful, "empty calories."[32]

Mark Ryden's art is an integral part of the overall draw of the ballet, his unusual style both pulling audiences' into the world of *Whipped Cream* and infusing the sparse plot with deeper and darker meaning. This collaboration for Ratmansky was not just about harnessing the surface aesthetic, the pastels and harmless characters present in Ryden's work, it was about the darkness of the style present underneath. In Deborah Vankin's interview with Ratmansky, he says that Ryden's, "style is completely original, it's very precise and detailed. He uses classical techniques, but the story he tells is very contemporary. There's something very unsettling, disturbing, about his paintings, which hides behind the sometimes very sweet surface."[33]

The originality of style, the detailed precision, and the classical technique told in a contemporary manner are all hallmarks of Ratmansky's work as much as Ryden's. From a practical standpoint, we can see why the two artists would wish to collaborate. However, digging deeper, the active choice to work with Ryden, knowing that the sweet surface of his style is a facade for something darker, shows that Ratmansky was thinking from the start about the possibility within the ballet for something unsettling and bizarre. The conscious decision to not only have Ryden be a part the production, but consider him a co-creator, with his style exerting a major influence on the trajectory and creation of the production in its entirety, shows just how important the idea of disguising the disturbing under a layer of sweetness is to the core of

[32] Ivy Lin, "Empty Calories: Ratmansky's *Whipped Cream* Is Sweet but Slight," Bachtrack, October 23, 2022, https://bachtrack.com/review-whipped-cream-ratmansky-simkin-granlunds-american-ballet-theatre-new-york-october-2022.
[33] Vankin, "Mark Ryden's Foray into Set Design."

Whipped Cream.[34] While the unsettling darkness still finds its way to the surface, the attempt to disguise it is integral to our understanding of the ballet as a whole.

[34] Vankin, "Mark Ryden's Foray into Set Design."

Section 2: Freudian Nightmares

Within the structure of *Whipped Cream,* there are three definitive dreams. Categorized by location, they are as follows:

1. Act 1's Dream at the Confectioners and the Whipped Cream World, brought about by an overconsumption of sweets
2. Act 2's Hospital Dream, caused by The Doctor's injections
3. Act 2's City Center Dream, provoked by The Boy's break from reality.

In later sections I will fully unpack each dream, but for now I want to demonstrate how each dream builds on one another, all three working towards a final form, a fully realized dreamscape in which The Boy can fulfill his deepest desires.

With the prevalence of dreams in mind, this section will go through the key ideas of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* that will be relevant in my analysis of *Whipped Cream.* I will start with the establishment that dreams are wish fulfillment. Then I will move to the distortion and the sources of dream content. Finally, I will finish with an overview of Dream Work.

"The Dream is a Fulfillment of A Wish"

The argument I make hinges on the admission that dreams are vehicles for wish-fulfillment, exemplified in Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams.* In his Dream Theory, which he lays out over the course of this book, Freud posits that dreams are not void of meaning, instead they are not only directly related to personal experiences, they also reveal the innermost wants and desires of the individual dreamer. It is up to the waking individual to decode the strange and exaggerated, or "manifest content," of the dream in order to discover its true meaning, or "latent content."[35] Freud uses simple dreams (for example, dreaming of drinking

[35] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 100-104.

a glass of water when you are thirsty and waking up with that thirst quenched) in small children to prove that in essence, dreams are a form of wish fulfillment.[36]

"Distortion in Dreams"

While these initial, in Frued's words, "dreams of convenience" are simpler to parse, many dreams, like the ones in *Whipped Cream,* are much more dense. At first glance, the meaning of such dreams are difficult to discern, hidden under layers of concealment and distortion, manifesting as fantasy and fear. Such dreams, according to Freud, cannot be taken at face value and must be interpreted to find their latent content. These complex dreams are distorted in part because the mind is unable to express the desire outright, sometimes out of inability, but also out of fear and shame.[37] The dreamer does not want to say their desire outright, so the mind dreams up a more palatable option, one that often sits in direct opposition to the latent feeling. In essence, the wish is disguised because the dreamer is repulsed by it. It goes against moral or social code, the desire does not not fit with what is expected of the dreamer in reality and it must be censured by the mind. In order to bypass the censorship it must be distorted into something visually harmless or contrary to the latent meaning.[38]

A briefly mentioned, but nonetheless important point, brought up in this section is that just because our dreams tell us something (Freud's example being that his coworkers are stupid and criminal), does not mean it is rooted in reality. The separate pieces of the dreams provide justification for the wish and furthermore, set the scene so the wish can be fulfilled (by implying that Freud's coworkers are stupid and criminal, Freud can be perceived as better than them in comparison, which is what he desires). These details are, "only the wish that the case may be as

[36] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 104-8.
[37] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 114-15.
[38] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 120-21.

the dream expresses it."[39] This idea will be important to our discussion of *Whipped Cream,* as we are dealing directly with the idea of reality, and whether or not a new reality can be dreamt up.

"The Material and Sources of Dreams"

According to Freud, the sources of dreams come from recent and significant experiences, usually from the day of the dream.[40] We can see how the dreams in *Whipped Cream* also come from these experiences, some more than others.

The act of First Communion at the very beginning of the ballet is the direct catalyst for our first dream—The Boy goes to the confectionery shop and over indulges because of the events at the church. The location of the dream as well as the focus on consumption, both in terms of communion, the ingestion of the metaphorical body and blood of Christ, and in terms of the sweets in the shop, bring about a dream permeated by anthropomorphized sweets. There is a correlation between the events of the day and the dream. And this correlation between the consumption of the day and his dreaming state persists throughout all three dreams, as sweets become the main vehicle by which the dream manifests. Everything is filtered through consumption, from the characters to the color scheme, a veritable candyland in The Boy's mind. However, the dreams never forget the first type of consumption was not sweets but communion. The more strange nature of the metaphorical consumption of blood and flesh seeps into the dreams as well. It primes the boy to experience the undercurrent of violence that permeates his dreams. In the child's eye, when the core of the experience is grotesque, when the initial consumption is cannibalistic, it stands to reason that the dreams will reflect this darker nature.

However, aspects that are not obvious about The Boy's day also make their way into his dreams. The structure of society, the way the world around him functions, and the background

[39] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 119.
[40] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 153.

machinations of the place and time he finds himself in, all come into play within his dream, triggered by the events of the day. The act of communion elicits an anxiety response, bringing about memories and fears of growing up in this society. While the focus on sweets is a result of his day activities, underlying memories and experiences inform The Boy's dreams, translating into a desire to escape that fear and anxiety, and mitigate it by providing an alternate path as the dreams progress.

Freud also states that the desire or wish that is being fulfilled in the dream often originates from previous childhood experiences. The anxiety that comes with growing up in a chaotic time, the end of World War I and Interwar period, would be the past experience that informs The Boy's desires for control and stability. What is more, Freud explains that multiple wishes can be contained in one dream, with the deepest desire dating to the earliest childhood experience.[41] Both the past and the present inform the dreams, as experiences in both early childhood and current adolescence intensify the character's desire for control and escape. This is something to keep in mind as we investigate the multiple dreams and how each dream complicates what The Boy wants.

"Dream Work"

Freud's section on Dream Work breaks down into four parts—"Condensation," "Displacement," "Means of representation and regard of presentability," and "Secondary revision." These four parts make up the pieces of the dream and work together to disguise the latent content within. Thus, in order to interpret a dream, one must identify the aspects that have been reconfigured and work backward to discover their true meaning.[42] The Act 2 dreams of The Boy can be broken down into the components of Freud's Dream Work, and by identifying the

[41] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 184.
[42] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 261.

parts that are representative of something else, we can identify and interpret the desire of the protagonist.

The first aspect "Condensation," has to do with how ideas and experiences are condensed in the manifest content of the dream. An object or sentence may be influenced by various parts of the subconscious mind, but are merely visualized in a singular aspect of the dream.[43] The second aspect, "Displacement," concerns how thoughts are given meaning within the dream. High intensity elements are deprived of their importance, while low intensity elements are given a place of prominence. This is all to disguise the repressed desire, another line of defense against the internal censorship of the mind.[44]

The third aspect, "Means of representation and regard of presentability," deals with how the latent content is represented, changed, and structured to fit the narrative of the dream. Freud explains that because of condensation and displacement, dreams are not always able to establish logical connections between experiences, and have to get creative with how they express complicated relationships between events and memories. They combine contradictory experiences into one, or have two events happening simultaneously and replace shameful characteristics with more palatable ones.[45] Since abstraction is much more difficult to represent, the dream also transforms the latent content into concrete, pictorial forms, in order to simplify larger latent expressions.[46] Going forward, knowing that images within dreams have integrated meanings, indicates that not much in The Boy's dreams can be taken at face value. These pictorial forms, in one way or another, will be related to his repressed desire—every image disguises a wish.

---

[43] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 262-83.
[44] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 284-88.
[45] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 289-313.
[46] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 314-16.

The final aspect, "Secondary elaboration," has to do with the waking mind and how it asserts its own interpretation and influence on the dream. The waking mind pushes back at the dream content, telling the mind that it is not real or changing aspects of the dream to further disguise the inherent wish. Just as the dream censures itself while the dreamer is sleeping, the waking mind censures the dream further in anticipation of the awakening dreamer. This becomes prevalent when we look at The Boy's first dream in the confectionery shop and his failure to fulfill his wish.

The Complicated Nature of Children's Dreams

For the most part, Freud's Dream Theory applies to the dreams of adults. He uses his ideas to interpret the dreams of himself and his colleagues. When he delves into the nature of children's dreams, he uses them only as a starting point, as examples of simple and easily understood wish fulfillments. This is because Freud believes that the dreams of children are simply not as complicated, nor are they particularly interesting in comparison to adult dreams.[47] Not only does this seem ironic coming from Freud, whose theories revolve so frequently around children, but it also creates a predicament for my paper, as I am focusing on unraveling the quite complicated nature of the dreams of a child. While I could make the claim that The Boy's dreams were created by the adults who formed the plot and thus technically acquire maturity through them, I would like to refute Freud's claim that children's dreams are too simple and not complicated enough to analyze using his theory altogether, by showing that his assertion is simply not true.

Whipped Cream itself speaks to the complexity of children's dreams in the way it is structured. Every dream builds on the next, becoming more complicated and nuanced every time The Boy slips under. The settings and characters within his dreams reflect his growing

[47] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 107-108.

complexity. We watch as the settings of the dreams go from based in reality, with Act 1's Dream at the Confectioners taking place in waking world's confectionery, to darkness, void of a particular setting in Act 2's Hospital Dream, to complete fantasy and imagination in Act 2's City Center Dream, which is not truly based on any real setting we see throughout the ballet. Additionally, the characters and situations become more complex. Act 1's Dream at the Confectioners, again, holds close to real world representations, pulling its characters out of tins on the counters. Act 2's Hospital Dream, adds to the first, taking some characters visible in the confectionery while also adding new and completely individualistic creatures. Finally, Act 2's City Center Dream compiles the characters from the first and second dream into one retinue while also adding more figures to the scene. These dreams keep growing, taking from their predecessors to produce more complex dreams that can better fulfill The Boy's desires.

As stated above, one could dismiss the complexity of these dreams by pointing to the fact that the creators of *Whipped Cream* are adults and thus the dreams themselves come from adult minds. However, as recent studies would suggest, Freud's simplistic claim does not take into account the scientific developments of the child's mind. While dreams develop in complexity as the brain matures, to outright refuse the idea that children's dreams are not interesting or compelling ignores the multitude of new and complicated connections the young brain is learning to make. There is a rapid maturation of cognitive development happening in childhood, and as a result, children's dreams grow in complexity at breakneck speed. Motion, actions, and feelings are present in children's dreams starting as young as three years old. These young children are present in their dreams and can understand and recall the events they dream of.[48] As children develop so do their dreams and by nine years old, dreaming is virtually like that of an

[48] Alice Sterling Honig and Arlene L. Nealis, "What Do Young Children Dream About?," *Early Child Development and Care* 182, no. 6 (June 2012): 771–95, https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2011.579797, 788-790.

adult.[49] This scientific evidence actively opposes Freud's rather flippant claim that children's dreams are not as complicated as adults. While they may not have the same life experience, childrens' dream functions, such as creating narratives and social interactions within the dream, the presence of emotions, and the ability to recall are practically the same as an adult, meaning that the complexities and intricacies of adult dreams occur in children and theories applied to the adult dreamer can also be applied to the child.[50]

[49] Piroska Sándor et al., "Content Analysis of 4 to 8 Year-Old Children's Dream Reports," *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (April 30, 2015): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00534, 2, and 1. Inge Strauch, "Rem Dreaming in the Transition from Late Childhood to Adolescence: A Longitudinal Study.," *Dreaming* 15, no. 3 (September 2005): 155–69, https://doi.org/10.1037/1053-0797.15.3.155, 166.

[50] Sándor et al., "Content Analysis of 4 to 8 Year-Old Children's Dream Reports," 1-4.

Section 3: Anxiety Now: 2010s America

When *Whipped Cream* premiered in March 2017, American attitudes were not quite optimistic. The newly elected and highly divisive president, the persistence of hate speech, and the fear of deadly outbreaks were just some of the concerns facing Americans.[51] It seemed for the time being, the country was on the downswing. Indeed, Sarah L. Kaufman's *Washington Post* review of *Whipped Cream* begins with a rather bleak outlook on American society saying, "Once upon a time in America, people were hopeful of progress and their hearts were light…That place doesn't exist anymore."[52]

While it is difficult to compare Interwar Vienna and 2010s America, nor am I here to attempt to draw direct comparisons between the two, the anxiety and uncertainty that permeated Europe in the 1920s is nonetheless felt in the more contemporary period in which we find *Whipped Cream.* What Ryden and Ratmansky do so successfully is use the anxiety of *Schlagobers,* the problems in society Strauss so vehemently ignored, and update them for the modern world. Using the built-in structure of the original plot, *Whipped Cream* touches on modern fears within American society, highlighting the alienation of the healthcare system and fear of vaccinations, as well as the unease of the unknown—of not knowing how it all works, what to do or who to be—which is an anxiety that perhaps transcends space and time.

The question of healthcare in America is long-running and fraught on all sides. For decades, the debate concerning whether or not healthcare in the United States should be granted to all has raged on, with both the government and private sectors voicing their opinions and using their considerable power to advocate both for and against the idea of a universal system, at the expense of the everyday citizen. Despite the assistance of the Affordable Care Act, 25 million

[51] Sara Clarke, "The Top News Stories of 2016," US News & World Report, December 30, 2016, https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/slideshows/top-news-stories-of-2016.
[52] Kaufman, "American Ballet Theatre's 'Whipped Cream.'"

residents in 2017 still did not have health insurance, making any visit to a doctor or hospital not only terrifying but exorbitantly expensive.[53] The uncertainty and hostility surrounding healthcare, where every visit and checkup could reveal not only a life-changing diagnosis but a bill that cannot be paid is not a new phenomenon, nor has it gone away in the intervening years.

With this in mind, it is no wonder that the hospital in *Whipped Cream* becomes a bigger beast than it was in its previous iteration. The United States is in the minority when it comes to not having universal healthcare, and the improbability of a comprehensive and appealing system is integrated into the fabric of the country.[54] The anxiety and fear surrounding a hospital visit is thus ingrained into American society, making its appearance in *Whipped Cream* bring about anxiety in an American audience. The hospital in the ballet, through its unfamiliar setting and cast of exaggerated characters, amplifies the fears present in the real world. When The Boy wakes up in a place he does not recognize, surrounded by machines and unfamiliar faces, The Doctor and his nurses practically pounce on him, injecting him with unknown substances and roughly interacting with him, their giant props and costume pieces dwarfing The Boy as he succumbs to their machinations. Bedside manners are nowhere to be found—in their place, The Boy is treated to hostility, pain, and fear. As an audience who knows all too well what it is to be chewed up and spit out by the healthcare system, this anxiety informs how the American viewer sees the protagonist: as a victim of a system they have also fallen prey to. It then becomes understandable why The Boy wishes to escape, for if given the opportunity, the viewer would do the same.

---

[53] Howard Bauchner, "Health Care in the United States: A Right or a Privilege," *JAMA* 317, no. 1 (January 3, 2017): 29, https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.19687.
[54] Bruce Vladeck, "Universal Health Insurance in the United States: Reflections on the Past, the Present, and the Future," *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 1 (January 2003): 16–19, https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.93.1.16.

Throughout *Whipped Cream,* Ryden plays with size and dimension in his design, creating props and costumes that are sometimes larger than life. Later in this paper I will look at the implications of such largeness, particularly the choice to create large bobblehead costume pieces for certain dancers, but for the purposes of this section, I want to stay focused on the hospital, namely the nurses and their unnaturally large and brutal syringe needles (Figure 5). For the majority of the time they are on stage, the nurses wield the needles like rifles, attacking the protagonist as he struggles against their considerable might. The fear and pain are visceral, with The Boy's panic manifesting itself in the way he moves and the choices he makes. The syringe needles are simple and clinical, opaque metallic cylinders that take inspiration from 20th century medicinal objects, the medicine contained within unknown to The Boy or the audience. They are the weapon, the means by which the hospital carries out its villainous designs. By emphasizing and villainizing the syringes, Ryden and Ratmansky touch on another prevalent anxiety in society in relation to health in America: vaccinations.

Figure 5. Nurses with Oversized Needles, Photo: TJ Schwingle, *The Art of Whipped Cream: For American Ballet Theatre,* 109.

The anti-vaccination movement has certainly been in the headlines in the past several years. Covid-19 and its subsequent vaccines have been the subject of much discourse in the United States and abroad, with many conspiracy theories surrounding the efficacy of the vaccine cropping up and taking hold of large swaths of the population. However, the refusal to receive vaccines, while exacerbated in the 2020s, has been simmering in American society for some time. Outbreaks of measles, varicella, pneumococcal disease, and pertussis, in the 2000s and 2010s, can be associated with vaccine refusal on the basis of mistrust of science.[55,56]

It seems that Ryden's and Ratmansky's focus on the syringe speaks to the anti-vaccine movement taking hold in American society. The conspiracies and fears surrounding vaccines—that they cause autism or immune deficiency, for example—inspire anxiety in those that believe them.[57,58] Even if one does not believe everything they read, there is still a nervousness surrounding the idea of vaccines and injections, of a painful prick and an unknown substance coursing through our veins. There is a reason that people fear needles, why such a phobia can persist throughout one's life. It is uncomfortable, painful, and stressful—it inspires anxiety in those that fear it. In *Whipped Cream,* Ryden and Ratmansky heighten this panic. Once again, the creators exaggerate the object of The Boy's fear, enlarging the syringes to unnatural proportions in order to not only highlight the props, but to intensify the fear they intrinsically imbue into the victim of their injection. The largeness makes the already present fear worse, the syringes and the medicine within are now more mistrustful, more painful, and more unknowable. This exaggeration raises the stakes and we as an audience, when faced with these magnified

---

[55] Varun K. Phadke et al., "Association between Vaccine Refusal and Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in the United States," *JAMA* 315, no. 11 (March 15, 2016): 1149–58, https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.1353, 1150.
[56] Lawrence O. Gostin, "Law, Ethics, and Public Health in the Vaccination Debates," *JAMA* 313, no. 11 (March 17, 2015): 1099–1100, https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2015.1518, 1099–1100.
[57] Gostin, "Law, Ethics, and Public Health in the Vaccination Debates," 1099.
[58] Theodore S. Tomeny, Christopher J. Vargo, and Sherine El-Toukhy, "Geographic and Demographic Correlates of Autism-Related Anti-Vaccine Beliefs on Twitter, 2009-15," *Social Science & Medicine* 191 (October 2017): 168–75, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.08.041, 168.

fears, begin to comprehend the severity and urgency of The Boy's desperate desire to escape and reinvent his world.

This is not to say that *Whipped Cream* nor The Boy is anti-vaccine, just that Ryden and Ratmansky are playing on existing anxieties of the time. Fear of the unknown and what it will do are perhaps most easily recognizable and accessible in an allusion to the anti-vaxxers, but that does not mean such a fear exists in a vacuum. The tendency to mistrust that which we do not completely understand, is painfully prevalent in all aspects of society. And while this distrust can lead to poor choices, hateful actions, and selfish behaviors, it is not easily dissuaded, even when one is faced with the consequences. The idea that someone—the government, the scientific community, or other figures of authority—have it all figured out while we still remain in the dark is a terrifying idea, and one that we see rear its ugly head in *Whipped Cream* throughout the production.

Section 4: Consumption and Authority: How to Cope

Whipped Cream opens outside of a church, with the Coachman and horse waiting out front. On stage left, there is the facade of a church, thin and quite tall. The door opens and a group of children, dressed in white, exit the building, a Priest joining them. The first child to exit is our protagonist, The Boy. He jumps down the stairs, followed by seven other children. The white of their clothes and their presence in a church indicate these children have just had their First Communion (Figure 6).

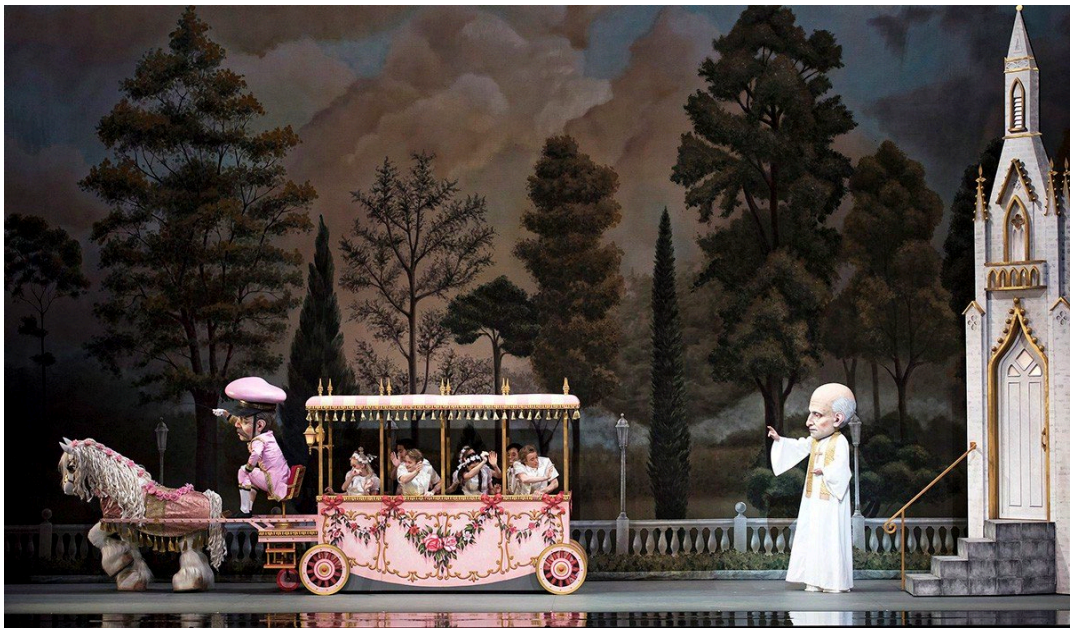

Figure 6. Priest, Coachman, and Ensemble Cast, Photo: Gene Schiavone, Michael Curry Design, https://www.michaelcurrydesign.com/american-ballet-theatre-whipped-cream/x3jmvry38i6f9l64l8txlltiu3l9sd.

First Communion has long since been considered a rite of passage for youths in the Catholic religion, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. The consumption of the body and blood of Christ is forbidden until a child's First Communion, when they have reached an age in which they could understand the implication and meaning of the sacrament. While the age of inclusion has varied across time, it is clear that up into the modern era, First Communion indicates that, in the eyes of the Church, a child is approaching adulthood. Things may have

shifted in the 20th century, but the creators of the original *Whipped Cream* story, who no doubt grew up and into adulthood in the 19th century, would have still seen First Communion as the catalyst for change.[59] This adulthood spurred on by consumption of flesh is a rather violent way to exit adolescence and enter maturity. It reflects a new reality, one far more weighty and thus, more risky. Now consumption has implications, and the choice to consume means The Boy's own reinvention, a shift he is entirely unprepared for.

This is reflected in his interactions with the authority figures in the scene. Both the Coachman and the Priest are differentiated from the children by large heads, painted costume pieces that sit over the head of the person. Roman Zhurbin, a soloist at ABT said about the head, "It's a little wobbly, so I have to wear a neck brace so my head doesn't move too much."[60] With adulthood comes an additional burden as their heads figuratively and literally weigh them down and they move differently than the children who are unencumbered by the strain of adulthood. Simultaneously, the large heads seem to symbolize the authority that comes with adulthood. The characters with the large heads are listened to by the children, they follow their instructions and go where they lead. One instance of this authority is when The Boy, who acts the most childlike of the children, attempts to jump on and ride the horse. For his childish folly, he is the only one in the scene who has to be admonished by a big-headed character, the Coachman, who grabs his ear and berates him as The Boy hangs his head in shame.

The act of communion means such childlike actions are no longer acceptable. In the transition from child to adult, it is the adult's responsibility to shape the children to handle the burden and responsibility of adulthood. All the children, as they leave the church, run and jump around, acting like young people, but it is The Boy who engages in the most obvious childlike

---

[59] Paolo Alfieri, "First Communion in Early Twentieth-Century Italy: A Rite of Passage within Childhood," *Historia Scholastica* 8, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 51–67, https://doi.org/10.15240/tul/006/2022-2-003, 51-52.
[60] Harss, "Backstage at Whipped Cream," 40.

behavior, and The Boy who must be put in his place, by the power and authority of the big-headed adults.

In the next scene, The Boy and the other children enter the confectionery, a large and very detailed set featuring pink walls with floor-to-ceiling decorations. Characters from Ryden's repertoire make appearances on the panels of the walls, strange animal-like creatures with large, unblinking eyes, small and unsettling mouths, and round, stuffed animal faces. There are countertops full of sweets, as well as sugar, tea, coffee, and cocoa, and a cabinet of marzipan, sugarplums, and gingerbread. Through the door, there is a butcher shop which, like the characters on the walls, gives a strange pallor to the otherwise sweet and bright shop (Figure 7).

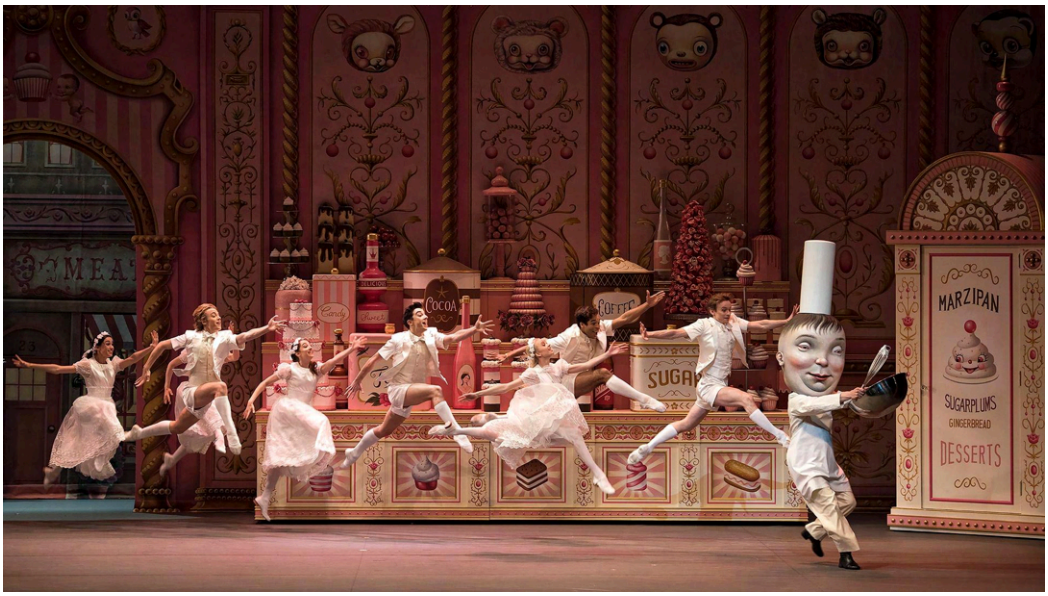

Figure 7. Confectionery Shop and Ensemble Cast, Photo: Gene Schiavone, American Ballet Theatre, https://www.abt.org/ballet/whipped-cream/#images-2.

The children enter and are greeted by the Chef, another big-headed adult. They immediately start celebrating, eating candies and dancing joyfully around the shop. The Boy is particularly interested in the bowl of whipped cream and is reprimanded by the Chef when he sneakily tries to eat from it before the group prays. Again he is singled out for his childlike ways, grabbed by the ear and dragged across the stage. He stands apart from the other children, and

while they dance, he creeps around the stage trying to get back to the whipped cream. While the other children are eating only what they are given, The Boy keeps going back to the bowl of whipped cream, eating more than his fill and actively rebelling against the authority of the Chef. Suddenly, he falls to the floor writhing in pain. He is carted away to the hospital, and the first dream, Act 1's Dream at the Confectioners, begins.

The Boy's physical separation from the rest of the children and his single-minded mission to eat as much whipped cream as he can during the pre-dream scene reflects certain behavioral tendencies of The Boy, namely a desire to retreat or withdraw from the children around him and impulsively overconsume. Indeed, there are several scientific studies concerning the correlation between nutrition and childhood and adolescent behavior. Results have found that poor nutrition and unhealthy eating habits, such as the consumption of sweets, can result in antisocial behavior, conduct problems such as ADHD, and aggressive behaviors as well as poor self-control in children.[61] It appears as if The Boy's overconsumption of sweets exacerbates his existing behavioral issues.

Before he starts to eat, he is already acting impulsive in the Church and Confectionary scenes, unthinkingly performing actions he should not do. He is always set apart from the other children, either at the head of the pack or off to the side, and he does not have any meaningful ties to any one child. Once started, he physically cannot stop himself from eating, so much so that it becomes a danger to his well being. While he is not particularly aggressive, The Boy is rash and hard headed, giving in to every temptation, despite the admonishments and reprimands

[61] For specific studies see, Matt DeLisi, "Consumptive Behavior, Eating Behavior, and Antisocial Behavior: The Ubiquitous Roles of Self-Control," *Preventive Medicine* 105 (December 2017): 366–67, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.08.001, Dylan B. Jackson, "The Link between Poor Quality Nutrition and Childhood Antisocial Behavior: A Genetically Informative Analysis," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 44 (March 2016): 13–20, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2015.11.007, and Oh, Se-Young, Hyojin Ahn, Namsoo Chang, Myung-Hee Kang, and Jiyoung V Oh. "Dietary Patterns and Weight Status Associated with Behavioural Problems in Young Children." *Public Health Nutrition* 17, no. 11 (November 4, 2013): 2563–69. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1368980013002917.

of the authority figures around him. That The Boy is already giving in to such behaviors before the consumption that is the catalyst for the story, shows a pattern or tendency in the character to revert to impulsivity and disengagement with the people around him. This is made worse when he over consumes, heightening existing antisocial behaviors and causing The Boy to pull back from reality, into his dream world.

These behaviors and his decision to overconsume initially read as a way for The Boy to cope with the world around him. The overbearing nature of the authority figures around him and the inability to do what he wants when he wants to, causes The Boy to engage in negative coping mechanisms, namely disengagement and avoidance.[62] He retreats and rebels, choosing overconsumption over acquiescence, risking his life in order to overcome the anxieties of his powerlessness.

As The Boy descends into the dream world, the audience watches as the shop comes to life. Out of a cabinet enters three armies of sweets: marzipan, gingerbread, and sugarplums. They perform a set of dances, followed by Princess Tea Flower, Prince Coffee, Don Zucchero, and Prince Cocoa, as well as their attendants, who all emerge from their respective tins on the counter. In this dream, we see The Boy's first experiment with the idea of escape.

There are several interesting things about this dream. Firstly, it is much closer to reality than its later counterparts. The costumes of the characters, while more fantastical than the children's ensembles, are certainly more like the traditional ballet costumes one sees on stage. The tea flowers wear tutus, the princes wear tights. They look more like human beings than fantastical creatures. Additionally, the setting of this dream is still rooted in reality. It takes place in the confectionery, where nothing save for the inclusion of the dream characters has changed. It

[62] Emad B. B. Algorani and Vikas Gupta, "Coping Mechanisms," NIH: U.S. National Library of Medicine, April 24, 2023, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559031/.

is a dream done halfway, a half-baked manifestation of his desires. Lastly, The Boy is not present. He, having been already carted away, does not appear in this dream. He is not a part of this world. Hence, the Act 1 fantasy can be categorized as a failed attempt to escape and reinvent his society. His consumption of sweets is not enough for him to escape, the characters and setting are too close to reality, and he is ultimately unable to even manifest himself in this dreamland. As a result, he is unable to fulfill his wish.

Act 2 opens with The Boy in a hospital. Now awake, it appears as if The Boy's mind performed a secondary elaboration on Act 1's Dream at the Confectioners, convincing him that this initial new reality was not possible nor was it beneficial. His waking mind took control of the dream, deeming it a failure and thrusting him back into the real world. The first dream is censured, cast off as a mistake, a fake, not quite right, and not quite enough.

In the hospital, The Boy lies in a large bed. Around him it is dark and bare, a stark space occupied only by a side table, an IV stand, and two grotesque x-rays, one of The Boy's body and one close-up of his intestine. While the anatomical features are in Ryden's distinct—not quite realist—style, they are still very detailed and gut-churning. A bright overhead light illuminates The Boy, casting him in a harsh spotlight. A large and imposing eye sits in the center above the set, simultaneously watching the audience and the hospital (Figure 8).

This all-seeing eye, which Ryden describes as "the big Doctor…watching you," surveils the stage, occasionally blinking and shifting its stare from side to side. The eye sees everything, it is a witness to all the events that occur in the waking state of the hospital. Its overbearing nature heightens the anxiety and unease of the scene, as it takes on roles outside of a simple painted eye. As we have discussed, fears and anxieties of the modern world run amok in the hospital, from an alienating and unhelpful healthcare system to the mistrust and skepticism of

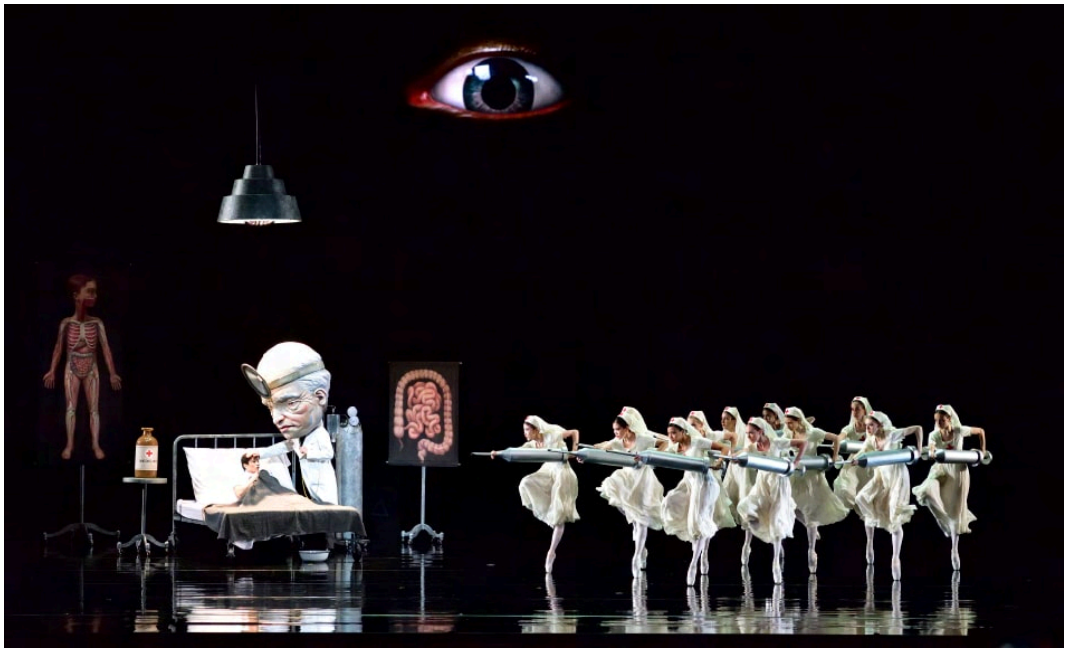

Figure 8. Hospital and Ensemble Cast*,* Photo: Gene Schiavone, Dance Log, https://www.dancelog.nyc/lick-the-bowl/.

modern medicinal practices. As conspiracy and distrust inspire anxiety, everything becomes suspect. Nowhere is safe, nowhere is unobserved, someone is always watching. The eye reflects this paranoia. It is simultaneously the Doctor, the institution, the state, and the greatest intelligence, always watching, always knowing, never interfering. It knows all, but more importantly it knows more than we do; the eye leaves us in the dark, while we stumble around looking for a switch.

With the all-seeing eye overhead, The Boy dances around in pain as The Doctor enters from stage left. If we were to name an antagonist in *Whipped Cream,* this character would certainly fit the bill. He stands in the darkness, with a white doctor's coat and a wrinkled face. He joins the other real-life authority figures, with a big head placed over the dancer's. According to costume designer Holly Hynes, The Doctor's head was the largest of all the adult figures, cementing this character as the utmost authority in the real world of *Whipped Cream.*[63] His head

[63] Ryden, *Art of Whipped Cream,* 107.

bobbles and limits the movement of the dancer. As a result, his steps are very measured and slow. When the choreography asks for more movement, the dancer must carefully execute these steps. These slow and precise movements reflect the Doctor's character. He becomes predatory, silent, and careful, stalking his prey as he moves across the stage.

In contrast, the sixteen dancers who emerge as nurses, carrying hypodermic needles almost as tall as a human being, move in a faster and more prickly way, driving forward and holding their needles out in front of them like rifles. They pounce on The Boy, with the Doctor holding him down as they attempt to inject him with medicine, a forcible consumption of drugs that causes The Boy to succumb to a dream state (Figure 9).

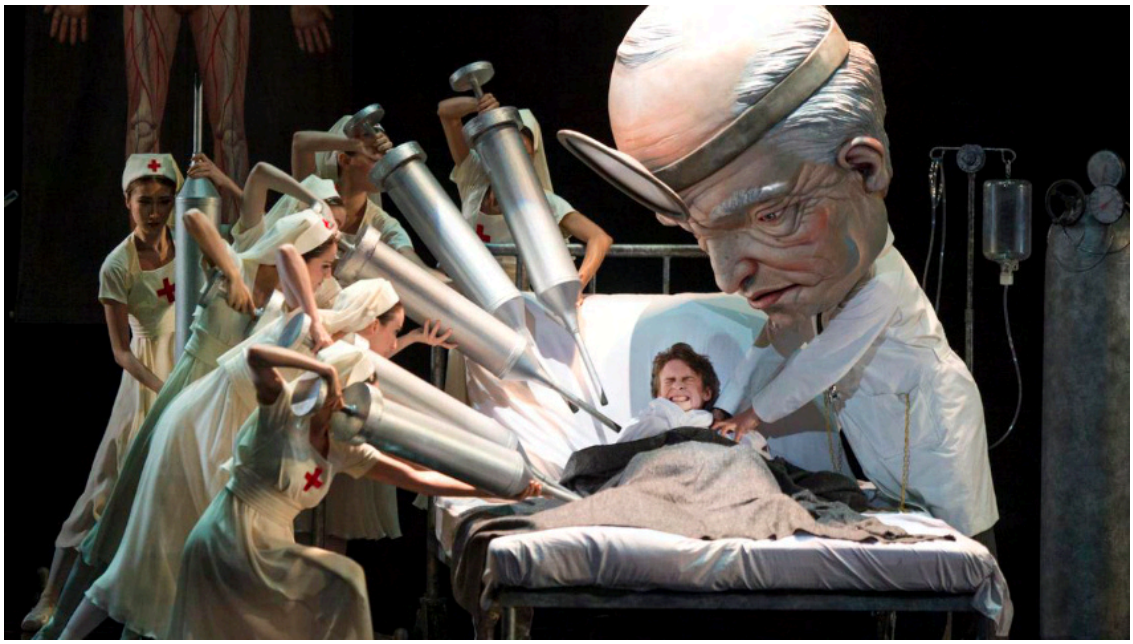

Figure 9. The Boy and Ensemble Cast, Photo: Matt Masin, OC Register, https://www.ocregister.com/wp-content/uploads/migration/omx/omx5c3-b88905598z.120170316104334000g8gltm6q.10.jpg?w=1024.

Instead of an active choice of consumption, like in the confectionery shop, this medicinal ingestion is the result of a very different circumstance. There is a more celebratory air in the sweet shop, the children are happy, and the colors are more vibrant. There is a brighter and more

surface-level shift from reality to dream. Ultimately, the dream in the shop is not enough, a failure both in terms of providing a more alluring alternate world and motivating The Boy to leave his reality behind. The Boy cannot escape into the confectionery shop world and as a result, he awakens from his fantasy by the more painful real-world circumstances he is experiencing in the hospital.

The consumption in the hospital is wildly different. It is not The Boy's choice, it is foisted upon him by predatory characters, figures that are more powerful than him, both physically and in terms of authority. First The Doctor and his nurses dose him without his knowledge, when he is unconscious. Then when he has awoken, they hold him down, forcing the medicine into him against his will in what can only be described as a traumatic event. The set is darker and unambiguously scarier than the sweet shop, unfamiliar and isolating. Most importantly, the experience of The Boy in the hospital is propelled by pain and fear: pain from indigestion and the needle pricks and fear of the imposing figures and the unfamiliarity of his surroundings. This pain and fear informs what happens next, as The Boy sinks into a deeper and more disturbing dream, one that is farther away from reality. Yet ultimately this is the one he chooses to remain in, for he would rather stay in the dream than return to the fear and pain of the hospital room that brought him there in the first place.

The Doctor returns after Act 2's Hospital Dream. He re-enters with his nurses, where we see him take an unidentified substance out of his pocket and drink it, leading to his own hallucinatory event. It seems we have discovered how the good doctor copes with his own role in society—with the consumption of a hallucinatory substance—which conjures up a vaudevillian trio of anthropomorphic liquor bottles (Figure 10). Consumption as a means to cope and to attempt to exert control over a situation is not a mechanism distinct to The Boy, it manifests itself

in his villain as well. The Doctor is suddenly a part of the fantasy, as the audience is given a direct correlation between the substance The Doctor drinks and the fantastical characters. Not only does consumption of drink produce life size, living drinks in the same way The Boy's consumption of sweets produces living sweets, the fact that the manifested characters are liquor bottles speaks to The Doctor's adulthood. No where else in the ballet have we encountered alcohol, save for The Doctor's hallucination. However, once present, the liquor bottles stick around for The Boy to witness.

Figure 10. Ladislav Slivovitz, Marianne, and Boris Wutki, Photo: Gene Schiavone, The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-apps/imrs.php?src=https://arc-anglerfish-washpost-prod-washpost.s3.amazonaws.com/public/42H2DYQIGEI6RNEMWB76VFL32U.jpg&w=1800&h=1800.

After the liquor bottles, Ladislav Slivovitz (Plum Brandy), Marianne (Chartreuse), and Boris Wutki (Vodka), in costumes shaped like bottles with caps on their heads, perform their comedic love triangle, The Doctor and his nurses, accompanied by the blinking eye, discover The Boy is gone. As they search for him, the set changes from the hospital set to a backdrop

made up entirely of eyes of varying sizes (Figure 11). The hospital staff locate The Boy and attempt to put him back in his bed, looming over him in a dominating manner and pointing their fingers in admonishment. The liquor bottles return with alcohol, luring The Doctor and encouraging him to drink. He drinks so much that he passes out, his illicit vice coming back to addle the mind and senses, allowing The Boy to make his escape. The nurses follow shortly after, stumbling and falling across the stage, as the liquor pulls them away from the present moment.

Figure 11. Eye Backdrop and Nurses, Photo: Gene Schiavone, American Ballet Theatre, https://www.abt.org/ballet/whipped-cream/#images-3.

At this point, the dream characters and real life figures are simultaneously converging on the hospital, the dream world and reality are colliding with the inclusion of The Doctor, nurses, and liquor bottles in the same scene. What is more, the set itself is vacillating between fantasy and reality, as the eyes of the real world unnaturally multiply and expand across the backdrop. We are not physically in the hospital anymore, but we are also not quite in The Boy's dream land either. This moment is perhaps the murkiest part of the ballet, where we as an audience cannot

tell whether we are in reality or dreamland, in The Boy's head or The Doctor's. It reflects the crumbling psyche of The Boy, the way he cannot make sense of what he is experiencing at the hands of The Doctor. This chaos and uncertainty—the anxiety of not knowing where one stands—is everything The Boy is trying to avoid.

Section 5: Cuteness Distorts: The Cracks in the Facade

As our protagonist drifts off to sleep due to The Doctor's concoction of medicines, so begins the more bizarre of The Boy's dreams. As the backdrop changes from the black walls of the hospital to a starry sky—signifying a change in location, from the physical world to the psychological—a procession of characters and confectionaries enter from stage left, beginning with child dancers in three-dimensional cake-shaped costumes. The sweets rouse The Boy, grabbing his attention with reminders of his initial consumption of sweets and inviting him into the dream.

The characters that enter next are wild and bizarre. As the backdrop changes to a collection of creatures and biological organisms, the twisted entourage makes its way onto the stage (Figure 12 and Figure 13). First, we see a red and white striped, worm-human hybrid. The dancer slithers across the floor, using only their hands to propel them around the stage. A bright pink character reminiscent of a furry yak, with a white face, large eyes, pink cheeks, and a tiny mouth, waddles on two legs behind the worm. Next, we see a chef-like character, distorted and disfigured, with their head making up the majority of the body, a chef's hat where the skull should be. They walk in carrying a whisk, followed by a tall figure in a long white dress, covered in brown dots and wearing an elongated pointed hat. A white animal, similar to the pink yak, with four legs instead of two enters, surrounded by dancers in frosting-esque ensembles and carrying a ballerina, Princess Praline, on their back, in a tutu and crown.[64] On the backside of the fantastical animal is a baby, looking back and forth as they progress across the stage. Next, an ice cream sundae with a cherry on top bounds behind the animal, followed by yet another furry fantastical creature, with an elongated neck and large ears.[65] He holds a cane, an interesting

[64] Referred to as the Swirl Girls in Ryden, *Art of Whipped Cream*, 118.
[65] Referred to as the Long Necked Piggy in Ryden, *Art of Whipped Cream,* 128.

contrast to the youthful face and bucked teeth of the creature. Three-tiered cakes and what appear to be a parfait enter next, followed finally by a dancer in a hooped skirt covered in red and pink gumballs. She closes out the procession, swishing along while balancing a gumball headpiece on her head.

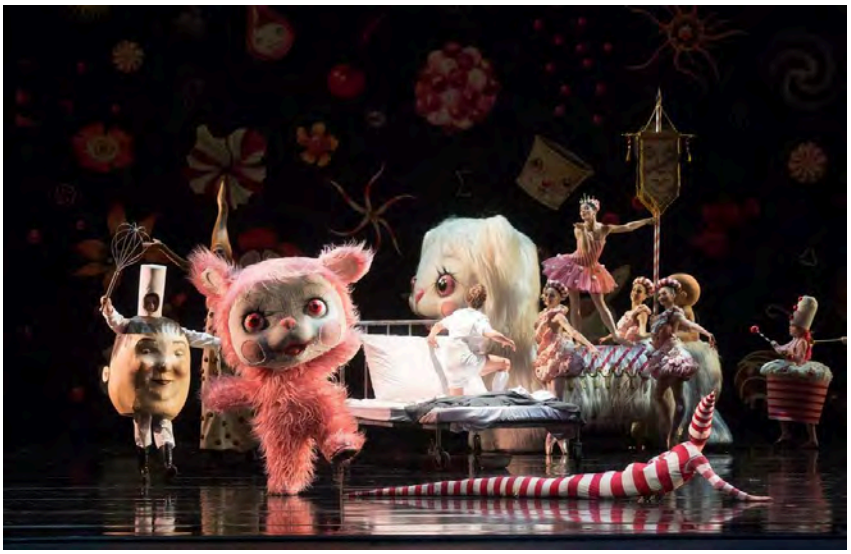

Figure 12. Princess Praline's Entourage, Photo: Gene Schiavone & Rosalie O'Connor, American Ballet Theatre, https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FfiMECiXEA80OWI?format=jpg&name=medium.

Figure 13. Princess Praline's Entourage, Photo: Gene Schiavone, Dancer Music, https://dancermusic.com/the-real-story-american-ballet-theatres-whipped-cream-with-dancer-rachel-richardson/.

Freud's idea of condensation and displacement comes into play in this second dream. Ideas from The Boy's subconscious condense into various characters revealing what fears and desires the character is focusing on. For the sake of brevity, we will look at one character in particular, the Long Necked Piggy (Figure 14). This creature is some sort of cross between a man, pig, and giraffe, with a youthful face and walking stick. The character, in effect condenses the lifespan of a person into one image. The buck teeth and large ears, like the character has not grown into their features, represent youth and childhood. The walking stick, usually required for older people, represents adulthood and beyond. The Boy has condensed life experience into a character that is altogether one of the most odd and distorted figures in the Princess's entourage. That this truly unsettling character, a biological mess, is representative of a life span reveals The Boy's fears about engaging in his own life cycle.

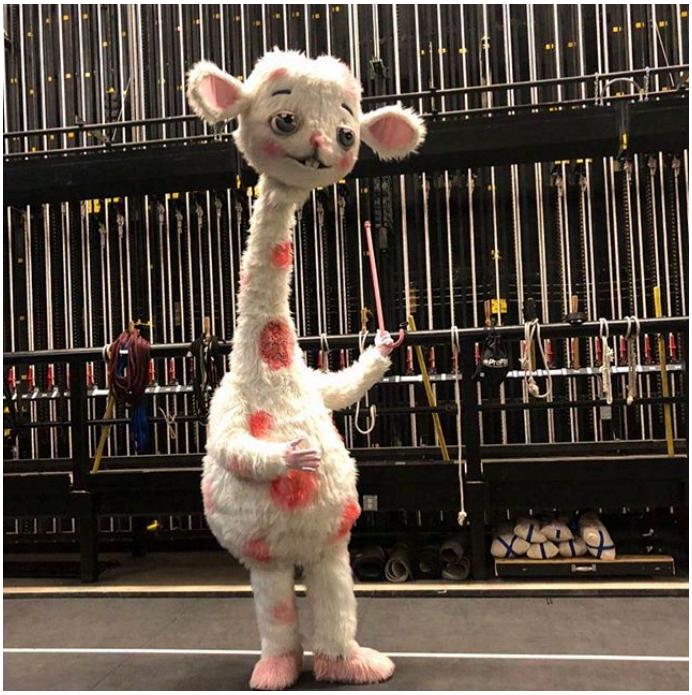

Figure 14. Long Necked Piggy Backstage with Cane, Photo: Rebecca Dee Theatre Crafts, https://www.rebeccadee.net/longneckpiggy/4hmkoyvj67lkxaakqq0b1pk9sucgyr.

We can also see the effects of displacement in this dream. If we recall, the confectionery shop had the heads of animals on the walls. Additionally, the shop had various types of candy only briefly glanced at by The Boy. Now these candies and animals come to the forefront of The Boy's dream, taking on forms and becoming more essential to the structure of the dream. This forefronting of literal wallpaper characters does the work to mask the latent content of the dream. Additionally, in hindsight, the decoration of the confectionary shop becomes a means of foreshadowing for the remainder of the ballet. What seemed rather inconsequential at the beginning, faced with so many other eye-catching designs, rear their cute heads in the back half of the production. If anything, they signify the presence and the *potential* from the start for The Boy's descent in the dreamworld. They are a hint of what is to come and well as the inevitability of events yet to unfold.

There is no doubt that the characters from The Boy's imagination are cute. They remind us of stuffed animals, of childhood and innocence, but this initial impression is not why the cute aesthetic appeals to the viewer. According to Sianne Ngai, the aesthetic of cuteness depends on a power imbalance, on a sadistic streak in the viewer and the desire to control that which they see as unequal.[66] Disguised as pity or compassion, the true aim of the user is dominance over the object of its affection.[67] This is the reason cute characters manifest visually in the way that they do. Ngai uses a frog-shaped bath sponge to prove this point. The sponge is stylistically simple, barely articulated, and "bloblike," with large eyes and parse details and contours. These aspects encourage physical handling, exacerbated by the function of the sponge itself. It is created to be squeezed and pressed into the body, and the malleability of both the material and the visual look of the object encourage the innate desire for manhandling and control.[68]

---

[66] Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," 816.
[67] Harris, "Cuteness," 6.
[68] Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," 815-16.

Like the frog, the pink yak character, part of Princess Praline's entourage (Figure 15), is plush and malleable. The face of the yak is characterized by its large open eyes, and its small nose and mouth, and it moves almost clumsily, taking big bounding steps as it travels across the stage. The visual softness of the yak invites tactile interaction, petting and fondling, but also violent actions like mutilation, contortion, and disfigurement. The bumbling nature of its movements and the wide, emphatic eyes turn the figure into something expressive and meaningful, to the detriment of the character.

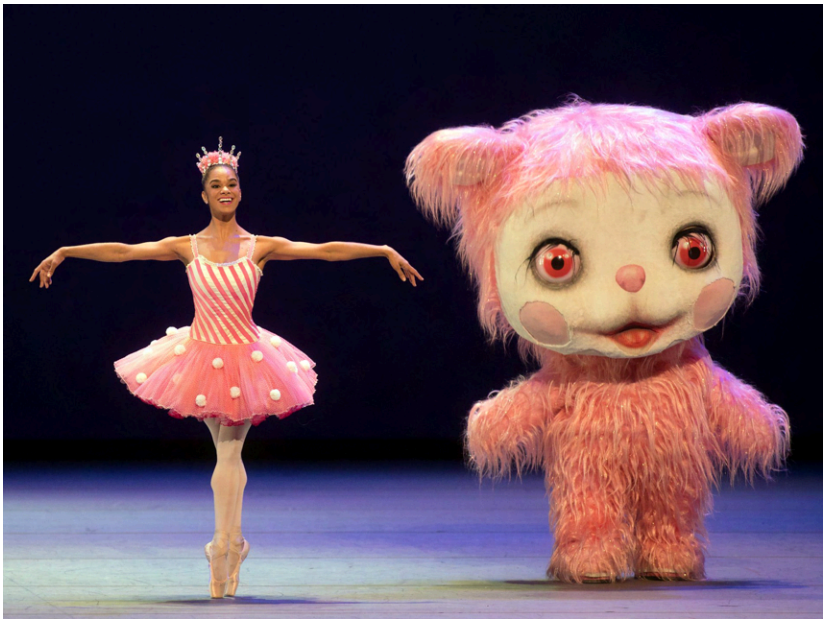

Figure 15. Princess Praline and the Pink Yak, Photo: Rosalie O'Connor, American Ballet Theatre, https://www.facebook.com/AmericanBalletTheatre/photos/a.122834101857/10156133554381858/?type=3.

Ngai, using poet Francis Ponge's personification of an orange, discusses how giving a "dumb object, expressive capabilities," paves the way for the eventual domination of the object. Rather than empowering the object by giving it a personality that is visually manifested in the facial expressions of the character, the object is instead forced to bow to the whims of its creator. Ngai explains, "'giving face' to an object is to make it lose face, an act not just of humiliation but mutilation." As seen with the frog sponge, the bloblike face of the character heightens the desire to handle and deform the object. Giving the object a face, makes it more likely to be

twisted and contorted, more likely to be abused and controlled. The character is visually personified, but at the expense of its intrinsic power. It is given a life, but it is a life dominated by its maker.[69]

Ngai's point is further displayed in the previously mentioned small mouth of the pink yak. Compared to the face itself, the mouth is not proportionate to the rest of the body. The character's mouth is barely opened, the corners of which are sealed shut. Not only does the smallness of the mouth, render speech improbable, aggravated by the nature of the performance—very rarely in a ballet is speech allowed, and if characters wish to communicate, they do so in sign and mime language, something impossible for such large and cumbersome characters to do with any comprehensibility—the smallness of the mouth and the nose together makes the character appear to be underdeveloped. In Ngai's words, "The striking incompleteness of the cute visage implies that while the object must be given just enough face to enable it to return our gaze, a fuller personification becomes impossible because it would symbolically render that object our equal, erasing the power differential on which the aesthetic depends."[70] Again, the look of such cute characters is directly informed by the control one can exert over them. They are made disfigured, mutilated, and incomplete to satisfy the desire for dominance and the proclivity for violence present in those who willinging seek out and engage with the cute aesthetic.

Another moment of cuteness disguising desire for dominance and control comes after Princess Praline, on the back of the white yak, greets The Boy, and the two begin a complicated pas de deux. What is interesting, and most eerie about this initial dream scene is that these characters, save for The Boy and Princess Praline, the frosting dancers, and the young children,

[69] Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," 832.
[70] Ngai, "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde," 833.

after entering with such curious and unusual movements—slithering, waddling, bounding, and swishing—*do not move from their location for the entirety of the eleven-minute dance.* They stay still, barely shifting or blinking, despite the interesting movement that is available with such strange and meticulously constructed costumes. Richard Harris describes cuteness as, "dehumanizing, paralyzing its victims into comatose or semi-conscious things."[71] We see this motionless in these giant characters. Even though they have the ability to move, the nature of their cuteness, their malleability, effectively freezes them. Think of a toy or stuffed animal. Their ability to move is dependent on the actions of the child who plays with them. It is that child who has control, who chooses how and when a toy should move.

We know The Boy to be the mastermind, the dreamer and creator of these characters. Thus it is him who has the power to move the creatures. His choice to freeze them could mean one of two things: either his desire for control is so strong, it completely shuts down the motion of any character he is not directly interacting with, or it reflects his own paralysis. The transition between the Hospital Dream and the City Center Dream is messy to say the least, as The Boy's reality becomes more flimsy and his dreams become more powerful. We are approaching a turning point for the protagonist, where he either integrates into society or creates his own.

Despite The Boy's desire to reshape the world, as we are coming to understand, such a reconfiguration is easier said than done. The energy that The Boy has put into creating and maintaining a fantastical world begins to drain him, and as a result, his grasp of both reality and fantasy becomes tenuous. He has been sick from overconsumption, dosed with medicine that renders him unconscious, not to mention the physical act of dancing, literally carrying the show. The control he has over himself is mostly subsumed by these greater forces and any energy not expended by these circumstances has been funneled into creating his dream land. As stated by

[71] Harris, "Cuteness," 7.

Matt DeLisi in his study on consumptive behavior, “self-control is a reserve or resource that can be depleted and exhausted, and when one's self-control is thoroughly taxed, behavior functioning generally suffers.”[72] The murky depths of The Boy’s mind cannot hold any one thing in place, so they begin to slip into one another, blurring the real world and the dreamland into a chaotic swirl of real and not real, cute and violent, control and disarray, until its hard to tell where the power lies.

As The Boy’s energy slips, he not only reverts into a deeper dreamland and impulsively pushes back against a reality he wants nothing to do with, he also loses his grip on the characters he has created. They therefore find themselves in a state of freeze, basically becoming uncomfortable backdrops, reflecting The Boy’s uncertainty, exhaustion, and unease. As viewers we subconsciously feel the paralysis, casting a stillness over the stage in a way that might not be at the forefront but is nonetheless felt in the back of our minds, in a way that makes us want to scream: “just do something!” despite not comprehending exactly why we need them to do so. Not only do we contend with the malformed nature of the characters, we cope with their uncomfortableness and unease, doubly impressing upon the viewer the sensation that the world The Boy is straining to build is not quite right.

After the murky demise of the hospital staff, the moment in the ballet when dream and reality are colliding chaotically, the stage empties of everyone save The Boy. The disarray of the previous scene, and the unreliability of the present state affect The Boy, who for all intents and purposes should be ecstatic to be free from his jailers. But as we watch the aftermath of the hospital’s mass intoxication, something very different plays out. We see the boy kneeling on the ground, his hands holding his head as he rocks back and forth. The eyes on the backdrop are still present, and as the boy sits at the front of the stage, distressed and visibly overwhelmed, they

[72] DeLisi, “Consumptive Behavior, Eating Behavior, and Antisocial Behavior,” 366.

start to flash rapidly. The music shifts from a jaunty melody to a discordant and drawn-out tone. While this moment only lasts a few seconds, it is impactful, indicating a severe and life-altering moment has passed through The Boy. As established, the walls between reality and dreamland are breaking down, so much so that The Boy now is able to seamlessly shift from one to another. The backdrop goes dark and The Boy sits alone until the liquor bottles return and remove his hospital gown, revealing a gold ensemble underneath, a complete departure from both the white communion outfit and the hospital gown of the previous scenes. From this point on, we are firmly in a dreamland, one from which The Boy will never awaken.

In the previous section, we discussed the nature of the eye in the hospital backdrop as representative of an all-knowing force, a force that inspires anxiety in The Boy and the viewer. Its existence reminds the characters that there is still that which they do not understand, and perhaps never will. While the eye disappears during the first part of the Act 2 Hospital Dream, it returns in full force for the end, multiplied and enlarged, flashing menacingly in time with the jarring tune. The eyes overpower the scene, dominating the view of the stage. Now it is not only a singular knowing force, it is a multitude of forces who have knowledge and experience The Boy cannot and will never have. It is terrifying, but it is also freeing. The Boy cannot go back, the reality he was a part of has been destroyed, tainted by authority and forced consumption, by the uncertainties and anxieties of a world he does not understand. The only way to survive is to succumb to the alternative and follow the pull of the dream, wherever it leads.

The dreamland of The Boy takes the shape of a city center, something *Juxtapoz* magazine writer Greg Escalante called Ryden's "Sistine Chapel."[73] Dressed in pastel pinks and purples, Act 2's City Center Dream is vaguely reminiscent of Vienna, featuring a confectionery, butcher shop,

[73] Greg Escalante, *WHIPPED CREAM: MARK RYDEN DESIGNS A BALLET*, in *Juxtapoz (San Francisco, Calif.)*, (San Francisco: High Speed Productions, Inc, 2017): 18-20, 19.

clock tower, toy shop, and museum. Ryden also peppered in some of his own artistic motifs, namely the aforementioned butcher shop, the bee, and Abraham Lincoln, as well as other characters from his previous works on balconies and behind windows.[74] Princess Praline's entourage, as well as the sweets from Act 1, appear in the city smiling and celebrating the arrival of The Boy. The sky is full of cotton candy-colored clouds and the buildings are embellished with gold and candy-colored decorations—stripes, swirls, and other geometric shapes. The main characters perform a series of pas de deux and pas de trois, variations, and group dances, in which every major dream character makes an appearance.

The only character from the non-dream world that appears in the fantastical new reality is the Chef (Figure 16). The Chef is in some ways the instigator of the dreamland in which The

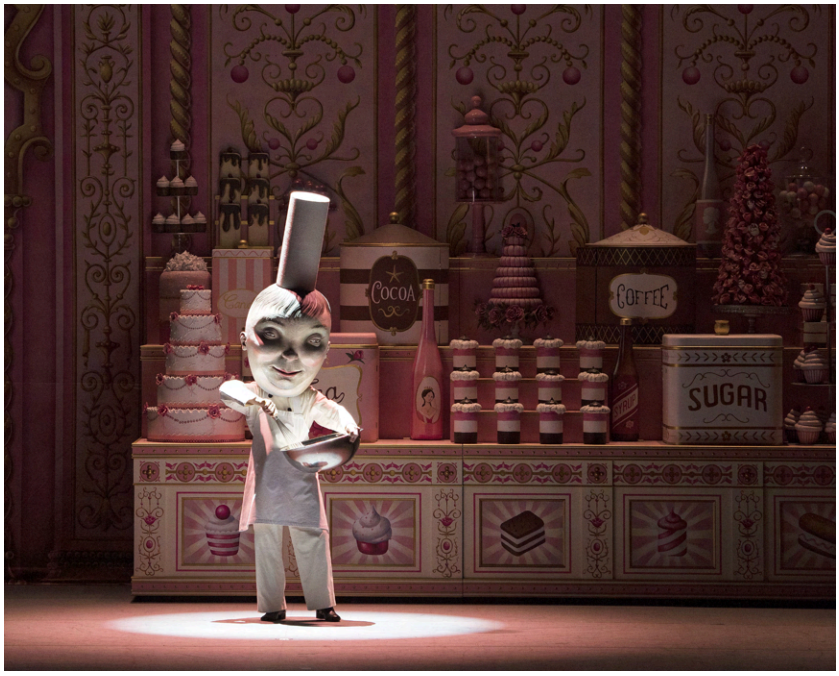

Figure 16. The Chef, Photo: Gene Schiavone, Stage and Cinema, https://stageandcinema.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/American-Ballet-Theatre-Whipped-Cream-Alexei-Agoudine-in-Whipped-Cream.-Photo-Gene-Schiavone..jpg.

[74] Ryden, *Art of Whipped Cream,* 146.

Boy has found himself. Although it is The Boy's imagination, it is the Chef's sweets that allow the protagonist to start his journey into this imagination. What is more, the Chef seems to occupy a more fluid space between reality and dreamland from the start. We first see him, alone and spotlighted before the confectionery even appears. He has no set for his introduction, just him and his bowl of whipped cream. This introduction sets him apart from other big-headed adults, who need a backdrop set in reality (ie. the church and the hospital) to exist. The Chef also brings about the whipped cream world that closes out Act 1 (Figure 17). In the whipped cream world we are introduced to a corps de ballet in white, physical manifestations of whipped cream. The Chef has a deliberate place in The Boy's imagination and thus can appear in the final form of this new reality, as can the sweets from his shop, despite their connections to the real world. But who exactly is The Chef?

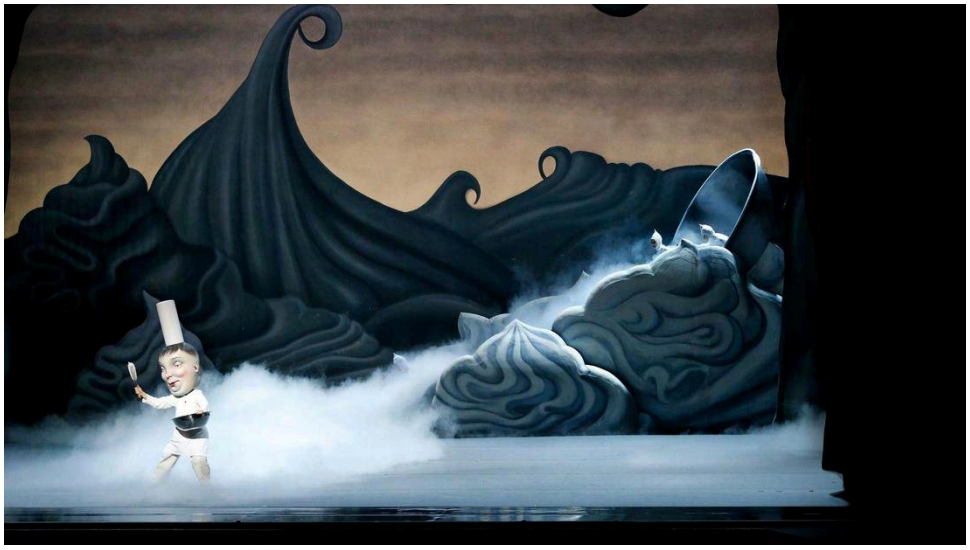

Figure 17. The Chef and the Whipped Cream World*,* Photo: Allen J. Schaben, Los Angeles Times, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-abt-whipped-cream-review-20170317-story.html.

There are a few ways we can interpret The Chef. One way to think of him is as an extension of The Boy. According to Freud's "means of representability," in cases where the ego (the dreamer) is not present but a strange character is there instead, this unknown figure is the

mind's substitute for the ego.[75] It is possible that The Chef *is* The Boy, transformed to fit within the dream world. However if this were the case, how can, in the last scene, both The Chef and The Boy be present in the same dream?

Whipped Cream is often likened to *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky's Christmas ballet, in which a young girl, called either Clara or Marie, faces difficult trials in order to save her beloved Nutcracker, and is eventually rewarded for her efforts with an invitation and celebration in The Kingdom of Sweets.[76] With this association, it is possible to draw parallels between characters in Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and *Whipped Cream.* The Boy becomes Marie/Clara, The Doctor becomes The Mouse King, the antagonist, and the whipped cream world becomes the snow scene. The Chef too has a Nutcracker parallel in Uncle Drosselmeyer. Both characters, in many ways, are the catalysts for the events of their respective ballets. It is Drosselmeyer's machinations that cause the Nutcracker Prince to come to life and his scheming that propels Marie/Clara to The Kingdom of Sweets. In the same way, The Chef's creations are what start The Boy on his dream journey and his machinations are what produces the Act 1 whipped cream world. Drosselmeyer, like the Chef, also moves freely between reality and dreamland, in that he is aware and able to move around in both worlds. While not completely corresponding, there are too many similarities to dismiss the idea.

If we can think of The Chef as a Drosselmeyer-like character—a character hyper aware of both reality and dream and able to shift between the two with ease—then we can infer that he has more control and autonomy over the world that The Boy wishes to escape to. The presence of this reality shaper in the final City Center Dream casts doubt on how much control The Boy really has over his imagined world. There are larger forces at play, as the presence of The Chef

[75] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* 300.
[76] Kaufman, "American Ballet Theatre's 'Whipped Cream'"

reveals. It is in effect, a subconscious warning to The Boy that he is not truly in control, that powers greater than him with pull in dreams, and more importantly reality, are still around, that he has not really escaped, and never will.

The finale commences with the entrance of Nicolo, the Master of Ceremonies, "a cross between the mayor of the city and a spiritual entity."[77] Nicolo is an abnormally tall figure in pink, with sweets pasted to the bottom half of his robes. He wears a tall striped hat and a long white beard. The Master of Ceremonies crowns The Boy alongside Princess Praline, sealing their union and establishing him as the ruler of this land (Figure 18). The dancing is joyous and energetic and the curtain comes down on the new society, The Boy seemingly content with his reality.

Despite the initial joyousness of the city center, the seemingly simple and manageable alternative, strangeness, violence, and surrealism are still evident in opposition to the childlike,

Figure 18. Finale with Full Cast*,* Photo: Gene Schiavone, American Ballet Theatre, https://www.abt.org/ballet/whipped-cream/#images-1.

picture-perfect scene. The clock tower bears a face that brings to mind Fisher Price or Playskool clocks. However, it stands directly above the butcher shop, plastered with the word "Meats" and

[77] Ryden, *Art of Whipped Cream,* 158.

displaying the legs of animals in the windows (Figure 19). The large cute characters once again stand motionless around as the dancers perform in the center of the stage. The strange characters in the windows seem almost voyeuristic, peering down at the festivities below (Figure 20). A sad clown-like head (Figure 20), and forcibly smiling faces provide architectural details on staircases and buildings (Figure 21). A large tree with eyes, nose, and mouth stands on stage left, looking out toward the audience (Figure 20), and a sign picturing an anatomical heart with an eye in the center waves from stage right (Figure 22). These initially innocuous details, when taken in, reveal an uncomfortable undercurrent beneath the bright pastel city center. While it may not be obvious at first glance, the subtly violent and eerie images impress upon the viewer a strong feeling of unease. Something is not entirely right about this world, and while the facade of a happy ending in a beautiful world draws the viewer in, there are darker depths below. In the same way, The Boy is drawn to the lovely things, the smiles and pretty pictures, until the ugly side starts revealing itself, piece by piece, and it becomes too late to turn back whether he knows it or not.

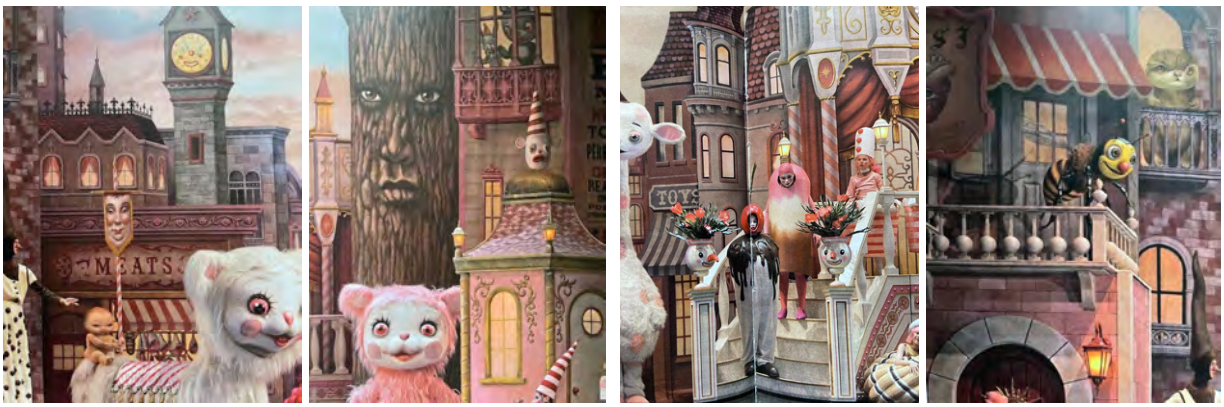

Figure 19-22. City Center Details, Photos: Mark Ryden, *The Art of Whipped Cream,* 152-53.

In many ways, we can look at The Boy's city center and find similarities to the way in which real cities and societies are structured. There is distinct and consistent architecture, stores in which to buy and sell goods, and a means of telling time indicating a system of days, months,

and years. There is a military in the form of the marzipan, gingerbread, and sugarplum armies. There are children, indicating family units perhaps complete with their own societal pressures and responsibilities. There are delinquent characters in the form of the liquor bottles with their mischief and troublemaking ways. Whether a mayor or a spiritual entity, the Master of Ceremonies indicates some sort of regional power. There is a hierarchy of princes and princesses and their attendants, with Princess Praline as the highest official in the land. What is different about this world is The Boy's place in it. Rather than joining the cupcake children, where a boy of his age seemingly belongs, he is crowned alongside Praline as the ruler of this strange world. He takes on responsibility instead of shying away from it and actively chooses to enter into a union with the Princess. Rather than being admonished by authority figures, pressured and dominated by them, he becomes that authority in the world he designed. He's managed to grow up but on his own terms. However, he has not managed to shake the structure of society in the slightest, he's merely repositioned himself within its hierarchy. Violence, anxiety, and pressure of the real world all remain, he's just too far above to see it.

Conclusion

What makes The Boy's dreams and his journey throughout the ballet so compelling is that it is clear from the beginning, our protagonist wants escape and control—escape from authority figures who overpower and pressure him, and dominance over a world that is, in quick succession, spiraling out of his control. He creates a world that relies on cuteness and devises a society in which he is repositioned as the utmost authority. On paper, The Boy has fulfilled his wish, he has satiated his hunger literally and figuratively, yet, despite the lengths he has gone to achieve his desires, in the end his grip on control and the new reality he has conceived are questionable.

Terrified by his real world circumstances, the anxiety and panic that comes with living in his delicate society, The Boy reinvents the world in a way that is eerily similar to the one he left behind. This decision leaves him ignorant, standing at the top of the hill yet unaware that he has failed to make a meaningful change in the structure of his society. All he has done is move himself to a position where the structure can no longer affect him. In this way, he has not truly eliminated any of the suffering present throughout the ballet, nor have the anxieties of 2010s America, so explicitly articulated throughout the hospital scenes, been resolved. While the initial desire to reinvent could be considered a radical move, the outcome of this desire is anything but. The Boy has reverted to his initial antisocial tendencies, once again retreating from society, not by reinventing it, but by soaring above it, essentially taking the easy way out.

From our outside perspective, we may be able to discern this lack of resolution, but The Boy certainly does not. In the thick of the world he has created, The Boy is blissfully unaware of his failure. He is fooled by the facade of cuteness and cannot see the signs that point to his failings. Not only has he failed to identify and eliminate the suffering and anxiety of the real

world, he may not even have any of the control he desperately seeks. His desire for dominance, manifested in the cute characters he conjures, is undercut by the enduring presence of a reality he has no authority over. Perhaps it is for the best, if The Boy knew the reality of his situation, the persistence of the society, authority, violence, and anxiety he wished to be rid of, maybe it would shatter him completely. And while we know the truth, maybe it is right to leave him here: trapped in a world of his making, oblivious to the dangers, and entirely and unequivocally satisfied with what he has done.

Bibliography

Acocella, Joan. “A Dance of Sugar and Cream.” The New Yorker, June 12, 2017. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/19/a-dance-of-sugar-and-cream.

Adams, Byron. “Richard Strauss, Schlagobers.” American Symphony Orchestra, 2012. https://americansymphony.org/concert-notes/strauss-schlagobers/.

Alfieri, Paolo. “First Communion in Early Twentieth-Century Italy: A Rite of Passage within Childhood.” *Historia scholastica* 8, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 51–67. https://doi.org/10.15240/tul/006/2022-2-003.

Algorani, Emad B. B., and Vikas Gupta. “Coping Mechanisms.” NIH: U.S. National Library of Medicine, April 24, 2023. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559031/.

Allnutt, Robert, Russell Frye, and Heather S. Foley. “Opinion | A Salty Review of Sugary ‘Whipped Cream’ Left Some with a Bad Taste - The Washington Post.” The Washington Post, February 16, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-salty-review-of-sugary-whipped-cream-left-some-with-a-bad-taste/2018/02/16/62681b88-112d-11e8-a68c-e9374188170e_story.html.

Bauchner, Howard. “Health Care in the United States: A Right or a Privilege.” *JAMA* 317, no. 1 (January 3, 2017): 29. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.19687.

Bleiberg, Laura. “Review: We’re Still on a Sugar High: Run (or LEAP) to American Ballet Theatre’s ‘Whipped Cream.’” Los Angeles Times, March 17, 2017. https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-abt-whipped-cream-review-20170317-story.html.

Boyce, Kristin. “Beyond Petipa and Before the Academy: Plato, Socrates, and Alexei Ratmansky’s Serenade After Plato’s Symposium.” *Midwest studies in philosophy* 44, no. 1 (2019): 260–278.

Clarke, Sara. “The Top News Stories of 2016.” US News & World Report, December 30, 2016. https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/slideshows/top-news-stories-of-2016.

DeLisi, Matt. “Consumptive Behavior, Eating Behavior, and Antisocial Behavior: The Ubiquitous Roles of Self-Control.” *Preventive Medicine* 105 (December 2017): 366–67. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.08.001.

Ebert, Grace. “Bizarre Wide-Eyed Hybrids Reflect Imagined Landscapes in Naoto Hattori’s Miniature Paintings.” Colossal, September 4, 2021. https://www.thisiscolossal.com/2021/09/naoto-hattori-hybrids/.

Escalante, Greg. “*WHIPPED CREAM: MARK RYDEN DESIGNS A BALLET*.” *Juxtapoz (San Francisco, Calif.)*. (San Francisco: High Speed Productions, Inc, 2017): 18-20.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Translated by A. A. Brill. *The Project Gutenberg*. The Macmillan Company, 1913. https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/66048/pg66048-images.html#Page_260.

Gostin, Lawrence O. "Law, Ethics, and Public Health in the Vaccination Debates." *JAMA* 313, no. 11 (March 17, 2015): 1099–1100. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2015.1518.

Harris, Daniel. "Cuteness." Essay. In *Cute, Quaint, Hungry and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism*, 1–22. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001.

Harss, Marina. "Backstage at Whipped Cream." *Pointe* 18, no. 4 (2017): 38–41.

Heisler, Wayne. "Recipe and Indigestion." Essay. In *The Art of Whipped Cream: For American Ballet Theatre*, 10–23. Paris, France: Cernunnos, 2019.

Honig, Alice Sterling, and Arlene L. Nealis. "What Do Young Children Dream About?" *Early Child Development and Care* 182, no. 6 (June 2012): 771–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2011.579797.

Jackson, Dylan B. "The Link between Poor Quality Nutrition and Childhood Antisocial Behavior: A Genetically Informative Analysis." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 44 (March 2016): 13–20. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2015.11.007.

Katić, Elvira K. "Flesh for Fantasy: A Semiotic Contemplation on the Paintings of Mark Ryden." *The international journal of arts theory and history* 12, no. 2 (2017): 13–26.

Keane Eyes Gallery. "About Margaret." Accessed March 28, 2024. https://www.keane-eyes.com/about-margaret/.

Lin, Ivy. "Empty Calories: Ratmansky's *Whipped Cream* Is Sweet but Slight." Bachtrack, October 23, 2022. https://bachtrack.com/review-whipped-cream-ratmansky-simkin-granlunds-american-ballet-theatre-new-york-october-2022.

Macaulay, Alastair. "Review: Alexei Ratmansky's Ballet 'Whipped Cream' Is a Candyland Triumph." The New York Times, May 23, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/arts/dance/review-ratmansky-whipped-cream-abt-gala.html.

Ngai, Sianne. "The Cuteness of the Avant‐Garde." *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 4 (2005): 811–47. https://doi.org/10.1086/444516.

Oh, Se-Young, Hyojin Ahn, Namsoo Chang, Myung-Hee Kang, and Jiyoung V Oh. "Dietary Patterns and Weight Status Associated with Behavioural Problems in Young Children." *Public Health Nutrition* 17, no. 11 (November 4, 2013): 2563–69.

https://doi.org/10.1017/s1368980013002917.

Pen Magazine International. “Yoshitomo Nara: What Lies Behind Insouciance and Appearances.” January 5, 2021. https://pen-online.com/arts/yoshitomo-nara-what-lies-behind-insouciance-and-appearances/?scrolled=1.

Phadke, Varun K., Robert A. Bednarczyk, Daniel A. Salmon, and Saad B. Omer. “Association between Vaccine Refusal and Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in the United States.” *JAMA* 315, no. 11 (March 15, 2016): 1149–58. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.1353.

Ryden, Mark. *Art of Whipped Cream: For American Ballet Theatre*. Paris, France: Cernunnos, 2019.

Sándor, Piroska, Sára Szakadát, Katinka Kertész, and Róbert Bódizs. “Content Analysis of 4 to 8 Year-Old Children’s Dream Reports.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (April 30, 2015): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00534.

Slayton, Jeff. “Ratmansky’s Whipped Cream for ABT Is Pure Eye Candy.” Bachtrack, March 17, 2017. https://bachtrack.com/review-whipped-cream-ratmansky-american-ballet-theatre-segerstrom-center-cosa-mesa-march-2017.

Strauch, Inge. “Rem Dreaming in the Transition from Late Childhood to Adolescence: A Longitudinal Study.” *Dreaming* 15, no. 3 (September 2005): 155–69. https://doi.org/10.1037/1053-0797.15.3.155.

Sulcas, Roslyn. “A Sweetly Disturbing Confection: Arts and Leisure Desk.” *The New York Times*. New York, N.Y: New York Times Company, 2017, Late Edition (East Coast) edition.

Tomeny, Theodore S., Christopher J. Vargo, and Sherine El-Toukhy. “Geographic and Demographic Correlates of Autism-Related Anti-Vaccine Beliefs on Twitter, 2009-15.” *Social Science & Medicine* 191 (October 2017): 168–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.08.041.

Vankin, Deborah. “Mark Ryden’s Foray into Set Design Is a Fantastical Ballet of Candyland Delights.” *Los Angeles Times (Online)*. Los Angeles: Tribune Interactive, LLC, 2017.

Vladeck, Bruce. “Universal Health Insurance in the United States: Reflections on the Past, the Present, and the Future.” *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 1 (January 2003): 16–19. https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.93.1.16.

Wang, Jason F, Nicholas A Soter, and Simon A Morrison. “Whipped Cream—Viennese Ballet and Pop Surrealism Meet Dark Medicine.” *JAMA : The Journal of the American Medical Association* 321, no. 7 (2019): 630–631.