

Dreams in psychoanalytic treatment

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Introduction.

Within the psychoanalytic frame of reference, the elaboration and analysis of dreams has, since the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, been seen as the main thoroughfare to the unconscious and a course change was increasingly seen in how psychoanalysis positioned itself in the scientific landscape. Dream research has always been divided into two different approaches: the approach that concentrates on the 'hardware' vs the approach that focuses on retrieving the meaning of the dream. The former, more objectifying approach aims at identifying the brain functions and structures that are important for the various aspects that have a part to play in creating the dream. The second, more subjective approach aims at identifying the meaning of the dream; its ultimate objective is to increase the dreamer's self-insight.

These approaches depart from different epistemological starting points, which cannot be traced back to a common origin. They do share one commonality in that the origin of the dream must be sought in the inner being of the dreamer. Today we will focus upon the second more subjective approach related to creating self – insight.

As long ago as 1895, Freud had described two types of angst: the "anxiety neurosis", which was not amenable to the psychoanalytic methodology that he was using at that time, and the "psycho-neurosis", which could be treated with the psychoanalytic techniques of the day. From the very beginning of his attempts to understand mental processes, Freud had had to contend with the difference between what we today refer to as mental process disorders and conflicting mental representations. From his need to be able to continue to position psychoanalysis between biology and psychology, he then attempted in the *Entwurf* to describe and explain the development of mental processes from a neurological perspective. His intention was to be able to explain both the process and the content. He wanted to keep the process and the content together. When he was unsuccessful in that endeavour - due to the shortcomings in scientific knowledge at that time - only two possibilities remained:

psychoanalysis could either move to the side of hermeneutics or it could find its home among the natural sciences.

Freud attempted to trace the origins of two intrinsically different epistemological frameworks — which were, in fact, related — back to a common source. That attempt remains unsuccessful to the present day. The distinction that Freud introduced between the anxiety neurosis and the psycho-neurosis has helped us to understand two qualitatively different types of dreams, however. One type concerns the dreams of patients with conflicting mental representations who are capable of symbolisation and whose dreams can often be characterised as wish-fulfilment dreams as described by Freud. The other kind are dreams of patients with mental process disorders. They are unable to use the symbolising function of the language and their dreams are often not of the wish-fulfilment type but are clear types of communication. We shall examine this type later in this chapter.

The Interpretation of Dreams.

Dreams became so prominent at the start of the second phase of the development of the psychoanalytic frame of reference at the moment that Freud abandoned his first trauma theory, partly as a result of his opinions about defence mechanisms and displacement. The emphasis on the external environment was replaced by an emphasis on unconscious inner desires and motives. There was an increasing emphasis on finding meaning within psychoanalysis and a decreasing emphasis on understanding the structure and the phenomena of the mental process itself.

The aim of treatment was to make the patient consciously aware of the unconscious desires and associated anxieties. The central publication during this phase was *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Freud considered the dream to be the main thoroughfare to the unconscious; the characteristic metaphor for psychoanalysis at that point in time was archaeology. Freud drilled a shaft directly into the unconscious in order to be able to observe the phenomena of the unconscious directly.

Freud believed that "dreams" constituted a separate psychological domain from that of "waking", a domain that had its own laws, which differed from those that operated during the waking state. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud describes how he thinks that unconscious desires find their way to the surface of consciousness. Freud

opposed the commonly held opinion of the time that it was possible to decode dreams by using specific codes and he rejected the idea that specific symbols had fixed meanings. He also rejected the idea that dreams were more likely to be "waste" than to have meaning. Such waste would have to be removed in order to eliminate from the psychological system any tensions that could not be dealt with satisfactorily. In that way, Freud follows the path of 'the dream as wish-fulfilment' and he concentrates on the dreams of patients with a psycho-neurosis, at the expense of understanding the dreams of patients with a mental process disorder or anxiety neurosis.

Freud believed that there was a conflict between instinctive motives and forces that tried to defend against the instinctive impulses out of fear. That led to a compromise solution that (partially and indirectly) satisfies both the unconscious desire and the defensive forces. Just as the manifest dream (the dream as the patient remembers it) was seen to be a disguised fulfilment of an unconscious desire, free association was also thought to be a disguised expression of an unconscious desire. The model of the mental apparatus that was developed during this phase has come to be known as the first "topography". It consists of the conscious, the unconscious and the preconscious. The focus of attention was the study of the phenomena of the unconscious, the instinctive urges, especially, but not exclusively, the sex drive, and derivatives (*Three Essays on Sexual Theory* (1905)). Freud sees the preconscious as a system between the conscious and the unconscious. It contains material that is not yet conscious but that is also not under the control of the forces of displacement.

In the seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the preconscious was described in such a way to make it possible to distinguish aspects of what would later be called the Ego.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud follows Ferenczi in seeing manifest dreams as a compromise; later, in the Lectures (1916), he states that the content of a phobia is comparable to a manifest dream. In "Psychoanalysis and Libido Theory" (1923), Freud also wrote that the dynamics of the creation of dreams are identical to the creation of neurotic symptoms. Two drives appear prior to the development of the structural viewpoint: the desire and the rejection of the desire. It should be clear that Freud's ideas about dreams can be seen as typical for the psychoanalytical theory of neuroses. At that moment, he was more concerned about understanding the conflicting mental

representations and less about the psychological functioning of the mental process disorders. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud defined dreams as the disguised fulfilment of a repressed infantile wish. In other words: At that time, Freud saw the dream as a rebus in which the manifest contents of the dream concealed a latent meaning. As mentioned above, archaeology was the metaphor that was used most often to describe psychoanalysis. An active censoring entity was postulated that determined what was permitted to enter consciousness and what was not. That censor withdrew from consciousness but was also not incorporated in the unconscious as it had been understood by Freud up to that point.

The censor was more effective when the person was awake during the day than when he or she was sleeping at night, but it was not absent even then. That implied two things. First, with this view, Freud was taking the first steps in abandoning the topographical viewpoint in favour of the structural one. Second, it implies that the conscious is subject to unconscious forces. That means, then, that the conscious is no longer lord and master but rather that it has a status that can be compared to a certain degree with a symptom, thereby creating space for psychoanalysis as a meaning-giving activity. Dreams are not subject to the laws of the logically structured secondary process that is characterised by the reality principle. They follow the laws of the primary thought process, which is much more associative and is driven by the lust principle.

At the beginning of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud expounds his basis idea of *the interpretation of dreams*:

" There is a psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and that on the application of this technique every dream will reveal itself as a psychological structure, full of significance, and one which may be assigned to a specific place in the psychic activities of the waking state. Further, I shall endeavour to elucidate the processes which underlie the strangeness and obscurity of dreams, and to deduce from these processes the nature of the psychic forces whose conflict or cooperation is responsible for our dreams."

With that statement, Freud again sets himself twin objectives: identifying the meaning of the dream and explaining the dream as a process. Here, too, he was concerned with

keeping the content and the process united. It is rather like a game of chess. Each of the pieces has a particular meaning but that meaning is relative because it is ultimately the position of the pieces that determines the relative significance of all of them. The position has to be analysed in order to be able to weigh the value and the significance of the pieces. That analysis must also include the realisation that the position of the pieces did not arise spontaneously. It is the result of a process in a particular context. That process, the game of chess itself, in fact, follows specific implicit and explicit rules; the same principle applies to the dream. It therefore follows that the various dream elements have no fixed predetermined meaning outside the context of the dream.

The aim as formulated by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* implies a distinction between the manifest and the latent dream; the manifest dream is the basis for explaining the underlying latent dream by means of associations. Sometimes, the distance between the manifest and the latent dream is small and the meaning of the (manifest) dream is relatively clear. At other times, we need the accompanying associations to be able to discover the meaning of the dream. Although he does mention exceptions, Freud does not believe that manifest dreams have much real meaning. They present the façade that obscures what is really important from view. It is only with the rise of Ego psychology that interest in manifest dreams starts to grow and the strict distinction between the manifest and latent dreams is abandoned (Spanjaard 1969). The role of the Ego in the construction of manifest dreams would become the province of Ego psychology. Freud was also interested in the role of the Ego in dream construction. Especially where he - following Ferenczi - saw dreams as a compromise formation and he saw the contents of the phobia as having approximately the same relationship to the phobia as the manifest dream does for the latent dream.

We saw above that Freud felt that the structure of a dream was equivalent to a neurotic symptom. In both cases, two opposing tendencies are in conflict. On the one side, the unconscious and repressed desire that strove for wish fulfilment, and, on the other side, the tendency that strives to repress and that was part of the Ego.

As stated above, the result of these conflicting tendencies is a symptom or a compromise. In the compromise - or symptom - both intentions have found a means

for partial expression. In other words, there are two forces at work in the manifest dream: both the wish and the repression of the wish. An adequate reading of the manifest dream will therefore make both the repression and the repressed visible.

For Freud, the key to everything in this regard was that a forbidden wish was in search of fulfilment. Freud himself had a long period of doubt about this "wish-fulfilment hypothesis". In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he wrote about dreams being "disguised fulfilments of a repressed wish." Later, in *New Introductory Lectures* (1932), he described dreams as being an **attempt** at wish fulfilment. Later, still, as a result of one of his own dreams, he would tell Ferenczi that dreams were, indeed, wish-fulfilments, **in spite of everything**. The doubt remained, but so did the wish-fulfilment hypothesis. Nevertheless, the wish-fulfilment hypothesis as an explanation for all of our dreams proved difficult to maintain in view of the many anxiety, panic (nightmares), and traumatic dreams that people experienced. The distinction between mental process disorders and conflicting mental representations can help us further.

Dream work

Two separate things happen during dreams: the creation of the dream thoughts (the latent dream) and the conversion of those thoughts into the dream content (the manifest dream). The latent dream is what Freud referred to as the "real" dream and it was, in fact, the crux of the matter. That was so threatening, however, that it would frighten the dreamer awake. Which is why the dream work (an activity of the Ego), had to convert the dream thought into the dream content that would be remembered later. That made it possible for the dreamer to continue to sleep. In other words: "the dream is the guardian of sleep". The dream creates itself around a "day residue" (an event that had been experienced recently); during the dream, the day rest is linked with a forbidden infantile wish.

Freud identified a number of mechanisms in the dream work:

1. the **transfer** of psychic intensity: in the dream, the accents can be moved, so that things that appear important at a later stage were not important previously. The most important element is not always given the pride of place during the dream itself.

2. the **condensation** of the components of the dream thought: dreams are not subject to laws of place and time. Multiple people can coalesce into a single individual or, conversely, aspects of a single individual can be expressed in several persons. It is also possible for aspects from different periods from the history of a single person to be linked together at a single point in time.
3. The contents of dreams are expressed in **visual images**.
4. **secondary elaboration**: making something acceptable that was not acceptable in its original form. That makes the dream into a continuous, coherent, and acceptable whole.

Dreamed dream versus the Dream which is told to us

It is good to be aware that we are never dealing directly with a dreamed dream in treatment; we are always dealing with the "related dream", the dream which is told to us by the one who was dreaming the dream. The dreamed dream is never directly accessible in a derived sense. The related dream is conscious; its meaning is unconscious. It is a good idea to observe how someone relates his or her dream during treatment. That might be extremely global or extremely detailed. Some people relate their dreams and provide their own interpretation immediately while others wait for the therapist to provide the comprehensive interpretation after the dream has been told. For some people, relating their dream is more an expression of resistance to surrendering to the psychoanalytic process; for others, it is an acknowledgement of how much they are willing to entrust themselves to that process. Regardless, the dream is being told to the therapist by the dreamer. And he or she is doing it right now...not yesterday and not tomorrow. The dreamer will have a specific reason for doing it, even though that may not be immediately clear even to the dreamer. The related dream has a communicative meaning in the context of the treatment at a specific point in time. Both the related dream and the dreamed dream are creations of the dreamer and the elements of both have meaning and in which there are no accidents.

Dreams, transference and the nature of the therapeutic relationship

The above does not mean, however, that the ultimate meaning of the dream has to be understood within the current transference and countertransference constellation. It matters whether the therapist is working from an interpersonal or intrapsychic

perspective. It is important whether the treatment is focusing on dealing with mutually conflicting mental representations or aims at reactivating a development that has become stuck, as is the case with mental process disorders. Interpreting dreams is not about looking for underlying meaning outside the therapeutic relationship. That also means that the process of interpreting dreams does not have a specific end point; it runs parallel to the development of the patient and the treatment. There is no ultimate, all-encompassing interpretation of a dream. The question that must be asked is about the nature of the therapeutic relationship at that specific point in time in the therapy. Is the therapist primarily viewed as a transference figure, or more as a 'development object'? Or, at the end of the treatment, has the therapist been seen increasingly as a real object? Those are all questions that are important in how one should approach dreams during the therapy. Regardless of all of the above, the fact remains that the dream does not give access to the underlying objective reality of early childhood. That reality has been lost for good and is no longer knowable. The dream, too, is about the inner, psychological reality of the patient. As is the case with everything that takes place in psychotherapeutic treatment, there are three aspects to processing dreams: 1) the present time outside the treatment setting; 2) the past; and 3) the present time in the treatment setting (the therapeutic relationship). In all three cases, the important aspect is not the facts but the perception of the facts.

The Dream is food for thought

To paraphrase a well-known quote from P. Ricoeur about symbols: "The Dream gives food for thought." At several different levels. In the first place, it's not about secondary-process thinking, i.e. rational thought, but more about primary-process thinking, where thinking and feeling are even more intertwined. That implies that elaborating a dream is a process that requires a certain degree of regression. At the end of this book, it will have become clear that entering into such a regressive process is sometimes desirable. And sometimes it is not. In addition, the dream is also "Suspect". Dreams are about conflict, which means that they are simultaneously about both concealment and revelation. The dream has the intention of making a compromise that will mislead the Ego, i.e. the dreamer. That compromise will be successful to greater or lesser degrees, thereby causing anxiety to commensurately greater or lesser degrees. And, finally, the dream provides food for thought in the

sense that it generates meanings by means of associations close to the primary process that illuminate what is going on in the emotional inner life of the dreamer at that point in time. This does not mean the discovery of fixed meanings that have already been secreted in the deepest basements of our unconscious, but meanings or intentions that are developing in the here and now of this specific therapeutic relationship. Rather like waves creating shapes in the sand as they strike the beach and that are immediately erased by the following waves, leading to the creation of yet different shapes.

Dream research

For Freud the dream is the guardian of sleep. Research showed that dreaming is related to basic symbolizing functions in the brain, and that dreams had a psychological meaning. (Solms 1995). Solms concluded (1999) also that the border between waking and sleep was not quite as sharp as some would have us believe. And that "there is sufficient evidence to believe that, during sleep, there is an ongoing process of thinking that develops into dreaming under different physiological conditions, of which REM is but one of many." According to Solms and Turnbull (2002), there remains little scientific evidence for specific intentions that explain the distortions between the manifest and the latent dream. Fiss (2000) believes that dreams are multifunctional and that dream analysis has less to do with translating manifest dream content into latent dream thought than it does with further expanding and creating meaning. The dream might have something to do with wish fulfilment, but it could just as well be the continuation of a specific thought process. That puts a different perspective not only on the wish-fulfilment hypothesis, but also on the concept of 'dream work'.

While it may be true that some of our patients are dreaming, they are incapable of making any associations to the dreams, even though the dreams are extremely clear and concrete. It may, in fact, be the case that the distinction between the dream and events from waking life becomes less clear. Perelberg (2000) shows that dreams of psychotics and patients with a borderline personality disorder are attempts at symbolising or processing emotional states that have thus far been unbearable and to transform them into images that can be borne.

Today, we would say that a distinction is being made in dreams between mentalised and non-mentalised dreams. In Freud's terms, the ability to dream supposes the possession of the symbolising function of language, which is not the case in people with mental process disorders.

In his research into nightmares and traumas, Schreuder (2003) makes a distinction between rigid nightmares, in which traumatic events are simply repeated — the repetition being used to acquire control over the event — and nightmares where new elements are added to the original trauma. There comes place for remembering and thinking is there again. In the rigid form of nightmares, almost no dream work takes place; the traumatic event is simply repeated and it remains isolated by virtue of the fact that it is not being symbolised. Dreaming which is only a repetition does not create thinking or meaning. In addition, dreams can also serve as repeated attempts to integrate experiences that have not (yet) been integrated but are still splitted off. The interpretation of the dream is therefore not only about the interpretation of latent contents any longer, but more about the construction of meaning within a specific context.

In general, we can distinction between two types of dreams: mentalised and non-mentalised dreams. Dreams that have been mentalised transform the emotional experience into an idea (M. Hebbrecht (2007). That involves dream work and possibly wish-fulfilment. That is much less so in non-mentalised dreams. They are concerned with affective experiences that cannot (yet) be dealt with adequately. The dreamer wants to lose what cannot be coped with. This concerns experiences that — in Bion's terms — cannot be dealt with adequately and cannot (yet) be integrated, leaving them present in the person in an isolated state. The distinction between waking and sleeping, between reality and dream, becomes unclear in non-mentalised dreams. It is not (yet) possible to make a distinction between the inner and the outer world. In that case, the dream becomes a direct and, in fact, the only form of communication. Mentalised dreams are much more the creation of the patient. There is a clear distinction between interior and exterior, between waking and dreaming. In both cases, the dreams have a communicative function in the therapeutic relationship; dreams have a message.

It should be noted, however, that the quality of the dream (mentalised or non-mentalised) is not only related to the type of pathology, but equally to the level of development of the patient. When my daughter was very young, for example, I remember that she would occasionally wake up crying from a nightmare. When I asked her what was wrong, she said that she had dreamed of a big, bad wolf who had tried to eat her. I suggested that the two of us go together to catch the wolf, to put it into a bag and to throw it out the window. And we did. After that, she went back to sleep peacefully. If I had made the same suggestion a year later, she would have told me to stop being so stupid...it was only a dream, scary, true, but just a dream, nonetheless.

Conclusion

A great deal of criticism of Freud's dream theory has been published over the past century. The sharp distinction between a manifest and a latent dream was abandoned years ago, and the archaeological metaphor has long since been rejected. Psychoanalysis has evolved from a one-person to a two-person psychology, with thought within psychoanalysis having become much more relational. It has long since ceased to be about retrieving the deep-secreted meaning of a dream and has become much more about the communicative and relational meaning of the dream. Along the way, the focus has shifted from the contents of the dream to the dreamer himself or herself. The definition of a dream as being purely wish-fulfilment has proven difficult to maintain in face of the many anxiety and panic dreams reported by our patients. An additional question is the matter of how it would be possible for people with a temporarily or chronically disturbed ability to mentalise to dream in the way that Freud proposed. What is the function of dreams? For Freud, dreams were the guardian of sleep. In his wonderful book about dreams, Stroeken (2005) discusses the theory of Crick and Mitchison (1983), who postulated the "dreaming as forgetting" hypothesis. Such a hypothesis goes a long way to explaining the dreams of non-mentalising patients. Brain activity during REM sleep serves to delete useless information and free up memory for receiving new impressions. Stroeken then points out that, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud cites the dream theory of W. Robert, which is identical to the theory of Crick and Mitchison, with Robert seeing dreaming "as a physical process of elimination which in its psychic reaction reaches the consciousness." [...] "A man deprived of the capacity for dreaming would in time

become mentally unbalanced, because an immense number of unfinished and unsolved thoughts and superficial impressions would accumulate in his brain, under the pressure of which all that should be incorporated in the memory as a completed whole would be stifled." [...] Dreams possess a healing and unburdening power ." (Freud (1900). p. 123/4).

The second part of this lecture is devoted to the contents of dreams, and specifically to a particular type of dream, the "dream within a dream", a structure that can be compared to a so-called 'frame story' or a story-in-a-story.

Dream within a dream

One of the characteristics of dreams is that, usually, the dreamer is unaware that he or she is dreaming; in a 'dream within a dream', however, the dreamer is aware of that fact. There seems to be a need to carry out a specific manoeuvre in the dream, which then gives the "dream within a dream" a specific meaning. Freud (1900 p. 406) believed that the intention of the "dream within the dream" was the depreciation of the importance of what was being dreamed. Whatever has been presented in the "dream within the dream" should be denied. In fact, the dreamer contends that:

"[o]f course, it is only a dream". Freud goes further, and writes: *"It may therefore be assumed that the part dreamed contains the representation of the reality, the real memory, while, on the other hand, the continued dream contains the representation of what the dreamer merely wishes. The inclusion of a certain content in a dream within a dream is, therefore, equivalent to the wish that what has been characterized as a dream had never occurred. In other words: when a particular incident is represented by the dream-work in a dream, it signifies the strongest confirmation of the reality of this incident."*

That implies that the dream within the dream represents reality, a reality that must then subsequently be repudiated. The reality as proposed in the "dream within the dream" usually has to do with the past; it is apparently such an unpleasant reality that it has to be repudiated. Such a repudiation constitutes a breach with the past. The "dream within a dream" does not always have to be about reality. It could be a reflection of a forbidden wish from the past (Kligerman (1962)). Whichever is the case,

the matter at hand is to minimise the significance of the wish or the event from the past (Hendrick (1958); Moore (1960); Altman (1975)). In addition, it is also important to recognise that associations with elements from the "dream within the dream" can lead to latent underlying thoughts, which, in turn, can also reflect real events from the life of the patient or the dreamer. Quite often, that relates to events that are essential for understanding the pathology of the patient (Silber (1983)).

Gutheil (1951) warns that the intention of the "dream within the dream" could be to mislead the other party, i.e. the analyst, and that it is not the content of such dreams, but rather the process and the motive for constructing or dreaming such dreams that are the important aspects. That would then deserve to be the subject of analysis. For Gutheil, the contents are not the primary considerations, the form or the process and the intention behind it are. Wilder (1956) describes a very special form of the "dream within the dream", namely, the form in which the "dream within the dream" is analysed in an encompassing dream. In that case, one should almost be inclined to speak of a DIY or self-help analysis. In fact, however, it often happens in such cases that the underlying motive is to mislead the analyst rather than to present matters as they truly are. With this contention, Wilder points out the transference aspects of such dreams. There is something else again, however, that he wants to emphasise, which is that the form of the "dream within the dream" constitutes a type of inner differentiation within the self, and between the self and the Other. We shall return to this idea later. "Dreams within the dream" are not all that common, but when they happen to someone, they are often a frequent part of the dream history (Allen (1974)). Patients who experience them frequently often exhibit serious pathology and intensive forms of resistance. Silber (1983) shows that the Ego uses "dreams within the dream" to protect itself from the intense anxiety to become overwhelmed by the affects. That would be the secondary processing, by which the Ego is trying to maintain the management or regulation of such intense affects by creating the "dream within the dream" so that the dreamer can continue to sleep. When the patient relates the dream to his therapist, the latter is felt to be an ally of the Ego of the dreamer who had experienced the dream. Silber (1983) proposes a more growth-oriented and less regressive approach to such dreams.

Ferenczi (1913) and many others after him (*inter alia* Lewin (1953); Kanzer (1955); Bergmann (1966)) often analyse patient dreams on the basis of their communicative significance. The "dream within the dream" strives simultaneously to draw attention to itself and to misdirect the attention and minimise its significance. This all takes place within the therapeutic treatment relationship, and it is within that relationship that the meaning of the dream, and therefore also of the "dream within the dream" should be found. Lipschitz (1990) points out that the literature of the "dream within the dream" places the greatest emphasis on the repudiating and regressive aspects of such dreams. I believe that he is correct in this observation, but that applies to the literature on dreaming generally from a psychoanalytical perspective. The much more important matter is the description of dreams as a compromise and therefore as a rejection formation and less about the dream as an expression of creativity and emotional growth. In that regard, Lipschitz joins Wilder when he shows that, in the case of the "dream within the dream", an inner mental layering is introduced, or more aptly, created: a distinction between waking and dreaming, between reality and dreams or fantasies. That is a distinction that apparently needs to manifest itself within the safety of the dream as divorced from the reality of the treatment. Lipschitz sees the "dream within the dream" as a transitional space that the patient needs to be able to develop in a situation in which the therapeutic relationship itself cannot (or not yet) be experienced as a safe setting in which the therapist can be viewed as a new primary object that can reflect the wishes and needs of the patient adequately, and by so doing, facilitate the patient in his development to a more coherent self. Looking at the "dream within the dream" in this way means that it is about restaging the primary attachment relationship with a caring and contained object within this specific dream construction in a way that is safer than would be the case within the therapeutic relationship itself. In Fonagy's terms, one could say that, in such a situation, the patient uses the "dream within the dream" to create a situation that is comparable to the "as if" modus that is necessary as an intermediate step on the route to relative functioning. Preventing a "dream within the dream" then refers to a situation where relative functioning is not created in an adequate way due to the failure of adequate mirroring. The "dream within the dream" can therefore be seen as an expression of a progressive development on the way to a more reflective level of functioning and not as an expression of a defensive and regressive process. We shall now examine several "dreams within the dream" in detail.

Sarah's dreaming

The treatment of Sarah was characterised by a process that was intended to get a stagnated development going again. When she first began treatment, Sarah was a single woman early in her 30s. She came to therapy with serious relational and identity problems. She had grown up as the middle child in a family of 3 children; she had an older sister above her and a younger brother below her. She actually should not have been born at all; her mother only wanted children because she wanted a son. Father and mother had both been traumatised by the war. Mother because she had been in a German concentration camp and father because of traumatic experiences in the resistance. In addition, the father had been raised in a National-Socialist Movement (NSB) family. The war was an extremely dominant feature of Sarah's life. There was virtually no room for the children to develop their own lives. Both parents were so traumatised that there was virtually no adequate mirroring whatsoever. Sarah's treatment began with a frequency of once per week. After a year, that was increased to a frequency of 5 times per week. After approximately half a year in therapy, Sarah began presenting what would become a series of 4 "dreams within the dream" over a period of a year. Sarah also presented many other dreams besides the "dreams within the dream". Now we will present and discuss the "dreams within the dream"

First Dream

- *"I had a strange dream. It was a bit confusing. A dream within a dream. I dreamed that you were lying in bed next to me and I told you what I would tell the director, because I realised that there were risks involved. But you were already sleeping, but I still felt very strong because you were there. I fell asleep and someone here in the administration asked if you knew someone with a certain name. It was my name. You said, not really, I can't quite recall. It made me feel somewhat numb. In my dream, it made me think of a boyfriend I used to have. He used me for keeping house and he had another girlfriend that he confided in. I realised that that numb feeling was the same feeling I had with my boyfriend...so abandoned and numb."*

When Sarah woke up, her thoughts turned to her father and to her sister, who was her father's favourite. Both her father and her boyfriend had someone else to do the things they really liked doing with. And Sarah thinks that there is no place for her in the real life of her analyst, either. She knows that ours is a professional relationship, but "knowing" that has consequences for how she "feels" about that. With regard to the dream, we discussed that Sarah wishes to have an intimate relationship with her analyst, but that such intimacy is also very threatening; although her analyst was lying in bed with her, only his head was visible. That is how Sarah regulates distance and intimacy in a way that is acceptable for her. The fact that Sarah starts to analyse her "dream in the dream" in the encapsulating dream can be seen as the wish to do the analysis herself out of fear of losing control of everything that is going to come out. And also as her need for someone who is present as a kind of 'container', who mirrors what is going on in her life, who gives meaning to those things. It reminds Sarah of what her mother did not allow her to do — swimming and phys-ed — and how she used to ask the other children in her class about what exercises they had done. She would do them herself in her mind's eye when she was in bed at night. Night after night. Years later, when she had moved out of the family home, Sarah began doing things that she had not been allowed to do. She swam a great deal and she became good at gymnastics. She also wants to do the analysis in the same way, first in her mind's eye — a kind of poolside swimming, as it were — and then with the analyst. In short, life and the analysis are first experienced in the "as if" mode as a lead-up to the real analysis and the real life in the reflective mode. Some time later, Sarah returned to the "dream within the dream", adding that, when she went home that evening, she remembered that on one occasion, when it was time for a parent-teacher conference at her school, her father went to her sister's school by mistake, mistakenly thinking that it was a parent-teacher conference for the sister. When that school was locked, he came home. He didn't know which school Sarah attended or where it was. She had the feeling that there was no place for her in her father's inner life. She is afraid that there will not be room for her in the inner life of her analyst, either. "Knowing the name" is therefore very important to her. In a roundabout way, she learned her therapist's given name. She cherishes that information as a precious gem. It is very difficult for her to say it out loud because she is afraid that by saying it, she will lose it. The theme comes up again later in the analysis, when the incident of her father's name being scratched off his gravestone is being discussed. You are well and truly

dead when your name is gone and forgotten. The issue at that time was that the burial rights were expiring and her brother wanted to use the gravestone to make a kind of mobile artwork in his yard. Sarah was upset and purchased the burial rights so that the grave could remain intact in the external reality and her father could remain alive in her interior life. Although the story of the scratching out of her father's name and the "conversion" of his gravestone into a "work of art" in the yard is somewhat bizarre, it also shows how Sarah still needed the support of the external reality to be able to hold onto an inner reality.

Second Dream

- *"I was in hospital. I had been attacked by someone with a knife. You came to visit me. My co-workers wanted to visit, too, but I didn't want them to. When you were there, I wanted to hide under your jacket. I would have been small enough. Then I realised that that would have been stupid. I had to ask whether I would have to go back on the waiting list when I came out of hospital; that made me feel very bad. Suddenly, you were a mannequin, and then yourself again, and then my brother, the doctors, my father, then my past boyfriends, and there were a large number of medical instruments, instruments of torture. It made me very angry. I attacked the mannequin with a knife, except when it was you or my brother. I then fell asleep in the dream and I dreamed that I was walking in a desert. I was very alone. I saw a bush and when I got closer, I saw that it was a cactus with sharp points. I thought: people whom I want to touch me don't, and others do it violently. I woke up in the dream with a desperate feeling of a great deal of hate; the images of the mannequin and my father remained. I wanted to sew it up again. I felt enormous fear but I would still do it again."*

The relationship between intimacy, contact and violence, breaking things, can be discussed, along with the fact that Sarah was very frightened by the intensity of her murderous anger towards her father. We then discussed how the "dream within the dream" was a reaction to the vacation of her analyst, which had just ended. In the period immediately prior to the vacation break, Sarah had had several dreams in which her analyst touched her while she lay tied up naked under a black sheet in a

hospital bed. Her body suddenly changed from that of a child into the body of a woman and the belts that had held her bound had disappeared. Sarah was able to express that in the analysis, and because of it, she was coming alive as a woman. She was developing both literally and figuratively. She experienced the vacation break that followed shortly after as a major rejection and it made her very angry. She needed her analyst to constantly be in the background and keep an eye on her growth. At the moment, Sarah had fantasies of her therapist dying in an accident and never coming back. It was possible, though difficult, to discuss that fantasy as a projection of her aggressive fantasies towards her analyst. The associations from the "dream within the dream" further showed that Sarah really missed her analyst during the vacation and that she regularly went into the city in the hope of running into him. She did, in fact, see him on one such occasion and wanted to speak to him but was afraid to, so she hid so that he could not see her. Some time later, Sarah dreamed that her analyst was making love with her very tenderly but that suddenly the tenderness disappeared and he raped her violently. After having related that, Sarah was embarrassed about having dreamed something so aggressive about someone whom she likes so much. We discussed how unsafe Sarah felt and how the realisation that things could also turn out differently than they had in the past or how she thought they would turn out was a source of anxiety for her. It is almost unimaginable for her that there are people who want only the best for her and she started to realise that it would be very difficult for her to recognise it if such an event occurred. Later in the analysis, Sarah returned to this dream once more when she dreamed that she was alone in her room with her boyfriend and just at the point when they were about to have intercourse, her mother entered the room angrily and sent her boyfriend away. At that moment, it was possible not only to discuss how intensely mother and daughter were tied together, but also how Sarah needed her mother to regulate her fear of intimacy. Mother then becomes the 'no', the fear and the prohibition, so that Sarah herself can represent the 'yes', the wish and the desire.

Third Dream

- *"I dreamed my old childhood dream again about those stairs and about men under my bed, just like a dream inside my dream, I lost it.... In my dream, Saskia (daughter of a friend who was staying over with Sarah) came to tell me*

my old dream. She got out of bed to see if I was still there and she used the dream as an excuse to do that... Strange, it was just like it wasn't a dream, but more like a memory in the form of a dream"

The old childhood dream that Sarah is referring to is a frightening childhood dream that she has had many times before. She dreamed that she was falling down the stairs, she tried to grab onto the handrail, but there wasn't one. She continued to fall, trying to scream, but unable to make any sound. Sarah related that dream the first time during the first hour of analysis. It is noteworthy in the third dream that Sarah herself says that the "dream within the dream" is about a memory in the form of a dream. Reflecting on the "dream in the dream" makes her very frightened. We discuss that having a "dream within a dream" is an extra level of security that she needs to keep something that is very threatening at a distance.

Sarah brought the dream up again two weeks later. She related that she once had a dream that her father and mother were away and she woke up very frightened, not knowing whether she was in a dream or the real world. She then went to her parents' bedroom and saw her father lying on top of her mother and moving up and down. She thought that her father was trying to murder her mother. Sarah stayed transfixed in the doorway and she ran away only when her father saw her and she fell down the stairs in panic. She tried to grab onto the handrail, but there wasn't one. She continued to fall and wanted to scream but was unable to make any sound. Her father was standing at the top of the stairs and yelling that he was going to do all kinds of things to her. Then, without checking whether Sarah had injured herself, he went back to the bedroom, where her mother was screaming that Sarah should be ashamed of what she had seen. In the next hour, Sarah related why she thought that her father was trying to murder her mother. Sometime before, Sarah had witnessed a bad argument between her parents during dinner. Her father threw her mother against the wall and began moving up and down on her in the same way as when she went into her parents' bedroom, and he was choking her and yelling that he couldn't live with her any more. Sarah jumped between them and kicked her father until he let her mother go and walked away. Without saying anything else, her father left the house and stayed away for a couple of days. He then returned but didn't say anything more about it. Sarah thinks that her father was with a girlfriend during the days he was

away. That girlfriend had a calming influence on him. Sarah says that the family knew that her father had a girlfriend and that they may have seen her at her father's funeral. Relating those events is very emotional for Sarah and she wants to go away or to sit up. She would most like to wrap herself up nice and warm, very safe, like she used to do when she went to the beach on her own. Much later in the analysis, Sarah returned to what was going on when the incident above was being discussed. She wondered, embarrassed, whether she was linking two different things that had nothing to do with one another. First, the fact that she had "caught" her father and mother having sex with each other and second, the event when her father was choking her mother. That gives room to consider the possibility that when her father and mother were screaming when Sarah fell down the stairs, it could have been because they had been frightened by the fact that Sarah was falling rather than because they were angry. That would mean that their yelling had an element of "care" in it.

Fourth Dream

- *"I had a strange dream. We were sleeping with a group of co-workers on the floor in a large, dark building. You were in charge. We were lying on mattresses. I was a teenager. You left and the others did, too. Then I was as old as I am now. I didn't want to be alone and I went to lie down outside. A car came and wanted to park where I was lying. I jumped up and put my back to a wall and stopped the car with my feet. The man was furious that I had so much strength. I fell asleep and dreamed that I was having a nightmare. And then you were there again. The strange thing is that I forgot the "dream within the dream" even though I ultimately really woke up in a cold sweat because of it. When I woke up in the dream, my first thought was "he's not there." When it turned out you were there, everything was all right and I really woke up."*

When her analyst asked about associations with the nightmares, Sarah said: *"I felt panic and despair. I think that I was afraid that you would not come back but that wasn't all. I wanted very badly to be small and was unable to be independent and adult, but I had to be, especially if you didn't come back. There had to be somebody. I was really afraid that you wouldn't come back."* We were able to discuss the fact that

Sarah felt very vulnerable and unprotected because so much had been revealed during her growth in analysis, even though her analyst is only there for ¾ hour per day, and not at all in the weekend. That is why separations in the analysis cause so much panic in Sarah. Now that she is growing so much, she needs to have an adult present. She is no longer willing to surrender her place. She has a place that she is entitled to and will not get out of the way. At the same time, the fact that she is growing into "being someone" makes her so fearful that she has to retreat into a "dream within a dream" to be able to deal with the overwhelming anxiety.

In the next hour, Sarah said that the man in the car was her father and that, when she woke up from the dream, she had to cry and laugh simultaneously. *"At that moment, you were exactly between my father and yourself in the dream. I was sad that I didn't let my father drive over me and that, when he couldn't, he simply walked away, ignoring me completely. That made me tough inside. I wanted to stay that way, but I couldn't. It was a battle inside me that I could only give up if you were there."* It became clear that Sarah needed someone in her life who 'saw' her with a loving and encouraging look. That is what she missed in her father. She wanted him to have seen her as a girl and later a young woman with her own life and her own inner wishes and desires. We discussed the fact that Sarah would like to be small but that she is afraid to because her analyst is not always present as an encompassing protective shield and she panics and gets angry because her analyst is not there for her in the way that she would like, especially now when such a large amount of fear and aggression are coming out now that she is growing. At the same time, feeling like the woman at the age she is now is also very threatening because then other even more complicated feelings will come up, especially very intimate feelings that can arise between men and women.

The big dark building made Sarah think of a dream she had had previously which was about her intense resistance because of fear of surrendering to the analysis and her analyst. It was possible to discuss the wish to be able to do the analysis on her own terms when discussing the previous dream.

Conclusion

Because so much had not gone well with respect to adequate mirroring in Sarah's development, for understandable reasons, it was difficult for her to feel an adequate distinction between fantasy and reality, between what happened in the therapeutic relationship and the reality outside the analysis. That is why she needed the dream and, during a particular phase of the therapy, a "dream within the dream" to create a kind of transitional space, an "as if" situation to be able to make the developmental step to the reflective mode. She seldom referred to dreaming as a kind of resistance. It was always placed in the context of growth and development. From growth to a more psychological self and a higher degree of autonomy.

It was only because she was able to use her therapist as a developmental object and that he allowed himself to be used in that way that the therapeutic relationship could be discussed as a transference relationship and she could ultimately leave her analyst, and therefore the analysis itself, as an autonomous woman. In the discussions of Sarah's dreams, a great deal of what has been described in the literature about dreams and the "dream within the dream" has been discussed.