

FREUD'S USE OF INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS IN HIS WORK WITH PATIENTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE "FRAGMENT OF AN ANALYSIS OF A CASE OF HYSTERIA" (DORA) AND THE "HISTORY OF AN INFANTILE NEUROSIS" (WOLF MAN).

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*"Life is Dream
And Dream, dreams they are."*

Calderon de la Barca,

INTRODUCTION

According to Freud, dreams are the "*royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind*" (Freud, 1900: 769). In fact, the study of dreams is one of the foundations upon which his psychoanalytic theory is grounded. From the neuro-psychological point of view, the process of dreaming acts as a "guardian" of sleep, thus, by dreaming we are protecting ourselves from psychic stimuli that could perturb our rest. From the dynamic point of view, the energy coming from the unconscious attaches itself to some outside world representations (symbols) and so finds a way out. The most general definition of dreams is "*a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish*" (Freud, 1900:196). This statement introduces the main explanation found under the economic point of view: Dreams allow a relative equilibrium in the pleasure principle ensuring that unconscious forces do not trespass the limits set by the censorship, and therefore provide the fulfilment of an unconscious wish in a disguised way. These wishes belong, topographically to the unconscious, and so, they proceed under the laws of what Freud calls "the primary process" (Freud, 1900:745-769)¹.

The primary process belongs to a primitive state of the mind related to infancy: "*Dreaming is a piece of infantile mental life that has been superseded*" (Freud, 1900:705). Aside from this, dreaming gives us infinite tools to explain other phenomena of mental life such as narcissism, the world of internal objects, an internal experience of fantasies, memories, and a bond in the psychoanalytic experience between analyst and patient through transference. Dreams can also be a way of repeating difficult experiences (as a manifestation of the death instinct) in a response to a trauma as Freud stated twenty years after the publishing of his "Interpretation of Dreams" (Freud,1920). From the perspective of psychopathology, dreams function in a similar way to neurotic symptoms and they are a defence against psychosis as each night a normal person "unloads" contents which might otherwise burst.

According to Freud, dreams are structured in relation to two contents: the latent content and the manifest content. The former makes reference to the thoughts that constitute the unconscious wish and the latter to what is remembered, what is reported, when telling a dream. By interpreting dreams, Freud aim was to find the latent content behind the manifest one. Without the latent content there couldn't be dream work and without the manifest content there wouldn't be the possibility of its representation. From all the experiences and perceptions that occur during waking life, the unconscious chooses some of them to represent its wishes, these are called the day's residues. Therefore mental life goes on whilst sleeping, just as dream work doesn't stop during waking life.

Most of the clinical cases Freud treated, studied and analysed were conquered by the interpretation of dreams. Some of them helped him to understand the dynamics of the unconscious, others helped him to formulate theories on neurosis and sexuality, a number gave him the ground to understand transference, and several cases to define the end of an analytic relationship. In this paper, I will explain the development of Freud's thesis on dream interpretation through two of his most poignant cases: Dora and the Wolfman. Separated by fourteen years, these cases portrait quite in distinctive ways, the hypothesis and resolutions of dream interpretation, how they were brought to life under the veil of the analytic relationship, and how played a prominent role in Freud's master works.

DORA, THE JEWEL CASE AND A STORY WITH NO END

In October 1900 Freud accepted as a patient a young woman, who was named Dora. She attended sessions for around two months. The symptoms she was experiencing at the time were generally physical, and that made her (not only) famous in the theory of dream, but also interpretation but in the research on hysteria. She complained about migraine, loss of voice and a nervous cough. Freud noted also the presence of depression alternated with irrational hostility. Freud focused his hypothesis of the case in two main dreams Dora reported; he thought that her symptoms were fantasies, which signified unresolved sexual situations in her unconscious. As the symptoms of hysteria, the dreams were expressions of these internal conflicts. The scene that was behind the curtain of consciousness was the forbidden love she felt towards a man (a family friend) that resembled in age to her father. These complex feelings were all varnished with sexuality, which made the clinical picture quite challenging.. The first of these dreams, which was recurrent several nights before and during the analysis was told to Freud as follows:

¹ These distinctive laws are a-temporality, lack of the sense of contradictions, massive displacement of psychic energy, significant condensation of psychic energy and a predominance of visual perceptions.

“A house was on fire. My father was standing beside my bed and woke me up. I dressed quickly. Mother wanted to stop and save her jewel-case; but Father said: ‘I refuse to let myself and my two children be burnt for the sake of a jewel case.’ We hurried down stairs, and as soon as I was outside, I woke up.” (Freud, 1905[1901]: 99).

At first, what most interested Freud was *the cause* for the recurrence of the dream. Dora remembered the dream for the first time after an attempted seduction by Herr K., the man she was unconsciously devoted to. According to Freud, the dream was a “*reaction to this experience*” (Freud, 1901:101). The dream had (therefore) a meaning, a latent content belonging to a repressed wish, which was being disguised by the anecdote of the jewel case and the fire.

A decisive point in the development of these interpretations was the use of symbolism, “*according to which there are certain invariants in dream representations so that certain basic thoughts or preoccupations find a regular form of expression*” (Wollheim, 1979:72)². Following his theory of dreams as wish fulfillment, Freud connected Dora’s dream with some events involving significant people in her emotional life, and with the use of universal symbols to describe the intensity and quality of the relationships.³ As a container, a box, the jewel-case represented Dora’s genital organs. This “jewel case” must be saved in the dream and a fire has threatened it. Dora’s father is trying to save her, but the latent content of the dream proves quite the opposite.

In this context, Freud describes one of the main features of dream work: displacement. This phenomenon shows how a thought can give another one all its cathexis, and as a result (in the latent content) there could be an omission, a change or a transformation into its opposite⁴. Freud made it clear to Dora: “*...in the dream you chose a situation which express the opposite, a danger from which your father is saving you*”. (Freud, 1901:106). This apparent contradiction is interpreted by Freud to Dora in terms of her father (in her unconscious) threatening her “jewel case”, seducing her, and at the same time shows the wish she has to give her father what her mother didn’t (sex).⁵ The dream had a connection with two events: one from the past where Dora wants to be seduced by her father as a child and one from the present where Dora wants to

These characteristics will be explored and developed in the course of the essay.

² An example is how parents are represented *universally* by queens, kings, bosses, teachers; the male genitalia is represented by sticks and phallic objects, and the female one with boxes, rooms, etc.

³ Explaining how dreams are interpreted on this line, Freud affirmed: “*The first of these procedures considers the content of the dream as a whole and seeks to replace it by another content which is intelligible and in certain respects analogous to the original one. This is ‘symbolic’ dream interpreting.*” (Freud, 1900: 170)

⁴ This concept describes the quantity of energy attached to an object or its representation. (Rycroft, 1968:19)

⁵ In the family history of Dora there is an evident proof that her father and her mother did not get well and did not have sexual life together.. It is also said that a couple of friends of her parents (The K’s) were very close to the family and the woman, Frau K. had an affair with Dora’s father. Herr K was in fact the man Dora was so fond of, and whose relationship created the whole scenario for her symptoms and her dreams.

be seduced by Herr K. In a way, the love for Herr K., seems to be a repetition of the primal love for her father: “*and it endeavors to re-shape the present on the model of the remote past*” (Freud, 1901:107).

Further on, Freud again uses symbolism as a tool for interpretation. He thinks that the fire is in fact a representation of water, moist and humidity. A translation in the connection with the jewel case comes as follows: “my jewel case is on fire-my genitals are on fire-my genitals are wet- I am sexually aroused”. For the purpose of recent events, Dora’s father stands for Herr K., who she wishes to stand by her bed, wakes her up and “makes her wet”. Here again is an example of displacement, where perceptions, sensations are replaced by their opposites and people are interchanged. “*The elements in the neighborhood of the wish fulfillment often have nothing to do with its meaning, but turn out to be derivatives of distressing thoughts that run contrary to the wish*”. (Freud, 1900:715)

Condensation was a second device developed by Freud’s interpretation of dreams. Whilst displacement involves a process where a thought gives away all its energy to another, in condensation, this thought appropriates all the energy coming from many different thoughts. Dora’s dream illustrates how her father in a dream represents himself, whilst Herr K. represents aspects of her mother and of Dora herself⁶. The fire, the house and the jewel case represent different scenes in one. The recurrence of the dream is the way condensation proves to be effective in repressing a wish that changed its structure over time, but remained the same in the manifest content.

Dora’s second dream is about walking along streets and squares, entering a house, finding a letter from her mother giving the news of her father’s death, and then escaping to an unreachable station through a forest, finally reaching her destination when everyone has already left to the burial. Freud thought this dream had a connection with her conflictual sexuality and the guilty feelings it aroused. Freud managed to pick up the day residues of each trace of the dream and connect the main issue around her father’s death with an actual revenge towards him after her affair with Frau K. Representation also plays an important role in this dream. To Freud representation in dreams are “*transpositions of thoughts into imagery*” (Freud 1900 in Garma, 1963:87) and this means the most abstract materials are introduced in the dream through the manifest content. All the descriptions, places and events that portrait this dream, represent imaginative conditions of thought.

This global account of Dora’s dreams and their interpretation informs us in a beautiful way where and how to understand the mystery of her unconscious wishes and the intricacy of her sexual experiences. But, as in literature, we wonder about the contemplation of the writer. Here we face another fascinating side of the

⁶ In relation to Dora’s mother Freud made the following link: “*The two groups of ideas met in this one thought: Mother got both things from her father: the sexual wetness and the dirtying discharge*”. (Freud, 1905[1901])

story: the narrator, the interpreter, the relationship between him and Dora, the consulting room, all the times when these stories were told. As Freud himself affirmed: *"The dream-thoughts behind it included a reference to my treatment, and it corresponded to a renewal of the old intention withdrawing from danger"*(Freud, 1901: 132). Freud was aware of the effect that the therapeutic relationship had in the process of dream interpretation, but the analysis had a premature ending and Freud talked about it in the postscript of the case. He thought transference was an *"inevitable necessity"* (Freud, 1901:158) which was present at all times.

Deepening the concept of transference as *"new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and fantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the process of the analysis"*(Freud, 1901:157), Freud realized that Dora was in fact, withdrawing from the unconscious feelings towards Freud, as an awakening of the forbidden feelings towards her father and Herr K. These were very early days -as Gay suggests-, to fully understand the role of transference in the analytic relationship; *"The emotional bond between analysand and analyst was only beginning to be understood when Freud worked with Dora"*. (Gay, 1988:253). This observation shows Freud's confronting transference feelings from Dora towards him and the countertransference experience from him on to her. In other words, Dora's dreams had another door to be opened remained closed. They could have possibly given Freud more clues on the master search of dream meaning and on the clinical construction of her case as a neurotic, a hysteric, the daughter of his friends, the protagonist of this story with no end.

THE SIESTA AT FIVE O'CLOCK AND THE VERY STILL WOLVES

The person whom Freud called the Wolfman was perhaps his *"most notable patient...and like Dora he supplied the master key to his neurosis in the form of a dream"*(Gay 1988:287). As a young man, he looked for Freud's help complaining from depression after contracting gonorrhea. This situation led him to depend on others and have difficult interpersonal relationships. The most fascinating enterprise that Freud engaged with seeing this man, was seeing the child he *no longer was*⁷. Freud worked for years around the early days of the Wolfman's childhood and devoted all the emerging tools of his theories to a dream this little boy had when he was four years old. This case is not only the panacea in the theory and technique of dream interpretation but it is also an essential guide in the comprehension of infantile neurosis and the impact of the primal scene in the psychic development of children.⁸

⁷ Freud thought that children's neuroses could be a very helpful instrument in the understanding of adult's neuroses and in the same way, children's dreams are essential with respect to adult's. (Freud, 1914)

⁸ By "primal scene" we understand the experience in reality or in fantasy that a child has of seeing or hearing his or her parents having sex.

The Wolfman was a disturbed child: “ *his early years were dominated by a severe neurotic disturbance, which began immediately after his fourth birthday as an anxiety hysteria (in the shape of an animal phobia), then changed into an obsession neurosis with a religious content...*” (Freud, 1914:234). This little boy had an intense fear of animals (especially wolves) and was also attracted by animals being beaten by other or to beat them himself. These fears were exploited by his sister who used to find pleasure in tormenting him by showing him an illustration of a fairy tale book (probably *The Seven Goats*) with a scary wolf standing still and looking attentive. His sister also seduced the Wolfman into sexual practices where he played the passive role of the victim. This seduction, together with some fantasies around body pieces coming off the body, made him very preoccupied about castration. From time to time, Wolfman had recurrent episodes of naughtiness and provocative behavior, explained by Freud as he was “*trying to force punishments and beatings out of his father, and in that way to obtain from him the masochistic sexual satisfaction that he desired*”. (Freud, 1914:257)

On a winter night, close to Christmas, the Wolfman had a dream. A dream that he happened to remember as adult and recounted several times during his analytic treatment with Freud. The anecdote of the dream was: the Wolfman lying on his bed at night and suddenly a window opens by itself. He is terrified to see some white wolves standing on the branches of a walnut tree. “*There were six or seven of them. The wolves were quite white...they had big tails as foxes and their ears pricked like dogs when they pay attention to something*” (Freud, 1914:259). Horrified with the idea of being eaten by them, he screamed and woke up. This apparently simple dream of a child took Freud many years to be understood and interpreted and all the theoretic tools he had available were deeply used. It opened a path through childhood memories and symptoms.

It was discovered by Freud that the instigating memory or day residue which pursued the production of the dream was a scene that took place, paradoxically, on a hot summer afternoon at five o'clock. The Wolfman (aged one year old), father and mother, are having a siesta. Wolfman wakes up and sees them copulating *more ferarum* (anal sex). Freud affirmed that the fundamental repressed wish that provoked the dream was that of a sexual satisfaction from his father (by an identification with his mother in the passive role) and the horror of its fulfillment. Thus, in turn, caused the massive repression to the unconscious⁹.

First of all, Freud saw a connection between the wolves in the fairy tale and the illustrations in the book his sister often showed him. It was accepted that there was a cultural and symbolic representation of the ‘bad wolves’ eating up the seven goats.¹⁰ This might have acted as day residue, but also as a very effective condensation of the Wolfman’s fears and wishes.¹¹

⁹ It is very interesting how Freud proved with this case that children can remember from these very early days.

¹⁰ Bruno Bettelheim (1976:41-43) suggests that in the tale of the Three Little Pigs (as in the seven goats), the wolf represents the badness and children use it unconsciously as a bridge to an externalization of their

The perfect stillness of the wolves and their attentive attitude, and the sense that this dream was actually happening, were issues which had a deep impression on the dreamer. The stillness was standing for the movement and the attentive looking for the experience of being looked. At this point, we are clearly seeing a process of representation and transposition where thoughts turn out to be images, and where the attributes of one object are displaced onto another. The movement is associated with the copulation of his parents and passivity with the role the Wolfman was wishing to pursue as the sexual object of his father. The posture of the wolves might have reminded him of his father's in the copulation scene. The only way for the Wolfman to be part of the scene was not having a tail (as opposed to the long tails of the wolves), in other words, by being castrated. Once again, transposition and contrary formation play a dual role: the dreamer's latent thought is clear: "I want to have sex with my Dad, but that will only happen if I am castrated and act as passively as Mum".

But why do all the elements of the dream appear to be distorted? Freud answered this question with another of his hypothetical construct: dreaming is the instrument used to guard oneself from waking up. Hence, censorship does not allow the contents of the dream to appear transparently and therefore all these transpositions, condensations, displacements, take place.¹²

But as with Dora, the story must have an observer, a connection between the stories told and the stories as lived. At this point in his theoretical development, Freud was not only aware of the transference, but also of the impact it has on the step-by-step process of dream interpretation. Freud not only thought of it, but also used it. He guided the Wolfman to create more and more associations over the years that allowed both to discover the "unreachable". The Wolfman saw many times in Freud another wolf sitting still and wanting to eat him up.¹³ These transference elements gave Freud the hints to uncover the mystery of this dream, not only as condensed elements of childhood scenes, but also as the patient's whole life and relationships. The dream (and the transference as a tool to its interpretation) gave the Wolfman the key to his unconscious, a name for the *very still wolves*.

own badness. In the case of Wolfman we'll see how it is not only this sado-masochist element present in the symbolization, but a profound identification with his father. Two universal symbols were also being employed: the high tree as a symbol of the omnipotence of seeing, and the seven wolves as an element of very well known fairy tales for children. These two elements helped Freud to set up a scenario for his main interpretation.

¹¹ We cannot forget that in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, a fantasy is at once a wish and a fear that mutually overlap. (Brainsky, 1988:56)

¹² "The Ego rationalizes, gives importance to what does not have it and creates truths in lies and lies on the most valuable elements" (Brainsky, 1985:118).

¹³ Peter Gay (1988) affirms in his Freud's biography, the confession from Freud to Ferenzi that Wolfman referred to his analyst as a "Jewish swindler, he would like to use me from behind and shit on my head" (Gay, 1988:287)

CONCLUSION

DORA AND WOLFMAN: FREUD FOURTEEN YEARS APART

Freud's theory of the interpretation of dreams evolved with the years and acquired different shape with every case. The fourteen years gap between Dora and the Wolfman suggests how dreams (in analytic theory and practice) started to belong not only to the patient but also to the relationship with the analyst. In this respect, we can consider some of the main differences between these two cases.

In the case of Dora, the dream was interpreted and almost immediately after being told. In the Wolfman, it took several years to discover the dream's latent content where there was a great deal of effort to recover the childhood experiences and to focus the whole scenario on the early years of the patient's life. The interpretation of Dora was focused in her present experiences and present wishes. In the Wolfman there was a clear use of transference and of the analytic relationship to assist the task of interpretation;¹⁴ Dora's transference on to Freud was evaded (although Freud was aware of it, and of the acting outs, in the analytic process).¹⁵ In the Wolfman, Freud allowed the patient to be more active and to freely associate with the manifest content; Dora was a much more passive patient and her analyst was very directive and almost imposing ideas on the interpretations. Finally, in Dora the aim of the treatment was to allow her to face the repressed fantasy with Herr.K. through the interpretation; its clinical findings point to hysterical symptoms belonging in adulthood other than childhood.¹⁶ In the Wolfman, the nodal point were the fantasies around the primal scene and the anal erotism, both having an origin in childhood.¹⁷ As we see, Wolfman's dream was interpreted back to more primitive stage of development than Dora's.

In both cases there is evidence of associations, absurd perceptions of time which shows the plasticity of the primary process, what Freud calls *the "hallucinatory experience of satisfaction"* (Freud 1900 in Nagera, 1969: 121). It is also evident that the reports of this dream, as well as the first one, show a prevalence of the visual perceptions, attributes belonging to the primitive and complex world of the unconscious.

¹⁴ In analytic technique this is called "extra-transferential interpretation"

¹⁵ The patient or the analyst acts out, when instead of thinking they engage in an activity that substitutes an unconscious thought or wish.

¹⁶ Even though it is suggested that Dora was an adult woman, from another point of view she might well have been experiencing the flourishing of adolescence.

¹⁷ It is deducible from there that three elements of this repressed wish were acting upon each other: the wish of being eaten, the wish of being beaten and the wish of being copulated.

Together these elements, directed Freud to formulate two different diagnoses: a case of hysteria and an infantile neurosis.

Most importantly, these contrasts show the evolution of analytic technique. We can't forget that when Freud gives the patient more control over his associations, he is preparing the ground not only to engage himself in transference but also in counter transference. All the emotional responses he could have had towards Dora, and towards the Wolfman, were surely creative elements in the interpretation of their dreams. For instance, we can't forget that Dora's case was a challenge and a critique of bourgeois morality and to the society of which Freud was part of. On the other hand, the analysis of the Wolfman was a long process for both analyst and patient where the former was dealing with his own professional career in the light of a recapitulation of fourteen years of hard work on dream interpretation ,and when the pieces of the puzzle would remarkably find their place.

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