

INNOVATIONS IN
TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS:
THEORY AND PRACTICE

ROUTLEDGE

Working with Dreams in Transactional Analysis

From Theory to Practice for Individuals and Groups

Anna Emanuela Tangolo and Francesca Vignozzi



WORKING WITH DREAMS IN TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

This unique book, incorporating both theory and practice, provides an invaluable guide to the assessment of dreams in transactional analysis (TA).

Grounded in the latest neuroscientific research, it offers both neophyte and experienced TA practitioners a pathway to incorporate a client's dreams within individual and group therapy, exploring key issues including trauma, dissociation and nightmares, dreams of change and transformation, dreams of healing, and transference and countertransference in dreams.

It will support therapists through the very first steps toward the analysis of more complex interpersonal dynamics and dream analysis in a group setting. Also discussing the direction of future research in the area, as well as an overview of an experiment on dream analysis during the recent pandemic, this will be key reading for anyone working in the field.

Anna Emanuela Tangolo, psychologist and psychotherapist, supervisor and transactional analysis teacher of the European Transactional Analysis Association (TSTA-P), is director and founder of the PerFormat school in Pisa, Genoa, and Catania. She has published *Psychodynamic Psychotherapy with Transactional Analysis*, and *Group Therapy in Transactional Analysis* with Anna Massi, both in Italian and English (Routledge), and directs the journal *Percorsi di Analisi Transazionale*, as well as the publishing series *Percorsi*.

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INNOVATIONS IN TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS:
THEORY AND PRACTICE

Series Editor: William F. Cornell

This book series is founded on the principle of the importance of open discussion, debate, critique, experimentation, and the integration of other models in fostering innovation in all the arenas of transactional analytic theory and practice: psychotherapy, counseling, education, organizational development, health care, and coaching. It will be a home for the work of established authors and new voices.

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ANALYSIS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE
FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

Anna Emanuela Tangolo and Francesca Vignozzi

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From Theory to Practice for Individuals
and Groups

*Anna Emanuela Tangolo
and Francesca Vignozzi*

Translation by Martina Del Romano

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TO OUR MOTHERS, FERNANDA AND PIERA
WHO DID SO MUCH TO STIMULATE
OUR IMAGINATION
AND OUR DREAMS



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From Anna Emanuela

Thanks again to Franco Bertozzi who listens, suggests, and advises my every literary and scientific production, always offering me a divergent and innovative point of view.

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They who are awake have a world in common amongst them; but they that are asleep are retired each to his own private world [...]

Heraclitus

FOREWORD

William F. Cornell

Series Editor

Without dreaming, our capacity to think, our inner worlds, become dreary, mechanical, detached from the realms of reverie and mystery. Without the capacity to think, our dreams may pass through us as meaningless flights of nighttime fancy or even grow into compelling, near-psychotic visions of one's self and the world. In many cultures throughout human history, dreams are seen as gifts of the spiritual realms, fodder (or perhaps warnings) for one's soul. In dreaming, we witness our night-time slippages into the world of fantasy, hope, and sometimes horror. Our dreams occupy liminal spaces within the realms of the desired, the forbidden, the conflicted, the psyche's emerging potentials. Contemporary models of dreaming do not limit the field of dreams to the night and sleep. As Ogden observes:

The frontier of dreaming, as I am conceiving it, is a psychological field of force over-brimming with freeing, taming, ordering, turning-back-on-itself, impregnating, "versifying" impulses (2005, pp. 8–9).

Both forms of dreaming—that done in sleep and in waking unconscious dreaming—generate a living semi-permeable barrier separating and connecting conscious and unconscious life (2005, p. 48).

Since Freud's monumental *Interpretation of Dreams*, the effort to receive dreams as meaningful communications from the unconscious has been central to almost every model of psychodynamic psychotherapy. And yet, until this book by Anna Emanuela Tangolo and Francesca Vignozzi, there has been no systematic approach to working with dreams within transactional analysis.

As the editor of the Routledge "Innovations in Transactional Analysis" series, I was thrilled to receive Tangolo and Vignozzi's proposal for this book, one which would fill in a serious gap in the literature of transactional analysis. This book not only fills in a gap in the TA literature but offers a remarkable, comprehensive approach to "dreamwork" that will engage and inform psychotherapists and psychoanalysts regardless of their particular theoretical model.

But as editor of this book series, as I read the incoming chapters of this book, I found myself wondering why a theory of dreams has been so absent in

transactional analysis. To have some sort of answer to this question, it was necessary to return to Eric Berne's own writings. Before Berne began to develop transactional analysis as its own model of psychodynamic psychotherapy, he had been trained as a classical psychoanalyst. Although he became disenchanted with psychoanalysis (and psychoanalysis became disenchanted with Berne), he wrote *The Mind in Action* (1947), an overview of psychoanalysis written for the layman. Here Berne writes of the unconscious and dreams from a classical, analytic perspective:

The chief tensions present in the unconscious minds of most people are unsatisfied oral wishes, unsatisfied anal wishes, and unsatisfied wishes for the later period of life after the fifth year. They are usually both libidinous and mortidinous, loving and hateful (p. 109).

During sleep, the Ego is largely out of commission [...] During sleep, the Superego is partly out of commission. Therefore, the dreamer does things in his dream that he would never dare to do nor perhaps dare even to think of doing in waking life (p. 118).

The manifest dream will be a compromise between the tensions of the Superego and the unsatisfied wishes of the Id, and the analysis of the dream will lead back to the latent thoughts which arise from those two forces (p. 119).

The Mind in Action was republished in 1968, after Berne had become famous for *Games People Play*, then under the title of *A Layman's Guide to Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis*, keeping the original book largely intact and followed by an extensive introduction to transactional analysis with chapters by Berne and other leading practitioners during the "birth" of transactional analysis. The psychoanalytic and TA sections read like two separate books within the same covers. The TA section makes no reference to the unconscious or dreams or to integrate Berne's earlier presentation of psychoanalysis. There is, however, a significant addition with respect to dreams in the 1968 *Layman's Guide* to the original 1947 text, as Berne observes:

There is now evidence to show that even ordinary emotional experiences have to be "digested" in some way through dreaming in order for the individual to feel well. A person deprived of the opportunity to dream may become quite confused; many psychoses are preceded by a period of prolonged lack of sleep, and hence the opportunity to dream. It may be said that the mass of "undigested" emotions which results has some effect in bringing on the psychosis (1968, p. 136).

In Berne's books on transactional analysis written over a decade, there is but one direct reference to dreams in his final book, *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?*, while writing about sleep, noting, "Thus it happens that people who are deprived experimentally or punitively of the opportunity to dream eventually go in a state resembling psychosis" (1972, p. 267). In spite of Berne's immersion in classical psychoanalysis when he wrote of dreams, Tangolo and Vignozzi note that Berne's own voice mirrors a much more contemporary attitude toward dreams when he wrote:

It is a common error to suppose that *finding out* the meaning of the dream is the important thing. This is not so. The meanings must be felt, and these feelings must be put into proper perspective with other past and present feelings of that particular person, for the interpretation to have any effect in changing the underlying Id tensions, which is the purpose of the procedure (1968, p. 136).

It is impossible to consider the meanings of dreaming without some option of the unconscious, and in Berne's development of transactional analysis, he turned his back on the analytic emphasis on the centrality of unconscious experience (Cornell, 2008). As contemporary transactional analysis has re-incorporated notions of unconscious experience, it has done so primarily through an emphasis on relationality, as evidenced within the dyadic dynamics of the transference-countertransference relationship and enactments. *Dreamwork*, as developed here by Tangolo and Vignozzi, brings attention back to unconscious forces within the contexts of intrapsychic conflicts and desires. While this book offers a detailed accounting of working with dreams within a transactional analysis context, the authors draw upon a broad spectrum of psychoanalytic authors and dream researchers. Their emphasis on the felt experience of dreams is consistent with the reception of dreams and reverie in such analytic theorists as Bion and Ogden. This is a book that will speak to psychotherapists of all disciplines with an interest in dreams.

Tangolo and Vignozzi open and ground *Dreamwork in Transactional Analysis* with chapters that offer comprehensive overviews of psychoanalytic and neuroscientific perspectives on the nature and functions of dreaming before beginning to articulate their approach to dreamwork as transactional analysts. It is, perhaps, no accident they convey a sense of "dreamwork" rather than the more common conceptualizations of dream analysis. "Analysis" implies a stance of a view and assessment from the outside—the dream as something to be looked at from a thoughtful distance. Tangolo and Vignozzi enter the oneiric world from a place of curiosity and respect. The dream is at work on behalf of the patient, and patient and therapist are at work in the unfolding of the dreams and its potential signs and challenges:

Our method is essentially to welcome a client's dream narrative as a gift that brings something new into therapy, a perspective that adds something to the usual narratives of daytime experience. Welcoming it, without the immediate pretense of understanding its meaning, is the first duty of the analyst, and the client (as well as the group, if the telling takes place in a group setting) is also involved in this experience. Thus, listening to a dream means accepting the gift that the most emotional and deepest part of ourselves—or someone else—makes to our rational mind, a gift that we accept as we accept the story that a child may decide to tell us (Chapter 3, p 46–60).

They suggest that the investigation of a dream is like "getting to know a city by getting lost in its alleys," a kind of wandering, wondering, discovering, risking getting lost:

Working with dreams requires giving up the search for linearity, causality and scientific evidence and being able to stand in uncertainty, to move in complexity, in the presence of multiple parts (Tangolo & Massi, 2022, p. 141).

Their discussion of Berne's inception of transactional analysis is both respectful and critical. In so doing they echo Ogden's (2022) recent differentiation of ontological psychoanalysis, attending to the emergent future, from the more traditional models of epistemological psychoanalysis that focus on history as causal factors—the ontological grounded in experiential understanding, the epistemological based in interpretation. Tangolo and Vignozzi critique Berne's overly deterministic (and rather pessimistic) script theory, captured by Berne's image of sitting at a piano believing one is playing his own tune when, in fact, the music is generated by a piano roll. Berne's was an epistemological model, with treatment based on game and script interpretation. Tangolo and Vignozzi argue:

In any case, liberation is external, which means that interpersonal support is needed in order to encourage change and free the person from their fate, which is more often tragic than “winning.” As transactional analysts we have had to emancipate ourselves from this view, which is so deterministic and reductionist as to be pessimistic and, above all, far removed from the results of research carried out over the past fifty years in developmental psychology (Cornell, 1988).

(pp. 151–2)

The authors present a detailed approach to the dreamwork in both individual and group psychotherapy, stressing as much the exploratory environment that needs to be created, in which the shared *experience* of the dream precedes the effort to discover or ascribe meaning:

Exploring means proceeding slowly, following the breath, the gaze, and the bodily tensions of the dreamer, who may be sweating, contracting, squinting and looking beyond, and still coming to terms with unknown dimensions of their self that may perturb them.

It is like being in the company of a child while they watch a scary movie or listen to a story or play with their monsters. One has to stay close by, sometimes a step behind, to allow the dreamer to move forward and find a passage first (Chapter 4, p. 65–84).

Tangolo and Vignozzi stress the transformative potentials of dreams. Drawing upon Quinodoz's (2002) writing about “dreams that turn over a page,” they describe how some dreams call into consciousness aspects of one's self that have been denied, dissociated, or unrecognized. While the reception of these dreams is not typically comfortable, the arrival of this news from the unconscious is not always being welcomed at first view. They emphasize that “the risk is, that if the transformative dimension of such dreams is not grasped

by the therapist and, on the contrary, the dreams are read as regressive, they can in fact induce regression in the patient”.

Tangolo, with her colleague Anna Massi, has previously written a book on group therapy in transactional analysis, and here one of the rather unique aspects of this book is the model of dreamwork in groups:

The group therapy setting is particularly fertile for dreamwork because the group itself constitutes a dreamlike, evocative place for each participant. The group conjures up childhood experiences within the family, archetypal and primordial experiences of circles around the fire, in caves, and villages, when dream storytelling accompanied evenings and nights under the stars. Thanks to the mystery and fascination that surrounds their representations, therapy groups facilitate listening to dreams as well as dreaming together and learning from each other’s dreams (Chapter 11, p. 209–224).

The dream worlds explored in this book are those associated with script and repetitive beliefs and defenses, trauma, nightmares, transformation and healing, transference, and countertransference, each of which has its own chapter of exploration and discussion. Every chapter is enhanced by case material of their dreamwork with their clients. The book concludes with a presentation of their own research on dreams in their clinical practice.

A unique and very rich element of *Dreamwork* is that some chapters, clinical in focus, are followed by a separate “suggestion” which extends the topic of that chapter to similar expressions in fiction, poetry, myth, film, and theater. Here we are reminded that our dreaming, our oneiric worlds, states of reverie, are not confined to the night, to sleep, or even to the individual.

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A PRESENTATION IN TWO VOICES

Anna Emanuela:

I am very excited as I am about to write this. It has long been in my desires as a psychotherapist and researcher of the psyche to write what I think about dreaming and the activity of dreaming: at least since visiting the remains of Apollo's temple at Epidaurus, when I discovered that the priests did with pilgrims in search of healing a work not unlike ours, that is, they sought in dreams the presence of the healing god, or, as we would say today, the presence of the intuition that guides our drive toward physis, toward the vital and healing force of nature that is written within us. The trip to Epidaurus and my youthful studies of philosophy the classical world certainly marked my early curiosity, but my personal experience as a child listening to and recounting dreams in my grandparents' house, by the fire on winter nights or on starry summer nights, also made a fundamental contribution. Even in that early context, dreams were considered important messages like poems and the voices of crickets in the night. These suggestions of my childhood remained within me, generating curiosity and interest in discovering in my patients' stories that hidden wisdom that could guide us toward the healing path.

Often, in the difficult work as a therapist and mind analyst, I have felt that I needed an ally to heal my patients, and I have always found this alliance in listening deeply to their will to live, to the daimon present in the slumbering child, to the parental voice that was the protection of the past, and these forces have often been recognizable in dreams even before daytime waking behaviors.

I have, therefore, always looked at dreams as revealing the forces that have guided the patient to me, but also undoubtedly as revealing the conflicts, and the anxieties, as in the case of nightmares and recurring dreams that carry scripted themes.

Psychotherapy is a journey of self-inquiry that allows us to rediscover our truest nature, and on this journey, dreams are useful companions for both patient and therapist. In this work we will give special emphasis to dreams that are had during periods of transformation and to dreams that are had during

group therapy—a special “matrix” in which change and the resolution of deeper conflicts are inscribed. We also left some space for therapists’ dreams and therefore, also, for mine, because often even the dreams of us therapists are a voice to be listened to that comes from our inner world and leads us to think about patients in a new and different way from the diurnal perspective of our clinical reflection.

Many fears have accompanied this project and many dreams. One of the first ones I had when I started thinking about it.

Dream of 30 December 2013

I am in Castellina (my hometown, in Tuscany), in the countryside and I have to go with someone to the old kindergarten. I arrive in the park, which appears larger than it is, full of trees. The man who is with me leads me on foot, walking ahead of me. There are cliffs and landslides along the steep, impervious terrain, among moss and scrub. At one point he plunges into a ravine, I get scared, call out to him and he tells me he is alive, he is okay, but needs help to get back up. I have to look for someone and, therefore, go on alone, in order to help him, too. I am frightened, but I tell myself that I am persistent and will slowly go on. This voice reassures me, calms me and I wake up thinking that I will make it.

When I wake up I think that the ravines and landslides represent the gaps in my knowledge and that’s why I can’t write the dream article I am supposed to write: the day before I felt really discouraged. The next day, when I wake up, I tell myself that I can make it through, but I realize that it is very tiring for me. I start writing fluently.

As we began writing this book, the dreams became more intense and signaled to me that we could make it only by working together.

Dream of 24 March 2020

Part 1

I am on a road trip with Franco and we are driving along a road in a desolate countryside (it looks like the road to Nisiros, which leads to the volcano). At one point we get off and continue on foot; there is a small crack to go through, like the door of a shack. Beyond is a landslide hill where the road gets smaller and smaller and slippery, you can’t go on. Forced to turn back, beyond the crack we are discouraged: there are no other roads and we still have to proceed.

Three people arrive with considerably more energy. They tell us that there is another way through that we just have not seen. Under the landslide hill there is a small lake, the water is shallow and there are stones you can step on. We can cross from there and we walk with them. We make it and I think, strangely enough, we had not seen the crossing on our own.

Part 2

Again, Franco and I face a short space journey, as if it were a rehearsal, on a spacecraft. The problem, on re-entry, is to slow down to get back to Earth. We each have to do it on our own, as if we were each inside our own individual capsule. I'm terrified because there's a near-vertical ramp to go down; I'm afraid I'll get crushed. But, from the outside, those instructing me tell me to trust them: you really have to go through there. With much anxiety I jump and instead of accelerating as I feared I brake and get down to the ground safely.

These last dreams made it clear to me that the project that scared me a lot could become a reality if I collaborated with Francesca and Silvia, our editor, and Caterina, the researcher who helped us with the research process. Dreaming alone is often a gamble, dreaming in two and dreaming in a group means finding ways and crossings that alone we had not even imagined.

Francesca:

Let me make it clear right away that if it were up to me this book would never have been born, the very idea of its existence would never have seen the light of day. And this, the reader will be astonished to know, is due in part to the fact that I have never been much of a dreamer. When I woke up, I often had the vague feeling that I had dreamed something that invariably escaped me, although with the writing of the book and a more developed attention span, my ability to remember dreams has greatly improved. As for daydreams, however, I can recognize in me an alternation of light and shadow. Two souls exist in me that do not easily coexist. One creative, original, outspoken, and free, that hates formalism and sugarcoating, that loves to go beyond, to the gist of things, loves to plan adventurous journeys, to tickle the limit, to dare. Another part of me, on the other hand, is frightened, holds back, and under its hegemony I am uncertain, I stumble and become quiet, docile, ashamed, and compliant, I fear the same limit just challenged. And so, in an endless strain to find a balance in me between day and night, I keep silent and still. For such reasons, if this book exists it is thanks to Anna Emanuela. My visionary teacher is not only capable of dreaming but capable, above all, of building a world where those dreams come alive. This is the world of the PerFormat forge, a school that is above all a laboratory of thought, planning, training; where people working together exchange ideas, experiences, desires. The realization of this book for me is a dream come true. If writing a book until a few months ago was a Herculean feat for me, writing one about dreams was pure utopia. It has been an incredible adventure to open myself up to the exchange of ideas with Anna Emanuela, to her cultural and literary proposals in front of tables overflowing with books and cups of coffee. As well as that of locking myself in the intimacy of my room in the early morning hours, meeting Freud, Ferenczi, finding Berne again, making the acquaintance of McNamara. Interacting with them and exploring my

thoughts in depth was an extraordinary journey that lasted several months and that each time was interrupted, like a rude awakening, only with the light of day and the first notifications on my phone, a clear signal that the world out there had stopped dreaming and had gotten out of bed. From this whole experience I certainly take with me this simple lesson. You can learn to dream alone, but together you dream harder. Happy journey, then, to the reader who will want to go on this dream adventure that has moved us so much, in the expectation that they too, like us, may experience the thrill of discovery, the courage of possibility, the tenacity of hope that dreams inexorably continue to teach us.

Introduction

This book that found its way into the hands of the reader has had a long gestation. It was about ten years ago that we first thought about writing a book on dreamwork, a text that would fill a void in the literature on the subject of the transactional analytic field. And so, with the outstanding editor of this volume, Silvia Rosa, we began to meet monthly to build an archive that would collect our patients' dreams, those dreams celebrated in literature and history, along with our own, in which we found amazing connections with those of our patients and with our clinical work in general. Today that archive amounts to hundreds of dreams. In an attempt to bring order to such a great volume of material we wondered about categories and genres, and those considerations led us to the construction of new theoretical knowledge of dreams and the evolution of the process of dreaming within therapy. This handbook is the synthesis of that long work, which over the years has obviously been enriched by much research and the many published works on the subject.

This book aims to describe a method of dream analysis in psychotherapy that is useful for both individual psychotherapy and group work. Transactional analysis is the reference matrix of this method, also integrated with the relational psychoanalytic approach. At its core is our belief that paying attention to dreams provides access to the deepest time of psychic functioning and insight into the evolution of changing relational script patterns.

The book consists of 12 chapters that lead the reader in exploring their own dream world and the therapist in preparing to address dreamwork in the analysis and treatment of patients.

Dreams belong to everyone, and artists and thinkers help in growing our imagination and creativity. Thus, we suggest that readers, including therapists, regardless of their background, nurture their humanistic and artistic culture, even as they study neuroscience, medicine, and clinical psychology. Working on dreams requires that we educate ourselves and listen to music, read poetry, experience film, theater, and open ourselves to any cultural experience through readings and traveling. The *Suggestion* path we offer at the end of some chapters is therefore an invitation to approach the artists and thinkers who have

INTRODUCTION

made dreams into works and masterpieces that heal our imagination through beauty and give color and music to the soul.

Our hope is that those who will delve into these pages will experience the same exciting thrill of discovery that accompanied us throughout this journey and which is the same spirit, we are sure, with which Neo, the protagonist of *The Matrix*, ended up choosing the mythical red pill, choosing in turn to discover the reality of dreaming.

DREAMS IN PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Introduction

Every research paper or clinical study on dreams starts off with Freud's fundamental contribution, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which paved the way in the 20th century for the scientific and clinical interest toward this particular dimension of the functioning of the human mind.

Indeed, Freud's work is still impossible to ignore. Similar to how philosophers cannot disregard Plato's or Aristotle's works, the same can be said for psychotherapists and Freud, and so we must start our study from its origins.

To those students who wish to pursue dreamwork, we often say that to do so they must start by reading Freud's work. Everything that hereby follows is in constant dialogue with his thought and teachings.

We will then move on to Jung and analytical psychology, Perls and Gestalt theory, and finally we shall explore the evolution of psychoanalysis and cognitive psychotherapy's recent interest in dream analysis in terms of narrations. A separate chapter will explore the relationship between dreams and the neurosciences.

We eagerly invite our readers to study and interpret the contributions of the great 20th-century clinicians and researchers, starting from the publication of the first systematic study on dream analysis provided by Sigmund Freud. To Freud goes the undisputed title of giving birth to a clinical and scientific thought which is still very much fruitful in terms of developments in clinical/psychotherapy field, as well as extraordinary for the intuitions and discoveries it yielded.

Freud (1856–1939) and dream interpretation

In the introduction to the Italian edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/2005), Cesare Musatti clarifies that Freud's work was born out of a period of self-analysis following his father's death in 1886, when he realized

the failure of his hypothesis that defined hysteria and obsessive neurosis as the result of real abuse suffered by clients during their childhoods. Musatti urges us to accept the “oddity” of this work, which seeks to be scientific and autobiographical at the same time, because in it Freud gives ample space to the analysis of his own dreams.

Freud’s interest in dreams came as a consequence of his decision to abandon hypnosis in favor of free association, since during sessions his clients started spontaneously mentioning their own oneiric material. In the eight editions he published in his lifetime, the essential structure of his theory remained the same.

Dreams are the “*via regia*” to the unconscious and provide the perfect means to explore the deepest part of human personality.

It is not a coincidence that Freud mentions two of Aristotle’s works in which dreams are considered for the first time as being of demonic instead of divine origin, that is to say, an autonomous psychic formation of the human mind. References to Artemidorus and in general to the ancients’ interest in dreams are summarized rather briefly, in order to give ample space to a more scientific perspective on dreams and sleep, given the knowledge available at the time.

Many dreams described in the text are Freud’s own, who embarks on a rigorous self-analysis.

His work on his dream about Irma’s injection is well-known (Freud, 1899/2005, pp. 107–120), and Freud regards it as the beginning of a great discovery: dreams are the hallucinatory realization of desires. Irma was a client he was treating for a series of disorders connected to hysteria, but the treatment wasn’t having the expected success. After a common friend brings him news of Irma, saying she is feeling better but is still not entirely well, Freud has the following dream: he imagines meeting her at a party with several common friends. He then proceeds to visit her and discovers that Irma’s disease is actually connected to an infection caused by an injection given to her by their shared friend Otto. The dream thus frees him from his sense of guilt for not having cured this woman properly.

Freud’s long work of self-analysis on the Irma dream brought him to many crucial discoveries. In his novel *L’interpreto dei sogni* (2017), the famed writer Stefano Massini dedicates an entire chapter to a dramatization of Irma’s dream (pp. 215–235), and ends it with the protagonist giving voice to the following consideration:

Today, January 23rd 1896, after many long weeks of self-analysis on the Irma dream, I can finally note that dreams realize our unspoken desires. That which we wished happened, and dare not say out loud, dreams allow us to live it out. Irma’s injection told me explicitly what the more adult part of me could never say out loud without feeling

arrogant: I wish to get rid of a difficult client, I wish to humiliate my jealous colleagues, I consider myself immune to error, I am the only one worthy of a tenured position in academia.

It might very well be that a human being whose desires are utterly fulfilled would not dream at all. Our dreams are that which we lack. Only in dreams we are complete.¹

(2017, p. 235)

How to explain then the more anguished dreams? Freud introduces the concept of dream disfigurement. Those desires which we cannot accept, the id-originated impulses which need to be satisfied, are thus processed through oneiric imagery, which in turn is transformed by the impact of such violent drives on our conscience. Oneiric stories and imagery are therefore born from the conflict between the Id's drives and the censorship of the superego. Recounting dreams allows us to discharge those drives, but in a concealed form. This way we are permitted to guiltlessly dream about incest, betrayal, the death and murder of our loved ones, by attributing responsibility to an external agent. The experienced despair thus protects us and we can wake up in tears and not sadistically satisfied for the eradication of the competition.

This is how Freud introduces the idea of manifest and latent content and deems the analytical process based on free association to be the most efficient way to access the latent content and allow previously repressed drives and feelings to surface.

The interpretative work becomes necessary when certain repressed contents and certain conflicts start conditioning a person's adult life, creating symptoms, psychic distress and unhappiness. It is precisely in these occurrences that psychotherapists are sought out and the analyst embarks with the client on a journey of exploration of their deepest conflicts, which they were incapable of facing and have festered into malady and existential suffering. Dreams speak just as much as symptoms do, employing ancient, symbolic languages and imagery that recalls the functioning of a child's mind.

In the final section of the book, Freud dwells on the usefulness of dreams for everyone's mental health, and quoting Plato's Republic, states that "the virtuous man is content to *dream* what a wicked man really *does*". So "it is best [...] to acquit dreams" (Freud, 1899/2005, p. 614).

Therefore, dreaming is an essential activity for the healthy mind, and while getting to know one's own dreams may represent a resource for each individual, their analysis is a fundamental tool to understand the causes of people's suffering and find a way to solve the conflicts that paralyze them.

1 My translation.

Carl G. Jung (1875–1961) and the archetypes of the unconscious

Freud's most beloved pupil for many years, Carl Jung considerably diversified his metapsychology and his approach to dreamwork after parting ways with Freud in 1913. To the analytical psychology born out of this rift we owe the studies on the collective unconscious, the Shadow, and the archetypes. In particular, Jung placed great value on mental images, as well as the cultural and artistic expressions of each civilization.

Humankind's symbolic language has been an object of great interest in analytic psychology, and each therapist must be able to read the visual arts, theater, cinema, and music as recommended by Jung. Federico Fellini, one of the greatest directors of all time (for more see *Suggestion 10*), left us a significant book of dreams accompanied by illustrations which inspired many of his cinematographic masterpieces. In this book Fellini admits his lifelong debt to analysis.

Jung wrote that "the dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and most secret recesses of the soul" (2014, Vol. 10, par. 304). He agrees with Freud that dreaming is one of the main ways to access the unconscious.

It is worth keeping in mind some key ideas in Jung's work on dreams and the unconscious. First, the difference between sign and symbol. Jung reminds us that while a sign is a word or a denotative image designating a specific object, a symbol is a word or connotative image which holds multiple meanings, some not directly accessible through logical-rational thought. Symbols are born as representations of the sacred and the divine, and are reminiscent of how the unconscious mind explores the world and gains instinctual knowledge. Jung reminds us how Freud and Breuer themselves, during their studies on hysteria, came to discover the symptom's symbolic meaning:

Neurotic symptoms are meaningful and make sense since they express a certain thought. In other words, they function in the same manner as dreams: they *symbolize*. A client, for instance, confronted with an intolerable situation, develops a spasm whenever he tries to swallow: "He can't swallow it". Under similar conditions another client develops asthma: "He can't breathe the atmosphere at home".

(Vol. 18, par. 421)

Jung discards free association and invites us to embark on "a circumambulation whose center is the dream picture", always repeating to the client: "Let's get back to your dream. What does the *dream* say?" (Jung, 1964, p. 29).

Jung's unconscious is not just the place of that which has been repressed, but a fertile ground where new feelings and ideas can bloom, the home of creativity and a search for future directions. On this matter Jung mentions the creative success of Robert Louis Stevenson, where the plot to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

was revealed to him in a dream, after having contemplated for years the duplicitous nature of humanity (p. 38).

I recall a dream of my own that baffled me for a while. In this dream, a certain Mr. X was desperately trying to get behind me and jump on my back. I knew nothing of this gentleman except that he had succeeded in twisting something I had said into a rather grotesque travesty of my meaning. This kind of thing had frequently happened to me in my professional life [...]

(Jung, 2014, Vol. 18, par. 463)

This is the primitive part of us that we lost, and it is because of such loss that we cannot directly access the symbolic world full of emotionally charged imagery that once belonged to a primitive humanity and still belongs to children.

The general function of dreams is to balance such disturbances in the mental equilibrium by producing contents of a complementary or compensatory kind.

(Vol. 18, par. 471)

Here Jung is referring to the complementary and compensatory role of dreams. Symbols bring with them an instinctual and intuitive knowledge which might be a useful guide for the future, even if it is seldom easy to understand their meaning. However, no oneiric symbol can be separated from the individual, and this explains the pointlessness of symbol interpretation handbooks.

The recurrent dream is another interesting phenomenon: “Such dreams usually compensate a defect in one’s conscious attitude, or they date from a traumatic moment that has left behind some specific prejudice, or they anticipate a future event of some importance” (Vol. 18, par. 478).

In the following paragraph, Jung writes about a recurrent dream of his:

It was that I discovered a part of a wing of my house which I did not know existed. Sometimes it was the place where my parents lived—who had died long ago—where my father, to my great surprise, had a laboratory in which he studied the comparative anatomy of fishes, and where my mother ran a hostelry for ghostly visitors.

(Vol. 18, par. 478)

He then adds that toward the end of this dream he finds a mysterious tome full of symbols: as a matter of fact, shortly after the dream he received an antique volume on medieval alchemy. The excitement toward this new field of study put an end to the recurrent dream. According to Jung, the house represented himself and the unknown wings were the parts he had yet to discover about himself.