A Summary Review of Dream Theory

Freud (1893-1895) assigned value to the dream at least ten years before the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). While treating Frau Emmy von N. in 1889-1890, he found she volunteered her dreams along with other descriptive material. Having discovered transference, resistance, and the need for an autonomous ego in therapy, Freud abandoned hypnosis, which created distortions in and added complications to these essential factors, and turned instead to free association and the method we know as psychoanalysis. Freud then used the dream as the starting point for associations which ultimately led to the unconscious ideas hidden behind symptoms and dreams and responsible for both. For the first time, the meaning of dreams was approached scientifically. Today, we know that to sleep is to dream and "perchance" is no longer admissible. Experimental work on sleep monitoring and Rapid Eye Movements (REM) (Fisher, 1965) demonstrates that dreaming is a neurophysiological necessity and dream deprivation has serious mental and physical consequences. REM findings indicate that dreaming occurs regularly during sleep. The neurophysiological changes which take place during REM periods suggest that activation of the limbic area of the brain—an area associated with primitive functioning of drives and affects—is involved. Such neurophysiological retrogression supports Freud's theory of the
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A dream is formed only when the current event makes contact with an impulse from the past—specifically, with an infantile wish. Sometimes a contemporary experience is so evocative of an earlier one that it pulls to the surface an infantile drive gratification which might otherwise have remained dormant. Conversely, a remote event, by virtue of its persisting importance, may invest a recent experience with a significance it would not have had in its own right.

Inasmuch as we conceptualize the quality of mental events according to their relation to consciousness, the content of the dream belongs to qualitatively different states of consciousness as well as to different periods of life.

When we refer to dreams in a theoretical sense, we have in mind three distinct entities: manifest dream, latent dream thoughts, and dream work. What the patient recalls and relates as his dream, the manifest dream, is a cryptic message which requires deciphering. Underlying the manifest dream are ideas and feelings, some of which belong to the present, some to the past, some of which are preconscious, some unconscious: the latent content. Interested though we are in the manifest dream, we are even more interested in the latent thoughts which give rise to it. We are equally concerned with the method whereby these latent thoughts are transformed into the images recalled as the dream. The process responsible for this alteration, which Freud considered the essential part of dreaming, is called the dream work.

DREAM WORK

The most arresting feature of the manifest dream lies in its apparent indifference to rationality, logic, and coherence. Gender is no longer absolute, physical assault and violence become indistinguishable from erotic passion, pleasure merges with pain, attraction with revulsion, horror with fascination, and condemnation with approval. Although the dream appears quite mad, there is method in it.
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When we regress during sleep, we do so not only in a temporal sense, but in a functional one. The regression is partially to a primitive, archaic mode of mental operation typical of earliest mental activity, i.e., to primary process functioning. Primary process, characterized by diffuse, random, and uncontrolled discharge of excitation, presses for immediate release and tolerates not the slightest delay. Jumping as it does from one idea or image to another with complete disregard for rational considerations, it more closely resembles a flow of energy than thinking. The dream work operates according to the principles governing primary process and this, for the greatest part, explains the bizarre quality of the manifest dream. The mobility of psychic energy in the primary process and its inexorable demand for immediate discharge account for the mechanisms of condensation and displacement employed by the dream work.

Condensation

Condensation, the fusion of two or more ideas or mental images, created the centaur, mermaid, sphinx, and the host of composite creatures found throughout mythology. It also produces the composite figure found in the dream. At its simplest, such a figure combines one or more features of one person with those of another.

My mother was speaking but not with her own voice. It sounded just like my sister. And she had the red hair of my other sister, and she was wearing one of her dresses.

The dreamer made clear in her associations that she could sum up all she felt about her mother by putting together those of her sisters' characteristics she liked least.

We get the same effect when we telescope two words—as in Joyce's neologisms, "Moansday, Tearsday, Wailsday, Thumpsday, Frightday, Shatterday," for instance—or when we combine a word with a feeling tone as Winston Churchill did in pronouncing "nazi" to make it sound as "nasty" as possible. As a matter of fact, neologisms are common in dreams.

Primary-process transfer of cathexis provides the impetus for sweeping up related concepts into a unity. A single representation carries multiple messages. When we undo the work of condensation through free association and restore the referents which have been joined into one, we bring to light a long chain of ideas. For example in this dream:

A woman teacher is seated at a desk in a classroom. She is talking Rumanian.

So far as the dreamer was concerned, the operative idea in this terse dream was the speaking of Rumanian. His mother spoke Rumanian; he loved to hear her talk in this exotic language. He wanted his analyst to talk to him so he could soak up the words and feel nourished. In his fantasies, psychoanalysis was a feeding and Rumanian a secret language of love. Without associations to Rumanian, we should never have expected to find condensed into this brief dream a veritable saga of love—of childhood love for his mother. The dream element, "talking Rumanian" amalgamated all this in a single stroke.

The dream work's capacity for condensation is enormous. Analysis must reconstitute the distillate. In waking moments, we have far less to say than we care to acknowledge; in our dreams, we convey far more than we imagine. A man dreamed:

I stood at the door of a classroom. Nobody was in the room except a teacher who pointed to a bookcase which contained copies of The Book of Knowledge in Latin. I was surprised because I'd never heard of a Latin edition.

At least five determinants for the image of the "teacher" in the dream were uncovered. The teacher in question was stern but kind; so was the dreamer's father (Latin was the language of a people who imposed law and order). The real teacher
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of primary process. The two mechanisms are intimately related and share responsibility for a major part of dream distortion. Whereas condensation distorts the latent thoughts by fusing or telescoping, displacement acts by a shift of emphasis or value. Displacement assumes myriad forms; the transposition can involve people, places, objects, actions, or affects. A woman troubled by intense competitiveness with her brother for their parents' love dreamed:

I was standing in a very definite place in a very definite house. It was the house we lived in when my brother was born. I stood in what had been my play area. I saw a ball lying in front of me and gave it a hard kick.

She had talked, the day before, to a man who resembled her brother, and had arrived home feeling unaccountably irritable. Without any provocation from her husband, she criticized him scathingly and then retired to bed, in tears. The husband at home and the ball in the dream suffered what was intended for her brother.

A patient had this dream after saying he wanted to break off psychoanalysis but was afraid of the consequences.

I went into the drugstore on the corner near your office. The place seemed to be doing badly and on the point of closing. Behind the counter, a clerk dreamed away. He paid no attention to me and I thought, "This won't last long."

The dreaming clerk replaced the analyst who "won't last long." The drugstore bore a faint therapeutic resemblance to the analyst's office. Displacement involved both locale and people.

Here is a dream illustrating a double displacement.

I am with my sister-in-law watching a girl in a movie. She is nude except for a fishnet covering and she dances sensuously. I become the girl and then a cat. The cat corners me in a room and won't let go.
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The dream displaced the woman's sexual frustration onto a dancing girl and then to the cat. A further displacement occurred in the substitution of the movie for analysis.

Besides transposing objects, people, and places, displacement creates further ambiguity by offering a part for the whole. A woman had this dream:

I was looking in a shop window at a display of lingerie. There were silk stockings draped attractively as only the French can arrange them. In one corner was a model of a leg with an unusual piece of hosiery. It stood out and I stared at it for a long time. It reminded me of something but I couldn't say what, or why it was so fascinating.

Her fantasies concerned breasts and genitalia, but her dream referred only to the leg. The leg substituted for a penis, which in turn substituted for the whole person. Genitalia are frequently displaced upward as well as to other areas of the body.

The following dream illustrates the close relationship between displacement and condensation.

I seemed to be in the neighborhood of the house where I was born. There was a light in the window.

The casually seen house and light were connected with the patient's grief over his father's death. Neither the event nor his reaction was contained in the dream's indifferent content. Such omission is characteristic of displacement in the dream. The dream work mechanisms have shorn the event of its emotional intensity.

A variant of displacement results in reversal, a particularly effective means of distortion. The dream speaks of crowds when it in fact refers to something secret; it multiplies parts of the anatomy as an allusion to the absence of such parts; it assigns, as in this case, the dreamer's intentions to another person:

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I was lying on a couch when someone behind me reached over and banged me on the head.

The patient's observable hostility and resentment made clear exactly who wanted to do the banging.

The dream work reverses not only the direction of an action and the roles within it, but also turns affects completely around.

In the street. Nobody was there but I felt shame and embarrassment which then turned into terror. I thought there were a million eyes on me.

The dreamer was preoccupied with fantasies of prostitution and exhibitionism. The dream replaced the positive pleasure provided by her sexual fantasies with the negative affects of shame and terror. The arena of her fantasies was heavily populated; the dream street was emphatically empty.

A young man who had gone to extraordinary lengths to avoid being drafted dreamed:

I was in a large board-room with a lot of people sitting around. I had taken a test. I had a sheet of white paper in my hand. I had failed the test and was ashamed in front of all those people. But nobody took the slightest notice of me. Nobody paid any attention.

Here the shame is not the subject of reversal but reflects the man's attitude toward what he saw as his own reprehensible behavior. "Nobody paid any attention" is the opposite of his fear that everyone will know what he has been doing. This dream can be placed in that group of classic dreams of nudity accompanied by a remarkable indifference on the spectators' part to the dreamer's condition. The dream spectators are every bit as hypocritical as the naked emperor's cheering subjects. They know perfectly well what is going on, but expediency demands that they too close their minds to it. And whoever else the dream spectators may represent, they
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also stand for the dreamer himself. As a matter of fact, anybody of either sex will serve as stand-in for the dreamer so long as a basis for comparison exists between them.

Clark Gable was on the street crying. He looked sick. I tried to help him.

Here the actor's large ears served as the connecting link. The dreamer's fantasies of world fame and success with women contributed to Gable's presence in the dream.

The following fragment shows the operation of both condensation and displacement. It was presented during a period of positive transference, the day after a patient had curbed her impulse to masturbate.

I was in a house high up on a hill or in the air. I could look out over a jocular view. Even in the dream I thought this a funny way to conceive of it.

Her dream conveyed an air of pleasure and good will. Sexual undertones were conspicuous. "Jocular" made her think of "jockey shorts" and "jock straps." The "view" was a condensation of her pleasure in looking and of having taken a reflective look at her sexual behavior. The wish to view the male genitals was transferred to the harmless aerial view of a landscape. A "funny" conception was a witty replacement for her interest in the male genital which she simultaneously admired and derided. At the same time, she asserted herself by taking a lofty "view" and making a joke of her wish.

An inordinately narcissistic man, who made a career of exploiting women and discarding them, was confronted by a particularly tenacious lady who, for reasons of her own, wanted him to marry her. For equally compelling reasons, he was resolved to withstand the siege. In one of his dreams, a single underlying theme was displaced successively, in layers as it were, from top to bottom.

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I was having my analytic session. I kept repeating, "I don't want to get married, I don't want to get married." I left and went down to find my car. It was nowhere to be seen. I looked everywhere but couldn't find it. Then I saw a ravishing girl walking away from me. I felt compelled to follow her. Next I was in my apartment on my knees examining my rug. I wanted to change it so I had cut a swatch from it to use. I called to a girl who was in the room and at the same time in a distant city to help me shop for a new rug. Then two men put their arms around me and wanted to kiss me.

"No marriage" first appears directly in speech, then as the loss of his car (symbol, in this instance, for a woman), again as following another girl. It next declares itself as changing his rug (again a symbol for a woman) and calling on a girl who is both there and not there. Finally, the dream reflected the deepest layer of his aversion to marriage by its reference to homosexuality.

SYMBOLS

The dream work mechanisms of condensation and displacement are supplemented by symbolization which further obscures the latent thoughts. Symbolism is a universal primal language representing an association between ideas having something in common although the relationship is not always easily discernible. Symbols stand for primary ideas from which they acquire their significance. The association is made not by the reasonable adult mind, but by the infantile unconscious one which typically equates objects that appear to have something in common. For a child, whose interests are always specific and physical, the concrete automatically takes precedence over the abstract. Symbolic language employs an elementary means of conceptual identification inherent in the child but, aside from psychotics and certain artists, strange to adults. Failure to recognize the connection between the symbol and what it stands for stems from man's having for-
gotten the infantile ways of thinking of which the symbol is a persistent remnant. Temporal regression, so inevitable a characteristic of sleep and dreaming, brings in its train perceptual and conceptual regression which lead to the formation and use of symbols.

Throughout recorded history, symbolism used in literature, art, religion, folklore, and mythology as well as in everyday life has found acceptance as a means of communication. Curiously, the application of symbolism to dream interpretation is often regarded as arbitrary and generates suspicion, suggesting that an irrational influence is responsible for its rejection in this area.

Each dreamer employs a preferred set of symbols chosen from the vast number available to him and uses them with considerable regularity and consistency so that they become a sort of mental fingerprint.¹

The experienced analyst can sometimes make an immediate translation of the manifest content on the basis of typical symbolic images in the dream. The interpretation of symbols without an intimate knowledge of the dreamer, however, without conceding any relevance to his current circumstances, may be intellectually stimulating but is not a valid exercise in a properly conducted analysis. Even though an invariant symbol may be present, only an appraisal of each dream on the basis of all the dreamer’s associations can produce an accurate reading. Very occasionally, the symbol may stand solely for itself. We cannot isolate symbols from the rest of the dream or the patient.

Referents for symbols are surprisingly limited in number. They correspond to the basic and universal preoccupations of children: birth, death, the body and its functions, the sexual organs, and people, especially members of the family. The wide discrepancy between the profusion of symbols and the ideas symbolized (for all their basic biological identity, we would not expect the Australian bushman to express himself in the language and style of an Oxford don) inevitably evokes a reaction much like the one that led Freud (1916) to observe, “... in contrast to the multiplicity of the representations in the dream, the interpretations of the symbols are very monotonous, and this displeases everyone who hears of it; but what is there we can do about it?”

The student of the dream must be well acquainted with the symbols he will meet. In a compassionate effort to spare him the tedium of an exhaustive listing, I offer those most commonly encountered. The illustrative material on the clinical use of the dream will contain still others.

Man’s interest in and preoccupation with the way he enters and leaves the world is reflected in the large number of symbols for birth and death. Water, primarily immersion in it, always refers to pregnancy and birth. At the same time, water or anything flowing has important oral connotations and is intimately connected with urinary fantasies and experiences. Infestation with vermin or insects refers to semen and impregnation. Sleep, silence, descending into the earth, dwindling in size, taking a trip (especially westward), disappearing into a blanket of fog may all appear as symbolic variants of death.

The Greeks used the configuration of the human body as the basis for their architecture. In the dream, human anatomy is symbolized by buildings with windows and doors corresponding to the body orifices. Symbolization borrows heavily from nature to represent anatomical parts and zones: landscapes, mountains, valleys, forests, and flowering gardens frequently appear. Caves instantly convey the idea of body cavities; ledges and overhangs, whether architectural or natural, usually portray breasts as do sisters or fruit. All articles that enclose space or are capable of being entered qualify as sym-

¹ A recurrent use of the same symbol must have a special significance but, to date, in not a single instance have I been able to trace any to its source in the patient’s personal experience. Why does anybody use a particular symbol with such consistency that one could call it a mannerism?
bolic representatives of the female genitalia. The horseshoe renders their shape, jewels their value; shellfish and the mouth almost speak for themselves. Stoves, closets, and cupboards refer more to the uterus than to the vagina. Undergrowth and underclothes are genitalia in general. Stairways, ladders, corridors, and tunnels often appear in dreams referring to the female genitalia; when a red lining is added, the meaning becomes unmistakable. Menstruation itself is represented by allusions to the color red. The letter or number "0" has a special significance in connection with female symbolism. Flowers, like eyes, can stand for either male or female genitalia. So does the ship which, in the one case may be represented as cleaving through water, and in the other as a vessel.

The phallus is symbolized by anything resembling it in form, function, or general properties as, for example, the bridge which joins two bodies. All penetrating, expandable, collapsible objects serve as symbols for the penis. Elevators, airplanes, birds or projectiles, things which go up and down may be symbolically employed for the male organ as may cameras and instruments which can be manipulated or played upon. The man who dreamed of an automobile with its parts out on a workbench and its convertible top half raised was preoccupied with his potency. A more recondite equivalent is the number three which has been found, apart from the dream, in widely separated parts of the world in the form of the triskelion, the fleur-de-lis, and the tripod.

A constant symbolic association exists between the phallic and animals, from the rat to the elephant. The snake and serpent are age-old and tedioulsly familiar. By extension, we see why lengths of rope or hose are gross phallic equivalents. A woman whose penis envy made a significant contribution to her character disorder dreamed:

\[9\] See dream: "Convertible car. disassembled in garage" (Index of Dreams).

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... a little boy holding a fox in his hands. It was a tiny, perky, red-nosed animal, more like a toy, but it could bite. Suddenly it appeared from out of his pocket, withdrew and emerged from his fly.

The little man as portrayed by the dwarf, anything mysterious and having to do with conjuring, such as amulets or charms, even the devil himself appear in dreams as substitutes for the penis. Articles of male attire, especially cloaks and neckties, are common phallic symbols. The same is true of the head and the hat; hence beheading is feared as castration. A fairly common dream (I have so far found it only among women) is of having a baby which walks and talks at birth. This baby must be regarded as a substitute for the miraculous penis.

The sun is a phallic symbol, the flame invariably so. The hearth is a female symbol at which the masculine flame is kindled. Phallicism has far-reaching associations with heat and anything else commonly identified with passion. A patient had this dream when resisting a positive transference because of its homosexual implications:

I am sitting with my wife in an auditorium. A man is lecturing on hypnosis. The air is suddenly suffused with a strange pinkish-red glow. The hypnotist is looking at me and I am forced against my will, pulled through the air toward him. I struggle against it, cry out and wake up as from a nightmare.

Sometimes a body part, a protruding arm, leg, or nose, or the tail of an animal stands for the penis. This equation is universal and accounts for symptoms that would be medically meaningless were symbolism rejected. Indeed, the compendium could be continued interminably. The number of things reconstituted in the image of man's narcissism with regard to the phallus and endowed with its attributes is truly awesome.

Dreams about teeth are peculiar in that there is such a wide divergence, from any rational point of view, between teeth
and eroticism. Such dreams have many variations. The teeth may be weirdly distributed in the mouth, they may be pulled out in quantities, be seen falling out of their own accord, or encountered with amazement in a newborn infant. Without exception, when teeth appear in the manifest dream as a symbol, they refer to sexuality (often with aggressive connotations) in its latent content. The reference is to masturbation, intercourse, and, in women, to unconscious fantasies of pregnancy. Loss of teeth symbolizes the loss of the penis and fear of impotence. The dream marked by loss of several teeth accentuates the fear of castration. The night after masturbating, a man whose castration anxiety was of central importance in analysis had this dream:

I was playing ball with my father who then turned into a friend of mine. We threw the ball back and forth, harder and harder. Suddenly my friend's face grew red and swollen and he threw the ball at me with lightning speed. It hit me in the face and knocked out three teeth.

Another man sat in a taxi between two girls he was escorting home and toyed with the idea of seducing them. While preparing for bed, his fantasies led him to thoughts of masturbation. He abandoned this notion too and then dreamed:

I was lying in bed when I remembered I had an appointment with my dentist. Then I realized I had already kept it. He had drilled a hole in two teeth, one upper left, one lower right. The holes were meant to remain holes and not to be filled.

Displacement may occasionally be made to the nose. A man, resisting the urge to masturbate because he was afraid that if once he started he would not be able to stop, had this dream:

I started to pull a hair out of my nose. I was alarmed to see a whole shower of hairs come out.

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Rhythmical activities from dancing to athletic games symbolize the sexual act as do ascent or descent, entering or disappearing, waxing or waning. Dreams of flying can symbolize erection. Sexual lust with gluttonous overtones is often conveyed by dreams of banquets or heaping profusions of sweets.

Autoerotic pleasure is represented by all sorts of activity, playful and otherwise, including passive forms of motion such as being carried, pushed, or tossed about. A masturbation fantasy is symbolically expressed in this typical dream of sexual excitement:

I entered an elevator. I felt short of breath and began to breathe more and more heavily. The elevator started up, steadily gaining speed. It reached the roof, kept on going and shot right up and out into the air.

Symbols also appear in connection with other basic body functions. Yellow liquids have the virtue of being obvious. Symbolism in the dream equates feces with money and associates both with the idea of a gift. Excrement, referred to by the colors brown or gold, usually has a bivalent meaning; it is both worthless and of great value. The symbolic equation between feces, penis, and baby appears in symptom formation as well as in dreams.

Following a siege of constipation, a man gave himself an enema after which he was stimulated to have intercourse. That night he dreamed:

I came across an enormous pile of gold coins. Endless. I scooped them up feverishly. They seemed to be everywhere.

Eminent personages running the gamut from gods and royalty to senators can be used as symbolic stand-ins for parents. The ogre and devouring witch, in addition to serving as projections of oral drives, have similar symbolic significance. A room or a house may stand for a woman, a series of rooms
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for a series of women. Cats are common symbols for women. The mother is represented by queens, witches, or spiders. Women are also represented by a host of symbols having to do with material: paper, wood, cloth, and objects made from them. The automobile does duty for both men and women. Animals symbolize people in general and parents in particular. Children appear as vermin, insects, or very small animals.

A man who was beginning to view his wife in a fresh and less favorable light dreamed:

I looked at a rug on the floor of my bedroom. It seemed changed, enlarged and ugly at one end, and out of shape. I told this to a friend who said he could always get me another rug.3

A patient was ashamed to tell me he had again acted out his compulsive promiscuity but gave himself away by bringing this dream:

I was in a bakery, a dull drab affair. I bought the best cake they had. Then I saw a lemon-iced chocolate cake. I couldn't resist. I sneaked a little piece of it, not wanting the baker to see me or charge me. I left the rest there and ran out.

If we substitute analysis for “dull drab . . . bakery” and tart for the “cake,” the meaning is clear enough. The “lemon-iced chocolate cake” readily suggests the range of his libidinal appetites.

MEANS OF REPRESENTATION

In addition to condensation, displacement, and symbolization, the visual means of representation demanded of the dream result in distortion of its latent content by the use of pictorial metaphors to express certain ideas. (Affects are not similarly transformed. They remain affects, as we have seen,

3 See also dream: “I don’t want to get married” (Index of Dreams).

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whether or not they are replaced by opposite affects in the manifest dream, displaced, or omitted altogether.)

The dream’s ingenuity in meeting a pictorial requirement is impressive and occasionally amusing. A patient, past mistress in the art of incitement to riot by passing meretricious confidences, brought this dream after she had lied to both her husband and to me:

My cat had gone astray. I knew cats follow a string when it is dragged along the ground, so I got a length of string, went outside, and a long line of cats followed it. Then two elongated mice or rats joined the line.

The two mice at the end of the string formed a rebus for the husband and myself being strung along by the patient.

To express in the shape of a picture the conditions laid down by because, therefore, but, when, or if, for example, demands graphic inventiveness. Nevertheless, the relationships commonly set forth by prepositions, conjunctions, other parts of speech, or by punctuation require visual means of representation in the dream. Causal relationships, which are usually either omitted or embodied in condensation, can also be represented by a dream divided into segments of varying lengths. The order in which these segments appear may parallel the cause and effect or may be reversed. The dream may begin with the effect and end with the cause, but in all cases the longer section corresponds to the principal clause, the shorter section to the subsidiary one.

When a dream tries to present a relationship between two ideas or events, it places the images which stand for them in proximity to each other, substituting a spatial for a conceptual or temporal relationship. In order to indicate the idea of superiority or advantage, for instance, the dream may place two people on different physical levels. Tiny people seen at a distance indicate events that have taken place a long time ago. Again, this is the exception rather than the rule; usually the relationship is omitted or served by condensation.
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Repetition of an action within a dream or duplication of a dream element can signify that the event has occurred repeatedly.

I saw dozens of women leaning out of windows on both sides of a street, shaking their heads in unison. Then they shrieked and waved their hands menacingly. They repeated this over and over again.

The dream alluded to the patient's relations with women. Time after time he sought them out only to rebuff them or to be rebuffed. The repeated action in the dream and the multitude of women represented a succession of rejections.

To our confusion, the idea of opposites and contrasts is indicated in the dream either by a choice of one or the other or by the insertion of both, as though they were equally valid. In a third alternative, the two may be combined in one dream element. The context determines which is intended.

A counterintention, "No, I don't want to," in the latent thoughts is represented by means of inhibited movement, by the classic dreams of paralysis. We are only too familiar with "I can't," as the unmistakable equivalent of "I don't want to."

An endless variety of dreams: the missed train, the lost car, the forgotten name, as well as the dream of immobility all bespeak the same intention—to interpose a negative wish. The similarity to paraprases is obvious.

Critical opinions appearing in the dream belong to the latent thoughts. Derision in the latent thoughts, for example, will find expression in a manifest dream whose content conveys absurdity.

I was buying a suit at the tailor's. A woman showed me ridiculous red herringbone suits. I fooled around with her, saying, "Yes, give me dozens and dozens. I'll take this and this and this. Give me all of them."

The ridiculous red suits expressed mockery in the latent thoughts. The patient had been highly critical of my interpre-

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tations and was making a travesty of them both in actuality and in the dream. Sometimes criticism, instead of appearing in the dream, is expressed by means of a comment. Had the patient said, "I had a ridiculous dream last night," he would have conveyed his message equally well.

SECONDARY REVISION

All the elaborate measures employed to disguise the latent dream thoughts are, according to the propositions of structural theory, at the behest of the dreamer's never totally dormant ego. Censorship, which forbids unconscious impulses expression in forms they would naturally assume, opposes regressive phenomena, including the dream. But while the ego, often enough spurred on by superego requirements, supplies the motive for dream distortion, it may be by no means always satisfied with the results. An impulse, albeit disguised, has come through, and the censorious ego and superego, conscious or unconscious, react with a last-ditch effort to make the result acceptable, thereby contributing still another distorting factor to the dream.

Secondary revision, using secondary-process thinking, attempts to supply the dream with consistency and coherence, to fill in the gaps, create some sort of order and mold it into an intelligible whole. Wherever we find continuity and logic in the manifest dream, we know secondary revision is responsible.

The expression, "It's only a dream," is very familiar. Sometimes the dreamer has the thought on waking; sometimes it is incorporated directly into the dream. In either case, the judgment is made by the ego, the agent of secondary revision. That portion of the dream dismissed as "only a dream" is precisely the part that is too real for comfort. The ego, by providing false reassurance, has created another dimension to the distortion.

Freud (1900) includes among the contributions of secondary
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revision, the carrying over of waking fantasies into the dream. Insofar as all fantasies are in themselves distortions of infantile wishes, their appearance in a dream adds to the distortion. The patient who didn’t want to get married brought into his dream a ready-made waking fantasy onto which he displaced his conflict. In his fantasy, he pursued to bed every attractive girl that caught his eye; in his dream, he saw a ravishing girl walking away from him and felt compelled to follow her.

STRUCTURAL THEORY

Central to psychoanalysis and to an understanding of the dream is the concept of conflict in mental life. Before the postulation of structural theory, conflict was assumed to result from the antithesis between conscious and unconscious. Further clinical experience made it clear that resistance to the emergence of unconscious material was itself unconscious. It was found that patients, free associating with the best will in the world, were unable to recover the repressed thoughts underlying the manifest dream. Another problem arose in connection with dreams having a predominantly distressing affect. Such dreams appeared to be in flat contradiction to the thesis of the wish-fulfilling nature of the dream.

The concept of a division of the mental apparatus into id, ego, and superego resolves these apparent contradictions. Structural theory proposes that conflicts between the functions of the different structures give rise to the unpleasant features of both dream and symptom and account for the phenomenon of unconscious resistance.

We now seek to understand the nature and function of anti-instinctual forces as well as infantile, instinctual drives and their derivatives. We assume that both sets of forces and the shifting balance between them are of major importance in de-

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terminating the configuration of the dream. Ordinarily, in waking hours, the exercise of ego functions is sufficient to maintain a working balance. But at night, when sleep weakens the ego functions and cuts off the external helping hand, instinct has an opportunity to reassert itself.

In our assessment of the dream, the concepts of structural theory offer additional aid. The strict independence of the systems id, ego, and superego is an illusion. Clear-cut structural distinctions are arbitrary, borne out neither in life nor in clinical experience. The structural systems are not air-tight nor are they totally in opposition to each other. While they contend, they also cooperate on a continuum to ensure survival. Moreover, the high-level theory embodied in structural propositions, while a valuable and essential instrument for the analyst, need not reduce human motivation and behavior to quasi-mechanistic functions with discrete areas of operation.

Structural theory conceives of the id as a repository of sexual and aggressive drives from all stages of development. These drives find mental representation as wishes and fantasies which seize on the dream as an outlet for immediate satisfaction. Even in the dream, they meet with counterdemands from ego and superego.

The ego functions of integration and synthesis operate to maintain logic and order in the dream. The perceiving function of the ego also makes a contribution. The ego’s mechanisms of defense and its development of anxiety oppose id-derived impulses and modify their expression. Ego functions, however, are not perpetually or by nature essentially hostile to drives. The organization of the ego exists to procure instinctual satisfaction as well.

The superego exhibits its effect on the dream by introducing guilt, remorse, and punishment for the attempt to gratify a forbidden infantile wish. As an extension of the ego, it also contributes to the creation of anxiety. Superego influence in the dream is felt as approval as well as condemnation.
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

No dream is ever solely an “id dream.” If we employ such a term it is only to indicate that infantile wishes, the mental representatives of instinctual drives or their affects, are so strong they have gained access to the dream with less distortion than usual. Dreams from below, dominated by impulses, feelings, and ideas of early life, contain more of a contribution from the id than from any other source. From the point of view of structural theory, a preponderance of sexual or aggressive drive representations from infancy reflects the id aspects of the dream.

No dream is simply an “ego dream.” This would be the designation, in terms of structural theory, of those dreams which contain a considerable amount of secondary revision, include preconscious ready-made fantasies, affects, or ideas, or introduce sensory impressions from reality and register current events—the day residue. The dream from above would fall into this category. The “ego dream” would show the effects of the ego’s unconscious defense mechanisms on the expression of infantile wishes from the id.

While recent research shows that amnesia for the dream is in some measure independent of repression, and that dreams are subject to “decay,” the activity of the unconscious portion of the ego largely determines whether a dream or dream segment will be recalled or forgotten. Drugs and optimal awakening time from REM sleep notwithstanding, recall and retention as well as forgetting, vagueness, and the “unreliability” of the dream are generally the work of unconscious censorship and repression from ego and superego. This explains why a device such as writing down a dream in the middle of the night or first thing in the morning is largely futile. When the unconscious is geared to thwarting the intention of analytic work, no amount of solicitation avails, but is in fact construed as impotency or censure.

No dream is ever exclusively a “superego dream.” The dream of punishment, however, or the one with overwhelming feelings of guilt, unmistakably indicates the presence of the superego. Spoken words in dreams are, according to Isakower (1954), a direct contribution from the superego to the manifest content of the dream.

The dream not only reflects the outcome of conflict between the systems of the mental apparatus, it also demonstrates the presence of contending aims within each one of them. The dream expresses the mutual modification of opposing forces and the compromise arrived at between antagonistic strivings, e.g., between activity and passivity, between masculinity and femininity, or between communication and secrecy. It provides the meeting ground where approval and condemnation, love and hate, convenience and necessity confront and vie with each other. Every dream is a compromise formed by contributions from all three psychic structures. Id, ego, and superego, each seek satisfaction. Just as the dream represents a compromise in this respect, so, containing as it does material from the here-and-now along with infantile wishes and experiences, it can be viewed as a compromise between past and present. The dream acts as guardian of sleep by permitting the partial gratification of unconscious wishes; it disturbs sleep to the extent of allowing these wishes any expression at all.

The difficulty and complexity of dream interpretation results from the extraordinary degree to which the latent dream thoughts are distorted in the manifest dream. To begin with, they are subject to distortion reflecting the characteristic primary-process nature of the dream work’s condensation and displacement. Add to this a vast propensity for symbolization and the limitations imposed by representation largely in visual form of the ideas and feelings which go into the formation of the dream. Finally, the distortion is further exaggerated by the conflicting needs of the systems of the psychic apparatus, including the ego’s need to lend logic, order, and acceptability to what it regards as illogical, disorganized, and still objectionable.