

# **China Child Psychotherapy Training Program**

## **Unconscious Communication: Dreams and Play**

Caroline Sehon, MD

[carolinesehon@gmail.com](mailto:carolinesehon@gmail.com)

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## The *Royal Road* to the Unconscious

*“The Interpretation of Dreams...contains, even according to my present-day judgment, the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make. Insight such as this falls to one’s lot but once in a lifetime.”*



## Multiple Avenues to the Unconscious

- Dreams
- Transference & Countertransference
- Resistance
- Nonverbal behavior
- Play Narratives



## What does a dream represent?

- A childhood wish?
- Fears?
- Conflicts?
- The metabolizing of trauma?
- The Past, Present and the Transference



## Uses of Dreams

- Diagnosis
- Prognosis
- Window into Past history
- Vision of the Future
- Current Conflicts
- Tracking Transference
- Shifts in Personality Structure



# Two Layers of Dream Content

## Manifest Content

- The dream's surface concealing the latent content
- Egyptian hieroglyphics (Freud)

## Latent Content

- Unconscious wishes, thoughts and core conflicts hidden by specific defence mechanisms
- Unearthed by free association



# Dreamer's Defence Mechanisms

## Primary Process

- Condensation
- Displacement

## Symbolic Representation

- Secondary Process
- Secondary Revision



# Condensation

- The shorthand of the dream
- A concentrated dose of Ucs material
- A wish, feeling or impulse condensed into one image
- The fusion of past life, current life & therapeutic life
- dream image-person looks like A, talks like B & feels like C





# Displacement

- Diverting intensity of feeling from one person to a separate person
- Working in the Displacement (therapy & dream work)



# Symbolic Representation

- A simple, concrete sensory image w/metaphorical meaning
- Universal Symbols vs. Idiosyncratic symbols
- The essential role of free association to unlock unique meaning



## Secondary Revision

- Secondary process cognitive activity
- Converts the irrational into the reasonable
- Produces an edited version of the dream



# The Role of Affect

*In the dark mystery of the dream, affect is the beacon that brings the light of reality into the world of fantasy.*



## Technique of Dream Interpretation

- Communicate your interest in patient's dreams
- Day Residue
- Free association
- Let yourself dream and freely associate along with the dreamer
- Tune into affect
- Decoding latent content: be mindful of dreamer's defences



# Fantasy

*“We like to think we live in daylight but half the world is always dark; and fantasy, like poetry, speaks the language of the night.”*

Ursula Le Guin



# Conscious and Unconscious Fantasies

## Conscious

- Daydreams
- Reveries

## Unconscious : Phantasy

- Dreams

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# Working With A Dream

## Freud

- Dreams interpreted in context
- Attend to coherence or incoherence
- Use of associations
- Patient retells dream
- Revisit Dreams in future





# Function of Dreams

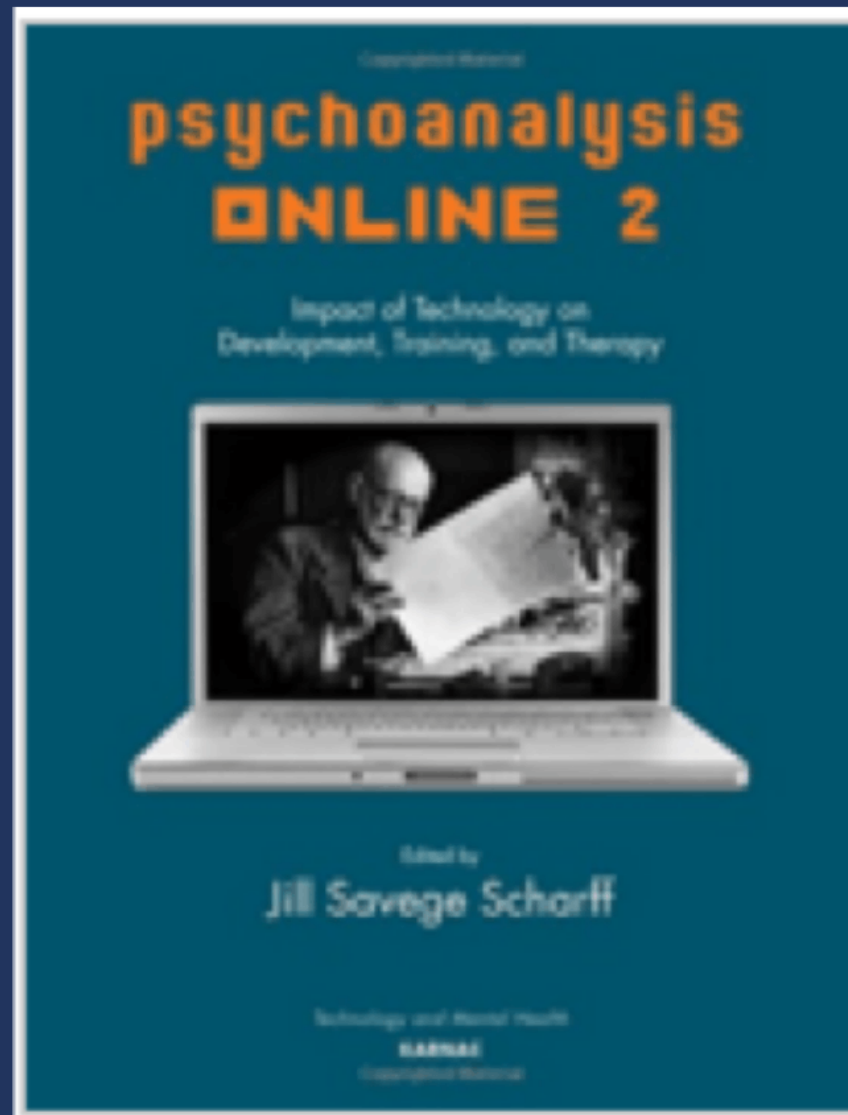
## Greenson

- Protects sleep and allows regression
- Uncovers hidden meanings w/interpretation
- Leads to affect
- Offers access to childhood memories
- Gives access to the most free associations



# Psychic Structure Revealed

- A compromise between wish and reality (Freud)
- Structure of dream reveals personality (Fairbairn, Segal)
- Working through* (Segal)



Scharff, J.S. ed. (2015) *The Impact of the Internet on Development: Teleanalysis and Training*. London. Karnac Books.

# **CASE VIGNETTE**

## **"JONATHAN"**

- 11 year-old boy at outset of therapy
- Grief-stricken after grandmother's death
- intense separation anxieties
- compulsive recall of guilt-ridden scenarios
- No prior treatment

# INDICATIONS FOR TELETHERAPY

- Unreliability of parents to bring him
- To preserve continuity of work
- To afford Jonathan autonomy
- To secure frame of treatment

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## References

Gabbard, G. (2004) Long-term Psychodynamic Psychotherapy- A Basic Text. U.S.A., American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.

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