

The polyphonic texture of intersubjectivity in the dream

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Abstract

My research on the Dream are based on the hypothesis that it is developed in the polyphonic texture of the interdiscourse. This assumption owes a lot to the work of M. Bakhtine and his followers. Bakhtine introduced the idea that the literary structure is elaborated at the crossing of several structures, just as the word is a polyphony of several writings: that of the writer and his characters, that which takes account of the recipient, of the historical, the ethical and the cultural context. Dreamed is formed in the polyphonic structure of the intersubjectivity The trace of the overdetermination of the Dream is revealed by its polyvalence.

Key- words: group, intersubjectivity, dream, polyphonic organization

The interest for the dream in the groups carried on following the freudian psychoanalytic pattern, produced three main research courses. The first one is based on the analogy of the group with the dream. D.Anzieu proposed this approach, claiming that the group is like the dream¹. The second course studies the statute and function of the dream, whose report takes part into the association process of the group; it pays a particular attention to the group oneirism, meaning the common dream or the shared one.

I suggested a third research axis: it is based on the hypothesis that the dream, one of the most peculiar and private of our symptoms, is developed in the polyphonic texture of the interdiscourse.

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The polyphonic organization is typical of the very area of the language: Bakhtine extends this principle to the whole semiotic production: the logic organizing it, is not the logic of the linear determination and of identity, but, instead, the transgressive one, that of the Dream or of the Revolution: another law is ruling.

The conception of polyphony is interesting here, because of another reason: it questions the belief of the author's unicity. In conclusion, Bakhtine believes in the idea of an inner social audience, which is specific for every individual, in the " atmosphere of which his deductions, reasons, appreciations are produced...".

¹ D. Anzieu, 1966, « Étude psychanalytique des groupes réels » *Les Temps Modernes*, 242, 56-73.

² M. Bakhtine, 1934-35 - « Le discours du roman », in *Esthétique et théorie du roman*, Paris Gallimard, 1978 ; 1963 - *La poétique de Dostoïevski*. Paris, Les Editions du Seuil (1970).

Finally, Bakhtine says, the word is oriented by two determining factors: " It is at the same time determined by the fact it proceeds from someone, and by the fact it proceeds towards someone (...) Every word is used as a form of expression to the one related to the other one...the word is the common territory of the locutor and the interlocutor ." I tried to work on these ideas as far as the dream is concerned. My hypothesis of research about the polyphonic texture of the intersubjectivity in the dream rests on two corpuses. The first deals with the analysis of the dreams that are born from the group associative process³. The second, with the dreams whose manifest content stages a group and that are recounted on the couch. Could the analysis of such dreams clarify the general processes of the dream?

1. Dreaming in a group situation

In the Interpretation of dreams, Freud made the dream a private matter, pointing out the operating principles, suggesting a conception strongly based on its intrapsychic function: the dream is the hallucinatory realization of an unconscious desire, a waking state desire and an infantile repressed sexual desire⁴.

In the group, the dream is expressed according to other peculiarities, as are the associative process, the patterns and contents of the transference. In the group situation, what I call interdiscourse is the effect of the multiplicity of the speakers: the result is a double associative chain, the one of the single subjects and the one formed after the succession and simultaneity of their statements. My hypothesis is that the dream "in the group" is elaborated by one or more dreamers, at the crossing of their own oneiric apparatuses with the group psychic apparatus, that they build in common out of identificatory and fantasmatic resonance with other subjects. The dream is a polyphony of several conversations and figures; its origin is found in a series of utterances and statements which have been heard in the group, the day before: the "factory of the dream" of the dream-carrier transforms the polyphonic productions to give them back to the group associations, equipped with a new representation, a preconscious one, that means, an interpretative effect⁵.

1.1. A woman dreaming in the group

I will shortly describe the context in which a dream appeared in a time limited group (16 sessions), conducted by a colleague (here her name is Sofia) and by me⁶.

³ R. Kaës, 1994, *La parole et le lien. Les processus associatifs dans les groupes*, Paris, Dunod. Trad., ital. 1996, *La parole e il Legame*, Roma, Borla.

⁴ S. Freud, 1900, *Die Traumdeutung*, G.-W., II-III, 1-642 ; 1901, "Über den Traum", G.-W., II-III, p. 643-700.

⁵ R. Kaës, 2002, *La polyphonie du rêve. L'espace onirique commun et partagé*, Paris, Dunod. Trad. ital. 2004, *La polifonia del sogno. L'esperienza onirica comune e condivisa*, Roma, Borla

⁶ Kaës, 2004, *La polifonia del sogno. L'esperienza onirica comune e condivisa*, Roma, Borla. For a more detailed analysis, cf. R. Kaës, 2007, *Un singulier pluriel. La psychanalyse à*

During the very first sessions, different members, particularly Marc, complained they lost their "reference frames" because of the fact they came into that group. A big confusion occurred and subsided only when some of the group members explained the reason why they chose to join it. Marc affirmed he joined the group "because of my name". The following session, he "confessed" what was the "marking" episode : in a similar group he was strongly struck by an interpretation of the therapist who conducted it. This episode happened 15 minutes before the end of the last session. We did not know anything about the interpretation content, we were only transmitted the emotion in all its violence, supported by the tone of his voice. The lack of the representation content increased the confusion and the difficulty to think.

Fifteen minutes before the end of the following session, Solange made herself into the spokesperson of a "secret" Anne-marie told her during a break: her daughter was to be hospitalized because of a cancer, she felt guilty because she came into this group. Though the words Solange said on behalf of another, she remembered the threat of cancer her mother uttered against her when she was the same age as Anne-Marie's daughter.

There developed a common point of reference for traumatic events which had remained unthought (meaningless), on the basis of the first phantoms of loss of reference frames, of depersonalization anxiety and confusion of identity. The memories of violence in the relationships between parents and children with their stake of life and death, were taken into the mechanism of transference on the therapists and on the group. How does the group organize itself during the very first sessions? I would say that the unconscious organizer of the group psychic apparatus is a phantom whose formula is: "a parent threatens--repairs a child". The fact that it is impossible to state this formula in only one way is an argument in favor of its polyphony: The scene includes a reversibility of the positions of the subject, the object, the action (acting the threat, suffering it). The internal group structure is recognized. In it, each subject benefits by a scene and by a related place which make him unique, according to the version of his secondary phantom.

The first session of the second day began with Michèle telling us about her dream of the night before: "she was making love with Marc's father or, maybe, with hers, in a room with everything in a mess. Both of them had gray hair." Surprised by her own words, Michèle added she did not really know what she was saying about fathers. Each element of the dream is the origin of different associative series. The first series are organized starting from the uncertainty of the father's identity (Marc's father or Michèle's ?), from their common features (gray hair) and the

l'épreuve du groupe, Paris, Dunod. Trad. anglaise *Linking, alliances and shared spaces. Groups and the psychoanalyst*, London, International Psychoanalysis Library (2007).

insistence and displacement of the incestuous desire. The chain will come up against the resistance of the transference on me ("the same gray hair") and on Marc's silence whose place in Michèle's dream will be often recalled. The second associative series have this origin: "the room in a mess", the love disorder: The day before there was " a battlefield", as a violent and chaotic primal scene. The third series take its origin just from recalling this catastrophe: the sudden and violent death of one of the participants' father, the disappearance of a friend on the mountains, the death of an elder brother, the paralysis of a mother because of a road accident.

The evocation of these traumatic events and of death will provoke a further libidinal-cathexis which supports a fourth associative link. The main reason of the dream is taken into consideration again: there, in the group, is it possible to make love without breaking the prohibition of incest between siblings? Or is it that the requirements of the abstinence rule are valid only for the relationships between therapists and participants?

Let us go back to Michèle's dream and let us stop on the representation of "Marc's father" as an object of the displacement of her incestuous desire, which is here expressed directly. Michèle's dream is also Michèle's interpretation of what she unconsciously picks up about what has been put at stake in Marc's traumatic event. In fact, this involves her, too, because it deals with her own phantom of seduction by the father. The associative work of the group makes the variations larger, expressing its connections. Michèle's dream is co-determined by the associative process of the group; Michèle dreams of an unknown side of herself.

The dream marks that interdiscourse. Starting from Michele's dream, in the core of the organizing phantom of the group, a transformation is formed: the reprisals phantom is associated to the seduction phantoms, particularly the phantom of sexual seduction of the son by the father

The Dream Tale in the Group

The clinical example allows us to analyse the statute of the dream and that of its narration in the group, more precisely. The first question concerns the dreamer: as far as the cited situation is concerned, who dreamt the dream? Obviously, Michèle did: above all and to the highest degree, the dream is "selfish", as Freud reminded us. It consists of its function of hallucinatory satisfaction. Is it also the case about the making and the addressing of it?

If we take into consideration the group associative work during the day-before sessions, we have to suppose that, in the group, day psychic residues have been produced. These psychic residues have been picked up by Michèle to formulate the dream thoughts. These remainders have been used and transformed according to her own fabricating processes. We could say that, as an oneiric representation, Michèle realized her own desire and at the same time what she perceived about the phantoms and psycho-sexual and unconscious conflicts mobilized in the group.

The dream is Michèle's interpretation of what is still repressed in the group and close to becoming preconscious in herself. We can apply to the dream of the group, what Freud wrote in the analysis of the dream of the botanic monograph, by recalling Goethe's metaphor about the weaver: " here we are in the core of a thoughts' factory". The dream made by Michèle is the original fabric that she weaves on the loom of the weaver-group. On the other side, it gives us a representation of the psycho-sexual conflicts and phantoms moving in the group. As a dream-carrier, she loads herself with all that the group can't dream about.

The second issue is about the dream addressee. Of course, Michèle dreams for herself, for a part of herself whose representation she delegates to the characters of the dream. However, she also dreams for the group participants who are the support of her transferred objects: Marc, me, Sophie, the group as a whole, the addressees of her dream. In the group, the interpretative function of the dreamer has been recognized by the group and the dreamer dreams to keep on this function , by which, "selfishly" she receives some benefit. The dream-carrier is formed through the same process Levi-Strauss described to us to produce the sorcerer⁷. In the very same way, the group attributes to one of its members the function of interpreter- dreamer, it invests him with a function the dreamer couldn't grant to himself by himself and so, he becomes and recognizes himself as a group dreamer, just as the sorcerer holds his power and function since he knows he is the sorcerer and he is recognized as the sorcerer by the others:" He is proclaimed sorcerer; since there are some, he could be one", Levi-Strauss notes (1958, p.189).

Which is the nature of the associative work which is realized in the group? Pontalis (1972) pointed out the contrast between the poverty of the dreamer's associations on his dream, in the group and, on the contrary, the interest the group members' associations show about the dream⁸. I suppose that this phenomenon depends on the fact the group recognizes itself as the beneficiary, the maker and the addressee of the dream. Therefore, the group interprets it as material built for an interpretation. So, we shall say that the dream narration made by a dreamer in the group, is a tale offered to the associations of the group members.

I. Identify five functions of the dream in the group

A function of return of the repressed in a representation that is acceptable for the preconscious. A female member will have access to her own incestuous phantom after the narration of Michèle's dream and the group members' associations having issued some signifiers that she can use.

A function of intersubjective treatment of the day residues which are carriers of meaning still unconscious and charged with instinctual investments repressed the day before.

^{7 7} C. Levi-Strauss, 1958, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris, Plon.

⁸ J.-B. Pontalis, 1972, « Rêves dans un groupe », in : Anzieu D., Kaës R. et al., *Le travail psychanalytique dans les groupes, 1. Cadre et processus*. Paris, Dunod (1982).

A function of container and contained of the representations (alpha elements).

A function of representation dramatized and staged, coupled with the subjective positions in the group.

A function of granting the dreamer a privileged position in the group topic, dynamic and economy and thus, in the transference dimensions. This function is the one of the dream-carrier.

We can verify that the five functions are those performed by Michèle's dream tale, in the group. Before Michèle's dream, Marc's symptom is based on the assertion of the reality event which "marks" him, the reason that he had the "mark".

The dream tale, the associative work and the transference analysis open the access to the meaning of the symptom: the incestuous and confusing relationship with the father will put into action a process of transformation of his traumatic representation.

I.2. The figure of the dream-carrier

Some subjects as Marc, Solange and Michèle, guarantee the intermediate functions which are necessary to the process of the intersubjective connections: in the family, in a couple, in a group or in an institution. These subjects provide those functions because of their personal reasons, but also after an intersubjective determination to which they subdue: they are the spokespeople, symptom-carriers, dream-carriers, death-carriers, ideal-carriers...I suggested the concept of "phoric" function to specify these positions and functions⁹.

The dream-carrier teaches us about the "phoric" function of those "group dreamers", such as we find in some families or in some psychiatric centers among the medical staff as well as among the patients. I tried to show how these dreamers dream their own dream, but also that some day-before events produce its content and destination. The content: events shared by the group members, common traumatic experiences such as some utterances and statements. The destination: it is determined by the transferences, which are often very strong and by the identifications regime, often of a protective type. The dreamer dreams in this situation, giving and telling his dream to the group and this fact poses the question of the dream making and, starting from here, we pose the question of its further use in the group intersubjective relationships. We could formulate the following hypothesis. The dream-carriers make dreams crossed by an interdiscourse polyphony which contributes to dream making. As all the analysts, in the dream they dream of someone or for someone. These dreamers dream in somebody else's shoes. These dreamers become dream-carriers because of the effect of an inner need to establish a psychic room larger than theirs, through projective identifications, they need to deposit it in an extra-topic container: an other or more than an other, of a whole group. The dream-carriers play the interpreting function

⁹ Cf. R. Kaës, 1993, *Le groupe et le sujet du groupe. Eléments pour une théorie psychanalytique du groupe*. Paris, Dunod. Trad. ital., 1994, *Lo gruppo e il soggetto del gruppo*. Roma, Borla.

of their Preconscious function. This is the basis of the group oneirism: the dreams travel among the members of a group, there is an exchange of characters and letters and the exchange implies a porosity of the psychic wrappings, as contained in the narcissistic wrapper of the shared dream by the mutual identifications.

In the psychoanalytic clinic of the group, the position held by the dream-carrier is placed at the crossing point of three spaces: that of the shared phantom, that of the associative discourse and that of the intersubjective structure witnessed by the transferences.

II. The Dream as Interdiscourse and Intersubjective Texture

If we say that the dream is an interdiscourse organization in which the work is done and the elements are anchored to the intersubjectivity in the "factory" where each element is distinguished, is the polyphony conception productive when it is applied to the dream analysis outside of the group situation? Which are the dream production processes which are responsible for its polyphonic character? I will use a particular kind of dream to try to give an answer: the group dreams.

These are dreams in which the dreamer performs different characters linked together by different kinds of relationships: often, many people meet in a familiar set (an apartment, a house), in a guest room (the living-room, the dining-room or even the therapist studio), or, in a passing-by space (the entrance, the corridor, the hall) but, sometimes, also in public spaces (an amphitheater, a meeting room, a church).

These people are parents, friends, other analysands, table mates, school mates or party partners.. The people who met can constitute a restricted group, a staff, a family, guests, a crowd, an assembly with characters more or less identified.

The associations which are stimulated by these dreams are based on the pleasure of being together in the space where the family members meet together, of meeting important people, of making a party or, on the opposite side, on the basis of the sorrow of being alone in the middle of unknown people, to be lost in a crowd and being invaded, observed and threatened, or, being rejected and forgotten. However, it also happens that they do not produce any association.

Freud had applied to the analysis of these dreams the basic principles he had elaborated in the Interpretation of Dreams. Some dream process can explain the relationships between the dreamer and the characters grouped in the dream. In the group dreams, the plurality, the multiple and the composite figures are effects of the identification, the condensation, the diffraction and the multiplication.

1. Identifications and the Dream: conglomerate-people, diffraction and multiplication

The reference to a plurality of objects or of psychic characters is present in Freud theories to define the identification from 1897: "The Plurality of psychic people:

the fact of the identification maybe authorizes the literary use of the expression."¹⁰. This first observation is contemporary to the studies on hysteria and it goes together with Fliess' debate, particularly at the moment of the operation on Emma Eckstein's nasal trumpets. This will be an useful guiding thread for the analysis of the dream called "of the injection made on Irma", and will provide the explanatory principle of the dream called "of the woman butcher".

The analysis of the dream of the woman butcher shows how the identification binds two (or more) people in a community:" the identification is a very important factor in the mechanism of hysteria. Thanks to it, with their pathological manifestations, neurotics can express the inner states of many people, not only theirs: somehow, they can suffer in many people's shoes and they can play all the roles in the drama by themselves."

All of a sudden, we have a group version of the identification, of the phantom, of the dream and of hysteria.

This grouped representation of the dream objects will be evidenced by the formation of the conglomerate-persons: the work of grouping is realized through the mechanism of condensation of the dreamer's objects. Thus, in the analysis of the dream of the injection made on Irma, Freud shows that in the back of the Irma of his dream are dissimulated many people he knows : his patient (Emma), his elder daughter (Anna), his niece, a girl in the hospital, another patient, his wife and other people. The dream analysis explains what the condensation work has collected: "Irma" of the dream....so she has become a general image, made up of a series of contradictory features. Irma represents all the people sacrificed during the condensation work because it happens to him what happened to them."

My opinion is that each Irma who was dreamt survived the sacrifice which the censorship had imposed.

Their identical and different features produced the polyphony of the dream crossed by all the different "people" forming the Irma-Group. The principle which binds the self of the dreamer to his dream characters is still the identification. On this basis, Freud observed the dream of the woman butcher fulfilled the desire that something was common to two people: and it was expressed by the exchange of one with the other.

The diffraction is one of the primary process which contributes to the creation of group dreams. The representation process combines with the decondensation, the displacement and the multiplication, so as to produce a specific mechanism which is responsible for the multiple representation of the self aspects which is represented by the dreamer's characters or objects, making up a group. The different elements of the dream's content represent only one idea, in fact:: an object, an image, the very person of the dreamer is decomposed into multiple

¹⁰ S. Freud 1897, manuskript L , in : 1887-1904 - *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer Verlag.

representatives, identical or not. Just as, for a subject, different members of a group can represent different aspects of his inner universe.

"(...) There are also dreams in which myself appears together with other people, who reveal themselves as being always myself when the identification is solved. Thanks to this identification, it is thus necessary to recollect those different representations which the censorship had forbidden. So, I can represent myself in the same dream many more times. First, I do it directly, then by the identification with other people. With such a kind of identifications, we can condense extraordinarily rich thought material.

2. The dream of the group: effect of the dream work or typical dream?

I tried to show that in the dream, the group is a particular effect of the representational processes used by the dream. I would like to carry on the analysis from another point of view, putting the dreams of the group next to the typical dreams. In effect, the group, a certain amount of people are often present in this category of dreams. In the analysis of the dreams of nakedness, Freud observed that the dreamer dreams himself naked or partially dressed in front of strangers. He suggested the following interpretation: "the great number of strangers who are indifferent to the performance have exactly the opposite desire to see some well known people to whom we showed ourselves naked, when we were kids.". Freud made his suggestion general: "we find so many people in so many dreams and, on the contrary, they always reveal our desire to "keep the secret.".

In the dreams about the death of beloved people, Freud suggested another example of the presence of a great number of characters. He reported the dream of one of his patients: "Lots of kids, her sons, her cousins, everybody was playing on the field. All of a sudden, everyone had wings and they flew away and disappeared ". Freud proposed to imagine that , having asked what happened to dead babies, she had heard people say they grew wings and became little angels. In the dream she gave the wings to her younger sons and she made them disappear as butterflies which flew away. (Tdt.221).

What do the multitude or the group represent in the typical dreams? The group is not only a representation of the inner group of the analysand. It does not represent only the multiples making up the Self which are represented in the difference of characters and their common link. The group is the representation of the inner audience, owned by each person. Finally and this is the new proposition , it gives a representation of desires and of "conflicts" which cross the identificatory "composition" or the "code" of the subject: the conversations heard from different sources are woven in the texture of the dream.

3. The polyphonic and intersubjective texture of the dream

The dream is polyphonic, it is elaborated at the crossing point of many structures of many processes and the materials it organizes, transforms and interprets are heterogeneous. As the word is a polyphony of many writings, the dream is built on

the basis of the productions and inner process of the dreamer, but some daily remainders and traces or marks of others are inscribed in the identifications of the dreamer. The dream which is dreamt is a composite construction. The dream is not a closed statement, it is acted and addressed: it is a transformation process, it is crossed by utterances or by other people's perceptions, sometimes by their dreams. The trace of this overdetermination of the dream shows in its ambivalence, better in its polyvalence. The dream is heterogeneous, heteromorphous, heterologous (Bakhtine); this last character is a consequence of the diversity existing among the psychic apparatus structures, the dream sources, the making process and the addresses or the people to whom the dream is devoted. The dream tale is a fortiori, its explanation tends to reduce the diversity, but its interpretation must give it back. Who is dreaming in the dreamer? For whom does he dream? So to support the polyphony prospective in the dream, we have to imagine another dream navel to be found in the intersubjective chain. I tried to show that in the group the dreamer is also the dream-carrier of another or of a collective of others. Now, we have to think about the limits of the intra-psychic space and its overflowing in a different way. As Breton, Artaud, Borgès and Tabucchi suggested, every dream is maybe crossed by the signs and the dreams of desire of an other.

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