

Freud's Rules of Dream Interpretation. Alexander Grinstein. New York: International Universities Press, 1983, 306 pages, \$30.00.

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The psychoanalytic method of treatment became possible in the moment when Freud recognized that the symptoms of certain kinds of neurotic patients made sense. During treatment Freud was surprised to discover that "patients, instead of bringing forward their symptoms, brought forth dreams" (Freud, 1916-1917, p. 83). This led Freud to conclude that dreams also made sense. In 1899, Freud presented both a general theory of neurosis and a systematic approach to dream analysis in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In that moment psychoanalysis became a reality.

The interpretation of dreams lies at the center of psychoanalytic theory. Freudian psychologists and psychiatrists have long recognized this. Nevertheless, Alexander Grinstein argues in his *Freud's Rules of Dream Interpretation* that most clinicians are baffled when confronted with the task of interpreting a dream. Grinstein wishes to dispel the notion that the dream interpretation depends on the analyst's intuitive skill. His goal is to demonstrate that the psychoanalytic method of treatment is not a matter of guess work. Dreams are like other neurotic symptoms. Grinstein argues that it is possible to identify a set of principles which analysts can use to guide them in their patients' treatment. Grinstein's goal is to demonstrate how Freud's work can serve as the basis for a practical guide to dream interpretation.

Freud's Rules of Dream Interpretation is a troubling book. Grinstein has set himself a difficult task. His success depends upon his doing two things: First, Grinstein must identify the critical elements in Freud's theory of dreams and examine the theory of symbolism which underpins that theory; and, second, Grinstein must demonstrate how *Freud's Rules of Dream Interpretation* can be applied in the clinical setting. Grinstein neglects the first of these responsibilities. This is a mistake. Grinstein owes his readers a careful, systematic presentation of the theoretical basis for Freud's approach to the interpretation of dreams.

Freud wrote two major works on dreams: *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *Der Traum* (1916). The second of these books appeared in 1917 as the second part of Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917). These lectures contain the most complete statement of Freud's approach to dreams. Freud built his theory of dream interpretation on the assumption that it was necessary to make a radical break with the past and open "a new path" (1916-1917, p. 100) to the analysis of dreams.

The interpretation of dreams depends on the therapist's ability to aid his or her patient in the process of penetrating through the dream's manifest content. Following Freud, Grinstein argues that therapists must begin with the assumption that the real content of a dream is not what is presented during the telling of the dream. The dream's manifest content hides its real meaning. The success of psychoanalysis depends upon the thera-

pist's ability to help the patient decipher the symbols present in the dream. The patient and the therapist, however, are not alone. Grinstein believes that it is possible to deduce from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* a set of rules which will provide analysts with the means to discover the "true" story that lies behind the dream.

Grinstein is correct when he argues that "the understanding of dreams is a touchstone of psychotherapy" (1983, p. ix). His procedure is to collate Freud's pronouncements on the different aspects of dream interpretation and, then, comment on these statements. Much of the book consists of dreams which Grinstein's patients have presented him during his career as a psychoanalyst. One weakness of the book is that Grinstein has elected to discuss these dreams out of context. The reader learns nothing about the patient's background or at what stage in the treatment the dream appeared. A second and more important problem lies in the mechanical way in which Grinstein analyzes dreams. Grinstein wants to avoid the charge that he allowed his intuition to guide his interpretations. Consequently, his explications of some of his patients' dreams possess a rigid and deterministic quality.

This book was written for those who do not need to be convinced. It offers a number of interesting ideas. The problem with Grinstein's book is that he assumes that his readers share his commitment to psychoanalysis. This is understandable. Grinstein works as both a supervising analyst for the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute and as Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Wayne State School of Medicine in Detroit. Grinstein has raised important questions. He has presented a clear statement of his experiences. Despite its weaknesses, this book offers a number of practical suggestions from which both psychologists and psychoanalysts can profit.

References

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