



ISPSO 34th Annual Meeting, Copenhagen 3rd - 9th July 2017: Dreams always take place: Spaces, Places, Rooms, and Furniture, inside and around us

PARALLEL PAPERS III
SATURDAY 8th JULY 1100-1215
ROOM III - 7.0.18

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*When Place Takes Dreams: Social
Dreaming in Nazi Germany*

“What haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others.” This quote from the Hungarian psychoanalyst, Nicholas Abraham, begins a recent book – part legal treatise, part Holocaust history, part family study – by Phillippe Sand (2016). One generation’s secrets become the next generation’s gaps, and also their hauntedness. But a remarkable dream journal from the 1930’s suggests the ways that, in the context of terror and destructive group processes, the earlier generation attempted to keep secrets from itself, leading to profound, collective dissociation and the licensing of horrific destructiveness. A natural experiment in what Gordon Lawrence called “social dreaming,” – indeed the foundational text for his theories - the journal illuminates the steady assault on a person’s inner life and the way that massive social trauma and malignant authoritarianism turn an

essential privacy into dangerous secrecy, even from the self.

Adaptation requires that we “see” the Other on whom we depend so fully throughout development, and psychic change relies to some extent on our seeing the Other whose conflicts speak to and through us. As Gordon Lawrence realized, especially in urgent contexts, envisioning the Other may move beyond the familial environment to larger social realities, in an effort to represent and understand the profound gaps in one’s experience of the Other. Each dreamer is potentially a “seer” of his or her “people” and of the relationship to that Other. This can be thought of as a form of unconscious citizenship. But what if the Other is all-powerful and ruthlessly dangerous? And what if that Other sees that you see it?

This is the framework from which I would like to reflect on what has been called the “cut out” unconscious and on the remarkable journal mentioned above. Throughout the 1930’s, the journalist, Charlotte Beradt, kept a notebook,

published in 1968 with the title, *The Third Reich of Dreams*, in which she recorded the dreams of ordinary, “non-political” German citizens, just after

National Socialism came into power. We will examine these dreams for what they might tell us about the totalitarian process and the organizational dynamics within it. We will also consider how, under circumstances of terrorized and terrorizing group processes, dreams are challenged to illuminate the dreamer’s current physical and psychological place; rather place takes over dreams.

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