



# Unconscious Fantasies and the Relational World (Relational Perspectives Book Series)

By Danielle Knafo, Kenneth Feiner

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What is the role of unconscious fantasies in psychological development, in psychopathology, and in the arts? In *Unconscious Fantasies and the Relational World*, Danielle Knafo and Kenneth Feiner return to these interlinked questions with a specific goal in mind: a contemporary appreciation of fantasy in its multiform relational contexts. To this end, they provide detailed examinations of primal scene, family romance, and castration fantasies, respectively. Each category of fantasy is pushed beyond its "classical" psychoanalytic meaning by attending to the child's ubiquitous concerns about sexual difference and feelings of incompleteness; her perception of the parental relationship; and the multiple, shifting identifications that grow out of this relationship.

Evocative clinical examples illuminate the manner in which patients and analysts play out these three core fantasies. They are balanced by chapters that explore the generative side of these same fantasies in the arts. David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet* provides an artistic rendering of the primal scene; Jerzy Kosinski's life and work illustrates the family romance; and French multimedia artist Orlan's "carnal art" recreates the trauma of castration. *Unconscious Fantasies and the Relational World* is a tightly woven study of broad and basic questions. It is in equal measure a contemporary re-visioning of the grounds of fantasy formation, a relationally informed guide to clinical techniques for dealing with unconscious fantasy, and an examination of the generative potential of unconscious fantasy in the arts. Out of the authors' broadening and broad-minded sensibility emerges an illuminating study of the manifold ways in which unconscious fantasies shape lives and enrich clinical work.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"Knafo and Feiner have done a masterful job of reinvigorating the concept of unconscious fantasy. Their erudition is worn so lightly that we are carried along by the sheer pleasure of seeing how the false dichotomy between fantasy and reality dissolves into a mutually interpenetrating dialectic. By combining modern classical and relational theory, they bridge a one-person emphasis on imagination and desire and a two-person focus on relationality and social context. The resulting synthesis not only attests to the centrality of fantasy as a problem-solving mode of thought; it also reestablishes the critical importance of fantasy for contemporary psychoanalysis."

- Virginia Goldner, Ph.D., Founding Editor, *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*

"Through an interwoven mix of the clinical, the theoretical, and the psychology of the arts, Knafo and Feiner explore the crossroads where unconscious fantasy meets relational processes. They have produced an informed, highly readable, and stimulating book - a book at the center of current theoretical debates that will reward readers at all levels."

- Fred Pine, Ph.D., Private practice, New York City

"In *Unconscious Fantasies and the Relational World*, Danielle Knafo and Kenneth Feiner critically examine the classic psychoanalytic constructs of the primal scene, family romance fantasies, and castration from a relational perspective of the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and artistic world of the individual. They resurrect these developmental phenomena and take them to heights that soar away above the usual relational framing of internal psychoanalytic processes. In the hands of Knafo and Feiner, classic psychoanalytic processes come alive. The book is a lucid and creative realignment of the role of unconscious fantasies in our relational world. It is a strong and needed addition to clinical practice and is highly recommended."

- Annie Lee Jones, in *PsycCRITIQUES* 51.40, 2006

"The clinical material provides excellent, detailed examples of the three types of fantasies and the manner in which unconscious fantasies can influence and even determine the unfolding of a life...Additionally, the application of psychoanalytic methods to analysis of film, memoir and performance art holds a certain interest for the reader."

- Martha Dupecher in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* Vol.89, No. 3.

"*Unconscious Fantasies and the Relational World* packs much rich material into its pages, raises many of the current issues and debates in psychoanalytic theory, provided thought provoking forays into psychobiography and applied psychoanalysis and finally but not least requires us to look at the place of psychoanalysis in today's culture. Given the deluge of journals we attempt to plow through, to have so much in one slim volume is indeed a boon."

- Helen B. Levine, Ph.D., *Psychologist-Psychoanalyst*, 2008

## About the Author

Danielle Knafo, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program at Long Island's CW Post Campus, is also faculty and supervisor at Derner's Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis. She is the author of *Egon Schiele: A Self in Creation* and editor of *Living with Terror, Working with Trauma: A Clinician's Handbook*. She maintains a private practice in Great Neck, New York. Kenneth Feiner, Psy.D., a psychoanalyst in private practice, has conducted research on child development and psychopathology assessment. He has written on psychoanalytic theories of development, psychoanalytic technique, and unconscious fantasy.

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