

The Dream Work of Sigmund Freud in Art and Architecture

John Shannon Hendrix

The distinction between the Lacanian Imaginary and Symbolic, and the preservation of the Imaginary in the Symbolic, is played out in the dream work described by Sigmund Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *On Dreams*, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, and *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*. The dream is not the unconscious, as both Freud and Lacan maintain, although it is seen to reveal the structures of the unconscious, and from the outset Freud's analysis is of the *memory* of the dream rather than the dream itself; the dream is thus seen as a mnemonic residue of perception. The content of the memory of the dream is labeled the *manifest content* of the dream, and the product of the conceptual analysis of the dream is labeled the *latent content*, or dream thought, of the dream. The latent content of the dream is not a content of the memory of the dream itself, but something which is ascribed to it by conscious thought. Dream work is the process which transforms the supposed latent content of the dream into the manifest content, the process by which the dream is generated as imagined by Freud in the supposition that it is generated from unconscious thought, or, as would be the case for Lacan, the discourse of the Other. The structures of both unconscious thought and Symbolic discourse contain particular linguistic constructions, as both are languages, the relations of which can be found in the relations between images in the manifest content of the dream. Lacan does not pursue dream analysis in psychoanalysis, but he adopts many of Freud's linguistic analogies from dream analysis in conceiving of the relation between the Imaginary and Symbolic.

Freud sees a direct relationship between the dream thought and the dream content in the same way as there is a direct relationship between the signifier and the signified in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, as two sides of a piece of paper, more or less, and the transcription between the two is governed by a linguistic syntax, a complex system of rules which operates according to a logic which does not always correspond to conscious reason. The mechanisms of representation, as they are developed between the dream thought and the dream image, are different from conscious mechanisms of representation in the intersection of perception and language, although the

mnemic residues of dream memories are derived from those of external perception, and the linguistic mechanisms of representation in the unconscious are derived from conscious language. Unconscious mechanisms are seen as a variation of conscious mechanisms not under the control of conscious reason; in that way they can be seen in the Lacanian sense as a discourse of the Other, the mechanisms of the Symbolic transposed into a deep structure, intersecting with the mechanisms of the Imaginary in the identification between the subject and the dream image.

As is often said, the ego is always present in the dream, the insertion of the perceiving subject into the unconscious mechanisms of language and perception. Such a relationship becomes problematic in Lacanian psychoanalysis, in the quadrature of the subject, in the attempt to show the elision of the subject in signification, which requires a distinction between the Symbolic and the Imaginary ego, a distinction which does not exist in dream work, because of the immediate identification between thought and image, signifier and signified, as in Saussurean linguistics, which is subverted by Lacan in the resistance of the signifier to the signified in conscious discourse, in the discourse of the Other. Thus for Lacan the unconscious cannot be anything other than the discourse of the Other, and a theory of dream analysis is not formulated outside of conscious experience. If it were it would be nothing other than a repetition of conscious experience and constructs.

Dream thoughts and dream content are for Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “two versions of the same subject-matter” presented in two different languages in a kind of transcript “whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation” (pp. 311–312).¹ Dream content is seen as a “pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of dream thoughts” in a signifying relation. Relations between dream images depend on relations between dream thoughts as a kind of deep structure syntactical matrix. There is no direct relationship between sequences of images in dreams and thought *processes* in the dream thoughts, which leads Freud to a conclusion which would suggest that there is no unconscious thought per se, but only mimetic repetitions and reproductions of thoughts which correspond to mimetic reproductions of images in perception, the mnemic residues. The unconscious doesn’t think in a way corresponding to conscious reason; it is as a monkey, as a sort of primordial form of conscious reason, imitating actions which are products of linguistic concepts, but whose actions are not connected to any linguistic concepts of its own.

The mechanism of the transposition from dream thoughts to dream images is labeled *imagination*, and the “mental activity which may be described as ‘imagination’” is “liberated from the domination of reason and from any moderating control” (p. 116). Dream imagination “makes use of recent waking memories for its building material,” in mimesis and repetition, and “it erects them into structures bearing not the remotest resemblance to those of waking life.” A Lacanian revision of Freud would suggest that the structures of dream images, if they can be seen as structures, are not erected by dream thoughts, but rather transposed. Dream imagination is “without the power of conceptual speech” and has “no concepts to exercise an attenuating influence,” thus being “obliged to paint what it has to say pictorially.” This would confirm the absence of thinking in the unconscious. There is a contradiction between Freud’s theory of the perception-consciousness system, which maintains the existence of unconscious thought, and Freud’s theory of dream work, which, while maintaining references to the existence of unconscious thought, suggests its impossibility.

The linguistic structure of the dream image is seen as “diffuse, clumsy and awkward”; it is clearly missing the organization of conscious reason, while its forms are mimetic of it. If the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, in Lacanian terms, it is only so in so far as it is a mimesis of the discourse of the Other. Dreams have “no means at their disposal for representing these logical relations between the dream-thoughts” (p. 347), or for representing logical relations between conscious thoughts, the relations created by syntactical rules. Dream images are compared to the visual arts in their incapacity to incorporate to any significant degree the syntactical structures of language. The desire on the part of the visual arts, in particular architecture, to engage as much as possible the syntactical structures of language, reflects the desire on the part of the arts to interweave the Imaginary and the Symbolic, in Lacanian terms, in the complete constitution of the subject. In Freudian dream analysis, dreams remain a function of the Imaginary rather than the Symbolic, in the projection of the ego in a pre-linguistic identification.

Thinking does not occur in the dreams themselves either, according to Freud; any thought processes which might be perceived in memories of dreams are only a mimicking of thought processes which occur in the dream thoughts, which are themselves a mimicking of conscious thought processes. Dreams are thus “thrice removed from reality” as the visual arts are for Plato, forms which are copies of sensible forms which are copies of intelligible

forms. “If we go into the interpretation of dreams such as these, we find that the whole of this is part of the material of the dream-thoughts and is not a representation of intellectual work performed during the dream itself.” Thus “what is reproduced by the ostensible thinking in the dream is the subject-matter of the dream-thoughts and not the mutual relations between them, the assertion of which constitutes thinking” (pp. 347–348). Dream images constitute a kind of façade and a form of deception; they are as the luminous embroidered veil of Plato hanging between the finite and the infinite, between the images which are mnemonic residues of perceived images, and the thoughts which, if they exist in the unconscious, are themselves mnemonic residues of auditory forms.

The memory of the dream image enacts the same dialectic as is found in metaphysics in conscious thought, the disjunction between that which is perceived and that which is conceived, which is at the core of the dialectic of the Imaginary and the Symbolic of Lacan. Any thought activity represented in dreams is represented as having already been completed, according to Freud, so thought activity, whether conscious or unconscious, is crystallized into a structure in the dream, made abstract, and made synchronic. Dreams can in that way be seen as another product of the death instinct, the desire to return to that more primordial form of conscious reason, which is defined as mimesis.

A contradiction in a dream, for example, cannot correspond to a contradiction in a conceptual sequence which is a product of the dream analysis. The logic of the dream is independent of conscious logic. There is an approximation of a conceptual contradiction, though, to the extent that mimesis would allow given its limitations. Any correspondence between conceptual structures would only be an indirect one. Different dreams vary in the clarity of their correspondence with conceptual structures; some seem to correspond fairly clearly, which can easily be a deception, and others make no sense at all. Different dreams would appear to contain varying degrees of the Symbolic in relation to the Imaginary as they are interwoven. Chronological sequences occur in dreams as imitations of chronological sequences in conceptual thought; they have no logic of their own, and any correspondence with conceptual chronological sequences is an accident.

Diachronic sequences, as they are understood in conscious reason, may as a result be compressed into synchronic events or images, or they may be fragmented, or reversed, in a logic which might correspond to the dream image in relation to the Symbolic, or the discourse of the Other, in the interac-

tion of the ego of the subject and the Symbolic structure in which it is participating, but not to conscious reason. In other words, because conscious reason is itself a function of the Symbolic, the discourse of the Other, in Lacanian terms, it is not in control of the structure of the dream, which is also a function of the Other. Any logic which can be found in correspondence between conscious reason and the dream is the logic of the Other, the linguistic matrix in which perception participates, and thus the mnemonic residues in dreams, in the Symbolic. Freud points to the synchronic representation of diachronic sequences in painting, in the *Parnassus* and the *School of Athens* of Raffaello Sanzio, for example, as evidence of the same process in conscious representation, which is a form of abstraction, a product of conscious reason, in a linguistic structure, in its ordering of that which is perceived, in the primacy of the Symbolic over the Imaginary.

The dialectic between the two mechanisms, the diachronic sequences of conscious reason and the characteristics of dream construction, consists of the dialectic between the hierarchy, unity, sequence and progression of conscious thought and the fragmentation, disjunction, contingency, alternation, slippage, and oscillation, all of which can be found to be characteristics of dream composition, the result of the alternate logic of the Other in the unconscious. The simultaneity of the conscious and unconscious necessitates an “oscillating” reading; the presence of the unconscious is revealed as that which is incompatible with conscious reason in the subject, which results in a continuous oscillation of presence, as language itself, as Derrida and Lacan have shown, is a continual oscillation of presence and absence.

Though the conceptual correspondence is arbitrary, the structuring of dream images as described by Freud corresponds fairly closely to linguistic structures, from which Lacan concludes that the unconscious is structured like a language, and it is safe to conclude that the unconscious is nothing other than the mimesis of language. Freud points out that the rules of collocation in dream images correspond to the rules of collocation in language. Dream images are distinct from one another in the same way that words are distinct from one another in a sentence, and the logic behind the combination is usually evident, a structural logic, as one that corresponds to the logic behind word combinations in sentences. Dreams seem to obey a grammatical and syntactical structure, regardless of whether a sense can be derived from them which corresponds to conscious reason. In that way dream images can be seen as pictorial equivalents of signifiers; they operate independently of the dream thoughts that they are supposedly attached to, and any signifi-

tion which they produce is a product of their combinations as systems of differences in a syntax, as in structural linguistics. Freud points out that dreams have no intention of communicating anything, so it is most likely that they produce no signification. Such communication would require a recognizable syntactical structure that corresponds to conscious logic, which does not exist in dreams, despite the periodic correspondences and similarities which are reproduced in imitation of relations in logic.

One example of the inability of dreams to correspond to conscious reasoning, in addition to the lack of distinction between the synchronic and diachronic, is the simultaneity of contraries and contradictions. Opposite forms are combined into a single form, or appear as the same form, or a form might be replaced by its opposite, or represented by its opposite. There is no distinction between positive and negative, no sign of any conclusion that might be drawn from conceptual thought as given in the syntactical structure of language. Freud points out that the same quality can be found in certain words in archaic languages. In Latin, for example, *altus* means both high and deep, and *sacer* means both sacred and accursed. In certain words in ancient Egyptian, “the order of the sounds in a word can be reversed, while keeping the same meaning,”² as described in the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (p. 221). Archaic languages “betray vagueness in a variety of ways which we would not tolerate in our writing today” (p. 285). Current languages vary widely in their ambiguity. The Italian language, for example, has many fewer words available to it than the English language; as a result, words in the Italian language often have more than one meaning, and the language requires more words in a sentence to express the same idea than would be expressed in English. The same kind of reversals occur in dream images; the conceptual structure of the order has no importance which is readily discernible by conscious reasoning. Dreams display the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the coincidence of opposites. The *coincidentia oppositorum* is seen as the dialectic of becoming in reason, in the development from the particular to the universal, which is pre-existent in it.

Representation in dreams, according to Freud, is often facilitated by replacement, as in a *coincidentia oppositorum*, or a condensation. “When a common element between two persons is represented in a dream, it is usually a hint for us to look for another, concealed common element whose representation has been made impossible by the censorship. A displacement in regard to the common element has been made in order, as it were, to facilitate its representation” (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 357). As Lacan has shown,

this is precisely the mechanism of metaphor, in the eliding of the first signified, which produces the anchoring point, the point at which signification is produced and the bar between the signifier and signified is crossed, and the point at which the unconscious is made present as an absence. Displacement has also been seen to be a mechanism in architectural composition. This is one of many examples in Freud's dream interpretation which points to the linguistic structuring of dream images.

The two principal mechanisms of the formation of dream images are displacement and condensation. Displacement is responsible for the fact that dream images do not correspond to conscious reason, and causes the dream to be seen as nothing more than a distortion, or perversion, of reason, a deceptive façade, as in architecture. Lacan has shown that displacement is a primary mechanism of both metaphor and metonymy in language, and that it results in a figurative or poetic signification or effect in language which goes beyond its literal function and introduces the unconscious, as in the case of metaphor, a distorted signification, and in the case of the metonym, displacement results in pure nonsense. In such a mechanism the dream can be seen as a form of tropic language whose logical sense is removed from rational discourse.

The other principal mechanism in dream formation is condensation, which involves the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the representation of two contrary ideas by the same structure, as well as the diachronic combined into the synchronic, and "collective and composite figures." Condensation is the most active mechanism in dream formation, as "in dreams fresh composite forms are being perpetually constructed in an inexhaustible variety,"³ as described by Freud in *On Dreams* (p. 30). In condensation the dream image is *over-determined* by material in the dream thoughts, or in the mnemonic residue of visual or auditory perception, as it were. A single dream image may be the combination of several pictorial or linguistic forms which have no apparent relation to each other, as in the play of difference in signification, or *différance*. Condensation is of course the mechanism of synecdoche, which Lacan confuses with metonymy, in tropic language. In synecdoche a single word serves as a substitute for several words, or a complex idea; condensation is thus another form of displacement, and can be seen as a mechanism of metaphor and metonymy as well. The condensation and displacement which Freud observes as characteristics of the dream image lend to the theory that the dream is a pictorial language, that the unconscious is structured like a language.

The composition, structure, and significance of the dream are all given by conscious thought in analysis, while the particular quality of the relationships between images in the dreams is created by mechanisms which can be compared to linguistic mechanisms, which are uncensored by conscious thought. Dream work thus provides a key to the relation between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, to the relation between perception in consciousness and sense experience in the primordial Imaginary, and object identification in Imaginary ego formation. Though there is a direct correspondence between the “dream thought” and the dream image for Freud, the construction of the dream entails a more complex relationship between the thought (mnemic residue) and the image. As is seen in condensation and displacement, “just as connections lead from each element of the dream to several dream thoughts, so as a rule a single dream thought is represented by more than one dream element; the threads of association do not simply converge from the dream thoughts to the dream content, they cross and interweave with each other many times over in the course of their journey” (*On Dreams*, p. 32).

A similar concept can be seen in the “floating kingdoms” of Ferdinand de Saussure, the realm of signifieds (conceptual networks of signifiers) in relation to the realm of signifiers (words), where, while there is a direct physical relationship between the signifier and the signified, they are joined between the two realms in a complex network of relationships, and it is particular occurrences within that network of relationships which engenders signification. In the *Course in General Linguistics*, a “linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas; but the pairing of a certain number of acoustical signs with as many cuts made from the mass of thought engenders a system of values; and this system serves as the effective link between the phonic and psychological elements within each sign” (p. 120).⁴ The relations between the dream thoughts and the dream images can be seen as a series of differences combined with a series of differences in which the pairing (incidental or otherwise) of a particular image with a particular concept might be taken as a linguistic sign, which contains a signifier and a signified. Or they can just be seen as coincidences of systems of differences.

The displacement which occurs in dreams is responsible for distorting, more than anything else, the “psychical intensity” of the thoughts or mnemic residues which correspond to the dreams, according to Freud. The psychic intensity is described as the significance or “affective potentiality” (*On Dreams*, p. 34) of the thought or perceptual trace; the system of differences

between the traces is a system of intensities as much as a system of signifiers, or more, because of the nature of the relation between the mnemonic residue and perception; some images or words are perceived at a different level of intensity than others, more clearly or more loudly, etc., and it stands to reason that the variations in intensities would be translated in the composition of the dream images, and that those variations would be illegible in relation to any conceptual structure. "In the course of this process...the psychical intensity, significance or affective potentiality of the thoughts is, as we further find, transformed into sensory vividness."

As a result of the complex network of psychical relationships which produce the dream images, and the mechanisms of condensation and displacement, dreams are composed of "disconnected fragments of visual images, speeches and even bits of unmodified thoughts," which "stand in the most manifold logical relations to one another" which are seen for example as "foreground and background, conditions, digressions and illustrations, chains of evidence and counterarguments" (p. 40). The network of logical relations which contribute to the composition of dream images is far too complex to be unraveled in dream analysis. Displacement, condensation, fragmentation, substitution and the *coincidentia oppositorum* are products of the complex network of logical relations, or the mnemonic residues of such, in dream thoughts, which is too complex to correspond to any logical structure. In the process of the dream formation "the logical links which have hitherto held the psychical material together are lost" (p. 41). It is the task of analysis to restore the logical connections which the dream work has destroyed, as dreams are seen as the "royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 647), an access to psychical mechanisms which psychoanalysis seeks to understand. Lacanian psychoanalysis furthers this quest in the analysis of the linguistic mechanisms of which dreams are a product.

In that the dream is always a function of the subject, or the ego of the subject, that the dream is always in relation to the subject, the dream must be seen as a function of the Symbolic, as a linguistic mechanism. Although the dream has no intention of communicating anything, it is nevertheless a product of the relation of the subject to itself, a product of the insertion of the subject into the Symbolic, and the intersection of the Symbolic and Imaginary self-definitions of the subject. To that degree, the dream functions as a signifying process as does language. It is only a self-referential language, but it is constructed as a mimesis of interpersonal language. The dream is a rep-

resentation of the subject to itself as a construct of the Symbolic, as the unconscious is the discourse of the Other. The dream is the Other speaking to the subject. The dream “behaves toward the dream content lying before it just as our normal psychical activity behaves in general toward any perceptual content that may be presented to it. It understands that content on the basis of certain anticipatory ideas, and arranges it, even at the moment of perceiving it, on the presupposition of its being intelligible...” (*On Dreams*, p. 49). This is exactly the way that Lacan describes signification at the moment of the entry of the subject into the signifying chain.

In the signifying chain of Lacan, the point at which the elided subject is identified, as in the metaphor, is the point at which the relation between the elided subject and ideal ego, the Imaginary ego prior to the Symbolic, is intersected by the vector of enunciation in the L-schema, which occurs only retroactively in the signifying chain, in anticipation of signification, as the subject in the dream anticipates signification in perception. The point is the anchoring point, the *point de capiton*, and “the diachronic function of this anchoring point is to be found in the sentence, even if the sentence completes its signification only with its last term, each term being anticipated in the construction of the others, and, inversely, sealing their meaning by its retroactive effect,” as Lacan describes (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 303).⁵ Dream construction, like the signifying chain in language, must be supported by a self-conception of the subject as ideal ego, but the conception of the subject can never be realized; it is always an expectation, and the subject can only identify itself after the fact of enunciation. This is borne out by the fact that, though the dream only functions in relation to the subject, the subject is never present in the dream. In the dream, as in language, “this is a retroversion effect by which the subject becomes at each stage what he was before and announces himself—he will have been—only in the future perfect tense” (p. 306).

The Imaginary ideal ego of the subject is the body of the subject, as it is reinforced in object identification with the body of the other. As the subject is absent from the dream, as it is absent from conscious discourse, and is only present in anticipation. As the Imaginary and Symbolic interact, and constitute the whole of conscious experience, the object identification of the Imaginary is preserved as a vestige or fragment in the Symbolic, and the Symbolic is preserved in the Imaginary, in the matrix of the Other. Such identifications cannot be abandoned completely, just subsumed into the ma-

trix of both conscious and unconscious identity, and removed from their dominant position in the identity of the subject.

In the anticipation of the dream content by the dream, according to Freud, the dream “runs a risk of falsifying it, and in fact, if it cannot bring it into line with anything familiar, is a prey to the strangest misunderstandings. As is well known, we are incapable of seeing a series of unfamiliar signs or of hearing a succession of unknown words, without at once falsifying the perception from considerations of intelligibility, on the basis of something already known to us” (*On Dreams*, p. 49). For Lacan, this would make it impossible for the subject to recognize itself in the dream, as the subject is not able to recognize itself in architecture, and it would be at this point that “the ambiguity of a failure to recognize that is essential to knowing myself is introduced. For, in this ‘rear view’, all that the subject can be certain of is the anticipated image coming to meet him” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 306), which is absent in the dream. The anticipated image is the Imaginary vector between the elided subject and the ego ideal, which announces the absence of the subject in language, in crossing the bar between signifier and signified, but bars the subject from its own absence (the unconscious), in not being able to cross the bar at the same time, as in metaphor. In this way the unconscious is present in the dream as well.

In terms of revealing both conscious and unconscious, Symbolic and Imaginary, mechanisms in the subject for Freud, “a dream that resembles a disordered heap of disconnected fragments is just as valuable as one that has been beautifully polished and provided with a surface” (*On Dreams*, p. 49), if not more so, given the deception of conscious reason. A dream is nothing other than condensation and displacement, that is, the mechanisms of language enacted to replay mnemonic residues of visual and auditory perceptions, for no communicative purposes. In the condensation and displacement, words and images are taken out of the context in which they are perceived, as submitted to the mechanisms of conscious thought, and they are freely recombined and substituted in the mimetic process. As opposed to waking thought, the nature of which is to “establish order in material of that kind, to set up relations in it and to make it conform to our expectations of an intelligible whole” (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 537), dreams are not subject to the orderings of conscious thought, and thus produce both chronological and pictorial hybridizations, as well as displacements and distortions of what is perceived according to conscious mechanisms. In that way dreams are perceptions minus conscious thought, while the mechanism of dreams, the un-

derlying linguistic structure, is the same. In this way the dream is the discourse of the Other, and the unconscious is structured like a language. The mechanisms of language are not necessarily conscious mechanisms, and in that way it is the subject which is the product of language, rather than language which is a product of the subject. The language of which the subject is a product is the language of the Other, which is the unconscious.

When memories of dreams are analyzed, they are submitted to conscious reason, and are thus distorted and misunderstood. The language of the Other is not completely accessible to conscious thought. It is not possible for conscious reason to completely understand the matrix of interpersonal relations which constitutes the Other. In the Hegelian dialectic between subjective and objective spirit, objective spirit, conscious discourse, is seen as a manifestation of subjective spirit. The individual subject wills itself into the Other in order to define itself, through reason. Subjective spirit is defined by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as individual self-consciousness (767) which becomes objective spirit through “collective picture-thinking,” collective reason and perception, which Lacan would define as the Other.⁶

Hegel sees perception as a function of subjective spirit, desire and self-consciousness. In *Reason in History* (p. 33), ego is defined as the desire of the subjective spirit to become objective spirit. “This self-knowing subjectivity projects itself into all objectivity. This constitutes the Ego’s certainty of its own existence. Inasmuch as this subjectivity has no other content, it must be called the rational desire....this is the sphere of its phenomenality. It wills itself in its particularity. If it succeeds in thus realizing its finiteness, it doubles itself (its potential finiteness becomes actual finiteness).”⁷ The externalization of subjective spirit as other, and the self-consciousness of the subjective as other in language, is picture-thinking (*Vorstellung*), or perception, as given by reason in signification. The externalization is an alteration of the content of subjectivity through misunderstanding, the impossibility of knowing the subjective in the objective as the Other. Subjective spirit becomes objective spirit when mind comes to know itself as its own other, double of itself. Thus it is impossible for reason to identify itself in the Other, though it is given by the Other, as it is impossible to recognize itself in the dream or in the unconscious.

For Freud, then, “there is no doubt...that it is our normal thinking that is the psychical agency which approaches the content of dreams with a demand that it must be intelligible, which subjects it to a first interpretation and which consequently produces a complete misunderstanding of it” (*The Inter-*

pretation of Dreams, p. 538). The production of dream thoughts must then be seen as external to the dream, as that which conscious reason projects onto the dream, through the desire of subjective spirit becoming objective spirit, and the desire of the subject to insert itself into the Other, as a thinking subject. The ego of the subjective spirit is the ego of the Imaginary, the self-imposition of the subject into the dream prior to its analysis. “However many interesting and puzzling questions the dream-thoughts may involve, such questions have, after all, no special relations to dreams and do not call for treatment among the problem of dreams” (p. 544). The dream thoughts are not only external to the dream, but they have no particular relationship with it. The Symbolic is external to the Imaginary, as a result of the will of subjective spirit toward objective spirit, and its doubling of itself in reason as a result, its self-alienation and misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the process of which it is a result, that is, that it is a product of the Other.

Though there is not a direct relationship between dream content and the dream thought which is the intervention of conscious reason, there is a correspondence in dreams between the image in the Imaginary and the word in the Symbolic, a correspondence which is given by the underlying syntactical structure of the dream, the presence of the unconscious. Freud gives as an example of correspondences between images and linguistic structures the frequent occurrence of houses and parts of houses in dreams. The house is seen in dream interpretation to be a symbol of the body, as a fortress might be a symbol of the ego. But Freud also observes the correspondence between the occurrence of the house in the dream and the use of the house in tropic language, in metaphorical and metonymical figures of speech in the German language. “But the same symbolism is found in our linguistic usage—when we greet an acquaintance familiarly as an ‘*altes Haus*’ [‘old house’], when we speak of giving someone ‘*eins aufs Dach!*’ [a knock on the head, literally, ‘one on the roof’], or when we say of someone else that ‘he’s not quite right in the upper storey’. In anatomy the orifices of the body are in so many words termed ‘*Leibesportfen*’ [literally, ‘portals of the body’]” (*Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, p. 196).

It is clear that the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy, crucial in the access to the unconscious for Lacan, are in operation visually in dreams, as transpositions from mnemonic residues of auditory perceptions to visual images. Certainly the obverse would be the case as well, that relationships between the mnemonic residues of visual images are transposed into auditory images in dreams, which gives an indication of the complexity of the under-

lying linguistic matrix which connects dreams with conscious thought, and which connects the unconscious with the conscious, and which establishes the importance of the unconscious in the definition of the subject as a product of the Other.

The linguistic structures themselves must be subject to condensation, displacement and distortion, which makes their presence even more obscure. Condensation occurs in language use in slips of the tongue, for example, in which neologisms are created which display an unintentional repression, which reveals the presence of the unconscious in language. An example is “the young man who offered to ‘*begleitdigen*’ [*begleiten* (accompany)’ + ‘*beleidigen* (insult)’] a lady” (p. 212). The same mechanisms occur in dream images, as they are transposed from mnemonic residues of auditory perceptions, and they are combined and interwoven with straightforward transpositions of linguistic structures, rendering them virtually impossible to translate. In addition, “a manifest element may correspond simultaneously to several latent ones, and, contrariwise, a latent element may play a part in several manifest ones—there is, as it were, a criss-cross relationship” (p. 213). As a result an attempted translation of a dream can never be literal nor follow a fixed set of rules.

The signifying chain in language, in the production of metaphor and metonymy in tropic language, for example, depends on an unbroken rational sequence in order to arrive at the *point de capiton*, the point of signification in Lacan’s scheme, at which the subject enters into the sequence as absence. Even in neologisms, jokes, and metonyms which make no literal sense, rational discourse is maintained. The same is not true for the language of dreams, but at the same time dreams cannot be seen as irrational babble. In displacement in language, in metonymy for example, which entails the production of nonsense, an allusion is required for the metonym to make sense as nonsense. “The foot of a hill” makes no sense literally, but it makes sense in its nonsense because there is a prior relationship between the foot and the hill (the hill can be seen as a body). “In waking thought the allusion must be easily intelligible, and the substitute must be related in its subject-matter to the genuine thing it stands for” (p. 214). The “precondition of intelligibility,” and the precondition of association, must always be present for language to function. The same is not true in dreams. There is no precondition of intelligibility, because nothing is being communicated, and there is no precondition of association between images, because the mnemonic residues have been disassociated and taken out of context from the structure in which they were

perceived. The linguistic structure of the dream is radically distorted from the linguistic structure of conscious thought, which makes understanding the dream in relation to conscious thought even more difficult.

Freud's dream analysis, and psychoanalysis in general, establishes the importance of the relation between the unconscious and conscious thought, and in fact establishes the primacy of unconscious processes in relation to conscious thought, which Lacan translates as the Other, the Symbolic structure of language. For Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "it is essential to abandon the overvaluation of the property of being conscious, before it becomes possible to form any correct view of the origin of what is mental...the unconscious is the larger sphere, which includes within it the smaller sphere of the conscious."⁸ Freud cannot avoid though, as has been seen, an analysis of the unconscious in the terms of conscious thought. This is given by the supposition that there is an unconscious thought that has similarities with conscious thought; it is primarily the existence of an unconscious thought that is brought into question by Lacan, in the redefinition of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other and as that which is structured like a language, but which, as Freud has shown, does not function like a language.

The unconscious is seen by Freud as both constituted by repression, as a linguistic mechanism, and an agent of that repression, and of *méconnaissance* in conscious thought. The unconscious is a non-originary origin of repression, as the Other is a non-originary origin of *méconnaissance* for Lacan, and the ego in subjective spirit is a non-originary origin of the self-alienation of reason in objective spirit. The ego, which in all three ideologies can be defined as thought itself, is the non-originary origin of psychoanalysis, and the better part of thought is inaccessible to itself. The structure of the Freudian unconscious is seen to contain the same internal differences and differentiations as does language in conscious thought, that occur in a non-originary origin; in other words, the unconscious can be defined by the quality of the *différance* of Jacques Derrida in the same way as signification in language, and thus, the *signifiance* of Lacan, in the mechanisms of conscious discourse. The unconscious is equally devoid of the presence of the subject as conscious discourse, as seen in dream construction and the mechanisms of language, and is thus the discourse of the Other.

The Freudian unconscious represents for Derrida in *Writing and Difference* the "irreducibility of the 'effect of deferral'..." (p. 203),⁹ the absence of presence. The conscious text, the interpretation of the dream, for example, cannot be a transcription, "because there is no text present elsewhere as an

unconscious one to be transposed or transported” (p. 211). If the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, which is the source of the subject, then the Other cannot be known to the subject; the subject cannot know its origin, nor the basis of its thought. There is no discourse in the unconscious, no communication, nor in dreams, which can be translated into a conscious discourse. “There is no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue of having been written elsewhere. There is no text written and present elsewhere which would then be subjected, without being changed in the process, to an operation and a temporalization (the latter belonging to consciousness if we follow Freud literally) which would be external to it, floating on its surface.” The dream could not be a hieroglyph, as Freud suggests in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (p. 377) for example, because the signs do not contain a discourse. The unconscious does not exist, except as a presence of absence, an absence within presence. Thus for Derrida “the unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united—a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are *always already* transcriptions” (*Writing and Difference*, p. 211).

This can be seen, as has been shown, in the structure of dreams: a complex matrix of mnemonic residues, structured like a language, but with no intention of communication, and free of the restrictions of language in conscious discourse. As the primary mechanisms of dream construction are condensation and displacement, corresponding to the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy in the anticipation of the subject in the signifying chain, “signified presence” in both conscious and unconscious thought “is always reconstituted by deferral, *nachträglich*, belatedly, *supplementarily*: for the *nachträglich* also means *supplementary*. The call of the supplement is primary, here, and it hollows out that which will be reconstituted by deferral as the present. The supplement, which seems to be added as a plenitude to a plenitude, is equally that which compensates for a lack (*qui supplée*)” (pp. 211–212). The supplement is tropic language, in the linguistics of Lacan, as that which reveals the unconscious, the lack which is being supplemented, the absence which is being made present. The signifier represents the subject to another signifier, and desire is instituted in the signifying chain, as a function of the supplement, a function of the lack in being. For Hegel, desire is the will of subjective spirit toward objective spirit, which is precisely the supplement, conscious discourse which is the product of the objectification of spirit in reason, which is the objectification of a non-originary origin, an ab-

sence, which necessitates the self-alienation of reason, which is confirmed by the structuring of the unconscious.

The mnemonic residues of perception which constitute the content of dreams, and which can be seen as revealing the presence of the unconscious in conscious thought, can be compared to the “trace” which Derrida describes as a component of language in *différance*. In *Positions*, *différance* is defined as the systematic play of traces of differences and of the spacing by which signifiers relate to one another. Spacing is the production of “intervals without which the ‘full’ terms could not signify, could not function.”¹⁰ *Différance* is thus the mechanism of the production of differences in signification in the absence of a direct relationship between signifier and signified, in the linguistic structure introduced by Saussure.

In *différance*, “the play of differences involves syntheses and referrals that prevent there from being at any moment or in any way a simple element that is present in and of itself and refers only to itself.” Thus, whether “in written or in spoken discourse, no element can function as a sign without relating to another element which itself is not simply present. This linkage means that each ‘element’—phoneme or grapheme—is constituted with reference to the trace in it of the other elements of the sequence or system” (*Positions*, p. 26). The linkage “is the *text*, which is produced only through the transformation of another text. Nothing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.” The trace is as the anchoring point of Lacan, the *archê* or point of non-originary origin in signification at which signification is produced retroactively in relation to the subject, and that point is constituted by the absences which have been introduced by presences in the signifying chain.

Mnemonic residues of perception are already traces, presences of absences which are constituted in the dream. If the dream can be compared to a hieroglyph, then the pictographic script of the hieroglyph can only be seen as a trace, a mark which does not correspond to conscious discourse, but which suggests the presence of conscious discourse, as mnemonic residues suggest the presence of auditory and visual perceptions, in memories of dreams and hallucinations. The psyche is thus seen by Freud as a “space of writing,” but it is a writing which is always exterior and posterior to the spoken word, the auditory perception. Perception is already an inscription, and there is a gap, a play of differences, between what is perceived and what is reconstructed in the mind through the intersection of perception and reason, or the Imaginary

and Symbolic, which manifests itself as the dream. The unconscious is structured like a language, and the language is a play of differences and traces, as in conscious discourse. The trace in both conscious and unconscious discourse is given by the dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic, or subjective and objective spirit, the absence contained in the identification between the image and the word, especially as it contributes to the definition of the subject, and the role of the ego in expressive language.

As Lacan explains, in the essay “Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever,” from the volume *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, “in a universe of discourse nothing contains everything, and here you find again the gap that constitutes the subject. The subject is the introduction of a loss in reality, yet nothing can introduce that, since by status reality is as full as possible” (p. 193).¹¹ Language, as a necessarily all-inclusive system of signification, cannot contain what is other to itself. As there is a gap between what is perceived and what is represented in language, a gap which is represented by the absence of the subject in language, that gap is manifested by the trace in *différance*, and the anchoring point in *signifiance*, as an archaic or primordial gap, a *chôra*, the origin of which exceeds the possibility of language, as an enclosed system, to incorporate.

The absence of the subject in language is inaccessible to itself, as the unconscious is inaccessible, and it is the function of the Symbolic to fill in for it. For Lacan, “when the subject takes the place of the lack,” as the Symbolic, “a loss is introduced in the word,” the *point de capiton*, or the trace, “and this is the definition of the subject” (*The Structuralist Controversy*, p. 193). Language is other to the subject, “what I call the otherness, of the sphere of language” (pp. 193–194); if language, the chain of signification, is otherness, then the subject is always a “fading” beneath the chain of signifiers. The signifier does not represent anything to anybody, as opposed to a sign or symbol; the signifier only represents the subject to another signifier, the subject which is absent. Desire is the search of the subject to rediscover itself in language, which is impossible. Desire is enacted by the Symbolic, in the formation of conscious reason, in the absence of the Imaginary ego, that part of itself which it seeks to rediscover. “The question of desire is that the fading subject yearns to find itself again by means of some sort of encounter with this miraculous thing defined by the phantasm” (p. 194), the lost Imaginary ego, the self-identification formed prior to language, the subjective spirit of Hegel.

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, The Standard Edition*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), pp. 311–312.
2. Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, The Standard Edition*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York, W. W. Norton, 1966), p. 221.
3. Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams, The Standard Edition*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1952), p. 30.
4. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966 [1915]).
5. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits, A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).
6. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold Vincent Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
7. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Reason in History, A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Robert Hartman (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953 [1837]), p. 33.
8. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Volume VI, pp. 612–613, quoted in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 161.
9. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
10. Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 27, quoted in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p. 97.
11. Jacques Lacan, “Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever,” in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970).