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## FREUDIAN SYMBOLIZATION DEVICES AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO INTERTEXTUALITY

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In *The Interpretation of Dreams* and in *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Freud expresses his reservations about the use of symbolism as a method for the study of dreams, describing it as a more or less arbitrary method of "decoding" dreams in which "each sign can be translated into another sign having a known meaning, in accordance with a fixed key" (1900: 97). Perhaps Freud's greatest contribution in the area of dream interpretation is to have postulated that dreams constitute a "language" and that it is possible to determine their "meaning" only once we have distinguished between the *manifest dream-content* ("what the dream actually tells us") and its *latent dream-thoughts* ("the concealed material, which we hope to reach by pursuing the ideas that occur to the dreamer" [1917: 120]). These two versions of the dream are comparable to the expression of a given subject-matter in two different languages. Writes Freud (1900: 277):

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The dream-content seems like a transcript [*Übertragung*] of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation. The dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have learnt them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts.

The relations between the individual elements contained in the manifest dream and what they stand for in the dream-thoughts are divided by Freud into four categories: the relation of part to whole, approximation or allusion, symbolic relation and the plastic representation of words. On a larger scale--at the level of the relation of the manifest content of a dream as a whole to the latent content as revealed through the dream's interpretation--there are also four categories: condensation (*Verdichtung*), displacement (*Verschiebung*), the transformation of thoughts into visual images and "secondary revision", or the attempt to render a dream coherent by suppressing its appearance of absurdity or nonsense. The transformation of the latent dream into the manifest dream (which always entails a greater or lesser degree of distortion

[*Entstellung*] and of censorship) is called by Freud "dream-work", while the opposite movement—the attempt to arrive at the latent dream through the manifest one—is a work of interpretation (Freud 1917: 170). The work of interpretation, in turn, can be of two kinds: either by means of the dreamer's associations in commenting on his dream (this is the cornerstone of Freud's method) or through symbolism (resorted to by Freud only as a complement to his method).

Through this highly condensed summary of Freud's approach to dream analysis, it should be clear to an audience of semioticians that Freud's work on the interpretation of dreams, based on the separation of the dream's manifest content from its latent thoughts, is by no means without analogy to such achievements in intellectual history as Peirce's distinction between the sign and its interpretant, that made by Frege between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, Saussure's division of the linguistic sign into signifier and signified, or the distinction drawn by the Russian Formalists between the *fabula* and the *sujet* of a narrative text. It is noteworthy that Freud himself did not hesitate to speak of the *Zeichenbeziehung*, or "sign relationship" (the Standard Edition—1900: 277—proposes, dubiously, "symbolic relation", which holds between the manifest content and the latent thoughts of dreams, even though he was familiar neither with the writings of Peirce nor those of Saussure.

Although Freud relegates symbolism as a technique for the interpretation of dreams to a secondary role, it is nevertheless true that the notions of symbol and symbolism themselves still remain important in Freudian psychoanalysis. As Laplanche and Pontalis have pointed out in their *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* (1967: 476ff.), symbolism, as it is used in psychoanalysis, has both a broad and a narrow sense. Understood in the broad sense, it is the mode of indirect and figurative representation of an unconscious idea, conflict or desire, and it includes, in the case of Freud, displacement, condensation, overdetermination and figuration. Hence, we can speak, for example, of a dream or of a symptom as the symbolic expression of a conflict or of a desire. In the narrower sense, symbolism pertains to the constancy of the relation between a symbol and what it symbolizes in the unconscious, independently of the individual discourse of the dreamer. As for Freud, he does not undertake to provide a rigorously formal definition of the symbol, or even to situate it within a comprehensive system of signs, as semioticians seek to do, even though, on the one hand, he does relate it to such characteristic phenomena of the dream as the replacement of one element by another and allusion while, on the other hand, he insists on the genetic link between symbols in psychoanalysis (where the vast majority of symbols are linked to sexual objects and relations) and those existing in such areas as folklore, fairy tales, myths and popular beliefs (1917: 152ff.). For him, the essential trait of the symbol lies in the constant, codified relation between the dream-element and the unconscious dream-thought, so that (unlike condensation or displacement) symbols frequently have fixed, even universal (or in any case supra-individual), meanings which can easily escape the conscious perception of the individual. "A constant relation (...) between a dream-element and its translation", we read, "is described by us as a 'symbolic' one, and the dream-element itself as a 'symbol' of the unconscious dream-thought" (Freud 1917: 150). The relation in question, then, is not arbitrary (as in the case of mathematical symbols, for example), but is based, rather, on *comparison*: long objects such as sticks, umbrellas, posts and trees, for example, symbolize the virile member, whereas pits, cavities and receptacles of various sorts symbolize the female genitals.

The classification of Freud's dream symbols within a general theory of signs is clearly problematic from a semiotic point of view and a subject worthy of serious investigation. Indeed, Freud himself warned against over-reliance on the use of symbols in dream interpretation, citing their varying degrees of intelligibility, the ambiguities to which they are subject as a result of their differing contexts of occurrence and the risk of their leading to automatic interpretations. As has been noted by one observer, moreover, symbols as understood by traditional psychoanalysts tend to take for granted the "natural" connections between words and things and are not, properly speaking, discursive phenomena and therefore do not really concern the theory of language (Wilden 1968: 229).

It is not my ambition here, however, to embark on the complex undertaking of situating Freud's notion of the symbol within a typology of signs. As the title of this paper indicates, it is my purpose to see in what ways Freud's work in this area might be of use to the theory of intertextuality in literary studies. To do this, I would like, first of all, to speak briefly of what Jacques Lacan called the "Symbolic Order", or simply the "Symbolic" --not to be confused with Freud's symbolic. For Freud, the symbolic (as we have just seen) is based on a fixed code, and it concerns the nature of the relations linking a symbol to what the symbol represents: it thus corresponds, more or less, to what Saussure called the "motivation" (as opposed to the "arbitrary" nature) of the sign. The Symbolic Order, however, covers a much vaster scope and, as Lévi-Strauss has emphasized, embraces all of human culture. Being coextensive with semiotic, the Symbolic Order is closely related, first of all, to *structure*—not only the structures of interhuman reality (via, in particular, the acquisition of language), but also those of the unconscious, reflecting Lacan's project of reformulating Freudian psychoanalysis in terms of structural linguistics, as summarized in his famous formula: "The unconscious is structured like a language." The other aspect of the Symbolic Order is the *Law*, a paternal metaphor in which the Name-of-the-Father, as a substitute for the phallus, becomes the basis of all symbolic activity (cf. Dor 1985).

More immediately related to our present concerns, however, is the fact that, as Anthony Wilden (1968: 233) noted in commenting on an article by Guy Rosolato entitled "Le Symbolique" (1959), the Lacanian Symbolic Order enables us to extract from Freud's distinction between the manifest dream and its latent dream-thoughts the idea of a symbol as a "transmuted sign": the multivalency of the symbol raises the possibility that, for a given signifier, there may be several corresponding signifieds and that, vice versa, for one of these signifieds there may be a plurality of signifiers. Understood in this way, the symbol becomes, in effect, a summarizing principle for the most important single chapter in *The Interpretation of Dreams*—"The Dream-Work", where, as already mentioned, the basic mechanisms or devices of dreams are examined: condensation, displacement, the transformation of thoughts into visual images and secondary revision. I would like to stress that permutations similar to those which characterize the symbol understood as a multivalent sign and as applied to the devices of dream-work are of no meager interest to the intertextual approach to the study of literary texts.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to say a word about intertextuality, itself. So diverse are the practices in this much debated area of research that the very use of the expression "intertextuality" is disputed by many and even rejected by some. It nevertheless remains that, as a generic term (if nothing more), intertextuality is a

useful term to designate a wide variety of theories and analytical approaches (some of them going under names other than that of intertextuality) which, over the past twenty-five years or so, have grown out of a dissatisfaction with the idea of the unity or the immanence of the literary text: indeed, in some of the more extreme cases the very notion of "text" itself has been put in question. Generally speaking, however, those working in the area of what we are calling intertextuality tend to affirm something like "the very idea of textuality is inseparable from and founded on intertextuality" (Riffaterre 1980: 625), or they may characterize the text as "a mosaic of quotations" (Kristeva 1969: 146) or as "the plural text" (Barthes 1970: 16), or they may broaden the notion into a "textual transcendence" or "transtextuality" which includes "everything that puts [the text] into an obvious or secret relation with other texts" (Genette 1982: 7)--to take only a few of the better-known examples.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the approach to intertextuality, however, the overriding principle is that textual analysis must necessarily take into account elements which may not be explicitly borne out in the particular text under examination, be it such abstract features as generic or narrative structures or, more concretely--although not necessarily more visibly--the incorporation of one text into another through such devices as parody or travesty.

I would like now to turn to a theory of intertextuality which has drawn to a significant degree from the field of psychoanalysis--that of Julia Kristeva, as presented in her book: *La révolution du langage poétique*, published in 1974. Having coined the term "intertextuality" in 1966 in her essay on Bakhtin's "dialogism" (1969), Kristeva abandoned it in her later work, saying that intertextuality had come to be too closely associated with the traditional study of sources and influences. What is at issue, she argues, is not what an author has borrowed from other authors, but rather "the passage from one system of signs to another." For this reason, she proposes to replace the term "intertextuality" with that of "transposition", explaining that "the passage from one signifying system to another requires a new articulation of the thetic--that is to say, of the positioning of utterance and of denotation" (Kristeva 1974: 59-60). She calls transposition a "device" (*un procédé*) and places it alongside two others: metaphor and metonymy--the very rhetorical figures taken over by Lacan (1981) along the lines developed in Roman Jakobson's article "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia Disturbances" (1956) in order designate, respectively, Freud's "condensation" and "displacement". Had Kristeva adhered more closely to the terminology of rhetoric, it seems to me that she would have chosen, not the term "transposition" to add to those of Lacan's metaphor and metonymy, but rather that of "metalepsis", a figure which, at the level of the proposition, consists of substituting an indirect expression for a direct one (Fontanier 1821: 127) and which, in narratology, designates the intrusion of a narrator, of a narratee or of a character into a diegetic level other than the one to which the agent in question is originally assigned by the code of the text, as when, for example, a reader is assassinated by a character in a novel he is reading (cf. Genette 1972: 243ff.).<sup>2</sup> What is interesting in Kristeva's choice of terminology is that "transposition" is the very word used in one of the French translations of Freud's book on dreams for *Entstellung* (in English: "distortion"). Laplanche and Pontalis (1967: 114) contest this translation, preferring to translate *Entstellung* as *déformation*, rather than as *transposition*. However, this detail is not really central to the point that I am trying to make here. Throughout *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud maintains that dreams are wish-fulfillments and that, in the course of the dream-work by means of which dream-thoughts are transformed into

manifest dreams, these wish-fulfillments are distorted, or deformed, as a result of the forces of censorship: "a dream", writes Freud (1900: 160; underlined in the original), "is a (disguised) fulfillment of a suppressed or repressed) wish." It is clear, then, that for Freud the interpretation of dreams—that is to say, the determination of their meaning—cannot be realized without taking into account the distortion, or the differential relationship, between the wish and the dream through which this wish is manifested. Kristeva's term "transposition" is meant, firstly, to reflect this differential relationship and to expand it beyond the realm of dreams so as to include textual processes functioning on a broader scale. And secondly, the term is intended to emphasize the fact that textual processes—and, consequently, the production of meaning—are inseparable from categories included under what others have called intertextuality. Although these dimensions of Kristeva's reasoning are compatible with the overall orientation of the present paper, the fact that she adopts a questionable rendering of Freud's *Entstellung* (i.e. "transposition") calls for a revision of terminology. The principle of "the passage from one system of signs to another" contains, as might be deduced from our discussion thus far, two components: on the one hand, metalepsis as the textual equivalent of Freudian distortion—both a complement to the devices of metaphor and metonymy and a key structural and semantic feature of the intertextual composition of the text; and on the other hand, transtextuality, or the broadening of the intertextual principle so as to account for the various aspects of textuality (cf. Genette's typology) which are included within the individual text.

To conclude these preliminary and not wholly unhypothetical remarks on the possible use of Freudian psychoanalysis in the elaboration of the theory of intertextuality and its application to the study of literary texts, I would like now to introduce the notion of *textual work*. As we have already seen, dream-work corresponds to the transformation of dream-thoughts into a manifest dream, while a movement in the opposite direction is carried out in the work of interpretation, an activity which is based primarily on the dreamer's associations in commenting on his or her dream, but also on an understanding of symbols—symbols being characterized in Freud's writings by a predetermined and codified relation between an element in the manifest dream and a dream-thought. From the point of view of the literary text, I would like to suggest that it is the combination, or interdependence, of these two forms of "work" within a given text that gives rise to textual work: for example, the "condensation" of several source texts by means of a textual metaphor whose meaning can be grasped only by referring back to the source texts. In cases such as these, the work of interpretation is not to be confused with interpretation as it has been conventionally understood in literary studies. It is notable that the English translation "interpretation" for the German *Deutung* is somewhat misleading: the *Deutung* of a dream consists in determining its *Bedeutung*, i.e. its meaning. It would, in fact, be more appropriate to conceive of interpretation in terms comparable to the Peircean *interpretant*—that is to say (as Peirce explained [c.1895: 1.339]), that category of thirdness corresponding to "the idea to which [a sign] gives rise" without which semiosis cannot occur, or (as we find in a later text [c.1897: 2.228]) "an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign" created in the mind of a person to whom a sign, or representamen, has been addressed.<sup>3</sup> The idea of textual work, as inspired from Freud's approach to the analysis of dreams and understood as the double (or even multiple) movement within a text between two (or more) discourses, not only entails the principle of the interpretant, but it is also compatible with intertextuality

as a corrective to the shortcomings of textual immanence and largely synonymous with the intertextual processes at work within every text. The mechanisms upon which these processes are based and whose functioning constitutes textual work can be called *symbolization devices*, and the examination of these devices can take as its point of departure Freud's technique for the analysis of dreams.

In this paper, then, I have attempted to outline a possible theoretical framework for the analysis of symbolization devices, firstly, by proposing to generalize what Freud called the *Zeichenbeziehung* (or sign relationship) between the manifest dream and the dream-thoughts into the Lacanian Symbolic Order. Secondly, I have added to Freud's conception of the symbol the idea of multi-valency, i.e. the possibility of a given signifier's grouping together several signifieds, and, conversely, the possibility that one of these signifieds may be dispersed among a number of signifiers. And thirdly, I have introduced a revised version of Kristeva's notion of "transposition", itself derived from Freud's *Entstellung* (or distortion), by substituting for this expression two terms which designate explicit textual processes: metalepsis and transtextuality.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>What many theoreticians call "intertextuality" is, for Genette, but one of five different types of transtextuality: the actual presence of one text in another, as in quotation, plagiarism or allusion. The signifying processes which these theoreticians frequently have in mind when using the term intertextuality are given a detailed examination in *Palimpsests* under the term "hypertextuality": the transformation or imitation of one text by another. The principal significance of the term "transtextuality" is that, in designating intertextuality in the broader sense of the term, it focuses on the various *aspects of textuality* that contribute to the constitution of the text, rather than on sources or on classes of texts.

<sup>2</sup>The device of metalepsis is fundamental to the intertextual dimension of narrative. See, for example, my article on Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1988).

<sup>3</sup>Michael Riffaterre (1985: 44), in referring to the latter of these two texts, has outlined an "intertextual model" which is based on Peirce's triadic conception of the sign: "a three-way relationship between the text (or subtext), its intertext, and the second intertext that the text brings to bear on its relationship with the first. (...) The literary interpretant is the second intertext equivalent to, or more developed than, the text." In spite of the interest and the rigor of this model, it must nevertheless be pointed out that it follows a line of reasoning which is distinctly different from that which has been adopted here, especially as regards the link we have sought to develop between the intertextual dimension of the literary text and Freud's method for the interpretation of dreams, including, in particular, the Freudian principles according to which dream-thoughts are "translated" into a manifest dream-content and the distortion to which an unconscious wish is subject in the course of its transformation into a dream.

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