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## “The flash of awakened consciousness”: dream images in Freud and Benjamin

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### ABSTRACT

This essay explores the role of visual images in dream imagery as a space where unconscious processes intersect with historical forces. It offers a comparative reading in Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (1982). Freud conceptualizes dream images as condensed memory traces that navigate between perception and hallucination, revealing repressed desires. Conversely, Benjamin’s dream images critique modernity’s loss of aura, offering moments of “Now-Time” as opportunities for historical creation. The essay argues that both Freud and Benjamin share a foundational premise: turning a blind eye to the obscure and unknown dimensions of individual and collective experience fosters crises and destruction, whereas striving to reveal these hidden areas promotes transformation. Exploring disruptions and ruptures in the continuity of experience challenges the inclination to act according to Freud’s concept of repetition compulsion or Nietzsche’s eternal return, as interpreted by Benjamin. These ideas are explored through the dream of the burning child presented by Freud and the ghost dream presented by Benjamin. The dialectic of insight and blindness, alongside the image of open doors in both dreams, invite us to consider how, even amidst loss and rupture, dream images can open pathways to new realms of experiencing and remembering.

### KEYWORDS

Sigmund Freud; Walter Benjamin; dream images; dream interpretation

Dreams and neuroses seem to have preserved more mental antiquities than we could have imagined possible; so that psycho-analysis may claim a high place among the sciences which are concerned with the reconstruction of the earliest and most obscure periods of the beginnings of the human race.

– Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900, 549)

The Copernican revolution in historical perception is as follows. Formerly it was thought that a fixed point had been found in “what has been”, and one saw the present engaged in tentatively concentrating the forces of knowledge on this ground. Now this relation is to be overturned, and what has been is to become the dialectical reversal – the flash of awakened consciousness.

– Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* ([1982] 1999, 388)

Human experience is shaped as much by discontinuities and mysteries as it is by coherence and logic. The fractures and inconsistencies in our perception often tell alternative

stories – stories that diverge from the linear narrative of consciousness and rational thought. Among these, dreams stand out as one of the most potent representations of these enigmatic tales. In this paper, I explore Sigmund Freud's and Walter Benjamin's perspectives on dreams and dream imagery. As demonstrated in my previous work, a comparative analysis of Freud and Benjamin reveals striking similarities and intertextual connections between these two modern thinkers. Both were deeply engaged with the study of images – Freud through the concept of visual imagery and Benjamin through the notion of *Denkbild* – as sites where visible and hidden dimensions of experience intersect. Dreams, central to their most canonical texts, serve as a compelling locus for examining this dynamic interplay.

In my previous work, I examined Freud's concept of dream-thought, constructed from visual images, alongside Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image and its literary form, the *Denkbild*, as intertwined conceptual frameworks. Both refer to residues of regressive thought conveyed through the German term *Bild*, which translates as image, picture, or figure. Freud's *visuelles Bild* (visual image) and Benjamin's *Denkbild* (thought-image) each articulate a dialectic between a condensed experience of the past – resistant to language and representation – and the inevitable transformation of experience into words. In my initial study, I explored the visual image's potential to represent the unrepresentable and to preserve hidden mnemonic traces in moments of trauma, particularly through lamenting figures that appear in the writings of Freud and Benjamin (Tzur Mahalel 2023). A subsequent work focused on childhood memories that evoke a return to infantile experience – both in content and in form – primarily through visual imagery. These notions are examined through a psychoanalytic reading of Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood around 1900* ([1938] 2002). Childhood memories are not necessarily recovered as realistic events but rather possess the capacity to generate new experiences in the present of remembrance, loosely anchored in the past (Tzur Mahalel 2024). Building on this foundation, the present study explores how dream images – situated at the intersection of unconscious processes and historical forces – function in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* and Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* as sites where rupture, loss, and the possibility of transformation converge.

When crafting canonical texts, thinkers aim to catalyse a transformation in cultural paradigms – a kind of Copernican revolution. Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*Die Traumdeutung*) and Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (*Das Passagen-Werk*) are rich, multi-layer works, with dreams and their visual imagery central to both. This comparative analysis will focus on the visual dimensions of dream imagery, investigating how the two thinkers addressed this subject and its implications for psychic life and cultural processes. Their shared cultural and historical contexts, as Jewish intellectuals in German-speaking Europe, possibly influenced their engagement with dreams.

Freud and Benjamin, shaped by their Jewish heritage and the disorienting crises of modernity, sought to find meaning in the ruptures and discontinuities of human experience. Their work reflects the tension between preserving tradition and confronting its disruption, focusing on breaking points and fractures in the perceived continuity of life. This shared background influenced their theories through two interwoven factors: the Jewish imperative to remember – a foundational element of their cultural and spiritual heritage – and the escalating atrocities they faced as Jews during the historical period in which their ideas evolved. Living as part of the German-speaking Jewish bourgeoisie of late

nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Central Europe – shaped by the legacy of the Haskalah, Jewish emancipation, and the tensions between secularization and cultural particularism within the Austro-Hungarian and German empires – Freud and Benjamin grounded their philosophies in the experience of estrangement from tradition and the search for meaning in a world undergoing profound upheaval. This search would become even more urgent in the shadow of rising antisemitism, the collapse of European liberalism, and the historical rupture of World War II.

For Freud, dream images represent the psychic residues of repressed desires, offering the potential for personal transformation by linking past wounds with present awareness. For Benjamin, dream images disrupt the linearity of time, appearing as momentary flashes of meaning that challenge the alienation of modern life and create pathways toward historical redemption. Freud's and Benjamin's shared Jewish legacy infuses their works with a deep commitment to remembrance and a sensitivity to the transformative possibilities embedded within moments of crisis. As secular Jews in German-speaking Europe, both grappled with the loss of tradition and the search for meaning in a fragmented world. Their insights invite us to consider how, even in the midst of loss and rupture, dream images might open a door to new realms – possibilities that remain as urgent today as in their own time.

This exploration unfolds in three parts. First, I examine the visual aspects of dream imagery in Freud's and Benjamin's thought. Second, I juxtapose their approaches through two specific dreams: the dream of the burning child, presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud 1900), and the ghost dream, presented in *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin [1982] 1999). Finally, I explore the dialectic tension between insight and blindness, which is manifested in these dreams. This tension is most vividly expressed through the image of the open door, presenting the potential for transition and transformation during times of turmoil.

### Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*: Dreams as visual mnemonic traces

Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) presents a groundbreaking theory and method for listening to dreams and learning from them about our hidden psychic life. Freud conceptualizes dream images as formations of memory traces, created from a combination of perceptual impressions and hallucinations. Memories are formed and stored in the unconscious, situated between the sensory and motor pathways. Their primary function is to inhibit motor responses through subjective interpretation:

They can be made conscious; but there can be no doubt that they can produce all their effects while in an unconscious condition. What we describe as our “character” is based on the memory-traces of our impressions; and, moreover, the impressions which have had the greatest effect on us – those of our earliest youth – are precisely the ones which scarcely ever become conscious. (Freud 1900, 539–540)

Between the sensory-perceptual end and the motor-response end of the mental apparatus lie unconscious memories. This area also houses the preconscious, which permits selective excitatory processes to enter consciousness. The unconscious “has no access to consciousness *except via the preconscious*, in passing through which its excitatory process is obliged to submit to modifications” (Freud 1900, 541, emphasis in the original).

A dream can be seen as an intermediate product of the unconscious and the preconscious. While it originates in the unconscious, its final form and content are shaped by preconscious processes. An image from the unconscious connects with one from the preconscious, enabling its transfer into consciousness: “The preconscious idea (*Vorstellung*), which thus acquires an undeserved degree of intensity, may either be left unaltered by the transference, or it may have a modification forced upon it, derived from the content of the idea which effects the transference” (563). The preconscious images that serve as vehicles for repressed desires are often neutral and obscure, having been previously overlooked or dismissed in our waking life. The day’s residues are the most prominent manifestation of these indifferent impressions. They offer the repressed wish a vacant vehicle through which it can be partially transferred to the preconscious. And these residues, which are located in either the conscious or the preconscious level, both borrow libidinal investment from the unconscious and at the same time offer something indispensable to the unconscious, namely the route to conscious expression, “the necessary point of attachment for a transference” (564).

These understandings are pivotal to the interpretation of dreams, for dreams are transitional phenomena between the preconscious and conscious expression of unconscious wishes: “the dream-work is essentially an instance of the unconscious working-over of preconscious thought-processes” (Freud 1938, 167). Dream images combine the perceptual impression from the preconscious and the mnemic trace from the unconscious. They therefore tend to be infantile in nature and lean on the visual aspect:

In dreams too the transformation of thoughts into visual images may be in part the result of the attraction which memories couched in visual form and eager for revival bring to bear upon thoughts cut off from consciousness and struggling to find expression. On this view a dream might be described as *a substitute for an infantile scene modified by being transferred onto a recent experience*. The infantile scene is unable to bring about its own revival and has to be content with returning as a dream. (Freud 1900, 546, emphasis in the original)

The process of interpreting dreams takes place within the analytic setting by listening to the dream’s narrative, exploring associations with its revealed images, and attempting to decipher their meanings. These associations are expected to arise freely and effortlessly into consciousness, facilitating the creation of links between memory traces – manifesting as images – and preconscious impressions and thoughts. As Freud noted, “the basis of association lies in the mnemic systems” (Freud 1900, 539). Dream interpretation occurs in a waking state, which primarily relies on secondary thought processes, whereas the dream itself unfolds in a sleeping state. In order to recapture a state of mind that resembles dreaming, Freud says that one needs to let one’s mind drift, travel through the unknown, enter darkness:

There is no possibility of *explaining* dreams as a psychical process, since to explain a thing means to trace it back to something already known, and there is at the present time no established psychological knowledge under which we could subsume what the psychological examination of dreams enables us to infer as a basis for their explanation. (511, emphasis in the original)

Freud offers a radical model for understanding the unknown, one that resists being fully known. To explain something, we must trace it back to what is already known, which keeps explanations and arguments within the realm of preconscious and conscious

thought. Thus, Freud argues, we must adopt a stance of not knowing in order to uncover the unconscious. We need to relinquish the rational thought and reality principles that govern our waking life and instead embrace an infantile state of ignorance, where the mind is free to explore without the constraints of logic and control. Dream interpretation requires us to let go of the compulsion to know that constantly accompanies our adult consciousness. Through free associations, we move closer to the infantile or prehistorical connections between sensory impressions and mnemic traces. Human experience is thus constructed more in an atmosphere of what remains unknown and mysterious than in one of what is known and revealed. In many ways, it is our dream state more than our awakened state that represents our authentic multifaceted experience: “The unconscious is the larger sphere, which includes within it the smaller sphere of the conscious. Everything conscious has an unconscious preliminary stage; whereas what is unconscious may remain at that stage and nevertheless claim to be regarded as having the full value of a psychical process” (612–613). Freud’s radical emphasis on the obscure and mysterious aspects of experience then takes an even more radical turn in Benjamin’s ideas.

### Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project* as a dream space of visual images

Walter Benjamin’s great and unfinished work, *The Arcades Project*, engaged him from 1927 until his death in 1940. He regarded it as his masterpiece and may have drawn some inspiration from Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* – a work of vast scope that explicitly aims to present a Copernican revolution. However, while Freud’s revolution centres on unravelling the mysteries of the human psyche, Benjamin’s revolution seeks to decode the mysteries of modern society.<sup>1</sup> They both lean on visual images and dream imagery as a method of reliving the past as a new experience and in order to create a distinct kind of history.<sup>2</sup> While psychoanalysis has long recognized the role of “picture puzzles” as representations of the dreamwork (Freud 1900, 277–278), Benjamin ([1982] 1999) shifts the focus from the psyche to the “track of things”. For him, the unconscious manifests not only in individual dreams but in the cultural artefacts and objects that shape collective history. Benjamin is engaged in the effort to reconstruct history from the fragmented and forgotten past, breathing new life into an array of objective facts and impersonal conventions:

Picture puzzles, as schemata of dreamwork, were long ago discovered by psychoanalysis. We, however, with a similar conviction, are less on the trail of the psyche than on the track of things. We seek the totemic tree of objects within the thicket of primal history. ([1982] 1999, 212)

Benjamin selected the nineteenth-century Parisian arcades as the focus of his research, viewing them as a key symbol in the history of modern culture. His chosen method of research was to dream the arcades in a continuous process of dreaming and awakening. The arcades, which at the time of Benjamin’s research were already relics of the past, serve as images of transition between traditional and modern culture, progress and mythology,

<sup>1</sup>In his notes for the 1935 *Exposé*, Benjamin wrote, “Freud’s doctrine of the dream as a phenomenon of nature. Dream as historical phenomenon” ([1982] 1999, 908).

<sup>2</sup>The present reading is also influenced and inspired by post-Freudian concepts, such as Bion’s ideographs (1984), Aulagier’s pictograms (2001), Botella and Botella’s psychic figurability (2005), and Scarfone’s traces (2013).

internal and external spaces, domestic and public. The arcades are public areas, yet they also contain features of an internal space. Originally constructed as modern shopping and cultural hubs for the bourgeoisie, the arcades symbolized progress but were gradually abandoned amid the social and urban transformations of twentieth-century Paris. The arcades, as relics of the past, represent a transitional experience, a kind of “rite of passage” with the potential for healing, akin to the processes of dreaming and dream interpretation: “Think of the arcade as watering place. What we would like is to stumble upon an arcade myth, with a legendary source at its center” (Benjamin [1982] 1999, 409). Healing “becomes vividly clear in those classical corridors where the sick and ailing turn into their recovery” (409). And it was not only in their past glory days that the arcades offered these distinct opportunities. In their present state, too, they serve as an image of forgotten and denied aspects of modern culture. In his notes for the 1935 *Exposé*, Benjamin writes, “First dialectical stage: the arcade changes from a place of splendour to a place of decay. ... The aspects of splendour and misery attaching to the arcades are dream vision” ([1982] 1999, 907–908).

For Freud, the mythological Ur-past is captured by individual manifestations of the unconscious, such as dreams and perplexes. For Benjamin, the mythological Ur-past is captured by artefacts of culture, namely objects and texts. For Freud, the dream acts as a key means of exploring the unconscious mind at the individual level, revealing the hidden forces that shape our thoughts, memories, and desires, while Benjamin uses the dream as a lens to explore the unconscious forces within modern society, examining how culture, objects, and history shape collective experiences, conventions, and esoteric phenomena. Eiland and McLaughlin, translators of the English edition of *The Arcades Project*, describe Benjamin’s research method as follows:

Not conceptual analysis but something like dream interpretation was the model. The nineteenth century was the collective dream which we, its heirs, were obliged to re-enter, as patiently and minutely as possible, in order to follow out its ramifications and, finally, awaken from it. (1999, ix)

This description highlights Benjamin’s method as an immersive re-engagement with the nineteenth century – a “collective dream” – aimed not at conceptual analysis but at tracing its intricate patterns and meanings through recurring processes of dreaming and awakening. Tiedemann interprets Benjamin’s view of dreams and awakening as the manifestation of the “image-making imagination” of a collective unconscious (1999, 933). He elaborates:

By turning the optics of the dream toward the waking world, one could bring to birth the concealed latent thoughts slumbering in the world’s womb. Benjamin wanted to proceed similarly with the representation of history, by treating the nineteenth-century world of things as if it were a world of dreamed things. (Tiedemann 1999, 933)

The driving force behind Freud’s and Benjamin’s research lies in the premise that ignoring the obscure, unknown, and dreaded dimensions of individual and collective experience leads to crisis and destruction, while striving to uncover these hidden realms holds the potential for transformation. As discussed previously, Freud created a model of the dream as a connection between unconscious mnemonic traces and preconscious perceptual impressions, so that the repressed archaic residues of the past could find a pathway toward being relived in the present as a new experience. This is the assumption that

lies at the basis of Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, or deferred action. Dreams are the pivotal realm in which the unknown past is innovatively created and experienced. Moreover, Freud's theory of dreams claims that the dream we interpret is not the dream that was dreamt. The dream cannot be completely revealed or completely interpreted; it follows the prominent principle of all unconscious manifestations, destined to remain in the realm of the obscure. Benjamin's concept of history is implicitly influenced by Freud's model of the dream, in which the past is not simply a static, objective archive of historical facts but rather something that is actively reworked and reinterpreted in the present. Just as the unconscious past in dreams is reformed and experienced anew, so too is history understood not as a linear progression but as something that is continually reshaped up through the present moment. Through his distinctive exploration of the development of nineteenth-century modern culture, Benjamin sought to create a model of history as something that is experienced and understood in retrospect. Modernity, in his view, reveals a dialectical tension: a declarative attraction to progress and technology coexists with a mysterious pull towards the archaic and infantile (Mali 2003, 228–283).

Freud reveals a model in which repressed wishes, present experiences, and unconscious desires remain in an unintegrated form. It is this dynamic interplay between archaic mnemonic traces, fleeting present experiences, unconscious drives, and the transition from visual imagery to abstract thought that creates a layered, often contradictory dream. Benjamin similarly applies dialectical dynamics to his understanding of history, where modernity, shaped by the constant pull of progress, is simultaneously haunted by the archaic and the mythological. For both Freud and Benjamin, the unconscious forces at play – the dream and history – are never linear or fixed but instead emerge from a web of competing, unresolved tensions. Benjamin's dialectical image, as well as the *Denkbild* as its literary form, expresses the configuration of the “now” and the “then” that comes together in a flash, in what Benjamin ([1982] 1999) conceptualizes as dialectics at a standstill:

It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. – Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language. Awakening. (462)

The *Denkbild* is the literary form of the dialectical image and is variously rendered in English as “thought-images” (Richter 2007) or “figures of thought” (Eiland and Jennings 2014). Instead of clarifying a thought by means of an image in linear fashion, the *Denkbild* presents an image of an integral, albeit not immediately recognizable, part of the thought. The *Denkbild*, or thought-image, as the literary form of the dialectical image, is considered an interruption in the linear chain of events that cannot be translated into conceptual terminology or a historical continuum (Tzur Mahalel 2023; Weigel 2015, 1996, 49–60). The dialectical image is not merely a reflection of the past in the present, or vice versa. Rather, it is a moment in which past and present converge, briefly and explosively, to form a “constellation”. This moment is not a linear progression but a flash, an instant in which history is made manifest as a dynamic tension between what has been and what is. In this sense, the dialectical image, much like the unconscious material in a

dream, resists fixed interpretation. For Benjamin, the continuous, linear relationships with which history traditionally deals are replaced by constellations, where the past and present coincide so completely that the past achieves a “Now” of its “recognizability” (Tiedemann 1999, 942).

In this flash of “Now-Time” (*Jetztzeit*), moments of aura occur. Benjamin’s concept of “aura” – the unique presence of an object that evokes both intimacy and distance – applies to the “unique apparition of distance, however near it may be” (Benjamin [1939] 2003, 255). Dream images, according to Benjamin, create a sense of significance far beyond their actual, factual basis. They provoke longing and mystery, precisely because they are veiled by an aura of meaning (Friedlander 2012, 110). The aura gives the dream image a special, almost sacred quality, because it emerges from the unconscious not simply as a reflection of reality but as a condensed image that speaks to deeper, often hidden, aspects of the internal and external reality. Dream images thus offer this singular “intimate experience of distance” (Friedlander 2012, 87). The dream image, according to Benjamin, is not perceived but revealed (Friedlander 2012, 37). An image is not an object of vision; it is only partially revealed through what Benjamin conceptualizes as the veil and the veiled (Benjamin [1925] 1997; Tzur Mahalel 2019). It is “manifest” or “recognized” in a singular dialectic between the internal (hallucinatory) and the external (perceptual), between the personal and the collective. Benjamin’s notion of auratic moments resonates with Freud’s concept of the hallucinatory aspect of dreams, described as a “hallucinatory revival of the desired perceptual identity” (1900, 605). Dreams, being fragmented, uncontrollable, and often incomprehensible, become “the places where tradition breaks off ... Where the truly new makes itself felt for the first time, with the sobriety of dawn” (Benjamin [1982] 1999, 474).

In the conceptualization of dreaming and awakening, Benjamin is referring not merely to concrete physical states but to the dynamic processes of revealing, experiencing, and acknowledging:

Awakening as a gradual process that goes on in the life of the individual as in the life of generations. Sleep its initial stage. A generation’s experience of youth has much in common with the experience of dreams. Its historical configuration is a dream configuration. Every epoch has such a side turned toward dreams, the child’s side. ([1982] 1999, 388)

Awakening is an inseparable part of the dreaming process; it is “the great exemplar of memory: the occasion on which it is given us to remember what is closest, tritest, most obvious. ... There is a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been: its advancement has the structure of awakening” ([1982] 1999, 389). Freud and Benjamin both regard dreaming as a dynamic process of continual evolution and transition, taking place during sleep but recalled in the moment of awakening. In his notes to the 1935 *Exposé*, Benjamin writes: “Awakening is the exemplary case of remembering: the weighty and momentous case, in which we succeed in remembering the nearest (most obvious)” ([1982] 1999, 907). He examines the paradox of distance – a central feature of moments of aura – which engages with “the structure of what-has-been” (907). This process uncovers the “nearest (most obvious)” aspects of what has been long forgotten or never fully experienced.

At this point, I would like to present two specific dreams: Freud’s dream of the burning child and Benjamin’s ghost dream. The imagery of blindness and insight, expressed

through the open door in these dreams, brings us closer to the shared significance both thinkers attributed to dream images as a pathway for transformation in times of crisis.

### Freud's dream of the burning child

Freud (1900) introduces the dream of the burning child at the beginning of the concluding chapter of his book, presenting it as both a “model dream” and a “moving dream” (509). This is not Freud's own dream, nor even the dream of one of his patients. Instead, it is a dream told to him by a patient after she had heard it in a lecture on dreams. Later, she herself “re-dreamed” it, repeating some of its elements in her own dream. Freud's choice to present a dream told by an unknown dreamer limits the ability to trace personal mnemonic connections to the dreamer's early life. However, this dream was selected because of the powerful imagery it offers in times of personal crisis:

A father had been watching beside his child's sick-bed for days and nights on end. After the child had died, he went into the next room to lie down, but left the door open so that he could see from his bedroom into the room in which his child's body was laid out, with tall candles standing round it. An old man had been engaged to keep watch over it, and sat beside the body murmuring prayers. After a few hours' sleep, the father had a dream that *his child was standing beside his bed, caught him by the arm and whispered to him reproachfully: “Father, don't you see I'm burning?”* He woke up, noticed a bright glare of light from the next room, hurried into it and found that the old watchman had dropped off to sleep and that the wrappings and one of the arms of his beloved child's dead body had been burned by a lighted candle that had fallen on them. (Freud 1900, 509, emphasis in the original)

Freud presents the dream while emphasizing again the visual imagery as a central feature of dreams: “Here we have the most general and the most striking psychological characteristic of the process of dreaming: a thought, and as a rule a thought of something that is wished, is objectified in the dream, is represented as a scene, or, as it seems to us, is experienced” (1900, 534). This dream presents two pivotal features: “one is the fact that the thought is represented as an immediate situation with the ‘perhaps’ omitted, and the other is the fact that the thought is transformed into visual images and speech” (534).

Freud interprets the dream as expressing a prominent wish for the deceased child to return to life, experience the burning sensation, and confront the father with reproach for his perceived indifference. Freud suggests that the burning sensation the son complains about may symbolize the fever he suffered from during the illness that ultimately took his life. This dream embodies the desire to reverse the son's untimely death – a repressed, archaic wish to undo the decree of death. The wish arises both as an immediate response to the father's profound grief over his loss and as a reflection of the ancient, unconscious struggle to confront and accept mortality. As Freud writes, “No one believes in his own death, or, to put the same thing in another way, in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality” (1915, 289).

Freud focuses on the unique significance of the dream for the bereaved father, who is deeply immersed in his grief and compelled to separate from his beloved son. He concludes that the dream does more than express the father's wish for his son to return to life; it suggests that the very act of dreaming keeps the son alive. The father's

overwhelming grief and inability to accept the reality of his loss result in a dream that embodies a profound libidinal investment in its hallucinatory quality. In the act of dreaming, the father not only imagines bringing his child back to life but also symbolically keeps him alive within the dream.<sup>3</sup> Awakening, however, within the logic of the dream, re-enacts the child's death and carries with it the act of letting the child die or even leading him to his death: "If the father had woken up first and then made the inference that led him to go into the next room, he would, as it were, have shortened his child's life by that moment of time" (Freud 1900, 510). The image revealed at the time of awakening, of the lifeless and of course unresponsive child burning, serves as a powerful image for the disregard or indifference that characterizes the dead and differentiates them from the living. As long as the dream persists, the child remains alive, even if only as a hallucination. In this context, awakening becomes an act of re-traumatization. Within the dream, the child expresses distress and reproaches the father for failing to save him from suffering. Freud posits that the father's guilt and anguish over his son's untimely death, combined with his recent memory of the child's agony, prevent the dream from depicting the son in a better state. Awakening from the dream forces the father to confront anew the finality of death, revealed through the child's unresponsiveness to the actual burning. This unresponsiveness serves as a stark and poignant marker of the transition from life to death (Caruth 1996, 94–115).

The dream of the burning child dramatizes the interplay of sight, insight, and blindness. Within the dream, the child reproaches the father for failing to see his condition, alluding to the father's guilt over not recognizing the severity of his son's high fever. Furthermore, as Freud emphasizes, the dream serves as an alternative experience to the unbearable reality the father is forced to confront. In this way, the dream generates an intense hallucination that acts as a defence mechanism against the overwhelming sensory impressions of actual reality.

The bright glare of light emanating from the room where the dead child lay serves as a poignant image, bridging the reality of the dream with sensory impressions from the external world. This creates a transitional space between the father's actual experience, rooted in sensory perception, and the hallucinatory experience, emerging from the unconscious. In the realm of the unconscious, where primary thinking prevails, the distinction between life and death dissolves. Consequently, the dream of the bereaved father may symbolize a deep wish to cross the threshold between the realms of the living and the dead. The open door, illuminated by the bright glare of light, represents the father's yearning to step into the other room and reunite with his son. Following this interpretation, one can state that the archaic aspect embodied in the dream is the challenge death presents to the living, of accepting this terminal and irreversible transition, regardless of all of the wishes and needs of the living. The powerful confrontation with death in both dream and waking life underscores the universal and timeless struggle to reconcile the permanence of loss with the desires and attachments of the living,

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<sup>3</sup>Freud (1900) assumes that the dreamer's wish to continue sleeping merged his immediate physical fatigue with his deeper psychological need to escape the reality of loss:

We may assume that a further motive force in the production of the dream was the father's need to sleep; his sleep, like the child's life, was prolonged by one moment by the dream. "Let the dream go on" – such was his motive – "or I shall have to wake up". In every other dream, just as in this one, the wish to sleep lends its support to the unconscious wish (571).

highlighting humanity's enduring search for hope in the face of irreparable absence (Freud 1915, 290).

Challenging times summon repressed wishes that are expressed as hallucinatory acts of replacement of unbearable reality. Such is this dream, which provides an alternate reality in which the child is still alive, and the father can still save him. The archaic aspect of the dream is further expressed in the emphasis on the "bright glare of light", which serves as a material perceptual impression that possibly provoked some of the dream imagery, giving it a distinct expression in the dream. This light breaks into the dream by perception, and then a transformation of meaning occurs: "The glare of light shone through the open door into the sleeping man's eyes" (Freud 1900, 509). At the time of dreaming, the door to the room where the dead child lay was open, and the bereaved father may have been drawn to the glare of light that was projected onto him. The actual glare of light proceeding from the fire that was started by the candles next to the child's body was transformed, in the dream, into an invitation to another realm of experience, a door that the dream opened into a place where the child possibly exists in a new form.

Freud (1900) expands on the imagery of light and dark presented in the dream, writing:

Hitherto, unless I am greatly mistaken, all the paths along which we have travelled have led us towards the light – towards elucidation and fuller understanding. But as soon as we endeavour to penetrate more deeply into the mental process involved in dreaming, every path will end in darkness. (511)

In Freud's framework, the dream and the unconscious belong to the realm of darkness, standing in contrast to the light of awakening and consciousness. Yet, in the present dream, the glare of light beckons the dreamer into unknown and mysterious realms of experience. Implicitly, this dream presents an intriguing dialectic between darkness and light. As Freud suggests, the realm of consciousness may harbour blindness, while the realm of darkness can give rise to innovative ways of seeing and understanding. Through darkness, our eyes may open to insights that cannot be formed or grasped in any other way.

### Benjamin's ghost dream

Bearing in mind the glare of light that shone from the open door in the dream presented by Freud, Benjamin ([1982] 1999), intriguingly, also presents a dream in *The Arcades Project* that begins with the subject of closed and open doors: "The dread of doors that won't close is something everyone knows from dreams. Stated more precisely: these are doors that appear closed without being so" (409). Benjamin touches here on two different experiences regarding doors and anxiety and implicitly binds together two different experiences, for the dread of doors that won't close is not the same as the dread of doors that appear closed without being so. In the first experience, one desperately tries to close a door against some kind of hazard or dread, to confirm a barrier and thereby create a safe space for oneself, but the door won't close. In the second experience, one assumes oneself safe in a closed, private space but then suddenly discovers, at some point, that the door that was supposed to prevent hazard and dread from invading had only appeared closed and was in fact actually open. The first experience therefore

embodies the active and continuous challenge of creating a border against danger by trying to close the door but in vain. The second experience is the passive assumption of safety that breaks down in a sudden moment when one discovers that the door only seemed closed, revealing one's feeling of safety as having been an illusion. In the dialectical tension between the confined and the invaded, the continuous and the sudden, Benjamin presents his dream as a singular *Denkbild*, a visual image of a seemingly negligible phenomenon that, when placed at the centre of attention, enables that object or phenomenon to be read and evaluated as a sign in a larger cultural semiotics (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 3). Benjamin's ([1982] 1999) dream involves his main object of research, the Parisian arcades:

It was with heightened senses that I learned of this phenomenon in a dream in which, while I was in the company of a friend, a ghost appeared to me in the window of the ground floor of a house to our right. And as we walked on, the ghost accompanied us from inside all the houses. It passed through all the walls and always remained at the same height with us. I saw this, though I was blind. The path we travel through arcades is fundamentally just such a ghost walk, on which doors give way and walls yield. (409)

Benjamin's dream conjures a magical atmosphere that mirrors the arcades' liminal nature. It depicts a ghost that appears in a window, then follows Benjamin and his companion through the walls of nearby houses. The ghost's movement transcends physical laws, blurring the distinction between public and private spaces. The ghost in the dream represents a transitional figure – a trace of the dead that lingers in the world of the living, a vague shadow of a deceased person that refuses to leave the realm of the living. Freud's dream of the burning child also depicts a realm where such boundaries dissolve: the dead can communicate with and accompany the living. Both dreams, guided by the logic of the unconscious, embody the merging of disparate realms, life and death, imagination and reality.<sup>4</sup>

However, Benjamin's dream introduces a further transcendence of physical and perceptual boundaries. While Freud's dream portrays a father perceiving his deceased child as alive in a realistic setting, Benjamin's dream disrupts perceptual rules. Benjamin "sees" the ghost, despite being blind, thereby radically immersing perceptual processes in the dream's imaginary realm. Thus, in this sense, Benjamin's dream goes further than Freud's and crosses another threshold away from reality and towards the transcendental. In Benjamin's dream, not only is the ghost, who belongs to the imaginary world, able to transcend physical laws by walking through walls, but the dreamer, too, is able to transcend reality by seeing the images suggested in the dream in spite of his blindness. In the dream presented by Freud, the dead child appears before his father as the living child he was before he died, and the father perceives the image as an actual, realistic event. In Benjamin's dream, although the dreamer does indeed also perceive the dream images, his act of seeing is, beyond that, carried into the realm of dream imagery. For Benjamin, dream imagery, like the ghost, constantly accompanies us in various forms and expressions. The dreamer's blindness alludes to alternative ways of seeing, beyond the conventional sensory path. In the context of modern culture, we are constantly in a state of shock, and, in the rush of progress, we repeatedly lose our ability to fully experience and

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<sup>4</sup>The image of the ghost recurs in several of Benjamin's dreams and frequently appears in Freud's writings as well. For example, Freud writes, "It would be just as though, after summoning up a spirit from the underworld by cunning spells, one were to send him down again without having asked him a single question" (Freud 1914, 164).

explore ourselves and our surroundings. Occasionally, a fragment attributed to the past can be captured in a momentary flash.

Benjamin's concluding remark, that the path through the arcades is "fundamentally just such a ghost walk" ([1982] 1999, 409), expresses the notion that the arcades provide an experience that belongs to the realm of dreams, even though they also exist in actual reality. Hence, dream imagery encourages us to devote ourselves both to dreaming and to awakening – to yield to representability and simultaneously awaken ourselves to the potential experiences and meanings that these images unfold.

In a radical move, Freud views the experience and interpretation of dreams as a path to healing the individual, helping them become a functional member of society, and assisting them in navigating the challenges of their *Bildung*. Freud's approach to dream interpretation requires innovative ways of perceiving the dream and the unconscious manifestations embodied within it. Benjamin takes these assumptions and pushes them even further, seeing dream images as the only path to redemption in modern culture. For Benjamin, the challenges of our modern environment, with its redundancy and haste that are framed as progress, require us to see in alternative ways, to perceive images through blind eyes, to create a realm that yields more to the unperceivable and unconceivable than it does to distinctions and rationalizations.<sup>5</sup>

## Repetition and transformation: A discussion

The idea of dream images as transitional phenomena, as explored in both Freud's and Benjamin's works, provides a powerful framework for understanding the unconscious dynamics that shape our perception of reality and the process of transformation. Dream images are formed in the tension between sensory impressions, hallucinatory wishes, and other possible mysterious aspects that influence our inner world.<sup>6</sup>

Dream images can be regarded as memory traces constructed from two channels, the first being sensory impressions that are internalized from the external world through perception, and the second being hallucinatory processes that stem from the unconscious and appear as compensation for a repressed wish. Freud (1917) writes,

The dream-wish, as we say, is *hallucinated*, and, as a hallucination, meets with belief in the reality of its fulfilment. It is precisely round this concluding piece in the formation of dreams that the gravest uncertainties centre. ... The formation of the wishful phantasy and its regression to hallucination are the most essential parts of the dream-work. (229, emphasis in the original)

For Freud, therefore, the dream embodies a regression to the language of pictures, which is an archaic form of sensing, thinking, and interpreting. Thinking in pictures forms a language that reveals and conceals at the same time, a picture-puzzle that demands to be re-assembled and deciphered. A dream can be thought of as a collection of pictures

<sup>5</sup>The presence of the friend in the dream, who accompanies the dreamer in his ghost walk through the arcades, can be understood as an expression of the necessity of an Other to accompany the self along the dark pathways of the dream. Moreover, the dialectical affinity between the dreamer and the ghost, or between the human and the creaturely, also appears in Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood around 1900* ([1938] 2002, 384–385). There, the author's affinity with the figure of the little hunchback that has accompanied him since childhood is eventually revealed to be a singular relationship, and the little hunchback is revealed as a denied part of himself, his prehistoric double (Tzur Mahalel 2024).

<sup>6</sup>Green (2005) discusses Freud's ideas about the hallucinatory aspect of the dream and the tendency of primary processes towards hallucinatory expression as being some of his greatest discoveries (75–76).

that embody a condensed array of meaningful images, experiences and representations: “visual images ... comprise the essence of the formation of dreams” (Freud 1916, 175).

This concept of dream images as transitional phenomena is explored in Freud’s distinction between thing-representation and word-representation. As mentioned, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud presents a model of memory traces that are located along the spectrum of experiences between sensory impressions and motor responses. Memory traces can either move forward towards activity or backward in the regressive path towards the hallucinatory. Dream images are the most prominent expression of memory traces, possessing qualities of both perception and hallucination. They serve as the psyche’s richest reservoir of memories: “Memory is far more comprehensive in dreams than in waking life. Dreams bring up recollections which the dreamer has forgotten, which are inaccessible to him when he is awake” (Freud 1938, 166).<sup>7</sup>

These notions deepen our understanding of the link that Benjamin makes between dreaming and awakening. This pair is not regarded as differentiated mental states but rather as a dialectical whole; dreaming always requires awakening, and an awakening always requires dreaming. A dream from which one does not wake and a waking state without dreams are both regarded as pathological states.<sup>8</sup> The continuous movement between dreaming and awakening expresses the motivation to touch unconscious primal traces and preconscious sensory impressions. These are not distinct phenomena, because both primal traces and sensory experiences are destined never to be fully acknowledged. Freud writes,

The unconscious is the true psychical reality; in its innermost nature [the unconscious] is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs. (Freud 1900, 613, emphasis in the original)

Freud emphasizes the regressive nature of dreams, where visual imagery embodies repressed wishes in archaic, pictorial form. This regression simultaneously reveals and conceals meaning, necessitating interpretive work to uncover the dream’s latent content. For Benjamin, dream imagery transcends the individual, offering historical and cultural insights. The Parisian arcades provoke dreams and dreamlike images that interrupt the rush of modernity, providing fragments of meaning that resist rationalization. Dream images are thus acknowledged by both thinkers as visual mnemonic traces, transitional phenomena that mediate between hallucinatory residues and sensory impressions. In the dream of the burning child, the agonizing loss that the father experiences is an allusion to the prehistoric prototypical trace of significant loss. The dream expresses a hallucinatory aspect of the dead child being alive and able to reproach the father for leaving his body unattended. The glare of light from the other room expresses the sensory aspect penetrating the dreamer’s consciousness, thus providing an external trigger for the aspect of hallucinatory satisfaction. The dream intensely expresses the tension between the

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<sup>7</sup>Botella and Botella interpret Freud’s conceptualization of “dream-memory” (*Traumgedächtnis*) and dream images as the primal mark of the lack, a psychic mark that mediates between nonrepresentational perception and the “lost-object-of-the-hallucinatory-satisfaction” (2005, 167–180; 2013, 101). According to this thesis, dreaming challenges us with the original trace of the lost object that activates hallucinatory activity based on infantile wishes. Thus, dreaming is an intimate engagement with our prehistory, similar to the intimate auratic experience of distance. Perhaps this is what Freud (1938) meant when he wrote that “sleep is a return of this kind to the womb” (166).

<sup>8</sup>Freud understands the inability to dream as being one of the implications of trauma (1933, 29).

internal wish to deny death and the demand to acknowledge it. In contrast to the dream of the burning child, the ghost dream presents an experience that goes beyond personal turmoil, such as the father's grief over his son's untimely death. It speaks to an ongoing state of unrest, where enigmatic images from a distant past persistently accompany the present, influencing every action and sight.

In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin extensively explores Nietzsche's concept of eternal return. Benjamin critiques modern secular life as lacking tradition and aura, as replacing original experiences and artefacts with imitations (Tzur Mahalel 2024). This distancing from nature and tradition erodes the potential for spontaneous auratic moments: "life within the magic circle of return makes for an existence that never emerges from the auratic" (Benjamin [1982] 1999, 119). While Benjamin acknowledges that modern life bears some characteristics of eternal return, he argues for humanity's responsibility to actively seek out aura and truth. The "here and now" of auratic experience is not tied to the material present but to a fleeting moment that transcends the perceivable.

In this context, Benjamin develops the concept of dialectical reversal, a process that disrupts dominant interpretations of reality in order to expose hidden contradictions and possibilities. Unlike Nietzsche's cyclical eternal return, Benjamin's reversals are imbued with a messianic dimension, pointing towards rupture and redemption. This method uncovers suppressed truths and opens pathways for transformation by challenging entrenched views of history and culture. Echoing Freud's idea of dream images as involuntary memory traces, Benjamin's auratic moments function as glimpses of the past emerging unbidden, revealing deeper insights that elude conscious recall (Friedlander 2012, 148).

Alongside the linear-materialistic time that modernistic progress emphasizes, and the cyclical time that is emphasized in Nietzsche's eternal return (and Freud's repetition compulsion), Benjamin presents a third dimension of time, which he conceptualizes as "Now-Time" (*Jetztzeit*). This dimension of time breaks or explodes the continuity of time and, based on an assumption about the irreplaceable singularity of each moment in time, creates a non-diachronic temporality (Moses 1992, 175–181). For Benjamin ([1982] 1999), the only way to grasp a sense of the past is by constructing it from images carved out of the experiences of dreaming and awakening. As already noted, this is not a return of memories in the sense of actual past events but rather a potential presentation of images and experiences that are merely attributed to the "then" in the "now": "History decays into images, not into stories" (476).

Both Freud and Benjamin believe that it is the realm of dreams and dream images that creates a disruption in the ongoing experience of conscious-linear thought. This disruption is irritating and troubling, yet it has an irreplaceable potential to create momentary life experience and thereby to create history that transcends informative facts and transforms the conventional, too-well-known experience into something authentic and true. Auratic moments are revealed as temporary transitional spaces that hold the potential to repair something in our traumatized past that created lacunas and blind spots in the present. Benjamin is intrigued by the moment of awaking, where the past becomes a present in a dreamlike state of mind and history is created:

In the dialectical image, what has been within a particular epoch is always, simultaneously, "what has been from time immemorial". As such, however, it is manifest, on each occasion, only to a quite specific epoch – namely, the one in which humanity, rubbing its eyes,

recognizes just this particular dream image as such. It is at this moment that the historian takes up, with regard to that image, the task of dream interpretation. ([1982] 1999, 464)

The historian's task is to be an alert reader of the eruption of residual dream images of historical time, in which the past registers its knowledge of the present while a certain knowledge of the present enables the past to emerge. The eruptions, disruptions, and breaking points with which the dream images challenge us give us the opportunity to release ourselves from Freud's repetition compulsion and from Nietzsche's eternal return. Benjamin concludes his discussion of the eternal return with the following words:

The belief in progress – in an infinite perfectibility understood as an infinite ethical task – and the representation of eternal return are complementary. They are the indissoluble antinomies in the face of which the dialectical conception of historical time must be developed. ([1982] 1999, 119)

For Freud and Benjamin, the inertia of events that allows the past to be repeatedly relived without insight enables individual and social traumas and injustices to persist tragically, unaddressed. Only by disrupting this conventional yet gradually pathological inertia can the unexpected and the radical emerge, fostering transformation. Rather than passively waiting, in a desperate yearning for better days, Freud and Benjamin advocate for an active yet patient striving towards change. This transformation can occur through a determined attentiveness to the esoteric, the unconventional, and the mundane. Freud (1914) writes, "the analyst gives up the attempt to bring a particular moment or problem into focus. He contents himself with studying whatever is present for the time being on the surface of the patient's mind" (147), and Benjamin ([1982] 1999) writes of the "necessity of paying heed over many years to every casual citation, every fleeting mention of a book" (470).

Striving for something new to occur involves an active yet completely open search for some unknown and obscure image that is summoned from traumatic wounds and breaking points. The dream image carries a ghostly quality, acting as a memory trace of the pre-historic past and a primal mark of absence. Yet, it simultaneously presents the past as a completely new experience in the present – a surprising and unpredictable creation that disrupts the continuity of experience. This rupture within the interpretive framework of linear time challenges the individual's ability to situate themselves within dimension of space and time. It blurs the distinctions between past, present, and future, between imagination and reality, between objects, and, as discussed, between life and death.

The traditional interpretation of dreams as foretelling the future, a notion held since ancient times, is redefined by Freud in modernity as a realm for uncovering the secrets of the past. This radical shift leads Freud (1900) to conclude his seminal work by emphasizing the affinity between the future and the past that dream images capture, as they unlock the expansive scope of the unconscious:

And the value of dreams for giving us knowledge of the future? There is of course no question of that. It would be truer to say instead that they give us knowledge of the past. For dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless, the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past. (621)

Our ability to foresee the future is inextricably linked to our perceptions of the past. Between the lost past and the uncharted horizon ahead, the image of the glare of light

and the door as a threshold emerge. These images, appearing in both the dream of the burning child and the ghost dream, also echo Benjamin's vision of the "small gateway in time through which the Messiah might enter", from his final essay ([1939] 2003, 397). Life's challenges often leave us metaphorically blind, standing in the darkness before a closed door. Yet moments of crisis – marked by ruptures and turning points in familiar paths – bring forth "doors that appear closed without being so". At these thresholds, our vision may clear, and a sudden glare of light may erupt, revealing the hidden realms of dream images.

### Translations of summary

**« L'éclair de la conscience éveillée » : Images de rêve chez Freud et Benjamin.** Cet article explore le rôle des images visuelles dans l'imagerie des rêves en tant qu'espace où les processus inconscients s'entrecroisent avec les forces historiques. Il propose une lecture comparative de l'Interprétation des rêves de Freud (1900) et du Livre des Passages de Benjamin (1982). Freud définit les images de rêve comme étant des traces mnésiques condensées naviguant entre perception et hallucination et révélant ainsi des désirs refoulés. À l'inverse, les images de rêve de Benjamin sont une critique de la perte d'aura de la modernité, offrant à tout moment des opportunités de création historique. L'article soutient que Freud tout comme Benjamin partagent une hypothèse fondamentale : un regard aveugle tourné vers les dimensions obscures et inconnues de l'individu ; l'expérience collective nourrit les crises et la destruction, tandis que l'effort pour révéler ces espaces cachés promeut la transformation. L'exploration des disruptions et des ruptures dans la continuité de l'expérience stimule la propension à agir selon le concept de compulsion de répétition de Freud ou celui de l'éternel retour de Nietzsche selon l'interprétation de Benjamin. Ces réflexions s'appuient sur le rêve de l'enfant qui brûle de Freud ainsi que sur le rêve du fantôme de Benjamin. La dialectique de l'insight et de la cécité, de même que l'image des portes ouvertes dans les deux rêves, nous invitent à considérer comment, même parmi la perte et la rupture, les images de rêve parviennent à ouvrir un chemin vers de nouveaux champs d'expérience et de souvenir.

**„Der Blitz des erwachten Bewusstseins“: Traumbilder bei Freud und Benjamin.** Dieser Aufsatz untersucht die Rolle visueller Bilder in Traumbildern als einem Raum, in dem sich unbewusste Prozesse mit historischen Kräften kreuzen. Er bietet eine vergleichende Lektüre von Freuds Traumdeutung (1900) und Benjamins Arkadenprojekt (1982). Freud konzeptualisiert Traumbilder als verdichtete Gedächtnisspuren, die sich zwischen Wahrnehmung und Halluzination bewegen und verdrängte Sehnsüchte zum Vorschein bringen. Umgekehrt kritisieren Benjamins Traumbilder den Verlust der Aura der Moderne und bieten Momente der "Jetzt-Zeit" als Gelegenheiten zur historischen Gestaltung. Der Essay zeigt, dass sowohl Freud als auch Benjamin eine grundlegende Prämisse teilen: Das Verschließen der Augen vor den obskuren und unbekannten Dimensionen individueller und kollektiver Erfahrung fördert Krisen und Zerstörung, während das Bestreben, diese verborgenen Bereiche zu enthüllen, die Transformation begünstigt. Die Erforschung von Unterbrechungen und Brüchen in der Kontinuität der Erfahrung fordert die Neigung heraus, nach Freuds Konzept des Wiederholungszwangs oder Nietzsches ewiger Wiederkehr, wie sie von Benjamin interpretiert wird, zu handeln. Diese Ideen werden anhand des Traums vom brennenden Kind von Freud und des Geistertraums von Benjamin untersucht. Die Dialektik von Einsicht und Blindheit sowie das Bild offener Türen in beiden Träumen laden uns dazu ein, darüber nachzudenken, wie Traumbilder selbst inmitten von Verlust und Brüchen Wege zu neuen Bereichen des Erlebens und Erinnerns öffnen können.

**“Il lampo della coscienza risvegliata”. Immagini oniriche in Freud e Benjamin.** Il saggio esamina il ruolo delle immagini visive nell'immaginario onirico, inteso come spazio in cui i processi inconsci si intersecano con le forze storiche. Si propone qui una lettura comparativa de L'interpretazione dei sogni (1900) di Freud e del progetto dei Passages (1982) di Benjamin. Laddove Freud concettualizza le immagini oniriche come tracce mnestiche condensate che, a cavallo tra percezione e allucinazione, rivelano desideri rimossi, le immagini oniriche di Benjamin rappresentano per contro una critica di quella perdita dell'aura che contraddistingue la modernità - e ciò nella

misura in cui offrono momenti di esperienza immediata nel “qui e ora” come opportunità di creazione storica. Il saggio argomenta come Freud e Benjamin muovano da una identica premessa fondativa, ossia che girare lo sguardo dall'altra parte rispetto alle dimensioni oscure e ignote dell'esperienza individuale e collettiva alimenta crisi e distruzione, mentre sforzarsi di rivelare queste aree nascoste promuove un processo di trasformazione. Esplorare le interruzioni e le rotture nella continuità dell'esperienza mette in crisi la nostra propensione ad agire secondo il concetto freudiano di coazione a ripetere o l'eterno ritorno nietzschiano (per come Benjamin lo interpreta). Le idee finora esposte vengono esplorate in queste pagine attraverso il sogno del bambino che brucia presentato da Freud e il sogno del fantasma riferito da Benjamin. La dialettica tra insight e cecità, accanto all'immagine delle porte aperte presente in entrambi i sogni, ci invita a considerare come persino nel mezzo della perdita e della rottura le immagini oniriche possano aprire sentieri verso nuovi territori dell'esperienza e della memoria.

**“El destello del despertar de la conciencia”: la imagen onírica en Freud y en Benjamin.** Este ensayo explora el papel que desempeña la imagen visual en la imaginaria onírica como espacio donde los procesos inconscientes se intersecan con las fuerzas históricas. Ofrece una lectura comparativa de la *Interpretación de los sueños* (1900) de Freud y el *Libro de los pasajes* [*Das Passagen-Werk*] (1982) de Benjamin. Freud concibe la imagen onírica como la huella de recuerdos condensados que navega entre la percepción y la alucinación, y revela deseos reprimidos. En cambio, la imagen onírica en Benjamin critica la pérdida del aura en la modernidad y ofrece momentos de “tiempo del ahora” como oportunidades para la creación histórica. Este ensayo sostiene que Freud y Benjamin comparten una premisa fundamental: hacer la vista gorda frente a las dimensiones oscuras y desconocidas de la experiencia individual y colectiva fomenta la crisis y la destrucción, mientras que el esfuerzo por revelar esas áreas ocultas promueve la transformación. La exploración de las disrupciones o rupturas en la continuidad de la experiencia dificulta la inclinación a actuar de acuerdo al concepto de compulsión a la repetición de Freud o al de eterno retorno de Nietzsche, como interpreta Benjamin. Aquí se exploran estas ideas mediante el sueño del niño que arde presentado por Freud y el sueño del fantasma presentado por Benjamin. La dialéctica del insight y la ceguera, junto con la imagen de la puerta abierta en ambos sueños, nos invita a considerar cómo, aun en medio de la pérdida y la ruptura, las imágenes oníricas pueden abrir vías a nuevos ámbitos de experiencia y recuerdo.

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