

The dream is a fragment

Freud, transdisciplinarity and early German Romanticism

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An appreciation and practice of the fragment is a feature of all European Romanticism, but it was in early German (or 'Jena') Romanticism, and most of all in the work of Friedrich Schlegel, that the concept of 'the fragment' was philosophically determined. Indeed, the fragment has been called 'the central philosophical concept of early German Romanticism'.¹ As both concept and form the (early German Romantic) fragment is at once philosophical and literary. It is the expression of both a philosophical limit and its surpassing, in a form made new by its self-conscious theoretical investiture. To the extent that the Romantic idea of the fragment developed out of a more general fascination with ruins, it is also tied in its origins to the cultural appreciation of archeology and architecture and of all the forms of ancient material and artistic culture that survive as 'fragments' of things (manuscripts, vases, pots, and so on) or of those cultures themselves.

The cultural and intellectual context of the emergence of the Romantic idea of the fragment is thus multiply determined and its field is certainly not restricted to what we would today call a 'discipline'. Nevertheless, in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy's influential study *The Literary Absolute* the interpretation of the significance of the fragment form is folded into the category of 'literature'. For Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, Jena Romanticism is 'theoretical romanticism ... the inauguration of the theoretical project in literature', perhaps even the inauguration of 'literature' itself.² And if 'literature or literary theory' is 'the privileged locus of expression' of (economic, social, moral, religious, political) crisis, the fragment is its privileged form. 'Literature' in this sense may not be a strictly disciplinary term, yet the idea of the fragment is nonetheless confined in *The Literary Absolute* to its embrace.³

One of Schlegel's *Athenaeum Fragments* suggests that the idea of the 'fragment' refers to more than the 'genre' of the literary fragment. Schlegel writes:

A dialogue is a chain or garland of fragments. An exchange of letters is a dialogue on a larger scale, and memoirs constitute a system of fragments. But as yet no genre exists that is fragmentary both in form and content, simultaneously completely subjective and individual, and completely objective and like a necessary part in a system of all the sciences.⁴

In fact, the very specificity of the concept of the fragment (opposed, as we shall see, to the 'empirical' concept of the merely broken-off bit, *das Bruchstück*) entails its independence from any given form of instantiation. Given this situation, I propose here that the conceptual logic of the fragment is also at work in the dream. More specifically, with the concept of the fragment one of the two competing characterizations of the dream in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* is illuminated and made compelling. Freud equivocates between, on the one hand, a theory in which a dream is the hallucinated fulfilment of a perfectly coherent and rational wish, discoverable through interpretation; and, on the other, a theory in which a dream is the fragmentary form of appearance of the incalculable, effectively infinite relations of the totality of psychic activity and its 'outside' and of the 'relation' to the unknowable. Reading *The Interpretation of Dreams* from the standpoint of the specificity of the Romantic concept of the fragment brings the second of these characterizations to the fore. It also functions critically in relation to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's de facto restriction of the concept of the fragment to the domain of 'literature' (in its most expanded sense), not least because the dream cuts across the distinctions that for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy specify the philosophical concept of the fragment. The concept of the fragment emerges from this encounter with *The Interpretation of Dreams* in its full transdisciplinary significance. But how does psychoanalysis emerge from its encounter with the Romantic fragment?

Fragment vs *Bruchstück*

What is the Romantic fragment? If, as numerous authors point out,⁵ people were writing fragments and calling them such long before the Romantic appropriation of the form, what distinguishes the specifically Romantic version of the practice? (This is, inevitably, as much a product of our contemporary understanding of this historical-intellectual moment of conceptual production as the product of that moment itself.) It lies primarily in the fact of its being posited as ‘an artistic solution to a philosophical problem.’⁶ For the purposes of this article, which has no pretension to the construction of a philosophical genealogy of the concept, suffice it to say that this philosophical problem can be glossed as the problem of the ‘presentation of the unrepresentable’, as Novalis put it,⁷ together with (what may in fact be the same thing) that of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of the system, or at least of the systematic horizon of knowledge. Both problems, and the Romantic response to them, can be seen as deriving from, and in reaction to, the understanding of the limits of knowledge and self-knowledge in Kant’s transcendental idealism. For Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, this primarily concerns the consequences of Kant’s articulation of the ‘I’ as an empty form, a transcendental function of unity or synthesis which is ‘unrepresentable to itself’,⁸ because it is not a possible object of any original intuition. According to Kant, the subject knows itself only as it appears to itself – not as it is in itself – hence as mediated by the pure form of intuition of time and the synthetic unities of its objects. Kant grants the subject the speculative thought of the infinite and the unconditioned with the Idea of reason, but not its possible ‘presentation’ (*Darstellung*) or representation in intuition. For Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, this ‘hiatus introduced at the heart of the subject’ frustrates the desire for a system of the totality of knowledge, for lack of any originary intuition to ground or organize it.⁹ The subject understood in this way thus both demands systematicity (that is, systematicity is a demand of reason) and yet also makes the system impossible. The system, as the totality of objective knowledge, is demanded by the subject whilst rendered impossible by it, since its own subjectivity resists incorporation into objectivity.

Following Walter Benjamin’s lead, Manfred Frank, in his detailed analysis of the philosophy of early German Romanticism, stresses also its character as a response (especially from Novalis and Schlegel) to Fichte’s attempt to address the problem opened up by

Kant; that is, Fichte’s attempt to ground the system of knowledge in the self-presentation of the ‘I’. Frank argues that the early German Romantics, sceptical (for good philosophical reasons) of the possibility of a philosophy based on an absolute first principle, foregrounded the conditioned and finite nature of our means of obtaining knowledge.¹⁰ This was not to reject the Absolute as the horizon of knowledge, nor to deny the ‘longing for the infinite’, but to conceive them as regulative principles, with the goal of philosophy as the infinite approximation of an ever-incomplete absolute knowledge, or the infinite progression towards the absolute.¹¹

The difference in emphases between Frank and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy reflect their very different aims and interests. Frank provides a detailed philosophical history of early German Romanticism, in a study that looks mainly to the past; whereas Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy are more interested in the Romantic invention of ‘literature’, and thus, in a sense, with the futures of Romanticism. Nevertheless, the same point emerges from both books: the problem of the presentation of the unrepresentable, and the need for philosophy, understood in its new-found disciplinary autonomy, to cede to ‘art’ (or ‘poetry’, or ‘literature’) or to become ‘art’ (or ‘poetry’, or ‘literature’) in acknowledging this. In Frank’s account art ‘alludes to’ (*andeuten*) what cannot be presented conceptually or sensibly. Art alludes to ‘that which it does not succeed in saying’, which Schlegel calls ‘saying-more’ (*mehr-sagen*) than it says.¹² Appearing only at the end of Frank’s book, this cannot help but seem to be a ‘supplement’ to philosophy, whereas for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy literature (or ‘literary theory’) is Romantic philosophy, a ‘total’ enterprise, in which the concept of the fragment – *the* form of ‘saying-more’ – plays a correspondingly more central role.¹³ So what is this concept of the fragment, exactly?

The answer is complicated but may be distilled into three main points. First, the Romantic concept of the fragment (for which we may use the same word in German: *das Fragment*), as a constructed work, is distinguished from a mere broken piece. Some make this distinction terminologically, opposing ‘fragment’ to *das Bruchstück*. Although this terminological distinction is not a consistent philological feature of early German Romantic texts themselves, it is useful. If the *Bruchstück* is ‘the detached piece pure and simple ... the residue of a broken ensemble’,¹⁴ the fragment is in itself complete qua form, while at the same time invoking an essential incompleteness. The archeological find of a ‘fragment’ of pottery is a

Bruchstück in so far as the archeologist searches for the other missing pieces, hoping to reunite it with the other bits to re-create the original whole. Sappho's fragments 64A and B are like this, to the extent that they are only what is left, bereft of what would allow us to discern the meaning in them: '... goat ... for comrades of children to gods ... ugly Muse'.¹⁵ We are left with only a fraction (*ein Bruch*), a potentially countable percentage of the whole.

Second, the fragment as 'a determinate and deliberate statement, assuming or transfiguring the accidental and involuntary aspects of fragmentation', aiming at 'fragmentation for its own sake', is to be distinguished from the unfinished draft 'struck by incompleteness'.¹⁶ Elizabeth Wanning Harries describes this difference as that between 'the *involuntary* fragment, cut off by death or by the writer's inability to finish the poem' and 'the *deliberate* or *planned* fragment'.¹⁷ Third, the fragment (or, perhaps, the fragmentary form) is to be distinguished from the literary genre of the fragment, the latter closely tied to the tradition of the *aperçue*, the *pensée* and the aphorism. (Most of Schlegel's 'Fragments' are in fact examples of the literary genre of the fragment, and not practices of the fragmentary form.) However, any of these – the *Bruchstück*, the involuntary fragment, examples of the literary genre of the fragment – can become 'fragments' in the literary-philosophical sense, and indeed, especially in the case of ancient works, have become so.¹⁸ As Robert Brain puts it: 'If a merely broken piece did not qualify as a fragment, it nevertheless offered great potential if its accidental or involuntary character could be transfigured into a determinate and deliberate statement of fragmentation.'¹⁹ 'Goat for comrades of children; to gods – ugly Muse.'

The fragment in its fullest sense is the idea of something complete in itself and yet essentially incomplete. Each fragment, according to Schlegel, is a self-sufficient form (indeed it must be 'entirely isolated from the surrounding world').²⁰ It is in itself a totality in its detached individuality, but, at the same time, the partiality of its content and its ineliminable reference to incompleteness mark it as 'the exergue of the total, infinite work'.²¹ It is, as Schlegel says, a 'project':

A project is a subjective embryo of a developing object. A perfect project should be at once completely subjective and completely objective, should be an indivisible and living individual. ... The feeling for projects – which one might call fragments of the future – is distinguishable from the

feeling for fragments of the past only by its direction: progressive in the former, regressive in the latter.²²

The fragment projects the system; its finitude is a negative reference to the infinite;²³ its completion carries within it a reference to incompleteness. This is the sense in which the form of the fragment is the presentation of the unrepresentable – Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's 'literary absolute' – and Schlegel's generic name for the fragmentary work in this sense is *poetry* (*Poesie*), beneath which lurks, as Peter Osborne writes, 'the generic concept of art'.²⁴

'Literature' and 'poetry' are not, as has already been noted, disciplinary terms, and they do not refer to specific genres. But even in their expanded senses they cannot claim 'the fragment' for themselves. The fragment is in principle – it must be – a transdisciplinary concept. Schlegel, Novalis and others gestured towards this, whilst remaining primarily interested in poetry/literature. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy gesture towards this gesture but only consider the fragment as integral to 'The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism' (the subtitle of *The Literary Absolute*). Frank, too, treats of the fragment only in the context of the 'theory of art'. However, freed from its association with poetry/literature/art, the idea of the fragment itself functions generically, as a productive interpretative concept. Accordingly, dreams can be understood as fragments, in the specific sense outlined above, and the deployment of the idea of the fragment in the interpretation of Freud's theory of dreams allows the transdisciplinarity of psychoanalysis itself to emerge.

From fragments of dreams to dreams as fragments

Throughout *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud notes, and notes others noting, the phenomenon of the only-fragmentary nature of the recollection of dreams and their fragmentary contents. But this is precisely *not* where the Romantic concept of the fragment has any purchase in the theory of dreams. Although Strachey's English translation uses the words 'fragment' and 'fragmentary' throughout, Freud never uses *Fragment* or *fragmentarisch*, but rather a number of other words and phrases which, in relation to the Romantic theory, can be used precisely to distinguish empirical forms of unfinishedness from the specific concept of the fragment. This is most insistent in the first chapter, 'The Scientific Literature Dealing with the Problem of Dreams', in which Freud builds up a picture of an extensive, mostly eighteenth-century

German, literature notable for its absolutely contradictory claims about the nature and status of dreams, particularly as concerns their relation to waking life (which, for Freud, at this early stage in the book, is sometimes equated with 'reality'). Freud's aim is to show that dreams are psychical structures that have a meaning and 'can be inserted at an assignable point in the mental activities of waking life' (IV, 1).²⁵ After a quick survey of divinatory dream interpretation in the ancient (mainly Greek) world and in the Middle Ages, Freud shows that the dominant tendency in the modern literature is either to treat dreams as the worthless excretions of the benumbed sleeping mind, or as the fanciful (and essentially meaningless, if sometimes pleasant or relaxing) play of the imagination freed from the cognitive constraints of the understanding or of reason.

Within these tendencies, the fragmentary nature of the dream content is associated with both worthlessness and meaninglessness. Especially where the process of secondary revision has failed (that is, where both in the dream and in its remembering and narration no effort has been made to make it seem coherent), 'we find ourselves helplessly face to face with a meaningless heap of fragmentary material [*einem sinnlosen Haufen von Inhaltsbrocken*]' (V, 490). The often absurd nature of dreams is later also said to be one of the main arguments used in favour of regarding dreams as 'the meaningless product of a reduced and fragmentary [*reduzierten und zerbröckelten*] mental activity' (V, 426), using only 'a functionally restricted fragment [*Bruchteil*] of the mind's faculties' (V, 506). One of the most frequently cited sources, F.W. Hidebrandt's *Der Traum und seine Verwerthung für's Leben* (1875), is quoted as wondering over the fact that 'dreams derive their elements not from major and stirring events ... but from the worthless fragments [*den wertlosen Brocken*], one might say, of what has been recently experienced' (IV, 18). L. Strümpell is similarly cited noting the derivation of dream components from what is unimportant and trivial, 'odd fragments' [*kleine Stücke*] of what one has read, and so on' (IV, 19). This fact, which Freud glosses as 'the remarkable preference shown by the memory in dreams for indifferent ... elements in waking experience' (IV, 19), is one of the central puzzles investigated in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. What is more, even these indifferent experiences are not reproduced in their entirety (or unaltered): 'Dreams yield no more than fragments [*nur Bruchstücke*] of reproductions; and this is so general a rule that theoretical considerations may be based on it' (IV, 21).

As well as the broken and bitty nature of what makes up the (manifest) content of dreams, Freud notes the view that, on waking, one remembers only a bit of it. To some extent Freud agrees that 'the dream which we remember when we wake up [is] a fragmentary remnant of the total dream-work [*bloß ein Rest der gesamten Traumarbeit*]' (IV, 279). This seems to be suggested by the extent of the latent dream thoughts uncovered in interpretation, as compared with the short and often telegraphic nature of what the dreamer is able to report. For Freud, though, the dream itself may well actually be short and telegraphic; the discrepancy between this and the extent of the dream-thoughts is the result of the process of condensation. Granted that 'only a small minority of all the dream-thoughts revealed are represented in the dream by one of their ideational elements', it is not the case that the dream is 'a highly incomplete and fragmentary version [*eine höchst unvollständige und lückenhafte Wiedergabe*] of them [the dream-thoughts]' (IV, 281). The 'different portions [*Stücke*]' of the manifold and complicated structure of dream-thoughts, which are in fact generally trains of thought, 'invariably' accompanied by their contradictory counterparts, are, as it were, squashed into the short dream through the process of condensation:

the whole mass of these dream-thoughts is brought under the pressure of the dream-work, and its elements are turned about [*die Stücke gedreht*], broken into fragments and jammed together [*zerbröckelt und zusammengeschoben*] – almost like pack ice. (IV, 312)

Nevertheless, to the extent that the forgetting of dreams is the result of their being repressed, it is the case that we often 'remember nothing but a single fragment [*eine Bruchstück*]' and 'there is every reason to suspect that our memory of dreams is not only fragmentary [*lückenhaft*] but positively inaccurate and falsified' (V, 512).

As well as references to the 'fragmentary' nature of the dream content, the 'fragmentary' function of the psychical apparatus in the process of dreaming and the 'fragmentary' nature of what is remembered of the dream, Freud also presents the account of certain dreams that are subject to analysis in *The Interpretation of Dreams* as 'fragments'. The description of these dreams begins: '(*Bruchstück*)...', indicating that he is choosing to tell us only a part (a percentage) of what he remembers.²⁶ But in all cases, as Freud's own choice of vocabulary indicates (but Strachey's translation obscures), these references to parts, pieces, fractions,

broken pieces, things full of holes, are precisely not, at least as Freud presents them, a point of contact with the Romantic concept of the fragment. Rather, it is the phenomenon of the dream itself – whatever the nature of its contents and whatever we remember of it – that bears interpretation in terms of the concept of the fragment. The explanation of this (and the justification of the claim) lies in an elucidation of the two different – and conflicting – accounts of the possibilities for dream interpretation that sit side by side in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: that based on the archaeological model and that in which the dream itself (as a finished piece, rather than a collection of broken-up bits) is understood as a fragment in the Romantic sense.

The archaeological model of psychoanalysis was described as early as 1896, in ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria’:

Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls [*Mauerresten*], fragments of columns [*Bruchstücken von Säulen*], and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions ... he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried ... the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or a treasure-house; the fragments of columns [*Säulenrümern*] can be filled out into a temple. (III, 192)²⁷

The influence of this model on Freud’s conception of dream interpretation emerges in the second chapter (‘The Method of Interpreting Dreams: Analysis of a Specimen Dream’) and follows on closely from the first major conclusion of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud distinguishes psychoanalytic dream interpretation from the two methods practised in the ‘lay world’²⁸ – symbolic dream interpretation (which ‘considers the content of the dream as whole and seeks to replace it by another content which is intelligible and in certain respects analogous to the original one’) and the ‘decoding method’ (which ‘treats dreams as a kind of cryptography in which each sign can be translated into another sign having a known meaning, in accordance with a fixed key’).

In Chapter II the psychoanalytic method is demonstrated by example, with the analysis of what has come to be known as the famous dream (one of Freud’s own) of ‘Irma’s Injection’. Picking up on successive parts of the dream, Freud unravels a series of interlocking associations that, taken together, seem to reveal that the dream represents ‘a particular state of affairs such as I [Freud] should have wished it to

be. Thus its content was the fulfilment of a wish and its motive was a wish’ (IV, 188–9). The defence of the generalization of this conclusion (‘a dream is the fulfilment of a wish’, IV, 121; refined, at the end of chapter IV, as the claim that ‘a dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish’, IV, 161) occupies much of the next two chapters of the book, and gives us the received view of Freud’s theory of dreams. Psychoanalytic dream interpretation is presented as the search for *the* wish of which the dream is a fulfilment, ‘the actual wish [*der Wunsch selbst*]’ (IV, 191), the ‘true content’ (*eigentlichen Inhalt*) (IV, 215), the ‘essential dream-thoughts’ (*wesentlichen Traumgedanken*) (IV, 311) which are never absurd (IV, 444) and which arise ‘through entirely normal mental activity’ (V, 592) – the perfectly intelligible, rational kernel of the dream which can become an object of knowledge.

Understood in this way, and armed with the distinction between manifest and latent content, the dream furnishes the interpreter with the pieces of a picture puzzle or rebus (*Bilderrätsel*), or with cryptic clues, as Freud explains in the opening of chapter VI, thinking perhaps of the Rosetta Stone:

The dream-thoughts [latent content] and the dream-content [manifest content] are presented to us like two different versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages. Or, more properly, the dream-content seems like a transcript 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 [*Bilderschrift*], the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts. (IV, 277)

Even when pieces of the puzzle are missing – as they generally are, because of the forgetting of dreams – the archeological reconstruction of the true meaning is still possible:

It is often possible by means of analysis to restore all that has been lost by the forgetting of the dream’s content; at least, in quite a number of cases one can reconstruct from a single remaining fragment [*einem einzelnen stehengebliebenen Broken*] not, it is true, the dream – which is in any case a matter of no importance – but all the dream-thoughts. (IV, 517)

Thus the explicit descriptions of the ‘fragmentary’ nature of the dream content and the ‘fragmentary’ nature of what is remembered of the dream refer,

according to the archaeological model, to what are in themselves meaningless bits and pieces (*Bruchstücke*) requiring the reconstruction of the whole to which they belong. And on this model (crossing with the metaphor of ideal translation) what is reconstructed is a singular meaning (the wish, or the dream-thoughts). The unknowable, the unconscious, is rendered knowable. End of story.

However, a strong countercurrent runs through *The Interpretation of Dreams*. For as much as Freud sticks to the idea that ‘a dream is the fulfilment of a wish’, he also stresses the innumerable chains of associations ‘reaching back to earliest childhood’ that ‘lead off even from dreams which seem at first sight to have been completely interpreted, since their source and instigating wish have been discovered without difficulty’ (IV, 218). Analysis reveals still more thoughts always lying behind the apparently completely interpreted dream (IV, 279), leading, of course, to the claim that ‘there is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable – a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown’ (IV, 111). Further and alternative interpretations are always possible, suggesting that the ‘intelligible wish’ revealed according to the archaeological model of interpretation may itself be the product of secondary revision. If so, the revealed ‘wish’, far from being

what lies behind, might in fact be just another front. For the dream remains enigmatic and strange, even after all attempts at interpretation and translation. Or, if the interpretation of a dream as the fulfilment of a wish says what the dreams ‘says’ (*Saxa loquuntur!* ‘Stones talk!’, as Freud writes in ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria’²⁹), the dream nevertheless says more:

The dream-thoughts to which we are led by interpretation cannot, from the nature of things, have any definite endings; they are bound to branch out in every direction into the intricate network of our world of thought. It is at some point where this meshwork is particularly close that the dream-wish grows up, like a mushroom out of its mycelium. (V, 525)

Temporally and formally finite, the dream refers infinitely; it has an infinity of reference.

According to the archaeological model, only *Bruchstücke* of the dream are remembered, or the process of condensation crushes the coherent dream-thoughts into in-themselves meaningless pieces. But once the dream is acknowledged to contain a reference to the infinite, whatever is remembered – no matter how much or in what state – is a fragment in the Romantic sense. Whatever remains of it is complete in itself, whilst at the same time intimating its essential incompleteness, alluding to what cannot be presented



or what it cannot succeed in saying. Freud tends to treat each dream as a composite structure, emphasizing the pieces of the dream and their relation to the whole. Thus, in a footnote added to *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1919, Freud describes the relation of the dream-element to its unconscious background as ‘a fragment [Stückchen] of that background, an allusion [Anspielung] to it ... made quite incomprehensible by being isolated’ (V, 518). When, however, the dream in its entirety or the fragment of a dream are considered, in their different ways, as dream-wholes, their isolation from any context that would determine their meaning becomes, instead, the form of their completeness. This is apparent in dreams presented in their totality in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, no matter how short: ‘I. His elder brother was chaffing him. II. Two grown men were caressing each other with a homosexual purpose. III. His brother had sold the business of which he himself has looked forward to becoming the director’ (IV, 159). An interpretation is not necessary to understand that this dreamer, like A.W. Schlegel’s ‘poetical genius’, ‘know[s] a great deal more than he knows’.³⁰ But it is also true of the enigmatic but insistent fragment: “‘Father, don’t you see I’m burning?’” (V, 509).

When the dream, complete in its incompleteness, is thought of as a fragment in the Romantic sense – a finished product that ‘cannot, from the nature of things, have any definite endings’ – its essential kinship with what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy call ‘literature’ becomes obvious. Like the literary fragment, it is a product of intellectual construction. Like the literary fragment, it invites interpretation whilst eluding it. It also, like the literary fragment, makes an impudent demand for attention considering its apparent deviance from the standards of classical composition. Further, what Baudrillard says of the fragment is true *a fortiori* of the dream: ‘Fragmentary writing is, ultimately, democratic writing. Each fragment enjoys an equal distinction. The most banal one finds its exceptional reader. Each, in its turn, has its hour of glory.’³¹

However, that aspect of Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* that allows us to see the ways in which the dream, also, is a fragment in the Romantic sense of the term frees the concept of the fragment from any disciplinary confinement. Frank’s disciplinary, philosophical approach to early German Romanticism seems to treat the fragment as, ultimately, a literary issue. In this the very disjunction between philosophy and literature that Schlegel sought to overcome is ironically reinscribed. Even Lacoue-Labarthe and

Nancy’s literary-philosophical approach, which has, as it were, gone with the Romantic programme, nevertheless also tends in *The Literary Absolute* to restrict the concept of the fragment to the – albeit expanded – field of literature. Of course, the idea of what might now be called the transdisciplinarity of the fragment is already present in Schlegel, not just in the traversal of philosophy-literature, but also beyond: ‘I can only give you of myself, of my whole self no other tiny sample but a system of fragments, because I myself am like that.’³² But the example of the dream fragment also cuts across some of the distinctions that have tended to be used to distinguish the fragment from the *Bruchstück*. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy distinguish, as we have seen, between what is ‘struck by incompleteness’ and what ‘aims for fragmentation for its own sake ... a determinate and deliberate statement’.³³ Wanning Harries similarly distinguishes between the involuntary and the voluntary fragment.³⁴ The dream fragment, however, which is already interpretation, is neither voluntary nor involuntary but both. It is at once constructed as a fragment and struck by incompleteness; deliberate and unplanned. As such it is not only an example of a fragment in the Romantic sense, but it complicates our picture of the meaning of that concept as it might have any actuality for us today.

The dream’s the thing

To recap: it has been suggested that there are two, competing, views of dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. First, according to the archeological model, the dream is divided into two: what we can call the dream proper (what is actually dreamed, the experienced dream, theoretically determined as the manifest content available to sleeping and waking consciousness) and the meaning or significance of the dream (theoretically determined as the unconscious, latent content). In this model the dream-work (the processes of condensation, displacement, transformation of abstract ideas into images and the equivocal process of secondary revision) transforms the latent content (the dream-thoughts) into the dream (manifest content) and the theory of dreams is reducible to the defence of the thesis that ‘a dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish’ (IV, 161). On this view the experience of the dream proper is, paradoxically, the least important thing in the theory of dreams. The aim of interpretation is, as we have already seen, to ‘reconstruct ... not, it is true, the dream – which is in any case a matter of no importance – but all the dream-thoughts’

(IV, 517; emphasis added). For Freud the problem of dreams was separate from any investigation into, for example, the physiology of sleep. Even so, being-asleep was for him a specific condition for dreams, lowering the guard of the censor somewhat and, in reducing the stimuli of external perception, opening the psychic space for hallucinatory perception. The dream-thoughts require the disguise brought about by the dream-work to the extent that they are such as would be repressed in waking thought, but are also disguised in dreams with the specific aim of not disrupting sleep. Thus if Freud ascribed a function to dreaming, it was the function of protecting sleep.³⁵ The combination of the ascription of this function and the wish-fulfilment thesis makes up the received view of Freud's theory of dreams. To the extent that this was proposed as a new, *specifically psychoanalytic* theory, developed along with the concepts and vocabulary of this new science (in the German sense), it sums up the *disciplinary* psychoanalytic concept of the dream in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. And it is very widely attacked, both inside and outside of psychoanalysis.

This view distinguishes between unconscious dream-thoughts and the conscious dream-form; it distinguishes between the constructions of the dream-work and the analysis undertaken in the work of interpretation. As interpretation makes what was unconscious conscious, the dream itself is conceived as something to be dissolved, its total form an appearance to be unmasked. Notwithstanding the evident literary and imaginative nature of the dream, the relation between dream and interpretation, on this model, is not unlike that of the relation between error and correction. The dream as dreamed is something to be overcome.

However, the second view of dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, thought according to the Romantic idea of the fragment, accepts none of these distinctions or conceptions. On this second view, 'the dream's the thing'; it is not a false front. The fact that it says more than it says is more important than any one thing that it might be made to say through the process of interpretation.³⁶ This is not to say that all interpretation is rendered otiose. Rather, interpretation is reconceived, in several respects. This is, to begin with, a consequence of the nature of the dream itself:

Not only are the elements of the dream determined by the dream-thoughts many times over [*mehrfach determiniert*], but the individual dream-thoughts are represented in the dream by several

elements. Associative paths lead from one element of the dream to several dream-thoughts, and from one dream-thought to several elements of the dream. Thus a dream is not constructed by each individual dream-thought, or a group of dream-thoughts, finding (in abbreviated form) separate representations in the content of the dream ... a dream is constructed, rather, by the whole mass of dream-thoughts being subjected to a sort of manipulative process [*einer gewissen Bearbeitung*] in which those elements which have the most numerous and strongest supports acquire the right of entry into the dream-content ... the elements of the dream are constructed out of the whole mass of dream-thoughts and each one of those elements is shown to have been determined many times over in relation to the dream-thoughts. (IV, 284)

The relation of interpretation to such a complex structure is less an overlay or addition than the 'completion' of one of its threads, just as with the Early Romantic concept of criticism which 'completes' the work. The dream interpretation then becomes a fragment in its own right. Further interpretations make up more fragments, which together make up a system of fragments, which is, again, itself a fragment:

Aren't all systems individuals just as all individuals are systems at least in embryo and tendency? Isn't every real entity historical? Aren't there individuals who contain within themselves whole systems of individuals?³⁷

This alternative view of dreams is thus one in which the distinction between dream-work (construction/production) and interpretation has already collapsed. On the archaeological model, in which the dream-work and its interpretation are separate processes, the idea of interpretation is restricted to the analytic situation (both formally in the clinic and informally, as with Freud's own self-analysis or the lay psychoanalytic attempt on one's own or others' dreams). It perhaps owes more to the abandoned practice of the analyst informing the patient of the meaning of their dream or symptom than Freud is aware.³⁸ The concept of interpretation in *The Interpretation of Dreams* does not, however, allow itself to be thus restricted. For example, explaining the alteration in the form of the external and internal somatic stimulus as it appears in the dream, and emphasizing that this is the result of a psychically motivated act (rather than a mechanical effect), Freud writes of 'the perverse and capricious manner in which external stimuli are interpreted [*die Schiefheit und*

Launenhaftigkeit in der Deutung des äußeren Reizes’ in dreams, when (as other phenomena attest) ‘the sleeping mind’ is perfectly capable of making ‘the correct interpretation [*die richtige Deutung*]’ (IV, 234). Thus, the dream-work is already itself the work of interpretation.

However, the absolute point of indifference between dream-work and interpretation is located in the process that Freud calls ‘secondary revision’, *die sekundäre Bearbeitung*. This is, for Freud, that part of the dream-work that attempts to endow the dream with a veneer of meaningfulness. But Freud identifies it with the tendency in waking thought to ‘establish order’ in perceptual experience, to ‘make it conform to our expectations of an intelligible whole’ (V, 499). Dreams subject to secondary revision ‘might be said to have been already interpreted once [*schon einmal gedeutet worden sind*], before being submitted to waking interpretation [*ehe wir sie im Wachen der Deutung unterziehen*]’, but ‘waking interpretations’ (of dreams, plays; in fact anything) too can be the products of the same process (V, 490).

Explicitly, Freud identifies secondary revision with what we might call *bad* interpretation, which for him means *mis*interpretation. It has, he writes, the function that ‘the poet maliciously ascribes to philosophers; it fills up the gaps in the dream-structure with shreds and patches’ (V, 490). The poet in question here, as Strachey’s editorial work tells us, is Heine – specifically Poem LVIII of ‘Die Heimkehr’. The poem is not quoted in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, but lines from it are included in the 1933 *New Introductory Lectures*, lecture XXXV on ‘The Question of a *Weltanschauung*’. The idea of ‘an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis’, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered, is one that answers to an ‘emotional demand’ or a ‘wish’, but is fulfilled only as a programme, an ideal (XXII, 158–9). However, philosophy clings to the illusion of really being able to ‘present a picture of the universe which is without gaps and coherent’ (XXII, 160). Freud then quotes the last two lines of Heine’s verse:

Zu fragmentarisch ist Welt und Leben!
Ich will mich zum deutschen Professor begeben.
Der weiß das Leben zusammzusetzen,
Und er macht ein verständlich System daraus;
mit seinen Nachtmützen und Schlafrockfetzen
Stopft er die Lücken des Weltenbaus.³⁹

Life and the world’s too fragmented for me!
A German professor can give me the key.

He puts like in order with skill magisterial,
Builds a national system for better or worse;
With nightcap and dressing-gown scraps as
material
He chinks up the holes in the Universe.⁴⁰

This may or may not echo Schlegel’s *Critical Fragments* 103:

many a work of art whose coherence is never questioned is, as the artist knows quite well himself, not a complete work but a fragment, or one or more fragments, a mass, a plan [*nur Bruchstück, eins oder mehre, Masse, Anlage*]. But so powerful is the instinct for unity in mankind that the author himself will often bring something to a kind of completion at least directly with the form which simply can’t be made a whole or a unit; often quite imaginatively and yet completely unnaturally. The worst thing about it is that whatever is draped about the solid, really existent fragments [*Stücken*] in the attempt to mug up a semblance of unity consists largely of dyed rags. And if these are touched up cleverly and deceptively, and tastefully displayed, then that’s all the worse.⁴¹

In all three cases (Schlegel, Heine, Freud) what is perhaps being described here is precisely that conception of interpretation associated with the archeological model of dreams and the idea of a fragment as a *Bruchstück* – something upon which to reconstruct a lost whole. This idea of interpretation actually betrays an intolerance of the fragmentary, never more evident than in Freud’s ‘Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria’, a companion piece to *The Interpretation of Dreams*.⁴² But without the presumptions of the archeological model, and in league with the Romantic concept of the fragment, the equivocal status of secondary revision – cutting across the distinction between dream and waking thought, across dream construction and interpretation, across ‘work’ and ‘criticism’ – refers us to a much richer concept of interpretation. The concept of interpretation associated with the archeological model is one of the disciplinary concepts of psychoanalytic ‘interpretation’. That associated with the alternative model, in which the (dream-)work and interpretation are part of the same work, is, on the other hand, a transdisciplinary concept of interpretation. The ‘application’ of psychoanalytic theory in other disciplinary contexts would make use of the former; indeed it would be an example of it. The latter reveals the transdisciplinary potential of psychoanalysis itself. It is one of the achievements of psychoanalysis as transdisciplinarity: its romantic transdisciplinarity, we might say.

Notes

- This article is an output from the AHRC-funded project 'Transdisciplinarity and the Humanities: Problems, Methods, Histories, Concepts' (AH/1004378/1), 2011–2013, located within the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP), Kingston University London.
- Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London and New York, 2013, p. 58.
 - Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Leser, SUNY Press, New York, 1988, pp. 2–3.
 - Ibid.*, p. 5. Cf. David Cunningham, 'Genre without Genre: Romanticism, the Novel and the New', *Radical Philosophy* 196, March/April 2016, pp. 14–27.
 - Friedrich Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 77, in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and Oxford, 1991, p. 27. See also Critical Fragment 9, in *ibid.*, p. 2: 'Wit is absolutely social feeling, or fragmentary genius.' Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 44; Ernst Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, especially pp. 152–3. The idea of the fragment is not itself that of a literary genre, but the genre of the literary fragment is still practiced today: for example, Jean Baudrillard's *Fragments: Cool Memories III, 1991–95*, trans. Emily Agar, Verso, London and New York, 1997.
 - See, for example, Elizabeth Wanning Harries, "'Unfinish'd Sentences': The Romantic Fragment", in Michael Ferber, ed. *A Companion to European Romanticism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2005, p. 362; Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1986, pp. 5–6.
 - Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, pp. 58–9.
 - See Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, SUNY Press, New York, 2004, p. 53.
 - Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 30.
 - Ibid.*, p. 32.
 - Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, pp. 26–30; Walter Benjamin, 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism', in *Selected Writings*, Volume I: 1913–1926, trans. Markus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1996, pp. 116–200.
 - Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, pp. 36, 51, 187. This book is a translation of the third part of Frank's *Infinite Approximation [Unendliche Annäherung. Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1997], entitled there: 'The Early Romantic Midposition Between Sceptical Critique of Foundations and "Longing for the Infinite"' [*Die Frühromantische Zwischenstellung Zwischen Skeptischer Grundsatz-Kritik und "Sehnsucht nach dem Unendlichen"*]
 - Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, p. 207.
 - See Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, pp. 207, 219; Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 39.
 - Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 42.
 - If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, trans. Anne Carson, Virago, London, 2002, p. 133.
 - Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 41.
 - Wanning Harries, "'Unfinish'd Sentences': The Romantic Fragment", p. 362.
 - 'Many of the works of the ancients have become fragments. Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written.' Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 24, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 21.
 - Robert M. Brain, 'The Romantic Experiment as Fragment', in Robert M. Brain, Robert S. Cohen and Ole Knudsen, eds, *Hans Christian Ørsted and the Romantic Legacy in Science*, Springer, Dordrech, 2007, p. 227.
 - Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 206, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 45.
 - Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, pp. 43, 48.
 - Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 22, *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 20–21.
 - Cf. Osborne, *Anywhere, or Not at All*, p. 60.
 - Peter Osborne, 'Introduction' to the Dossier 'Romantic Transdisciplinarity', *Radical Philosophy* 196, March/April 2016, p. 6.
 - All references in the text and below refer to the *Standard Edition* of Freud's works, trans. James Strachey et al., in the Vintage imprint, London, 2001, citing volume then page number.
 - For example, 'Dream of October 1st–2nd, 1910', IV, 167; 'Dream of October 2nd–3rd, 1910', IV, 168. Freud also, of course, published a famous 'Fragment [*Bruchstück*] of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' (the 'Dora' case), written very soon after *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1901; though not published until 1905) and close to it in many of its concerns.
 - The Freud Museum in London, where much of Freud's collection of ancient fragments is held, devotes a section of its website to Freud, archaeology and the archaeological metaphor or model: www.freud.org.uk/education/topic/40037/freud-and-archaeology.
 - Remembering that the 'scientific' world has tended to deny any meaning to dreams, the question of interpretation does not arise for it. However, 'lay opinion' seems to presuppose that dreams do have a significance, hence the history of dream interpretation.
 - Freud, 'The Aetiology of Hysteria', III, 192.
 - Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 172, in *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 40, attributed to A.W. not F. Schlegel.
 - Baudrillard, *Fragments: Cool Memories III*, p. 8.
 - F. Schlegel to A.W. Schlegel in 1797, cited in Manning Harries, "'Unfinish'd Sentences': The Romantic Fragment", p. 373.
 - Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 41.
 - Wanning Harries, "'Unfinish'd Sentences': The Romantic Fragment", p. 362. For a survey of attempts to classify types of fragment, see Michael Bradshaw, 'Hedgehog Theory: How to Read a Romantic Fragment Poem', *Literature Compass*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2008, pp. 73–89.
 - See, for example, IV, 234, where the function of protecting sleep and wish fulfilment meet in the idea of 'the wish to sleep'.
 - See Stella Sandford, 'Freud, Bion and Kant: Epistemology and Anthropology in *The Interpretation of Dreams*', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, forthcoming.
 - Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 224, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 51.
 - Freud affirms the abandonment of this mistaken view in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (e.g. IV, 106). It is succeeded by the conviction that the method of psychoanalytic dream interpretation 'imposes the task of interpretation on the dreamer himself' (IV, 98). However, the abandoned view is not always avoided in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, especially in Freud's tendency to proffer interpretation of dreams relayed secondhand.
 - Heinrich Heine, 'Die Heimkehr', LVIII (1826).
 - Heinrich Heine, 'The Homecoming', no. 58, in Hall Draper, ed., *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine: A Modern English Version*, Suhrkamp/Insel, Boston, 1982, p. 99.
 - Schlegel, Critical Fragment 103, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 12.
 - Throughout 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' (VII), the famous case of Dora, Freud continually mentions and attempts to justify the incompleteness of the study.