

### Who wants to know anyway?

Dreams are easy to forget. But the stuff dreams are made of is not. I started to record my dreams in the summer of 2001 after I saw a 50 Austrian Schilling (ATS) bill on a refrigerator at a party in Brooklyn. I was wondering about the decorative functions of Austrian money in the USA. I was told Sigmund Freud is depicted on it. This was a surprise to me, having used this money for so many years without being aware of its iconography. I soon learned that many fellow Austrians ignored this little fact as well. I found it peculiar and indicative of Freud's writing itself. With the looming introduction of the new European currency, Austrian legal tender was doomed to disappear. During the remaining eight months that Freud's paper image circulated in the hands, pockets, cash registries, and banks of Austrians, I created this dream-artwork, which I entitled *Das Zählen der letzten Tage der Sigmund Freud Banknote* [The Counting of the Last Days of the Sigmund Freud Banknote].

For this work I tried to remember my dreams and write them down as quickly and accurately as I could, often at the "scene of the crime," that is, in bed, sometimes shaken up by a nightmare. Since I am not trained in figurative depiction, my dream notation was mostly done with word, only sometimes accompanied by clumsy drawings. With the help of this scribbling I was later able to carry some of the dream memories into the morning and transcribe them more legibly onto the computer. I realized soon that this "immediate writing down in bed" was essential to recollection, since dreams are so fragile that even a change of my physical position could liquidate its memory. Rereading my loose handwriting of single words and sentence fragments is, even for me, not easy since it often was done in the darkness of the night. Dreams with more dramatic texture usually wake me up easily. The onei-

ric scenes could be so intense and colorful that my initial recall appeared often falsely accurate. With the partial or entire loss of dream content, at least, these meager reminders were helping me to remember or reconstruct a dream for more detailed explication on the computer. Our unconscious mind works with all kind of tricks to secure deceptions and dream evaporation. For example: I would dream I was writing down a dream and continue to sleep, only to discover later in the morning that I'd written nothing at all. So-called "lucid dreams" in which I dream-watched myself became frequent, and I felt released when this dreaming marathon stopped and I could let all my dreams just pass by again unnoticed.

After having written down the dream on the computer, I checked the value of the 50 ATS bill on CNN's online currency converter. Simultaneously, this online service gave conversions for a number of other currencies. I complemented these listings with the economic data of two major US stock indexes, the Dow Jones and the Nasdaq. At that moment, I also checked how many books on Sigmund Freud were offered on Amazon.com and on Buecher.de, a German equivalent to the US online bookseller. After printing a dream with all the information on the same paper that contained the original dream scribbles, I added the 50 ATS Sigmund Freud banknote. The production of these artworks was contingent on my dream activity, that is, no dreams — no works. In the period from July 1 to the end of February, when the actual currency ceased circulation, I produced 144 works with dreams. Thought I mostly slept at night, sometimes I also fell asleep during the day and dreamt. Many works contain multiple dreams, since I quite often dream several times a night. I experienced myself as a *serial dreamer*.

This dream work had quite an effect on me. Before I had started, I went dream by dream and didn't pay much attention to my dreams. I was not aware — to give an example — of how often I was dreaming of my native Austria where I haven't lived since 1986, and of Vorarlberg, the region I grew up in, which I left behind



Civilization and its Discontents



in 1980. The amount of Vorarlbergian or Austrian dream background has been a real surprise to me, something I only became conscious of when working through these dreams. Even more intriguing is the fact that right now, years after I completed this work, I now see it in a different light. At the time of dream harvesting, I had limited understanding of how my former personal relationships influenced me. A five-year-long relationship had come to an end and I fell in love with a new girlfriend, who featured quite prominently in my dreams during the eight months of dream registering. Even though I dreamt of my ex-girlfriend from time to time, I was not aware of her oneiric appearances during that period of dream accounting. Rereading my dreams is quite an adventure evoking embarrassment and surprise since I have forgotten most of the dreams.

Apart from my personal and professional life, my family history and all the dream-gossip reflecting socializing and stress, people and personal drama, there is also an important historical tragedy of catastrophic consequences that entered this work. The duration of this project overlapped with the events of September 11, 2001, the subsequent lethal anthrax letters, and other threats. These dramatic events did direct some of my dream production, mixing up news and paranoia, post-trauma symptoms and existential nervousness. In these dream scenarios I was featured in all possible roles: as victim of terrorism, as terrorist, as CIA agent, as victim of anti-terror campaigns, and so on. Terrorism and the overblown wars and campaigns to counter terrorism resulted in gruesome and sickening images paraded on TV that created unconscious and subtle effects during the night a well. Thus, the psychic collateral damage of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror were leaving traces in much of the oneiric quilt I left behind.

Dreams resist final interpretation, but they are open to contextualization. They also invite asso-

ciations and new narratives resulting from the dream content remembered. In this work, I never tried to “interpret” it in a classical sense. I didn’t want to “play Freud,” but supplemented many dreams with accounts on the dream context. This process of contextualization never ends due to the nature of language and the endless turns our lives are always taking. The difference between actual dream narratives and contextualizations is not always clearly understood by readers. For this work, my dreams are not indicated as dreams and clearly distinguished from contextual complements and associations. I opted for the fluidity between these different layers of texts to prevent readers from clearly pinpointing a story, a fact, or a person. This helps to create a vaguely inconsistent narrative that constructs a space where a writing subject passing as “me” emerges just to disappear again into some extra-layers of stories.

Everybody can relate to dreams since dreaming is universally human. I myself see my contextualizing explanations and dream associations as just a first reading, compressing and decompressing stories, thus sending subsequent readers in various directions. To a certain degree, any account, including court papers or visually recorded facts, is fictional and gain reality only through context, through authority and through the various laws that govern the construction of our daily world as facts and reality. Recent American politics provide good examples of how facts — the war with Iraq, terrorism, redistribution of wealth to the wealthy, a failing economy, the criminal behavior of a president, and his administration, etc. — seem not to matter, in fact seem to be up for endless spinning and political power games. In our society, usually, dreams no longer play any real part in the construction of reality — unless one is in the well-paying business of psychoanalysis. I can “have a dream” of justice, a dream of being rich, of being here or there, but all these dreams don’t simply create any actuality after awakening. Or do they in the minds of people?

When it comes to corporate dreams the situation of constructing reality becomes a different ball game.



The Interpretation of Dreams



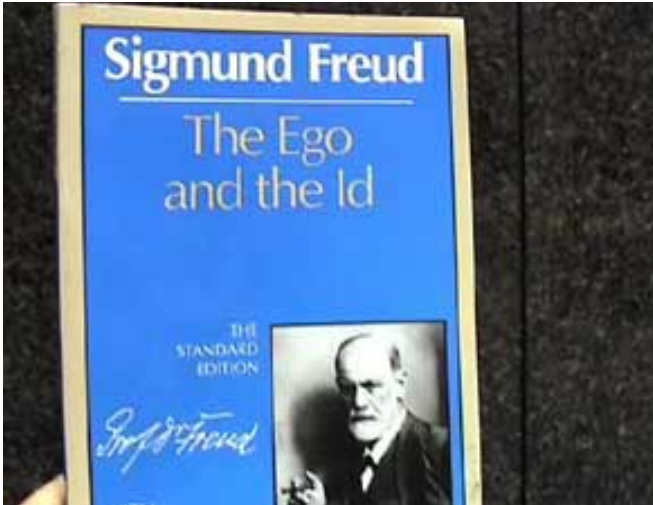
Hollywood and companies like Dreamworks fabricate digital and celluloid dreams *en masse* that shape reality to a degree that renders surreal reality real, as we saw in the last Californian election. The dreams of Arnold Schwarzenegger — the best-known Austrian after Hitler and Freud — have come true. Most marketers try to sell us pre-fabricated dream products of all sorts, using dreaming as a seductive sales pitch. What these political, business, and advertisement schemes operating with words and visual ideas of dreams don't mention is the fact that many of our dreams are actually nightmares — something that readers of my dreams will quickly become aware of.

Sigmund Freud himself sees in any regular dream an aspect of a *Wunschtraum*, that is, wishful dreaming, or wish fulfillment that is falsely translated by my online dictionary as “pipe dream” or “great dream.” This element of desire for material, social, ideological, psychological, and erotic realities in “great dreams” and in lesser ones reinforces the intrinsic relationship between dreams and a truth that seem to be suspended. Dreams fulfill in a very individual, spontaneous, and unmediated way the same reflective functions as utopias do in the realms of political and ideological screening. In today's world of massively unfair and incredibly unequal distribution of resources, dreams — cashed in or not — serve as colorful liquid pumped through all political, economical and social systems globally. Thus, individual and global dream worlds can be studied in the same way oncologists use traceable fluids to detect cancerous cells.

Martin Luther King had a dream for which he had to pay with his life. Dreams not only can be a threat to others but can also be quite repulsive to our own psyche. The explosive amalgam of truth, desire, and anti-gravitational immateriality needs various mechanisms to be kept under control. This is why many dreams go uncollected, unremembered, untold, or become self-censored. Self-censorship starts with the personal inability to remember stuff in the first place, if one accepts the commonly accepted ideas of our personal conscious/

unconscious information economy. In my dream reporting, self-censorship also plays a conscious role, though I tried to be as honest as possible. But I do remember some instances of balancing the consequences of disclosing certain details about others and myself against an implicit drive for authenticity and artistic responsibility for truth. In a couple of alienating dreams with embarrassing or too painful contextualizing associations I opted for wandering vagueness and blurring oblivion. In some instances I also switched between languages something that usually wasn't related to self-censorship. The question of (self-) censoring also plays a role in selecting the material to be printed in this volume since we can afford to reproduce only 100 works. I therefore delegated this selection primarily to the editor of this series in order not to self-censor myself.

An ineffective, naive way of dealing with this issue of self-censorship is similar to the tactics of children who close their eyes and believe that they are not visible anymore. As I write this text I sense a refusal on my part to reread my collected material. It is as if I don't want to regain yet another view on the state of these eight months of oneiric self-observation. I hesitate to be reminded of these dreams. I am reluctant to see what was going on in my life at the time of dream recording. I vacillate to see two life-defining love stories blend into each other and diverge. It is painful to see love and oneself change and time pass. It is uncanny to suddenly recognize conflicts of the current relationship already inscribed in the very euphoria of early love where problems seemed simply not visible. Also, the events and after-events of 9/11 created a schism that did away with a political innocence, a situation nobody really wanted to anticipate. Today, we really don't want to remember 911 or even project yet another attack of even larger magnitude and destruction. Hollywood and politicians whose lifeblood is fear are insinuating threat scenarios for us. In analogy to Freud's death drive, one could wonder whether it makes sense to speak of a drive to forget, a drive of oblivion and ignorance. Who wants to know anyway? Friedrich Nietzsche was one of



the fiercest advocates of oblivion and wanted to make it a human virtue. In political and public life, the power to forget – and to keep others forcefully from remembering – as well as the power to ignore are vital instruments to staying in power or grabbing power. Personal heuristics (un)fortunately follows the same path. We don't want to remember loss and painful things. I hope that very few people will actually read these small and often badly written writings. Finally, readers will read it their way, mix in their own memories, their own dreams and lives, and my stories will hopefully defuse.

Indeed, the actual quality of the writing is peculiar to say the least. There are plenty of orthographical, lexical, and grammatical errors, which have not been edited out. For multiple reasons, some of which are addressed throughout this introduction, I prefer not to reread either my emails, or many of these dream texts. This “write and run” style sometimes approaches incomprehensiveness and marks an “anything goes” attitude that may also be explained by the fact that I'm not a native-speaker and depend on editors. This doesn't apply only to English but also to German, my so-called mother tongue, though my mother spoke Vorarlbergian dialect, which is not written officially and which is in many ways quite different from standard German. To address this subject more accurately, I only remember the Vorarlbergian voice of my father and not that of my mother. My mother passed away in a violent vertical way of her own choice when I was fourteen. To this day, I have no acoustic memory of her. I cannot remember her voice and don't recall a single sentence, a single word she uttered. For me, dealing with proper grammar and correct spelling in my “teachers' tongues” feels authoritarian and rule governed. I also found out that if I ignore orthographical rules consistently enough, I might get away with it.

Getting away with things had always played a crucial role in my life, since I had many issues to escape from. I like to name my practice of learning many foreign languages – currently Chinese and Arabic – as a “moving away from my mother's tongue.” Many of my dreams were mediated, caught and objectified in Ger-

man, English, or in some other language – depending mostly on the dream context. We know that dreams may occur even in languages or with words that don't exist. More or less evenly I wrote out dreams in English and in German and was never really aware of why this or that language offered itself for use. It just occurred. I also often switched linguistic codes and mixed them up sometimes even within a single sentence. This most likely is a product of the fact that I have been living outside a German-speaking country since 1986. In New York, my use of German is limited. I don't evade German as did Louis Wolfson with his mother tongue. This great New York writer learned many languages in order to refuse to speak English, his mother tongue. As opposed to me, he is very eloquent about the voice of his mother, which he hated. He wrote two fabulous on this subject books: *Ma mère musicienne est morte* [My Mother Musician Is Dead] and *Le schizo et les langues* [The Schizo and Languages] .

Recording my dreams was like interviewing myself with little interference. As in good interviews, for this “neuro-matic” viewing no questions were necessary. Questioning the narratives of dreams is little desirable since desires rule our libidinal empire of dreams. The answers are of a similar material: obsessive exaggerations and possessive distortions, paranoid constellations of freeze framing and threat, the ever returning, all too natural drive for sexual ludism and seduction as well as delirious and twisted social interplay and intrigue. The word “interviewing” is very accurate for dreaming, which delivers mostly images of our cathexes, our mental energy directed towards a particular idea or object.

Money is one of the most prominent cathected objects there is. It is interesting that money, in and of itself, is worthless and has value only when exchange is possible. Exchange doesn't need to be effective, but it needs to be optional. The day, after I finished this dream work, nobody – except the Austrian National Bank – would accept the Austrian Schilling as legal tender, since this role had been passed onto the Euro. According to Talcott Parsons and Nicolas Luhmann, money is a



Beyond the Pleasure Principle



symbolically generalized medium of value and exchange and shares this quality with other media. I am now interested to project money onto dreams and ignore for a while the usual way money and dreams are associated together when we “dream of money.” Not only is money a medium, so are dreams. Since ancient times, dreams were interpreted and were looked as messengers of the gods. Before Freud institutionalized psychoanalysis and made dreaming into a cottage industry, dreams already communicated the wishes of a god, the state of our minds, and were considered informative for the health of people and communities. Money enlarges the possibilities of exchange and frees transactions from temporal, material, and social constraints. Dreams worlds, too, are unlimited in their actions and timing and frequently cross social, economic, ideological, and sexual boundaries. If capitalism can be reductively paraphrased as making money with other people’s money, work, and time, dreams, too, make use of the full scope of imaginable and unimaginable instruments, protagonists, actions, interactions, and settings.

The very structure of money is based on scarcity. In cases where money is easily accessible to everybody without consequences there is not much to be exchanged, as was the case in the former communist countries. In other precarious situations where plenty of money is in circulation, the currency is worth little and inflation can render it less relevant. In such circumstances, significant exchange resumes without paper money of that given currency. Scarcity of money is therefore an intrinsic element for the proper functioning of money, which brings to my mind the omnipresent structure of dreams as *Wunschtraum* — the dream in which we desire and want something. Money and dreams are therefore perfect bed fellows in our wishing system. The discrepancy between reality and dreams concerning the allocation of wealth, love, time, space, justice, power, and everything else is most likely one of the driving force in oneiric ambitions. Mocking the world of material differences, one might ask, “What’s the point of dreaming if you have got it already?” It is

difference that powers our dreams and the world in which we dream.

Money as a generalized medium of communication has the power to establish relationships between diverse and noncomparable things. Money is therefore a unifying element of difference without eliminating or excluding differences. The most unrelated and incompatible facts, situations, objects and people may converge into relationships with the help of monetary instruments or the pure imagination of them. This became very apparent in the insurance files of the World Trade Center disaster, also a major stage in my dreams, which tagged prices not only onto lost and destroyed property but also onto lives and future lives of the people who were killed. This integral function of money with its high degree of generalization finds its equivalent again in dreams, which also ignore facts, times, geographies, borders, habits, social orders, and politics. Anyone could indulge in delirious dreams about Princess Diana though she is not anymore among the living and is inaccessible. Dreams are made of decoy materials that render libidinal energies and vibrations promiscuous and versatile. We often see alliances in dreams that would be impossible but desirable or are abject and unthinkable in real life. Dreams flow in liquids that are as fluid as money.

Actual money — cash, or more to the point, cash flow — is already anachronistic and will soon not only be irrelevant in business but also more likely even prohibited for tax and “security” reasons. Money is about to be stripped naked of all materiality and will become pure information and fully transparent. In the near future, we will stop using money and checks and only deal with wire transfers and bank and debit cards of all kinds. Already, it is impossible to purchase airplane tickets without a credit card, and nearly impossible to make phone calls in Europe without a calling card. More and more machines want to be fed with machine codes and electronic ID chips only. These monetary interfaces are about to learn to communicate without any visual or physical contact to a scanner. I wonder whether this

explosion in environmental interactive intelligence, in which pecuniary transactions and information play vital roles, won't soon turn into nightmares. From a subjective point of view, wiring money or debiting a purchase with plastic may feel like having the limbic regions of the brain, responsible for emotional and emotive matters, communicate with the prefrontal cortex that houses our working memory, our attention unit, and our logic and self-monitoring center — all functions that are suspended during the dream-enriched time of REM sleep with Rapid Eyes Movements.

For Nicolas Luhmann, money is at the center of an economic theory that is dominated by “improbable communication” which has as its binary code payment and non-payment. The economy is therefore seen as the totality of all contingent necessary and non-necessary, executed and non-executed payments. The problem of money is an integral part in this game of probabilities which determines the acceptance or refusal of economical communication, that is, payment or non-payment. The experience of contingency, the choice to buy or not to buy, to pay or not to pay, to sign on or not, regulates not only prices but also implies a high degree of (market) observation and self-observation. It was therefore not arbitrary that I added the value of the money at issue and other key economic factors. In the world of anti-gravitational dreaming, probability is not a non-issue. We still dream that we want to escape the monster or killer and are petrified and unable to escape. Last summer in East Hampton, a telling nightmare was reported by the six-year-old daughter of one of my few wealthy friends. The little girl awoke from a dream in which her parents lost all their money in exchange for poverty. Her unfortunate dream might have been inspired by my fascination for their fabulous villa or by the fact that on that famous peninsula, not a single stone goes without a big exuberant price tag. In East Hampton, people don't “own houses,” they are “in the market.” Wish fulfillment is disguised in such a case dialectically through the fear of loss. The dream-come-true vacation situation creates new nightmares when one is

confronted with people living realities in which non-payment options are the dominant ones.

Of course, economic transactions are observed and consumed even by people who are excluded from direct participation. Luhmann even paraphrases Marcel Duchamps's famous grave inscription that reads “D'ailleurs, ce sont toujours les autres qui meurent [But it is always others who die] . . .” He says, “Die Wirtschaft — das sind immer die anderen [The economy — it is the others].” This market transparency is important for the market to function. Others therefore join and participate even though they might not be able to enter the payment/non-payment game. Price structures and the quantity of economic transactions help us to orient and position ourselves in this sea of possible payments and nonpayments.

Presenting my dreams to a public creates for me a kind of an embarrassment that I try to hide through this abstract introduction and my quasi-refusal to even re-read my own dreams. As I mentioned earlier, because they are products of my lived background and existential patterns, these dreaming recordings are communicating residues of the primal pleasure and pain, the original comfort and stress that this stuff is made of. Life goes on and we don't always want to know about it. I refuse to be fully aware of exactly how much intimate and personal detail I disclose details about myself, my family, and my social circle. I'm also concerned that these dream writings and post-oneiric associations could hurt the feelings of others, addressed in this work, something that will create a new layer of conflicts. Luhmann, like Parsons, could be accused of paying relative little attention to conflicts, crisis, and all those social situations where the euphemisms of a unifying system theory appears out of sync with non-anticipated ruptures of rule-governed behaviors and wars. In my dreams as well as in life, conflicts are everywhere and I wonder whether I am an artist or a nocturnal worrier. Today, the optics of dream literature is well domesticated and room is provided to accommodate the colorful expressions of “primitive, sexual, and aggressive impulses” — as aca-

demic books sometimes put it. Dreamers, writers, and artists thus get some bourgeois apologetic nimbus to function as pathetic, neurotic, paranoid and enlightened informer on contemporary society. Without being limited to dreaming, these figures are even expected to create bizarre imagery, suspend current logic, create distractions, and morp times, places, identities and histories.

Not simply because of this *Narrenfreiheit*, the jester's license, I finally would like to point out that the vanished Sigmund Freud on the Austrian money was also a reminder of the fact that not too many decades earlier he was forced to leave Austria. Nazi-Austria was voluntarily part of a real and murderous nightmarish regime that should never be forgotten. The fact that I wasn't aware of this historical figure on the 50 ATS bill was for me shocking and is now seen by me as symptomatic for the Austrian way to deal with its own history for many years. This brings us back to the question "Who wants to know anyway?" Even though I have studied quite a bit of this history and did all kinds of extra "home work" in order to find out, I still haven't asked all the questions possible concerning my own parents and grandparents. Do I dare to know? Do we want *Verdrängung*, repression? If Paul Celan is known for saying, "Death is a master from Germany," I might add, "Repression is a master from Austria," without suggesting that Austrians played a reduced role in the twentieth century's industry of death. For this publication, I asked Paul Mattick as well as Sylvère Lotringer to contribute texts of their own choice. Lotringer, who leads the life of a multi-coastal somnambulist, has written extensively on art and philosophy and has worked with me on other publications in the past. Mattick is an art historian and critic and has extensively published on economics, critical theory, art, and money. By accident, these two writers and friends have their own history with Nazi-Europe. Lotringer was persecuted as a Jewish child in Nazi-occupied France and had to hide under a fake Christian identity in a different geographic region far away from his family. Mattick's parents were forced to flee Austria and emigrated to the USA where he was born. None of these biograph-

ical facts, however, played a deciding role in the commissioning of their texts.

I would like to conclude this introduction with the statement that we are always part of a historical process and that the writing of history and histories is political as well as part of history itself. The Austrian contribution to the iconography of the new multinational Euro doesn't include any indication to its recent history. Though different national icons are still present on the Euro coins, this new European currency stands for the departure from national currencies. The creation of a unified European market with a unified denationalized currency seems to be the solution to new globalized conditions where productions, (intelligent) labor, and capital flow relatively freely. The Euro, symbolizing the results of the ideas and the politics of the European Union, may also be seen as an answer to centuries of national slaughtering and chauvinistic competitions. On it rests the cardinal question of whether this new European economic course — with not even everyone on board — will trigger the necessary political and ideological unifications that are crucial to make Europe a functioning entity able to withhold destructive pressures from within as well as from outside. As a bitter reminder of the past, we should not ignore that since the reinvigorated implementation of a unified European zone has become a reality, reactionary political forces are regaining momentum. Neo-nationalisms, xenophobia, racism, the structurally biased inability and refusal of the full economic, cultural, and ideological integration of its large, mostly Muslim immigrant population, and cold-blooded right wing radicals engaging in violent actions could gain such explosive power that again, a new kind of money could — hopefully not — become a nightmarish reality. Over the last hundred years, Austria has changed its currency five times — and we know why. Money echoes politics, and so do many of our dreams.



