Dream as Deceit, Dream as Truth: The Grammar of Telling Dreams

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Abstract. The Kagwahiv (Tupí-Guaraní) grammatical particle used exclusively in the telling of dreams had earlier been claimed to be just a specialized tense marker used in dream narrative. Instead, it is argued that this particle is also part of a system of evidentials—specifically, of a set of reportative past markers. This is supported both by the form of the particle and by examination of its functions and etymological connections.

1. Introduction. In a footnote to The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud attributes to Sándor Ferenczi the suggestion that “every tongue has its own dream language” (1900:99 n. 1).¹ Freud was referring to the features of language that facilitate the formation of dreams: the assonances, homonyms, commonly used metaphors and underlying linguistic images, and all the other forms of connection between words in the spoken and written language that can be the basis for associative links. He was not talking about, probably was not aware of, those far less numerous languages that present an explicit grammar for dreams. Kagwahiv, a Tupí-Guaraní language of the Brazilian Amazon Basin, is one of a few languages that offer a linguistic form specifically for dreaming—a grammatical form for the recounting of dreams.

When I presented this material earlier, in a paper with a different title (Kracke 1988),² I argued that the grammatical form by which Kagwahiv speakers mark the telling of a dream was not an evidential, but a simple tense. I must now completely reverse that argument, for, in fact, the dream-marking tense particle fits perfectly into a well-defined series of evidential tense markers in Kagwahiv. Thus, as in Kwakiutl and Quechua (Boas 1947:245; Cusihuaman 1976:170–72; Mannheim 1987:146), the Kagwahiv dream-discourse marker is likewise an evidential, and places the dream as a form of indirect knowledge about the event dreamed of.

Kagwahiv is a Tupí language spoken by various small groups in the Upper Madeira River Basin and Rondônia in Brazil. The Parintintin, who live along the east bank of the Madeira River, and their Tenharem neighbors speak a northern dialect of the Kagwahiv language (Kracke 2007:26–27). Their traditional territory used to run from the mouth of the Ipixuna south to the mouth of the Machado, but their currently demarcated area lies to the north of the Trans-Amazonian Highway, which runs into Humaitá, cutting their old territory in two.

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2. The dream particle ra’ú.

Dreaming was important in traditional Parintintin life, closely associated with shamanism. Dreams were used to forecast the presence of game species to organize the day’s hunt. They were used as an augury of illness and death. In times of warfare, they were called on to predict the outcome of a war expedition. Dreams were told frequently, and discussed to determine their knowledge value, either as predictions or as indicators of the presence of invidious spirits, or of other states of affairs. When they are told—and this is itself an index of their importance in Parintintin life—the narrative of the dream event is marked in each sentence by a particle ra’ú.

When a Parintintin tells a dream, the account is usually framed initially by a statement such as ‘I dreamed of . . .’ (ahayhú ji NP or NP ji ahayhú) and the ensuing dream account is interspersed with the particle ra’ú, a grammatical operator that marks the narrative as a dream account. This dream narrative marker regularly occurs when dreams are told in Kagwahiv. It occurs generally in every sentence of the dream account, though it may be omitted in occasional sentences, conveying a sense of urgent intensity. It generally follows the verb and subject pronoun, in the same position that would otherwise be occupied by a past tense marker. A past tense marker never occurs together with ra’ú.

The many dreams recounted to me by my informant Gabriela, an older woman of the Mytum moiety, in the course of my personal interviews with her (Kracke 1999) provide excellent examples of this form. One such example, which she told me in 1973, is given in (1).

(1) Mbojá ji ahayhú. I dreamed of a snake [mbojá].
onaró ra’ú. It was angry ra’ú.
Oñaró ji-rehe ra’ú. It was angry at me ra’ú.
Oro onarórò ji-rehe. It was angry at me.
Mbojá heihâihu. The snake was huge.
Oro ji hoi, Then I went on,
oro ji ojipe’ia repiagi no. and I saw another one.
Hei’ji repiagi ra’ú. I saw a lot of them ra’ú.

In this account, two initial sentences marked by ra’ú are followed by three sentences without the dream particle, increasing the pace and intensity to convey a sense of rising urgency. Then the last sentence closes with a final ra’ú, clarifying that we are still in a dream.

A dream told to me in 1967 by Coriolano, a young man of the Kwandú moiety, is presented in (2). It is syntactically a little more complex, but shows the same syntax of the dream particle.

(2) Antônio Pykwêri’ga ji ahayhú. I dreamed of Antônio Pykweri.
Uhu ga ra’ú, He came ra’ú,
uhu ga oni jiive ra’ú. he came to talk to me ra’ú.
Oro ga ei ra’ú, Gabriel ga ei: So he said ra’ú, Gabriel said:
"Tjuká yhuranhú “Let’s kill the bull
jatuâ’gywýri-pe on the nape of the neck
tikutugí néhê” [ei ga] ra’ú. [or] he’ll gore us” [he said] ra’ú.
In the opening phrase of telling a dream, ‘I dreamed of...’ (ahayhú ji NP, or NP ji ahayhú), the noun phrase may refer to the manifest content of the dream, as in (1) and (2). But often it refers to the augury of the dream—what the dream predicts will happen. Thus, if the dream is manifestly of paddling a canoe, the opening may be aman ji ahayhú ‘I dreamed of rain’, since a dream of paddling a canoe predicts rain. If the dream is of a wild party, then the dreamer may say ‘I dreamed of peccary’, since a wild party in a dream foresees a herd of peccary crashing through the jungle.

This frame of telling dreams appears to be acquired relatively early in language learning. A child of five in 1973 told me a dream showing basic mastery of the dream-discourse marker, with certain marginal divergences and in a mixture of Kagwahiv and Portuguese. An excerpt is given in (3) (Portuguese words are underlined in the example).

(3)  
\[ \text{Ní rakwái—cortou...} \quad \text{He cut off—my penis.} \\
\text{(Má'ngá okutú?)} \quad \text{("Who cut it off?" I asked.)} \\
\text{Tap'yntín okutú.} \quad \text{A white man cut it off.} \\
\text{Anhângá ji-pyhy.} \quad \text{A ghost grabbed me.} \\
\ldots \quad \text{Porco'i ji ahayhú—morreu ra'ú.} \quad \text{I dreamed of a little pig—it died, ra'ú.} \\
\text{Porquinho omanó.} \quad \text{The pig dies.} \\
\text{Faz. Visagem por porquinho.} \quad \text{He does it. The ghost to the pig.} \\
\text{Ji rerohó ra'ú. Lá no cemitério.} \quad \text{He carries me off, ra'ú. There to the cemetery.} \]

From this point, he continued the dream in Portuguese, discontinuing the use of the dream particle. (For the complete dream, see Kracke [2009].)

It is to be noted that in the highly traumatic opening scene of the dream, which presents a frightening fantasy of castration, the five-year-old boy loses the initial bracketing of the dream account. He does not begin ‘I dreamed of...’ and does not have recourse to the dream marker ra'ú. But as soon as he comes to a calmer, more displaced segment of the dream (it is the pig who dies, not he), he opens that section with the affirmation of dreaming, and immediately starts to insert the dream particle. He uses the dream particle as long as his account is in Kagwahiv (even when the verb is in Portuguese), but drops it when he switches the main language of his account to Portuguese.

3. Dream-account markers as evidentials. The particle ra'ú is used exclusively to mark the narration of a dream; it is not used as a grammatical particle for any other function. This usage is fairly unique; there are very few other languages that have particles used exclusively for telling dreams. Guarani, a closely related language of the Tupi-Guarani family, seems to have the same usage for the particle ra'ú as in Parintintin. Dooley glosses it as “em sonho” ‘in a dream’, with no alternative meanings (1982:166).5

There are other languages that have dream-narrative markers, such as Quechua and Quiché Maya, but in both these cases the markers have other uses
as well. In Cuzco-Collao Quechua, according to Cusihuaman (1976), it is a “reportative” suffix, -sqa, that is used in the following cases:

1. Historic or prehistoric events .
2. Scenes of legends, fables or stories .
3. Acts that occurred before the speaker had reached the age of reason .
4. Actions performed by the speaker while in an unconscious state, whether drunk or in a dream .
5. Events that took place without the personal participation of the speaker, who knows of them only through other people or from other sources of information .
6. New situations—phenomena that the speaker has just found out about .

[Cusihuaman 1976:170–71]

Bruce Mannheim sums it up as “a past form used for narrated events to which the speaker cannot attest” (1987:146), including dreams and myths.

In Quiché (Tedlock 1987:120–22, 131), dreams are told with the quotative form kacha’ ‘he/she said’. This form is used also to tell stories and in mythic narratives, as in Quechua. However, as Barbara Tedlock pointed out in response to an earlier version of this article, it is used more generally to mark statements whose authority is absent or not manifested. When a diviner experiences a diagnostic muscle twitch, he says kacha’ ‘the blood speaks’. Thus, in Quiché, the use of this “quotative” to recount a dream may imply an authority outside the conscious self of the dreamer, but not necessarily a lesser degree of veritude or certainty.

Likewise, when Parintintin tell their dreams in Portuguese, they often mark their dream accounts by a quotative, diz que, or disse que (lit., ‘[indeterminate third person] says that’ or ‘said that’). This Portuguese phrase is used to indicate that the source for the statement to be made is an indirect one, as in passing on gossip, for which the same form is used.

This form of telling dreams with the quotative is common in the Portuguese spoken in the northeast of Brazil, and in Amazonian Brazil, though not known in the south. When discussing the Parintintin dream particle with Aryon Rodrigues’s linguistics class in Campinas, São Paulo, in 1983, I mentioned this use of the quotative to mark the telling of a dream in Portuguese. Everyone in the class was familiar with the use of diz que or disse que to pass on gossip; but most of the students, from São Paulo or other southern states, denied familiarity with the use of diz que to tell a dream. Two students from northeastern states, however, recognized it immediately.

In various languages there exists a group of grammatical forms that indicate the epistemological status of information given by a speaker—whether a fact that he or she asserts is known from his or her direct observation or personal knowledge, is heard from others or deducted from evidence, or is learned in some other way. Such forms, first noted in Kwakianl by Franz Boas (1911: 443, 496), were designated by Roman Jakobson as “evidentials” (Jakobson 1990:392; see Aikhenvald 2004); and they can be differentiated from “moods,” by which the
speaker calls into question the truth of the proposition (Jacobsen 1986:3). Often one of the sources of information thus marked is the dream. Most often, the dream is included in a broader category of indirect ways of knowing, as in the case of the suffix -sqa in Quechua, and of the Quiché quotative kacha’. The case of Kwakiutl, described eighty years ago by Franz Boas, is the only one I know besides Kagwahiv and Guaraní in which dream narrative is marked with a particle used exclusively to mark dreams.

In his sketch of Kwakiutl grammar in the Handbook of American Indian Languages (1911:443, 496), Boas reported a suffix -Eng:a affixed to verbs to indicate that the action of the verb occurs in a dream. He grouped this suffix with three others to make a category of “suffixes . . . expressing the source of subjective knowledge” (1911:443) or “source of information” (1911:496, 1947: 245)—a category which was later labeled “evidentials” (Jakobson 1990:392; Jacobsen 1986). If speaking of a sick man, Boas observes in the introduction to the Handbook, a Kwakiutl speaker, “in case he had not seen the sick man himself, would have to express whether he knows by hearsay or by evidence that the person is sick, or whether he has dreamed it [-Eng:a]” (1911:43).

4. The Kagwahiv language: the past tenses and evidentials. In my 1988 paper on the Parintintin dream form, I argued that ra’ú was simply a tense marker contrasting with other tense markers in Kagwahiv. I have since recognized—alerted to it by Helga Weiss’s excellent unpublished report on Kayabí tenses (Weiss 1986), which I discovered in Summer Institute of Linguistic files in Brasilia in 1989—that the past tense markers in Kagwahiv, like the cognate forms in Kayabí, are organized on the basis of an evidential contrast, and that the Kagwahiv dream marker ra’ú fits neatly into the series of past tenses marking indirectly known events.

A little context on the structure of the Kagwahiv language is needed here. Like other Tupí languages, Kagwahiv has a relatively simple verb morphology, with inflection only for person. Tense—past tense, at least—is indicated by an adverbial particle that follows the verb it modifies. There is an array of these adverbial particles with specific meanings, such as recent past, long past, etc.

The tense-marking particles fall into two series, distinguished phonetically and in meaning. One series includes ra’é ‘recent past’, and raka’é ‘long past’. (Another tense marker, rimba’é, is used in myth for remote past.) The other includes ko ‘recent past’, and kakó ‘long past’. This latter series, ko and kakó, refers to events that the speaker has witnessed or experienced firsthand. The first series, on the other hand—ra’é, raka’é—is applied to events that were not witnessed by the speaker, but which he or she knows from a third party. This is the form generally used in recounting myths, usually with one of the distant past markers, raka’é or rimba’é, often preceded by ymýä, ‘long ago’ and the dubitative po, i.e., . . . ymýä po raka’é.
Example (4) is an excerpt from the myth of Mbahira creating his daughter, told to me in November 1966 by João Messias (Kuahã) (who had told myths to Nunes Pereira in the 1920s). It illustrates well the compound indirect-knowledge markers of past tense used in telling myths.

(4) Mbahira potimba'ë
imondëvi pota raka'ë,

ô, to, tô.
Akarahûnuhûa tûri, mbôru
Ga jukâ'ôv! Mbahira mombôri
potimba'ë gwakwywëri.
Kiro po hênôi Mbahira raka'ë

"Toroky'wû, apî! Toroky'wû, apî"
Ojirowâ, mõpôpô.

Bahira, maybe, a long time ago, plunked his igaponga in the water maybe long ago, "plunk, plunk, plunk."

The dark acará came along, swimming.
He killed it! Bahira threw it, maybe, long ago, behind him.
Now maybe Bahira long ago heard [the voice behind him, saying:]

"Let me groom you, Papa!"
He turned around, and it fell.

More simply, these indirect knowledge terms are frequently used to report gossip heard, or to pass on any information that one learned from another person rather than from firsthand experience. Clearly, the particle ra'û used in telling a dream fits into the phonetic pattern established by the series of reportative past tenses—ra'ë, raka'ë, the tense particles used for unwitnessed events known only indirectly by hearsay or inference. The use of the simple quotative diz que when dreams are told in Portuguese is even more clearly reportative, since it is also a form used by Amazonian Brazilians to pass on gossip or to tell a tall story.

For both the Kagwahiv and Portuguese dream-discourse markers, then, the dreamed event is presented as something one knows only from external authority, not through one’s own direct experience.

But why, in Parintintin and so many other languages that have markers for dream narrative, is the dream narrative so often grouped with narratives of events not witnessed by the narrator? In our way of thinking about dreams, it would seem that dreams are par excellence events witnessed by the person telling them. Indeed, by its nature, a dream is witnessed only by the person who dreamed it. A few languages—including Jarawara, an Arawá language in Southern Amazonia—follow our intuition, and treat dream accounts as reports of something directly observed “since they are supposed to be ‘seen’” by the dreamer (Aikhenwald 2004:345). But in most of the languages cited in Aikhenvald’s book that mark dream accounts evidentially, the great majority code them as indirect knowledge (“reported” or “nonfirsthand”), like information heard from others. These include several Caucasian languages, such as Abkhaz and Svan; Modern Eastern Armenian; Macedonian; Yukaghir in Siberia; and Cree, Montagnais, and Naskapi among Algonquian languages in North America (2004:158, 222, 345–46, 381). Among Amazonian languages, Shipibo-Konibo speakers tell dreams in the reported evidential, “since what one experienced in a dream is
not part of reality” (2004:346, 380); Tariana and Tucano nonshamans tell their dreams in the nonvisual, “since they belong to an unreal, imaginary world,” but “prophetic dreams of shamans are cast in visual evidential,” since they are “part of their supernatural experience” (2004:309, 346–47).

In Kagwahiv, the particle ra’ú that marks a dream account is not identical with the reportative past tense markers ra’é and raka’é, but it fits phonologically into a sequence with them, contrasting with the firsthand past tenses ko and kakó. How is it that accounts of dreams are assimilated in so many languages to the category of affirmations whose authority lies in someone other than the speaker?

Of course, even though the question is related to a trend that involves many different languages with systems of evidentials, it must first be answered for each language on its own terms.

5. Connotations of the dream marker. Before addressing this question, I want to raise a second one: just what is the full meaning of the particle ra’ú? What are its connotations? And what does it suggest for Parintintin beliefs about the nature of dreaming?

There are three ways to approach this double question. One, which I have already utilized, is to look at its positional meaning: what syntactic slot does it occupy, and what part does it play in the system of contrasts among the alternative words that can occupy that slot? Secondly, we can look at that slippery category of synonyms: what words does it alternate with, in the same slot, without changing the meaning (very much)? Third, one may look at close cognates within the same language; and, fourth, one may look at the word’s etymology, or the cognate words in other, closely related languages.

The positional meaning of ra’ú we have already examined; that is, the basis on which we have assigned it the function of a tense-marker and, within the past tenses, the function of an evidential marking the past event as one that was dreamed and not directly experienced in waking or heard about from someone else. It is, however, on the basis of its form that I deem it closer to the particles that mark heard-about events than to those that mark events directly experienced.

When we look for synonyms—words alternating with it that at least approximately possess the same meaning—we find one. Some speakers use the term rameñúmi, an adverb of time otherwise meaning ‘temporarily’, in substitution for ra’ú when they are recounting dreams. I consider it a case of alternation rather than of contrast because the use of one or the other seems to be determined by the speaker rather than by a contrast in meaning; certain speakers regularly use rameñúmi, others ra’ú, when recounting a dream, in similar distribution. One of those who uses rameñúmi regularly is Gabriela’s daughter Marielena. An excerpt of a dream from the first interview I had with her in 1973 is presented in (5).
Yesterday I dreamed of Mundico.
So, I dreamed of him,
then I lit a little fire,
and then he went away.
So then Paulo said to me temporarily.
"Go bring the lantern!"
Paulo temporarily said to me
"Go bring the lantern into the bedroom!"
So I went temporarily to get the lantern,

... añąngà jive rameńúmi!
Oro ináni ogwówo ikia rameńúmi.
"Añang!" e ji gapé rameńúmi.
"Añang!" e ji gapé rameńúmi.

There was a ghost after me!
So I ran away and went inside temporarily.
"A ghost!" I said to him temporarily.
"A ghost!" I said to him temporarily.

Marielena uses rameńúmi in this way through all of the dreams that she
told me. I have rarely heard the same speaker use the two terms in alternation
in telling his or her dreams; the use of one or the other seems to be a preference
of the speaker rather than a marking of any contrast in meaning. In one
instance, Marielena’s mother Gabriela used the term rameńúmi in describing to
me how, in her childhood, her mother had tried to reassure her that the night-
mare that had just terrifed her was a transient event.12 Her mother used the
term to characterize her daughter’s nightmare image as evanescent and her
daughter replied, insisting on her feeling that the image was real, but accepting
that it was transitory. It was not used by either as a substitute for ra’ú. Still,
that brings out the implication of the substitution of rameńúmi ‘temporarily’ for
ra’ú as a marker of the dream discourse. It emphasizes the evanescence of
dreaming, the transient nature of the dream.

Let us look at the cognates of ra’ú in Kagwahiv. There is one principal close
cognate: the noun ra’úv,13 a noun of complex meaning which includes references
to dream-images among its significata. This noun basically means a representa-
tion of something. A picture of a house, ongá, can be referred to as ongá ra’úva.
If a child picks up a stick and pretends in play that it is an arrow, u’ýva, the
stick is u’ýva ra’úva. In talking about a dream, the term is used for the dream
image of something; if you dream of a fish, pirá, the image of the fish in your
dream is pirá ra’úva.

But the term also has other referents that intrude into a semantic domain
signifying something like ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ or ‘life force, center of feeling’. In food
taboos (Kracke 1990), when someone eats a forbidden species, the offended
animal in certain cases (paca, piranha) retaliates by “biting the liver” of the
offender (or of his or her child), or “biting his or her ra’úv” (hu’ú’u ahe ra’úva).
In the case of deer, it “stamps on the ra’úv” (opyvondy ahe ra’úva). The ghost,
añáng, is often referred to by the term ha’uvagwéra ‘the former ra’úv’. A dying
person’s ra’úv is said to go out to visit his or her close relatives, appearing to
them in their dreams to announce its departure.
6. Etymological comparisons. When we turn to other languages of the Tupí-Guaraní family, there is only one in which a cognate particle is attested with just the same meaning as in Kagwahiv, a grammatical marker of dreams. This is in Mbutá Guarani (Dooley 1982:166). Within the context of the Tupí-Guaraní family, Mbutá is rather distant from Kagwahiv, which suggests that there must be other intermediate languages in which ra’ú or a variant of it is so used, but these are not attested in the literature.14

In other Tupí-Guaraní languages, we find a number of cognates, with diverse significata, clustering around a set of meanings that illuminate in an interesting way the concept of dreaming in these languages. The meaning of ‘soul’ or ‘ghost’ is prominent among them. In old Guarani,15 as in Kagwahiv, raugue (“former rau,” a synonymous cognate of Kagwahiv ha’uwagwera”) means ‘ghost’, as also does tau (Ruiz de Montoya 1876 [1639]:338, 359). But many cognates of Kagwahiv ra’ú refer to divination: hau in old Guarani means ‘divination, prognostication, outcome [sucesso]’, or “coger al espírito atraer la voluntad del ausente” (‘to seize the spirit to attract the desire of someone absent’). The verb ahau means ‘to divine’, and the participle hauvô means ‘to augur’, or an ‘augury of something’. In present-day Guarani, the verb rauvô is still glossed “Augurar. Presentir. Predizer”, ‘to augur, have a premonition, foretell’ (Sampaio 1986:141)—another aspect of beliefs associated with dreams in Parintintin (Kracke 1979:130–32, 1999:262–64).

And finally, the term, used as a suffix, indicates either a wish, or deceptive-ness. Thus, in old Guarani, according to Ruiz de Montoya (1876 [1639]:74), aú is a desiderative, but au signifies ‘burla [jesting deception, pulling the leg], fiction, fantastic’: abá au ‘a fake man’ (hombre de burla); Aha au ‘he pretended to go’ (iba de burla). The adverb rau (which he translates as ‘doubt’ and derives from ra ‘already’ and the desiderative au) can indicate either a wish (“Eyapó rau, ‘do it right away’ [expressing a desire that the other do it!]”) or deception: “This ra with the particle aú, ‘in pretense’, puts what is said or done in doubt: Oho rau yê, ‘they say that he went, but don’t believe it’” (1876 [1639]:338).

The various clusters of meaning that we find attached to cognates of ra’ú in other Tupí-Guaraní languages—‘ghost’, ‘augury’, desiderative, and marker of falsehood—all have some reference to aspects of Kagwahiv concepts of what dreaming is. I have noted that certain dreams are interpreted as the appearance of the soul of a dying person to announce his or her impending death to a close relative. More generally, however, dreams are regarded as auguries of future events or states. These auguries are not literal visions of the future; they are messages about the future that are evident only to those who have mastered the elaborate code in which dreams are couched. Dreams are not depictions, but, as suggested by the cognate noun in Kagwahiv, representations of what is to come (Kracke 1979:130–32, 1999).
But, despite these ways in which dreams may provide important information about the future, dreams are still regarded in a sense as deceptive. Concluding the account of a dream, the dreamer would often remark: “I thought it was so-and-so; –oro ăhă ‘in the end, it was not’,” it was just a dream; they agree with Descartes’s judgment.

Thus, the various senses of ra’ú reflected in its cognates in other Tupí-Guarani languages form, as it were, a synopsis of the main tenets of Parintintin beliefs about dreams: dreams are predictions or auguries of the future; dreams may be a way of perceiving the spirit world, especially ghosts; and dreams are unreliable, deceptive.

7. Conclusion. Finally, let us return to the question raised earlier: why in Parintintin, and in so many other languages which have special grammatical markers for dream accounts, are descriptions of dreams seen as indirect knowledge? Why are accounts of dreams grouped with accounts of events which are heard about from a third person, rather than with events witnessed by the speaker?

Dreams are not what they seem to be. In a literal sense, they have all the appearance of a real, waking perception, but they are not perceptions of substantial reality. One wakes from them, and they are not there: –oro ăhă. At the same time, they do convey some truth, but the truth is not what is presented. It is what the dream can tell a person who is versed in the code of dreams about the future.

The dream does not present the truth, but represents it, through a language to be understood by the dreamer. In this sense, then, the dream is not an experience, it is a message, a message from an unknown source. The knowledge in a dream is received as a communication from beyond. Hence, it cannot be coded as personal experience.

Freud’s footnotes generate fields of research and thought. In another footnote to Interpretation of Dreams, in chapter 7, Freud asks: “To whom is the dream a wish fulfillment?” (1900:580 n. 1). It is clearly not to the person who wakes from the dream and is puzzled by it, or distressed by it. It is, he reflects, another person within us who constructs the dream. “A dreamer in his relation to his dream-wishes can only be compared to an amalgamation of two separate people who are bound in a strong communality.” This footnote inspired Jacques Lacan’s concept of “the ex-centric subject,” the “unknown subject” of our unconscious inner life (Lacan 1988:43).

And it also provides us with an answer to our question, with a reason why languages that mark dream accounts mark the dream as indirectly accessed. The dream comes from another space, another scene. It is a message from another self, distinct from our waking self. “Someone other than ourselves talks in our dreams” (Lacan 1988:135).
Notes

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Transcription. In the transcription of Kagwahiv used in this article, y is a high back unrounded vowel, like Russian ь; ’ is glottal stop; r is flapped; e is as in English pet; o is like the a in English call; ñ is a palatalized n, as in Spanish.

1. Actually, I do not find the remark in the English translation of the Ferenczi work referred to (Ferenczi 1950), though the dreams of the Hungarian patients that Ferenczi interprets in that article offer ample material to document such an assertion. In a footnote to the article, however, the translator, Ernest Jones, does make the comment that the sense of one dream in Hungarian “depends on a play on words that is not translated by the author” (Ferenczi 1950:121 n. 1).

2. The title of my 1988 paper was borrowed from Descartes via O. K. Bouwsma (1965), who took the title for his article on the epistemology of dreaming from Descartes’s famous exclamation, “I have oft in sleep been deceived. . . .”

3. The abbreviation NP stands for “noun phrase.” It may refer either to the manifest content of the dream, or to the dream’s augury—what the content of the dream predicts.

4. Dreams told with code-switching, with a considerable admixture of Portuguese, may still utilize the ra’ú form in portions told in Kagwahiv, or may dispense with it if the overall structure becomes more Portuguese.

5. He adds the example okyje ra’ú ‘dreamed of being afraid’, and cross-references [r]jexa ra’ú ‘to dream of . . .’ (1982:57), literally, ‘to see . . . in a dream’.

6. This is the first “linguistically informed reference grammar of Cuzco-Collao” (Mannheim 1991:117). In Wanka (Central Peruvian) Quechua, Aikhenvald reports, citing Floyd (1999), that “the direct evidential is used in recounting dreams, as if they were part of ‘everyday experienced reality’” (Aikhenvald 2004:345).

7. The Spanish original of this passage is as follows:

(1) Hechos históricos o prehistóricos . . . .
(2) Escenas de leyendas, fábulas o cuentos . . . .
(3) Actos ocurridos antes de que el hablante tenga uso de razón . . . .
(4) Acción que realiza el hablante mientras se encuentra en un estado inconsciente, ya de borracho, ya en sueños . . . .
(5) Hechos que transcurrieron sin que haya participado per sonalmente el hablante; éste sabe de ellos solamente por intermediario de otras personas o de otras fuentes de información . . . .
(6) Situaciones nuevas, fenómenos que el hablante acaba de descubrir . . . .


9. Jakobson cites Boas as holding up Kwakiutl evidentials as an example of epistemological accuracy: “In his last published linguistic study ‘Language and Culture’ (1942), Boas wittily remarked that we would read our newspapers with much greater satisfaction if, in the same way as Kwakiutl, our language, too, would compel them to state whether their reports were based on self-experience, on inference, or on hearsay, or the reporter had dreamed it” (Jakobson 1954:192). In fact, Boas there only recommends distinguishing “whether their reports are based on self-experience, inference, or hearsay” (1942:182); he does not mention dreaming as a source of journalistic knowledge.
10. The respective Kwakiutl reportative suffix is −l(a) ‘it is said’. Another of the evidential suffixes is −em skʷ ‘as I told you before’ (Boas 1911:496).

11. Dixon gives only the laconic statement that “anything the speaker witnessed (in real life or in a dream) will be described by e,” the “eyewitness” form (2003:168). Aikhenvald’s elaboration is consistent with the criteria given in Dixon for Jarawara evidentials, and by Dixon elsewhere (2004:203–7), although he does not mention dreams in the latter passage. Aikhenvald (2004:345) cites several other languages that classify dreams as direct visual evidentials because they are seen, including the Eastern Tucanoan languages Tuyuka and Tatuyo. “In Turkic languages,” she adds, “dreams are never cast in nonfirsthand evidential” (2004:345).

12. When Gabriela woke from a nightmare, her mother reassured her Ávi āhā rameńümi mbätéra ‘but there was nothing there at that moment’. But Gabriela insisted Avite! jypívuhu rameńümi ‘upa, Iii! Mbätéra jypívuhu rameńümi ‘It was too! It was dark temporarily, ee! There were dark things temporarily’—insisting on the dream’s reality, but acknowledging it as an evanescent event.

13. Depending in part on phonetic context and prosody, it may be pronounced either [raˈu] or [raˈuʃa] ([β] represents a bilabial fricative, as in the Spanish pronunciation of v or intervocalic b).

14. In Bouchard’s Tembé-Portuguese dictionary (1978), he defines sa ’u as ‘to imagine or suppose’, and the verb suffix aub as ‘to dream, imagine, conjecture, suppose, conceive or guess, predict’. In the next sentence, he adds one more definition: adivinhar, which means ‘to guess’ in Portuguese, but it can also mean ‘to divine’ (see below).

15. “Old” Guarani (Portuguese Guaraní Antigo) is the Guarani spoken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, documented in the reports of early missionaries and travelers such as Padre Ruiz de Montoya. I am indebted to Aryon Rodrigues for access to his library of sources on old Guarani and old Tupinambá and for putting at my disposal his knowledge of Tupí languages, which made this part of the research possible. I also owe him thanks for his guidance in my study of Kagwahiv, starting with my first efforts at the Museu Nacional in 1966–68.

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