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Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026 Comparative Literature

2017

Dreaming for Others in Culture and the Novel

Spellberg, Matthew Moscicki

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

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DREAMING FOR OTHERS IN CULTURE AND THE NOVEL

Matthew Moscicki Spellberg

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

BY THE DEPARTMENT OF

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Advisers: Peter Brooks and Caryl Emerson

June, 2017

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Abstract

This dissertation proposes a way of re-conceiving dreams and the dreamlike as ontological states with distinctive characteristics that play a crucial role in human social life and the literary arts. I argue that dreaming is best understood as a state of mind in which thinking takes on the shape of a world: in dreams the mind is a thick and complex physical reality. I argue against the prevalent belief that dreams are codes waiting to be deciphered, as in many hermeneutic traditions of dream-interpretation.

In the first part of the dissertation, I develop a theory of the dreamlike based on a principle of *emergent aliveness*, what I also call *spiritual force*. I argue that in the dream-state, the mind is continuously generating living presences, and imputing aliveness beyond the boundaries of the discrete self, and that this dream-state can be induced in waking life as well. The cognitive intensity of the dream-state has been used to cement social and spiritual cohesion in a range of different cultures, but such techniques for harnessing the emergent aliveness of dreaming were gradually lost in the history of the West. I suggest that the novel may have arisen in part as a compensation for this loss of dream-sharing protocols within western modernity.

The second half of the dissertation takes four novelists as case studies for the role of the dream in the novel, both as thematic and generic template. A chapter on Pushkin examines dreams as a means of staging in the mind the tyranny of social relations. A chapter on Tolstoy considers the desire to share dreams and the failure to find an avenue to do so. I then consider Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* as a meditation on the fine line between a productive absorption in the dream and a dangerous alienation within it. In the final chapter, Marcel Proust is held up as the culminating figure in the novel's long aspiration toward the dreamlike. In his work a dialectic

of unselfconscious dream-attention and critical self-consciousness creates a model for the inducement and even manipulation of the dream-state in waking life.

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Preface.

Heraclitus is credited with saying that "the universe for those who are awake is single and common, while in sleep each person turns aside into a private universe." Hegel, in his lectures on Heraclitus, further glosses that "The dream is a knowledge of something of which I alone know," and this, he adds, is the negative imprint of the true and objective knowledge of reason, which "is not an objectless consciousness, or a dream, but a knowledge, that which is for itself; but this being-for-self is awake, or is objective and universal, i.e. is the same for all."[1]

In their remarks Heraclitus and Hegel suggest at least two fundamental areas of investigation. The first, what does this universe of dreaming look like? What are its physical laws and governing principles? In what does its epistemic and phenomenological difference from the waking world consist? The second: how, if this world is so exceptionally private, do we even know of its existence, not only for ourselves, but for others? In other words, how does this private world return to the public one? What are the methods by which the remote regions of the self are integrated into the common realm of social life?

The dream is among the most reclusive of all experiences: no one can follow us there. It is often so strange and unprecedented that we are at a loss for words to describe it. Nor can we ever – at least on first reflection it seems – point out a dream to someone else, as if it were an object somewhere in the room. We are more deeply within ourselves in the dream than perhaps anywhere else. And yet a careful eye notes two paradoxes that arise from this line of thinking: the first, that in this world we have to ourselves, there are innumerable *others* present, or at least simulacra of others – friends, enemies, lovers, objects of desire and hatred and fear. The second,

[1] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol I: Greek Philosophy to Plato, trans. E.S. Haldane

that the pressure to share these private worlds full of private people has been, in many places and periods of history, very strong: that a complex cultural apparatus in religion, popular divination, art, and medicine has come into being in nearly every society in human history in order to account for, explain, and render explicable, useful, and common these most apparently inscrutable experiences.

This dissertation is concerned with explicating these two intertwined paradoxes in dreaming, these two ways in which intersubjective interaction governs and determines this most seemingly univocal of realities. We might say that the dissertation is about the *interior society* and the *exterior society* of the dream. It is about the inside of the dream, its phenomenology, its distinct characteristics, and above all its living presences; and it is about the outside of the dream, the modes by which it is shared and known, the language-games by which it is described and given common reality.

The dissertation contains two parts, each with separate but linked ambitions. Part I of the dissertation speculates on a broad canvas about certain problems in the phenomenology and anthropology of dreaming. It will touch upon Native American dreams and cognitive science; the Aboriginal Dreamtime and ancient Greek dream oracles; the Bible and dream-sharing in the Bay of Bengal; concepts drawn from René Girard, Julian Jaynes, Simone Weil, Freud, Wittgenstein, Darwin, and others.

Part II of this dissertation, meanwhile, will look at the western novel in its high phase in the long 19th century, and will contend that the novel is a disguised vessel for dream-sharing; that in fact, the ideology and aesthetics of the novel arise in part as a compensation for the loss of dream-sharing in modernity. It takes as its main case studies Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.

Over the course of these two parts, an argument will unfold that can be distilled as follows. Dreaming is an experience of radical isolation within which thinking takes on the shape of a world, that is, it appears as a thick and complex physical reality. In many cultures, dreaming is understood as bearing primarily the form of this complex reality, rather than holding the status of a code or message waiting to be deciphered. If anything, the status of code or message is only assigned after the dream has been interacted with as a state of being.

The physical isolation of this dream-world, the fact that it is brought into being in the closeness of sleep, causes the mind to compensate for the absence of other beings by thickly and vibrantly conjuring new forms of aliveness, and particularly by conjuring a liminal state in which the animate and inanimate constantly alternate, a state I will associate with a concept I call *spiritual force*, borrowed, with my own modifications, from Simone Weil. Te more alone the mind is, the more it generates – or becomes aware of – emergent living presences. The longer the mind remains in this state, the more volatile these presences become, and the more diminished self-consciousness and self-reflection become. This aliveness is a potent source of religious, artistic, and even political inspiration; but left unchecked, it destroys the capacity for reflective thought, and can strip us of most of what we think of as agency. Many of the world's cultures have developed complex protocols by which the spiritual force of the dreamlike can be neutralized and harnessed, usually by way of being shared in waking life, and so socialized according to certain customs and beliefs. The power of the dreamlike in waking life is sometimes used to bring about major changes in ontological status and social position, as when a community is united around a sacrifice, a sick soul soul is healed by a shaman, or a person is demoted to the status of slave. Psychoanalysis, I will briefly suggest, may be viewed as a late attempt to deploy such a state for therapeutic purposes. Paradoxically, socialization and social

life tend to dampen the mind's inherent tendency toward generating forms of emergent aliveness, and so many traditional ritual and interpretative reactions to dreaming hinge on achieving a middle ground between the immediate ecstasy of the oneiric state and the reflective distance of the waking one. They seek a ground where socialization and aliveness strike a balance, the openness to the world of the latter tempered by the self-consciousness and restrictions of the former. This arrangement, perhaps always precarious, has undergone a rupture in the modern West, which seems to have lost (or at least, been ignorant of) the culturally-mandated mechanisms for controlling the aliveness of isolated mental life.

An anxiety about this loss of dream-socialization arises in modern European literature. Certain great novels will both lament the lack of methods by which the dream can be socialized, and attempt to provide, in their own generic structure, a method by which such a socialization can take place: in essence, the novel will attempt to replicate within the discrete boundaries of a single artifact, imagined by a solitary author, the structure of a communal culture, thereby making possible the translation of inner life into a perceivable outer form. The ever-more audacious experiments in this direction in the history of the novel make up one of the key strains in the evolution of literary modernism. The translation of dream-life into a literary artifact gives shape to artistic modernism and its philosophical proposals for the need to re-negotiate the relationship between cognitive experience in all of its complexity and the pressures and dangers of social and political life.

Our exploration of the novel begins with Pushkin, who is entranced and terrified by the social destruction that dreams seem to portend: his characters map their own alienation from social life in the laboratory of the dream-world; they are particularly plagued, though ultimately enlightened, by the humiliating laughter of a certain kind of nightmare. We continue with

Tolstoy, Pushkin's student in the dream (and much else), the man responsible for transmitting onto the world stage certain ideas and sentiments which had earlier germinated in Pushkin. In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy attempts to build a model of a successful dream-sharing culture within modernity, but by his own exacting standards, he fails. This is one of the intellectual developments that leads him to turn his back on modernity and embrace a fantasy of pre-industrial culture, as typified by his immersion in peasant customs and culture in the later half of his life. The unanswered cry for social healing within modernity in Tolstoy's fiction is then picked up by Virginia Woolf, particularly in *Mrs. Dalloway*. There the cry becomes an inquiry into the fine line between a productive absorption of the dream by waking life and a madness-inducing absorption of waking life by the dream. What stands on the uneasy threshold with Virginia Woolf is fully entered by Proust. In his work a dream-utopia is sketched, a possibility is glimpsed that through certain kinds of disciplined imaginative work a Dreamtime might be regained even in our fallen world. But Proust is very canny, and he warns us, implicitly, about the political dangers of waking dreams: we must learn how to negotiate our entrances and exits from the dream-state, lest we be trapped in a dream designed to carry us toward nefarious ends.

Three methodological choices deserve to be addressed in this preface. The first is that the dissertation makes very limited use of the literature and techniques of psychoanalytic dream interpretation. The reasons for this have to do with both the genesis of this project, and also its final aims. I came to the study of dreams outside of psychoanalysis. In fact, my initial interest was stirred by the kinds of empirical dream-study that Freud derides in the *Traumdeutung* – the careful descriptions of dreams in such 19th-century figures as Alfred Maury, and especially Hervey de Saint-Denys (about whom much more in chapter eight). A phenomenological

approach to dreaming – asking not *what does it mean*, but rather, *what is it like?* – opened for me rich veins that had seemed foreclosed by some of the more over-determined hermeneutical practices associated with psychoanalytic dream-theory.

I have since come to see there is more to psychoanalysis than such schematic thinking, and I've come to appreciate something of its richness and of its deeply therapeutic intentions. The dissertation does make occasional use of certain Freudian ideas, as well as some key concepts drawn from Ludwig Binswanger, the great bridge-builder between psychoanalysis and phenomenology. Nevertheless, the role of psychoanalysis remains small, in part so as to argue that much is to be gained by studying, at face value, certain complex systems of dream-understanding and dream-experiencing worked out independently of the psychoanalytic model. Thinking about the dream in such a comparative framework will allow us to consider it as a structuring principle for meaning rather than a source of meaning *per se*. This dissertation is, among other things, an attempt to identify certain forms of non-hermeneutical, or perhaps pre-hermeneutical, thought. Throughout I'll be interested in what precedes interpretation, and gives rise to the need for it. I hope that, among other things, such an inquiry will also serve to situate psychoanalysis within a much longer and larger set of practices relating to dreams the world over.

Some readers trained in psychoanalysis may feel a strong impulse on many pages to say, *but psychoanalysis already has a convincing explanation for this!* I gently ask such readers to indulge me until the argument has taken its course. Sometimes there is a reason to reinvent the wheel, or at least to ask again basic questions about what it does and how it works – for once-obvious aspects may by now, at this late moment, be hidden from us.

The second issue of method I wish to address is the choice of writers who will later appear in this dissertation – Pushkin, Tolstoy, Woolf, and Proust. Although dreams play a prominent role in all of these writers' work, they are not, with the possible exception of Proust, commonly called "dream-writers." If such a category exists (and is not merely pleonasm), then it's usually reserved for the likes of Thomas DeQuincey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Gérard de Nerval, Lautréamont, André Breton or Raymond Roussel. None of these usual dream-figures plays a role in this thesis, though each produced more than his fair share of admirable and brilliant work. The full reasons for this being the case will I hope gradually become clear over the course of the dissertation itself, but I can offer a preliminary explanation here: the significance of the dream-world is to be found in its continuous interaction with the waking one, its endless refraction and re-translation of the waking world, not to mention its constant and sometimes powerful transmissions back into wakefulness. What interests me are the writers who are concerned not only with exploring the dream-world, but with understanding its cyclical relationship to waking. The four writers I treat in this dissertation have a powerful sense of the continuous alternation between sleep-state and wake-state that creates the human self and plays a decisive role in constituting culture. Those writers who are lost for years on end in the dream – as DeQuincey and Coleridge were, as Breton and Roussel desperately wished to be – can convey a sense of the dream's complexity and splendor, but not of its power to do things, to change things in this our common life. This dissertation is concerned with the role dreams play in a process of world-creation and world-transformation undertaken by the human mind across both waking and sleep.

Finally, I wish to comment briefly on the difference between the two halves of the dissertation. They are distinct from one another in both style and matter, though in their thematic

content I hope the relation is strong and clear. Part I: Dreaming and Aliveness, is speculative and philosophical in its aims and approach. It offers a number of hypotheses and looks for resonances amid a wide corpus of sources. Part II: Scenes from the Dream-Life of the Novel, as the title would indicate, is much closer to the conventions of a typical dissertation in comparative literature, containing sustained analyses of individual texts. The hybrid nature of the work reflects my long pursuit of these ideas over territory beyond the normal frameworks of literary study, as well as my repeated and happy homecomings to literature. The differences between the two halves will, I hope, generate fruitful questions and contrasts. It remains to be seen whether the two parts will continue together in later phases of this project, or be decoupled into separate works.

The chapters of the dissertation move in a circle. I begin with the premise that there is a way to understand dreaming as a state of being rather than as a language of signs. In the early chapters, I use many examples from the historical and anthropological record to argue that this ontological (rather than epistemic) understanding of dreams has been key in many societies that take the dream seriously – in fact, the epistemic function of dreams as messages proceeds from their ontological status as sacred or crucial places. I render tribute to immensely complex systems of dream-living that exist among cultures like the Ongees of the Andaman Islands, the Chukchee of the Arctic, the Tsimshian and Haida of the Pacific Northwest, the Aranda and Pintupi of the Australian desert. The dissertation then traces a cultural and sociological process by which this ontological understanding of dreams is gradually effaced, and follows a series of novels trying, in starts and fits, to recover some notion of it. The dissertation ends by suggesting that Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* is the culmination of these novelistic experiments in

transforming words on the page into a communal dream. In this way we finish where we began, for in Proust the mechanisms of linguistic meaning will be manipulated in such a way as to once again induce a state of dream-thinking as sensuous being.

This cyclical structure is not an accident. Proust is the end, but he was also the beginning, of this project. Many of its insights first arrived in reading him; my chapter on him contains not only the latest additions to the dissertation, but also some of the first thoughts I ever had on dreaming. Conversely, indigenous dream-practices take pride of place at the beginning of this manuscript, but they swam into my ken only at the end of the process which led to its writing. I encountered them much later than I did western literature, but I've come to see in them cultural practices of equal, sometimes even greater, power. Without my immersion in the anthropological corpus, the main thrust of the argument – the way dream-being relates to communal life – would not exist.

In so tracing a continuous circle between dream-sharing and novel-writing, it is in part my hope to suggest that the boundaries between different cultural structures – those separating storytelling from ritual, say, or art from religion – are not as permanent as they might seem. We are coming up on a future where technologies of the mind will advance and proliferate with a speed and power the likes of which we can barely grasp. Amid these transformations there will come a revolutionary rhetoric aimed at discarding old categories, as well as a reactionary one calling us to barricade ourselves behind certain well-loved and familiar ones. But if students of literature are to participate in the building of an imaginative life for the future that is ethical and salutary, we would do well to look wide and deep for our sources of inspiration. Whatever we try to make will need great resilience and versatility to hold fast against the dream-stimulations to come.

Part I
Dreaming and Aliveness

Chapter 1.
The Dream is a World, Not a Language

In the intellectual history of the West, dreams have been often described as a kind of language. Dream commentators from at least Artemidorus forward have seen messages in dreams, to be revealed by the decoding and translating of dream-images into our own waking language. Benjamin thought dream-language was like a reversible-figure illusion, its meaning popping out behind or underneath its apparent content. Freud thought dreams were the language of the disguising unconscious, expressing its desires for wish-fulfillment in a code that could, with the hard work of therapy, be transcribed into our waking speech and so understood. In the Bible and in many foundational myths – at least as they have been conventionally understood – dream-speech is thought of as the language of prophecy, the words which spell out the future.

But in the first work of fiction we know he produced, Tolstoy warned against thinking like this, at least unreflectingly. "God forbid you should believe the dreams which are told you by people who always dream something significant and interesting," he admonishes,

> These people are accustomed to draw conclusions from dreams according to the principles of fortune-telling; they have set up a certain form to which everything is reduced. They supply what is lacking from their imagination and reject anything that does not fit into this form. For example, a mother will tell you that she dreamed that her daughter flew up into the sky and said: 'Farewell, Mamma dear, I shall pray for you!' And what she really dreamed was that her daughter climbed up onto the roof and said nothing, and after she had climbed up the daughter suddenly became the cook Ivan and said, 'Don't you climb up here.'[2]

The pressure dreams exert on their dreamers to interpret them is very strong – indeed, the pressure they exert is so strong that it leads to all kinds of transformations and deformations (or rather, smoothings-over of the deformations) inherent to dream-life. To find something

[2] Leo Tolstoy, "A History of Yesterday," trans. George Kline and Michael Katz, *Tolstoy's Short Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1991), 293.

meaningful in the dream is not really to interpret it; it is to re-construct it for the purposes of waking life. It is on this principle that one of the strongest aspects of psychoanalysis is built: people make use of their dreams to suit waking purposes, conscious and unconscious. In doing so, they reveal certain predispositions, prejudices, or insecurities. We learn a great deal about the sanctimonious mother from Tolstoy's tiny dream-anecdote, but not so much about her dream.[3]

The young Tolstoy suggests that the customary act of extracting a system of meaning – semiotic or linguistic – from dreams is *secondary* to the dream itself. If we are truly to understand the nature of our dreamt lives, it will be in pushing past this semiotic stage to a more phenomenological description of our night world, and of the life lived there.

There are occasions in dreams, Wittgenstein observes, when we seem to be reading, but in fact upon waking we realize we were just imitating the external motions of the action: "It seemed to me as if I were reading signs, though they weren't really signs at all."[4] This points to an aspect of dreaming, and of mental life in general, that has only become visible on the horizon of intellectual inquiry in the last half-century, and is far from being exhausted.[5] We do not only generate thought and meaning in mental life through interpretation and analysis; we also work

[3] The Russian semiotician Juri Lotman calls the dream "a semiotic window," by which he means that it is a space whose free-floating, potential state allows it to be invested with external meaning with great fluidity and ease. Hence it has served the purpose of bearer of meaning for millennia: first as the bearer of messages from the divine or the future, then later as the language of the self. Dream to him is pure linguistic form. "This property of the dream as a pure form allowed it to become a space ready to be filled: a Shaman interpreting dreams is as 'knowledgeable' as the experienced Freudian. Sleep is a semiotic mirror and each of us sees in it the reflection of our own language." What Lotman is unwilling to do in these perspicacious remarks is shed the vocabulary of linguistics entirely: dream is a master-language or a template for language, but he will not acknowledge it as having a meaningful identity beyond its semiotic superstructure. Juri Lotman, "The dream – a semiotic window," *Culture and Explosion*, trans. Wilma Clark (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009), 142-6.

[4] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, Joachim Schulte (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), §160.

[5] At least two strands of thought in the last half-century have begun to examine mimesis as a cognitive form: the first stems from René Girard's theory of mimetic desire, first expressed in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1961), studies mimesis in erotic, emotional and social desire. It has been followed by a number of scholars, notably Eve Sedgwick. The second is a subfield of contemporary cognitive science concerned with, among other things, imitation, so-called "mirror neurons," and the evolutionary biology of communal interaction. Perhaps the most well-known proponent of this field is Richard Dawkins, who coined the word *meme* to mean an imitative unit of transmitted cultural experience in *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford UP, 1976).

through embodiment and imitation, sometimes emptied of any reflective meta-content, the sheer act of re-creating (or creating) reality, richly, idiosyncratically, highly specifically and with great dexterity. Dreaming, and by extension many other phenomena of the inner life, should be understood not merely to be linguistic, for this implies a reduction of the world into linear narration. In many cases, the inner world aspires to the fullness of the outer world: its efforts are a highly sophisticated and specialized form of mimesis – a form of mimesis that is also creation, imitation and reinvention.

The Boundaries of the Dream-World

Dreaming, then, is the happenings of the dream-state and, equally as importantly, the setting where those happenings take place: borrowing images from the waking world, the dream builds them into a new world, the parts scrambled and re-worked. Scientists at the Einstein College of Medicine in 1978 had students wear red-tinted goggles all day and record when they began to have red dreams. They found that red objects began appearing in their dreams very quickly, but, oddly, only in piecemeal fashion. The first dreams of the night were often tinted red, but later ones were once again in normal color. Certain experiences lived through in red tinting were rendered in the dream without it. In other cases the tinting was mixed in with non-tinting in the midst of the same dream: say, for example, a subject was dreaming of his kitchen, and saw, perhaps, a red table and a red window but everything else in its normal color, suggesting that in the dream, the brain had somehow synthesized a recent image of the table and window-pane with older images of other household items (the stove, the cupboard, the houseplant half-wilted in the corner) in order to create its own kitchen, or rather a mosaic of the

many perceptions of the kitchen that the dreamer had been accumulating.[6] A very simple account of this process is given by the neuroscientists Yuval Nir and Giulio Tononi in a review article on dreaming in the pages of *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*: "Dreams…show that the human brain, disconnected from the environment, can generate an entire world of conscious experiences by itself."[7]

The dream is a three-dimensional plane of reality, and though much of the material is gathered from memories of the waking world, it is governed by its own laws and delineated by its own borders. Its apparent disconnection from the outside world has been physiologically described as relating to the fundamental shift in brainstem function that characterizes the transition into REM-sleep: the brain switches tracks, activating a set of foundational neurons in the pontine brain-stem whose reach throughout the cortex trigger an alternative mode of chemical and electrical activity. The brain is bathed in acetylcholine; the spindles that generate slow-wave brain-activity in non-REM sleep are inhibited (just as in waking); the motor cortex becomes highly active, but its link to the rest of the body is severed, and an intensified muscle atonia occurs.[8] The dream-state has also been described as a matter of memory, or rather the lack thereof. The dream, completely enclosed within itself, cannot be accessed by waking memory for the waking memory has so few external cues – perceptions, sensations – that correspond to the self-contained experience of the dream. The dream thus appears to be its own distinct reality because it can't be integrated, by way of recollection, into the narrative of waking life. Nir and

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[6] The experiment, led by Howard Roffwarg, is detailed in Andrea Rock, *The Mind at Night: The New Science of How and Why We Dream* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 87-88, and also in Jonathan Winson, *Brain and Psyche: The Biology of the Unconscious* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1985), 210.

[7] Yuval Nir and Giulio Tononi, "Dreaming and the brain: from phenomenology to neurophysiology," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2009), 88.

[8] Eric Kandel et al., *Principles of Neuroscience*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 940-941. See also J. Allan Hobson, *The Dreaming Brain: How the Brain Creates both the Sense and the Nonsense of Dreams* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 121-123, 203-205. Of course dreams do not only take place in REM – though REM dreams tend to be more vividly recalled than non-REM dreams.

Tononi again: "The neurocognitive model claims that dreams are usually forgotten because they are internal narratives; unless internal experiences are tied to external cues, such as times and places, they are bound to be forgotten."[9] Moments of dream *déja vu*, the specific *mémoire involontaire* that occurs when a chance perception in waking life causes a forgotten dream to come rushing into consciousness, are the exceptions that prove the rule.

My concern here is not however with neuro-cognitive models for dreaming *per se*, but rather the subjective experience of them. What does the fact that the dream appears to be a state of being – a reality unto itself – mean for our understanding of its *content*? The first postulate is that we must understand it to bear the structure of a world, meaning that, like any world (or *universe*, a word which may also be substituted here), the dream has laws and borders that govern the possible series of motions, perceptions, decisions and interactions it contains. In this sense, the *laws of a dream* might be said to be closer to natural laws than to the laws of a grammar. We must be in search of the physics of the dream – albeit a physics that does not reduce itself to mechanics – and we must ask ourselves to what extent this physics is continuous with, or departs from, the physics of the waking world. We might ask ourselves about dream-gravity and dream-causation, about fundamental dream-particles and dream-waves, about whether the worlds of all dreamers have the same laws, or whether, in certain remote corners, each sleeping mind obeys physical constraints which are singular, whether, for example, in one person's dreams flying can only ever happen in a straight line, where in another's always only at a 45-degree angle; whether a house can turn into another house, but never a field, or whether, for someone else, the house in which the dreamer is sitting can become a field, but never another

[9] Nir and Tononi, 92. This account is anticipated in remarkable ways by Georg Simmel's essay on "The Adventurer," in which he compares the cognitive state of adventure to the cognitive state of dreaming – each so discretely removed from waking life that they seem another life, a separate totality of existence, yet waiting for reintegration. See Chapter 7 of this dissertation for a deeper treatment of Simmel's remarks.

house, for there is only one house in the dream. We must entertain the possibility that dreams might have certain commonalities and yet also that certain dreams may be unique in the history of the species, such that certain borders and restrictions might belong only to one of my dreams or one of yours, the only such reality with such rules amid the potential infinitude of realities, material and subjective, that we've long attempted to make room for within our many and inadequate pictures of the cosmos.

Many cultures in history have conceived of dreaming in terms of world, or worlds, rather than language, or languages. In making this generalization I mean for the moment to bypass the complex evolution of different paradigms for studying dreams in history and in different cultures,[10] and make the baseline claim that many cultures other than our own accept a certain surface truth about dreams: namely, that dreams are as much a place as a message, and that we travel through them just as we travel through the waking world. The *Bhrhadaranyaka Upanishad* of Vedic India, for example, contains a prolonged meditation on the spatial and existential structure of dreaming: "Wherever he may travel in his dream," it says of a sleeping man, "those regions become his worlds. He may appear to become a great king or an eminent Brahmin, or to visit the highest and the lowest regions. Just as a great king, taking his people with him, may move around his domain at will, so he, taking the vital functions here with him, moves around his body at will."[11] Elsewhere in the same text is a still more sophisticated account of the birth of the dream-world, its creation akin to the creation of a cosmos, not the authoring of a text:

> This is how he dreams. He takes materials from the entire world, and taking them apart on his own and then on his own putting them back together, he dreams with his own radiance, with his own light. In that place this person becomes his own light. In that place there are no carriages, tandems or roads; but he creates for himself carriages, tandems and

[10] For a summary of these shifting paradigms, see Sylvie Poirier, "Une anthropologie du rêve est-elle possible?" *Anthropologie et Sciences*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1999), 175-181.
[11] *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, trans. Patrick Olivelle, quoted in Kelly Bulkeley, *Dreaming in the World's Religions* (NYU, 2008), 32.

> roads. In that place there are no joys, pleasures, and delights; but he creates for himself joys, pleasures, and delights. In that place there are no pools, ponds, or rivers; but he creates for himself pools, ponds and rivers – for he is a creator. On this subject, there are these verses: "Subduing by sleep the bodily realm, / Remaining awake, he contemplates the sleeping senses."[12]

The sense of dreaming being above all governed by a principle of spatial creation, not of hermeneutic production, is clear from this ancient Indo-Aryan text. It transmits into writing an idea that is often still more self-evident in smaller communitarian societies, among hunter-gatherer groups and small-scale agriculturalists. These societies, their religious orientation frequently shamanic, possessed (and possess) a spectacular diversity of dream practices and mythologies. Their general contours, however, hold remarkably consistent: the dream is considered either a state of being in which the soul leaves the body and travels about, encountering living presences everywhere, or a state in which living presences travel through the world in order to visit the dreamer. Dreams constitute a landscape in which the mythworld and the human world, the past and future, seem to co-exist. The dream is thus not exactly *another* world, or *another* life, as Gérard de Nerval would say, but rather a nexus of worlds and lives, a matrix out of which worlds and lives take shape in relation to one another. The dream-world is not necessarily different from the world in which we live awake; it is perhaps, as Spinoza might say, another mode of that world, or simply another mode of engaging it.

So it is, for example, that throughout many parts of Native North America (so far as the anthropological record can know after the devastations of colonialism), dreams were key sites of interaction with the animal spirits who governed life in a hunting society, and dreams were the key template for the so-called Vision Quest, in which a society's sense of itself and its direction

[12] *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, trans. Patrick Olivelle, quoted in Bulkeley, 33-34.

were refreshed by sending an emissary on prolonged journey, into the dream-world.[13] The dream was above all a place of potentiality, a place in which raw materials had to be cultivated, tended, and strategically, carefully encountered. It was composed of a mixture of elements outside of the dreamer's control, and elements that could be conjured, created, manipulated. Having been attacked by a bear in his dream, for example, a man living in the Alaskan Arctic later explained to an anthropologist, "when it appeared I tried to flee, but then the thought came to me that I had summoned this magic bear deliberately and of my own free will, so I remained where I was."[14] The dream was neither something to be fully controlled in the moment nor something to be controlled after the fact with hermeneutics: it was to be coaxed, lived through, reacted to, fought against, endured, and, when possible and salutary, intervened in and tamed. In this, the American Indian relationship to dreaming was perhaps not unlike the American Indian relationship to landscape: neither about a complete transformation of the land, as in the western, Lockean model of property that has led to so much ecological degradation, nor, as was once naively assumed by certain Romantics, about passive co-existence. On the contrary, as Kat Anderson, among others, has shown, many native peoples throughout North America carefully "managed wildland resources and altered the composition and structure of plant communities to meet their needs for food, clothing, and shelter."[15] The hunter-gatherer relationship to dreaming was an awareness of a complex landscape with many actors that had to be managed and altered in such ways as to serve certain psychological, sociological and spiritual ends.[16] Reading and writing are not the

[13] Barbara Tedlock, "Rêves et visions chez les amérindiens: Produire un ours," *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1994), 13-27.
[14] Tedlock, "Rêves et visions," 13.
[15] M. Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (Berkeley: U. of California, 2005), xv.
[16] I rely here particularly on Bulkeley, as well as on Sylvie Poirier, "The Dynamic Reproduction of Hunter-Gatherers' Ontologies," in Janice Boddy & Michael Lambeck, eds. *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 50-68, for a discussion of the fundamentally "relational" notion of dreaming, a part of a larger sense of self relating to other sentient beings, human or otherwise, across the space of

main metaphors here for the life lived in dreaming (how could they be in societies where there is no reading or writing?). Instead, the conceptual framework by which the interior existence of dreaming is understood is travelling, the movement of the self in the world. We would do well to remember that even if our own culture teaches us that dreams have a hermeneutic significance – when they are deemed to have significance at all – the phenomenological experience of our dreams in the moment of dreaming them continues to resemble not primarily the interpretive disciplines like literary criticism or psychotherapy, but the unfolding of a reality in space and time. (I have had occasion to observe that even literary critics, when dreaming of their profession, usually dream not of deciphering texts, but of desperately trying to get to a conference in a foreign city, or running to a seminar classroom only to discover the copy of the paper they're about to deliver is missing.) Dreaming continues to be a domain in which mind provides a floor, a ceiling, a sky, walls, and living beings crossing through the planes between them. It might be said that dreaming is *thinking as world*, or a world where thoughts (in the form of a soul, a psyche, a self) have a tendency to literally move.

Cultures that understand this seem to have a markedly different relation to sleep and dreams than our own. They think of dreams as being far more instrumental, and have a much more sophisticated sense of dream-agency: in dreams you can *do* things, not just learn things after the fact. The Guajiro of South America, for example, practice a form of nightmare alleviation, in which the literal trajectory (the path over which the dreamer moves) is altered, and so the nightmare becomes a pleasant dream. This is especially important because the dream-path may potentially influence a path in waking life, and so its alteration can change the course –

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landscape. For a detailed treatment of the spatial and relational nature of dreaming specifically in a single hunter-gatherer context, see Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten "Cercles de guérison, pratiques d'inspiration chamanique et néo-chamanisme chez les inuit du Nunavik et du Nunavut," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, Vol. 38, No. 2–3 (2008), 55–67.

again, the term is literal before figurative, first a geographic trajectory and only then, perhaps, a narrative arc – of a person's future (similar strategies have been successfully tried in the last two decades with victims of sexual trauma suffering from recurring nightmares, particularly in the pioneering work of Barry Krakow).[17]

Many of the most complex and sophisticated dream cultures have disappeared from the record and from history by way of colonial violence and disease, or by processes still more inscrutable. Since dreams are the proverbial shape of the ephemeral, they are often the first things to be lost to time. But sometimes the most meager traces yield remarkable suggestions. Let's consider, for a moment, the bare traces that remain of the Independence People, who occupied parts of the Canadian High Arctic more than 2,000 years ago. Unlike the Inuit of more recent times, they do not appear to have had advanced technological adaptations to life in the North. They seem to have lived out the subzero Arctic winter in simple skin tents, with only enough fuel for intermittent fires. This has given rise to the hypothesis that they may have spent much of the winter in a state of semi-hibernation, not unlike that of bears, in which days and even weeks at a time were spent in deep sleep. If so, this may have been a society that performed a significant portion of its cultural and spiritual work in a dream-state. Where the movement and activity of the corporeal body were heavily restricted, it is possible that the dream-body moved as compensation, creating, recounting, exploring, socializing. More recent accounts of trappers

[17] Michel Perrin, "Quelques relations entre rêve et chamanisme," *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1994), 33. Krakow's study asked survivors of serious sexual traumas diagnosed with PTSD to undergo a process of "imagery rehearsal" in which nightmare imagery is consciously manipulated into benign imagery while waking (ultimately 43 completed the study in the non-control group). After three months it led to a considerable reduction in the frequency of nightmares – by one measure a 52% reduction overall, by another 62% -- with greater effects reported by those with more frequent nightmares at the beginning of the study. In the discussion of his findings for this key study, Krakow notes that "currently, there is no adequate explanation to account for these treatment findings." Such procedures, which deal with nocturnal life as a reality to be authored, worked in, and manipulated independent of its ideational or physiological substrates, are still a foreign and confusing concept to western psychology. Barry Krakow et al., "A Controlled Study of Imagery Rehearsal for Chronic Nightmares in Sexual Assault Survivors with PTSD: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2000), 589-609.

living in remote cabins in the North and withdrawing for weeks into dreams provide evidence that such a way of living is possible.[18]

There are perhaps no societies whose dream-practices are more richly recorded – in part because they are themselves so rich – than the Aboriginal cultures of Australia. Dreaming plays a crucial role in the larger mythical structures and in the minutiae of daily life, and in both cases, its ontological structure is eminently world-like. Take for example the Aboriginal creation myth, which inaugurates a reality and state of being known in English as The Dreamtime, or simply, The Dreaming. In the Aranda account, the world began as a flat and empty surface, a dull mirror of an empty sky. The ancestor figures – the fathers of the world, among them the Kangaroo Man, the Bandicoot Man, the Sun and Moon – lay dormant below the earth's surface. At a certain moment, they all began to rise to the surface, and emerged out of watering holes in the ground. On the surface of the earth, they began to walk, and in walking, began to sing. Their song called into being all the elements of the landscape: spinifex and mountain, river and forest. Finally, their work completed, they withdrew once again into the watering holes out of which they had originally emerged, letting the world enter historical time.[19] This creation myth resembles with remarkable precision a certain account of the dream process: the dreamer moves across a landscape, and as he does so, the landscape springs into existence out of nothingness, so that where there was only the darkness of sleep, there is now the sky and the land, the mountains and

[18] Robert McGhee, *Ancient People of the Arctic* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 64-65. Such feats have been more recently reported in the account of a family of Old Believers who fled the Stalinist Purges and lived in a remote valley of Siberia for decades before their discovery in the 1970s by a Soviet survey team. They seemed to have spent the long, harsh winters recounting and comparing one another's dreams. See Vasily Peskov, *Lost in the Taiga: One Russian Family's Fifty-Year Struggle for Survival and Religious Freedom in the Siberian Wilderness*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 84-85.

[19] This account follows the classic description in T.G.H. Strehlow, *Aranda Traditions* (Melbourne University Press, 1947), 25-28. It is also indebted to W.E.H. Stanner, "The Dreaming," in *Traditional Aboriginal Society: A Reader*, W.H. Edwards, Ed. (Melbourne: MacMillan Australia, 1987), 225-236. The work of these two pioneering students of the Dreaming (and indigenous' rights activists) continues to be well-respected, though a survey of more recent thinking on this very difficult to define concept is summarized in the introduction to Max Charlesworth et al., eds., *Aboriginal Religions in Australia: An Anthology of Recent Writings* (Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), 1-27.

the rivers, and everywhere sentience, living creatures and animated beings around each corner, ready to jump out of the ground and fly down from the heavens.

And yet this description of the Dreaming, rich and beautiful as it may seem, is still a far cry from the imbricated complexity of Aboriginal thought. It too much resembles a western creation myth, which situates the beginning of the world at the beginning, before us, and forever separated from us by the Cherub's Flaming Sword, Pandora's Box, or the terrible flood. Sylvie Poirier is the latest in a long line of anthropologists to have shown that the Dreaming, though it is present at the beginning, is also present always and ever, running parallel to the quotidian world, and constantly shaping and being re-shaped by the events of the everyday.[20] The Dreaming is not only the earliest age, the heroic age, but also the model of cosmological order, the Law in its most awesome and expansive form, the Nature of the World. The Dreaming is both immutable and subject to continuous modification in response to the vagaries of lived experience. Aborigines are inducted into the totemic "Dreaming" of a particular ancestor (by way of a dream, of course, had by the mother, or a close relative, at the beginning of pregnancy), and when they enter adulthood, they are taught the sacred songs of this ancestor, and the pathways across the landscape that those ancestors travelled while they sang, calling all the landmarks into creation. To travel this path, as Aborigines do when they walk the so-called Songlines or Dreaming Tracks, is to recreate the creation of the world, to sing once again as the ancestors sang, and to match their walking pace to the rhythm of song, and so to make the landscape and the songs that

[20] "In their present-day, ever-changing expression, Australian Aboriginal socialities are characterized by a continuously negotiated and somewhat paradoxical dynamic between 'the forms of permanence'…and their structural tranformations." Sylvie Poirier, *A World of Relationships: Itineraries, Dreams, and Events in the Australian Western Desert* (U. of Toronto, 2005), 4. Bruno Davis warns us to be careful when discussing the timelessness of Aboriginal Dreaming, which is not to be confused with the western idea of timelessness sometimes ascribed to Aboriginal culture. Within Aboriginal culture, the Dreaming is thought of as a continuous, dynamic ongoing structuring principle of reality. This is very different from the western fantasy that Aboriginals are somehow "unchanged" from when their ancestors first arrived in Australia tens of thousands of years ago. Bruno Davis, *Landscapes, Rock-Art, and the Dreaming: An Archaeology of Preunderstanding* (Leicester University Press, 2002), 89-110.

describe it cohere exactly in the transit of the self through the world. Thus though the Dreaming is the mythical time, it is not mythical in a lost sense: it is immanently mythical, constantly weaving in and out of life. Some have analogized Aboriginal culture by describing it as one which believes Eden still exists, which believes that all its energies must be directed toward keeping Paradise forever intact, rather than lamenting its loss, or looking forward to its apocalyptic return. To this can be added the idea that Eden must constantly be re-worked and readjusted, even though, and this somehow without contradiction, it is forever unchanging.

Not surprisingly, one of the major vehicles for this continuous interaction between the Dreaming and everyday life is sleep dreaming. The use of language tells us something about this: Dreaming is *Alcheringa* in the central Australian language Aranda, and *Tjukurrpa* in Pintupi, Kukatja, and other western desert languages; each term shares a root with the daily word for "dream" (though also greatly, massively expands upon it).[21] Many Aboriginal cultures believe that a person is conceived in a dream; in other words, that it's in a dream that a person's spirit first crosses from the Dreaming into this world, announcing itself to the mother, father, or other relative. Likewise do they believe that a person's soul does not truly return to the Dreaming until it has been sighted one last time in a dream, after physical death.[22] Between birth and death, the dream-world emerges in all kinds of rich and modifying forms. It provides insights into hunting and into lineage. In many groups, people learn new songs and new rituals from their dreams.[23] They use dreams to sanction and align experiences in waking life (more on this in chapter 4). For

[21] *Alcheringa* seems to bear a relationship to *altijra* – dream – and the suffix *–inga* means "belonging to." *Tjukurrpa* is different from, but related to, *kapukurri*, which is the dream realm. Poirier, *A World of Relationships,* 53-54.
[22] See for example, Jane C. Goodale, "Tiwi Island Dreams," and Sylvie Poirier, "'This is Good Country. We are Good Dreamers': Dreams and Dreaming in the Australian Western Desert," both in Roger Ivar Lohmann, ed., *Dream Travelers: Sleep Experiences and Culture in the Western Pacific* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
[23] The first westerner to advance the theory that Aborigines learned their rituals in dreams was Géza Róheim in *The Eternal Ones of the Dream* (New York: International Universities Press, 1945). Robert Tonkinson provides a careful account of the way the Mardu people of the Australian desert use a "dream-spirit ritual" in order to take dreams and collectivize them. Robert Tonkinson, "Ambrymese Dreams and the Mardu Dreaming," in Lohmann, 94-95.

example, Sylvie Poirier reports that once, when a car once broke down in the desert and was finally fixed, the people involved actively looked for some corresponding event in the dream-world. She writes: "As the engine started running again, a young woman pointed at her toddler and said, 'Might be that boy had a dream about that car and saw it working properly.'"[24] This anecdote is of great significance because it shows a vision of dream-life so different from our own sense of its purpose: to see the fulfillment of a dream in a situation that is happening right now is not necessarily to be concerned with prophecy (for the dream is not invoked *until* the thing has happened), but rather to be concerned with an alignment between dreaming and waking, an alignment which also has the consequence of sharing among individuals dream-perceptions. If the boy did in fact see the car working, it also means that, in that moment, everyone has now seen, with their own eyes, his dream.

The practices and beliefs of these dream cultures give the lie to Nietzsche's dismissive remarks on dreaming in *Human All Too Human*. Nietzsche writes that "The man of the ages of barbarous primordial culture believed that in the dream he was getting to know a *second real world*: here is the origin of all metaphysics. Without the dream one would have had no occasion to divide the world into two."[25] From this, suggests Nietzsche, followed the whole erroneous tradition by which sensual life was devalued in favor of intellectual nihilism. But in fact this error, if that's what it is, is foreign to many actual dream-cultures, and indeed, presumes an understanding of the dream that in this chapter I have been at pains to argue is not at all the norm around the world, and, if anything, is particularly western, and particularly modern. Nietzsche's account of the birth of metaphysics out of the spirit of the dream supposes, it seems to me, a dream-world that cannot be accessed except after the fact, and in mediated fashion. Nietzsche

[24] Poirier, "This is Good Country," 117.
[25] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge UP, 1986), 14 (Chapter 1, Section 5).

imagines that all men saw in dreams – as the men of his own era did – an unchanging and ideal snow-globe world, separated from their own life by a pane of glass, and only integrable into it by way intellectual operations, that is by language, description, interpretation.

Most societies that take the dream seriously believe, on the contrary, that the dream is not first some picture or diorama or snow-globe to be glimpsed and then expounded upon, but rather a landscape as rich and as accessible as the one we traverse while awake – or indeed, part of the same landscape. Interpretive practices – which do play a role sometimes – follow on the heels of this sense of dreams being sites for actions and investigation. Collecting ethnographic data more than century ago from missionaries, James Frazer summarized,

> The soul of a sleeper is supposed to wander away from his body actually to visit the places, to see the persons, and to perform the acts of which he dreams. For example, when an Indian of Brazil or Guiana wakes up from a sound sleep, he is firmly convinced that his soul has really been away hunting, fishing, felling trees, or whatever else he has dreamed of doing, while all the time his body has been lying motionless in his hammock. A whole Bororo village has been thrown into a panic and nearly deserted because somebody had dreamed that he saw enemies stealthily approaching it.[26]

As Sylvie Poirier wrote only ten years ago, the Aborigines of the Western Desert, possessed of a culture explicitly and complicatedly invested in dreams, have very little interest in dream interpretation. But "what possibly might be seen, at first, as a lack of interest in dream interpretation reveals, on closer examination, another local reality – the paramount role of the action of dreaming itself in one's life itinerary and in the unfolding of reality. Primacy is given to the activity of dreaming – as a means to know the world and to relate to it – over the dream content or dreams simply as 'objects' (or products of the mind, as in the dominant dream theories of the West)."[27] This suggests that viewed from a certain angle, dream-life is in fact the cognitive experience most in line with our experience of the physical world: in dreaming our mental

[26] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Abridged Edition (London: Penguin, 1996), 218-219.
[27] Poirier, *A World of Relationships*, 196.

selves behave in a manner very similar to our bodily selves, acting not primarily as monologue or sensation, but as an embodied entity traveling through an embodied reality. If we consider dreams to belong to an ontology of doing rather than interpreting, then it's Nietzsche who seems to be drawing artificial distinctions, or at least diagnosing the distinctions of his own time and place. Nietzsche had to invent, in the deep past, an unnatural split between the physical world and the dream world in order to explain the rupture between the two that, as we will see, caused some of his contemporaries much unease.

The Dream-World as a Mimesis of Human Eusociality

If the first step toward moving beyond a linguistic account of the dream is to consider its world-like nature, then the second is to acknowledge what may be the clearest characteristic of this world: it is peopled with others. The paradox inherent in Heraclitus' reflection draws attention to this circumstance. The dream-world unfolds within the isolation of sleep, when the dreamer's sensorial apparatus is closed off to those with whom he shares his waking life. But instead of offering some kind of reprieve from the complexity and density of waking social life, the dream often replaces it with its own social life, massively full of figures – often human but not always, sometimes animal, some even inanimate objects come to life (about which we will say more soon). These are often engaged in decisive, intrusive, even dangerous, interactions with the subjectivity of the dreamer. In some cases, even, the subjectivity of the dreamer is nothing but a passive eye recording the movements, deeds, and battles of these other living figures, but just as frequently he is an actor influencing the course of events. A famous mid-century content-analysis of one thousand college students' dreams found more than 2500 discrete characters

within them – and did not count crowds, offstage figures, or sensed presences.[28] Such distinctions and complexities are blurred by the snow-globe theory of dreams espoused by Nietzsche and others in the West, making it seem at best that these are just little figurines in a picture. But in fact, the other beings contesting the mental space of the dream are numerous and vivid throughout history and time, whether it be Scipio Africanus or a tutelary animal spirit or a spurned lover or the haunting victim of an earlier injustice. I want to emphasize that there is an important difference between this state of affairs – in my dream-mind I share a world with others – and the commonly accepted modern account of waking consciousness, where what goes on inside of our heads is expressed (at least, we claim, in mentally healthy people) by a single voice, which we recognize as our own; and if the image or voice of another being intrudes, it appears as an object to be thought about and analyzed, rather than as an acting, unpredictable, living subject.

Why are dreams so often full of living beings, and where do these beings come from? The first answer is that human beings are profoundly social animals, and that the mental architecture of our species, just like the architecture of the environment in which the majority of us physically live, is fundamentally intersubjective. The biologist E.O. Wilson has advanced the claim that it is the almost unprecedented social nature of human beings that defines our species above all else, and has made possible our domination of the planet's terrestrial environments. Wilson argues that we share this powerful sociality with only a few other species – not, as you might think, our close relatives the other primates, but rather the massed social insect species: ants, termites, and bees, who dominate the miniature and low-lying parts of our planet very much

[28] Calvin Hall and Robert Van De Castle, *The Content Analysis of Dreams* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966), 164.

on the same scale as we do our own domains.[29] The conquest of Earth, to use Wilson's phrase, has been achieved *only* by these so-called eusocial species – humans, ants, termites, and bees – and they all bear certain similarities, something which human commentators have remarked upon since at least Aristotle. For this reason, there is an equally ancient (and still vital) tradition of using these other species to try to understand the social behavior in our own.[30] If there is a social charge to dreams because we are fundamentally a social species, and if the nature of that social charge is somehow imbricated in the obscurities of the human mind and its many gradations of consciousness, awareness, and proto-consciousness, then we might be well-served by looking, for a moment, at the structure of species who have achieved civilization-level social complexity without any consciousness at all.

The ants are often found in colonies that contain millions of individuals, acting in self-organized patterns of such cohesion that they are known as *superorganisms*, with every individual advancing the reproductive and alimentary interests of the colony as a whole. They exhibit an in-built "reproductive altruism," meaning that sterile workers aid the fertile queens and their mates in reproduction even though they themselves will never pass on any genetic material, and the young develop into a number of phenotypically distinct castes, called "soldiers," "workers," and so forth. The massed members of a colony can manifest astonishing

[29] "The key to the origin of the human condition is not to be found in our species exclusively, because the story did not start and end with humanity. The key is to be found in the evolution of social life in animals as a whole." E.O. Wilson, *The Social Conquest of Earth* (New York: Liveright, 2012), 109. Wilson's theory of multilevel selection, laid out in this book, though not entirely relevant to the argument here, remains highly controversial within biology, as it appears to challenge the dominant kin-selection theory which Wilson himself once helped to triumph in the face of stiff skepticism. More level-headed voices suggest that the conflict is unnecessary, and that whether kin-selection or multilevel group selection is foregrounded, both can be used as models to help explain the mystery of emergent human eusociality. See David Sloan Wilson, "Richard Dawkins, Edward O. Wilson, and the Consensus of the Many," *This View of Life*, The Evolution Institute, accessed March, 2017: https://evolution-institute.org/article/richard-dawkins-edward-o-wilson-and-the-consensus-of-the-many/ For the controversy over inclusive fitness, see Nowak, M. A., Tarnita, C. E., & Wilson, E. O. "The Evolution of Eusociality," *Nature*, 466 (2010) 1057-1062, and the response, Abbott, P., Abe, J., Alcock, J., et al., "Inclusive fitness theory and eusociality," *Nature*, 471 (2010), E1-E4.

[30] See the *Georgics* of Virgil, Book 4, for example.

coordinated group behaviors. The ants of the South American genus *Eciton*, for example, build bivouac shelters for the colony out of their own bodies; leafcutter ants raise herds of aphids, harvesting their dew-like feces as if it were milk; African *Macrotermes* termites build nests with a complex network of chambers and capillaries that air-condition the structure to keep the main living area always within a degree of 30 Celsius.[31]

These achievements of the social insects are accomplished by what is called in systems theory *emergence* – that is, by the self-organization of coordinated simpler phenomena into a larger phenomenon that exceeds the sum of the individual parts. Wilson and his colleague Hölldobler have argued that evolutionary natural selection has created a set of algorithms, mostly made up of simple binary decisions (approach another ant – smell its body odor – determine if a foreign ant or familiar – if familiar, follow it, or go in the opposite direction – and so forth) enacted by each individual in the colony. Similar trees of binary decision-making are made by genes in expressing certain phenotypes in response to certain chemical signals. When these exceedingly simple decisions are simultaneously exercised by and on hundreds of thousands of ants in a colony, they form a practically infinite set of permutations (as Wilson points out, the number of possible configurations on a chess board – where only 32 pieces are involved – exceeds the number of atoms in the universe). In turn this allows the manifestation of complex, coordinated forms of behavior.

The study of the eusocial insects has been key for the development of computer science and the neural network in particular. It has served as one of the key models for theorizing how individual neurons in the mind might interact together to form the complex, emergent systems of

[31] E.O. Wilson and Bert Hölldobler, *The Superorganism: The Beauty, Elegance, and Strangeness of Insect Societies* (New York: Norton, 2009), 57-58.

the human brain, consciousness among them.[32] And, as a recent study on the role of experience in the decision-making processes of ants has argued, it might also serve as a model for the functioning of human collectivities, among them traffic and movement patterns in big cities.[33]

In light of this research, one way of conceptualizing dreams may be as self-organizing representations of human collectivities: if the decisions of human beings are intimately connected to the decisions and actions of other beings that surround them in waking life, then we may speculate that a mimesis of this phenomenon occurs in dreams, with certain differences that will become clear as this dissertation progresses. The forces at play in dream-experience might be conceived as a self-organizing integration of the facets of other beings which help give shape to our intersubjective consciousness. Given that humans, unlike ants, are aided (or hindered!) in decision-making by the possession of a complex brain with its attendant forms of consciousness and unprecedented decision-making processes (which no field of knowledge can yet properly describe), we might imagine that one function of dreaming is to stage the set of behaviors, opinions, emotional reactions, desires, and habits that we acquire by observing, encountering, resisting and copying other beings. It has long been argued that dreams are self-organizing phenomena tending towards some form of dynamic equilibrium;[34] my addition to that argument here is that the living presences surrounding the dreamer are the defining factor needing to be equilibrated. This will be elaborated in the following chapters, but for now, it's safe to say that the dream-state is a world frequently filled with living presences, and that if dreaming is a state of thinking-as-world, then the thinking subject shares his dream-thoughts with many living

[32] See Douglas Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 315-316.
[33] T. Sasaki and S.C. Pratt, "Ants learn to rely on more informative attributes during decision-making," *Biological Letters* 9: 20130667 (2013) Accessed: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2013.0667>.
[34] Kahn and Hobson, for example, contend that in dreaming, "the brain self-organizes neuronal signals whose cognitive correlates produce discontinuities and incongruities in an on-going narrative." David Kahn and J. Allan Hobson, "Self-Organization Theory of Dreaming," *Dreaming*, Vol. 3., No. 3, (1993), 151.

beings apparently independent of him, but whose actions are intertwined with his own in a complex and closed system.

Among the thorniest problems in the study of dreams is the question of dream-agency, which many commentators believe not to exist, or at the very least to be greatly inferior to the agency we possess (or feel that we possess) in waking life: we will see that its perceived lack may be related to the highly braided action and reaction – one unfolding in the wake of the other without any space for deliberation – that defines the relations between the dreamer and other living beings in his dreams. Dreams are a mental picture of the hive of aliveness in which we are programmed to live, with, as we'll see, the complicating factor of self-awareness largely diluted; the sense of isolation and self-sufficiency of individual self-consciousness is in the dream-state largely suspended, so that actions and reactions between beings are laid out in all of their interdependence.

At this stage of the argument, we have both advanced very far and very little: I have argued against dreams being thought of primarily as repositories for semantic or hermeneutic meaning, as in the snow-globe theory of Nietzsche and others; I have argued that instead, they are best understood as worlds with set parameters, movements, trajectories, which include and engulf the dreamer, and that meaning may be productively assigned to them after the fact, but shouldn't necessarily be thought to be the constituitive structuring principle. And furthermore, I've said dreams are worlds permeated with beings entwined in a complex social web of the kind that biologists call *eusocial* – "truly social," the highest level of social organization known among animal species. These claims may seem dramatic, but in some sense they are still in the domain of the indisputable: even if you think a dream does have a semantic structure, you would be hard-pressed to disagree with the claim that dreams present themselves as sensorially-

accessible worlds, usually full of beings. In fact, if anything, the danger lies not in offering an outlandish theory of dreams, but rather of one that is too familiar to be useful: one could argue that this definition makes dreams almost indistinguishable from human waking life, which can also be assigned various meanings based on semantic or symbolic patterns, but which bears the basic perceived structure of a three-dimensional world full of beings.

This is how it should be, since it is the goal of this first chapter to establish that dreams are both much more similar to waking life than modern paradigms allow, and, at the same time, they are much more distant than we might initially think. In other words, it is the goal of this chapter to provide an alternative to the Nietzschean paradigm of a hermeneutic snowglobe of dreams. Here another addition to our growing picture of this state of being: the inner realm of the dream-mind is not a unified linguistic consciousness, but living beings interacting with each other in infinite permutations.

What might be said to be missing in dreams, as opposed to waking life, is a certain form of reflective self-consciousness. Studies have long shown that during REM sleep, the pre-frontal cortex – traditionally thought of as the seat of conscious reasoning – is largely dormant. Furthermore it reactivates dramatically during the induced state of lucid dreaming, when the self becomes aware that he or she is dreaming, and acquires a certain distance from or awareness over it (and even, in some cases, the power to control it).[35] In non-lucid dreaming, then, there is a remarkable absence of meta-cognition, of the ability to dissociate oneself from one's surroundings by thinking about them (or about something else) at some remove. Bert O. States, in his book *Dreaming and Storytelling*, calls this phenomenon, using a phrase borrowed from Allan Rechtschaffen, the "dream's single-mindedness":

[35] Ursula Voss et al., "Lucid Dreaming: A State of Consciousness with Features of Both Waking and Non-Lucid Dreaming," *Sleep*, Vol. 32, No. 9 (2009), 1191-1200.

> To review briefly, single-mindedness is the "strong tendency for a single train of related thoughts and images to persist over extended periods without disruption or competition from other simultaneous thoughts and images." Waking consciousness consists of "at least two prevalent streams" of thought: voluntary mental productions and sense impressions, on one hand, and, on the other, "a reflective or evaluative stream which seemingly monitors the first and places it in some perspective." In the dream state, however, this second, "reflective stream of consciousness is drastically attenuated"; that is, we are (normally) unaware that we are dreaming. Rechtschaffen expresses this idea still another way by saying that dreams "lack imagination" – meaning that the dream state, lacking "reflective awareness" (that is, being single-minded), has no "capacity to conjure up images and thoughts which may occupy consciousness simultaneously or near simultaneously with another stream of thoughts and images." Although he acknowledges that in another sense dreams may be "considered among the most imaginative of human productions," they are nonimaginative in that the dreamer cannot, as a waking person can, dream of one thing ("sitting at my desk") while "simultaneously imagining a tennis court".[36]

What this polemical vocabulary of the nonimaginative suggests is that dreams do not permit self-awareness: they do not permit meta-consciousness or self-consciousness, the capacity to disentangle our thoughts from our actions and perceptions, the possibility of a developed internal monologue which withdraws us from what is going on directly in our environs. Instead, dreams provide an environment in which the subjectivity of the dreamer cannot be easily divided from the perceptual experiences that constitute his interactions with the world that surrounds him (and, in the case of dreams, might quite literally be said to *be* him).

How does this relate to the worldlike and eminently social qualities of dreaming? The attempt to answer that question in all of its complexity will be the subject of many of the pages that follow, and will reach its most complete answer in our late analysis of the great dream-champion of the European novel, Marcel Proust. But here I wish to say a word about the relationship of this lack of self-consciousness to human eusociality and its mimesis in dreaming.

One of the most startling and heterodox propositions about the relationship between self and society to emerge from 20th-century psychology is Julian Jaynes' theory of the bicameral

[36] Bert O. States, *Dreaming and Storytelling* (Cornell, 1993), 17-18.

mind. In his 1976 work *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Jaynes advances the claim that consciousness – understood narrowly as self-awareness, or meta-cognition, the ability not just to think, but to think about your own thinking – *did not exist before the year approximately 1000BC*, when it developed amid the collapsing civilizations of early Mediterranean and Mesopotamian Antiquity. Immediately before then, the human mind, he claimed, had operated within two separate chambers (hence it was *bicameral*), corresponding roughly to the brain's two hemispheres. The first, seated in the left brain, carried out daily tasks, reasoning and acting according to our developed and innate habits and behaviors. The second, seated in the right brain, provided a set of hallucinatory voices which were activated whenever the subject reached an impasse which his or her ingrained mental habits could not overcome. Human beings planted and fished and made offerings; but if suddenly the fields did not seem ready to plant, or the usual pools were empty of fish, a voice would appear commanding the human to go elsewhere, or wait two weeks instead of one to sow seeds. These voices were experienced as coming from a discrete being – usually divine, a god, or god-king, deceased ancestor, or divine messenger, issuing orders that had to be obeyed. In fact, these orders could *not* be disobeyed, for there was no capacity for reflection about their relative worth or value. In this way, argues Jaynes, human beings were slaves to an internalized hierarchy of voices ordering individuals to act in concert to make their city or other community cohesive.[37]

Crucial to Jaynes' theory is the idea that consciousness is itself a very small part of our mental world. Many of our most sophisticated behaviors – playing the piano, solving a mathematical problem, reacting to a sudden emergency or threat – do not require the use of consciousness, at least when it is narrowly defined as the voice of self-reflection. In fact, to

[37] Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1990).

introspect too carefully on these behaviors is usually to ruin them: if you think too much about what you are doing when you are playing the piano, you can no longer play. Likewise, you may think carefully about the parameters of a math problem in the work of solving it, but the moment in which everything comes together and an answer comes to mind (as the legend of Archimedes shouting *Eureka!* in the bathtub is meant to illustrate) is a moment beyond the reach of our introspective faculties, a mysterious arising into consciousness from non-consciousness. Jaynes therefore suggests that we should not find it so hard to imagine that human beings could act in sophisticated, coordinated and intelligent ways *without* the self-reflection we are used to thinking of as necessary for sophistication and intelligence.[38]

For Jaynes, the bicameral mind was a phenomenon of emergence very much akin to the evolution of ant colonies: "the bicameral mind is a form of social control which allowed mankind to move from small hunter-gatherer groups to large agricultural communities. The bicameral mind with its controlling gods was evolved as a final stage of the evolution of language. And in this development lies the origin of civilization."[39] The voices inside the self helped define the self's relation to the voices and body that surrounded it, that made it a part of a larger whole, the superorganism of a bicameral civilization, usually built up around a god-king figure, or king as-steward-of-the-gods-on-earth, ruling alongside idols placed atop pyramidal structures. Jaynes claims that this coordination of everyone by voices was absolute but also totally uncoerced, for coercion in a bicameral regime would have had no meaning:

[38] "it is only necessary to conclude that consciousness does not make all that much difference to a lot of our activities. If our reasonings have been correct, it is perfectly possible that there could have existed a race of men who spoke, judged, reasoned, solved problems, indeed did most of the things we do, but who were not conscious at all." Jaynes, 47.
[39] Jaynes, 126.

> In the bicameral era, the bicameral mind *was* the social control, not fear or repression or even law. There were no private ambitions, no private grudges, no private frustrations, no private anything, since bicameral men had no internal 'space' in which to be private, and no analog 'I' to be private with. All initiative was in the voices of gods.[40]

Jaynes' hypothesis occupies a curious place in modern psychology. His work is widely derided, but not because it has been definitively disproved; rather, the problem is that many of his claims appear at present impossible to verify one way or the other. He is regarded as a pioneer in signaling a need for the discipline of psycho-archaeology, for asking science to accept that human mentation has existed in radically different forms than the one we know now.[41] He has shed light on the possibility that the medicalization of certain mental states may not be their definitive characterization, and he long-ago suggested that consciousness and the brain are malleable in a way that neuroscience is only just coming around to accepting.

Nevertheless, I invoke him here not to defend the historical specifics of his theory, but rather to draw attention to three general claims his theory rests upon. First, that intersubjective (perhaps he would prefer merely intervocal) structures within the mind relate to and affect intersubjective structures outside of the mind in the human social world. Second, that the hearing of voices attributed to other beings – and also seeing visual forms of those beings, either through hallucination or by projecting voices into the mouths of constructed idols – may have once played a much more considerable and accepted role in human cultures than now, when such behaviors are almost universally defined as signs of mental illness. And third, that the human mind, when operating as a set of multiple selves or voices, has a diminished awareness of itself as an introspecting subjectivity, and reflects less often and more weakly on its own thought-process. All of these propositions are resonant with the described experience of dreaming, and

[40] Jaynes, 205.
[41] Andrea Eugenio Cavanna et al., "The 'bicameral mind' 30 years on: a critical reappraisal of Julian Jaynes' hypothesis," *Functional Neurology*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2007), 11-15.

stand in sharp contrast to the generally accepted modern idea of healthy, waking consciousness as a single voice carrying out elaborate self-reflection and analysis.

Jaynes' argument rests on two major pillars: the first is his wager that the countless texts from antique civilizations narrating direct communion with gods – as well as texts from a slightly later period lamenting the silence and absence of the gods – ought to be understood literally. If later poetry has made of such invocation a mere convention, he argues, it is nevertheless the residue of a time when men and women did in fact communicate directly and undoubtingly with the divine. The second is the body of research into brain disorders where the two hemispheres have been traumatically or surgically separated, and the forms of hallucination and multiplied personality that result.[42] In both of these bodies of evidence, the dream plays a privileged role. Jaynes speaks of documents from Egypt and Mesopotamia in which a dream provides the vessel for divine communication, as in "The Instructions which the Majesty of King Amenemhet I justified, gave when he spoke in a dream-revelation to his son."[43] He also cites the important studies of hallucination during electrical stimulation of the brain after surgery in severe epileptics, conducted by Penfield and Perot. Subjects hallucinated voices and even visible figures, and one metaphor patients used to describe the experience was, "It was just like a dream."[44]

In the modern world, many would say that a state in which the mind generates visual spaces filled with figures and voices who order us about, arguing or threatening or placating us, is either a dream or madness; if so, then the dream is the last place in our psychic world where such phenomena are not considered abnormal. I don't believe that Jaynes' hypothesis is possible in the historical specifics he presents, but I do believe that there is good reason to imagine that

[42] Though on this second bit of evidence, see the critique of Cavanna et al.
[43] Jaynes, 189.
[44] Jaynes, 109-110.

the hearing of voices and seeing of figures was more commonly a part of waking life in certain societies than in our own, for the historical and anthropological record testifies that such events were regularly accepted among shamans, priests, initiates, and even whole communities in certain contexts. It is plausible, I believe, to take these extensive testimonies at their word, as Jaynes does. If this is true, then the dream may be a final refuge within our own time for this bringing forth of living beings from the mind, and its importance in many non-western cultures may be linked to an openness to understanding psychic life as having a multiplicity of voices.

What Jaynes suggests more broadly is that social control in a world with limited self-awareness resulted in part from highly dream-like phenomena, indeed from the entire society living in a kind of shared waking dream, consisting of a hallucinated world of beings and their dwellings, which was consistently being synched with the visual world, as when idols and homes for idols (temples) were constructed, and cosmologies depicted in stone and paint and ritual pageants. A great power – a power to shape the world – was exercised in the mind by the emergence of living beings onto each person's plane of psychic awareness. To induce the dream-state during waking, I will shortly contend, looks something like a temporary regression to a state of non-reflective bicamerality.

This theory stands in an intriguing symmetrical inversion to another theory about the origins of social cohesion: René Girard's account of mimesis and sacrifice. Like Jaynes, Girard begins with the premise that human beings are defined by their social nature, but according to him, this sociality plays out not through the hallucination of voices, but rather through imitation of one another. We humans, claims Girard, are constantly internalizing images of others, their actions, behaviors, attitudes, expressions. It is how we learn, bond, and even, in the earliest instance, before language has attained any real sophistication, communicate. But it is also how

we come to desire: the fact that we are imitative animals means that we are also animals always desiring to be something that we are not, and therefore we are always and eternally thwarted by the fact that our desire to have, or become something, is really a desire to imitate, which, by nature of the perennial need for someone else to imitate and the impossibility of ever fully becoming someone we are not, cannot ever be fully sated. We always want what we cannot have because our wanting is really about the search for people to be *like*, and any temporary success in becoming someone else only opens up an avenue for us to encounter still other people to want to become and overcome. Thus when unchecked, desire always leads to chaos and the war of all against all, as each person tries to take what belongs to the other, to assume his position or mate or food, only to discover, once he has it, that he really wants what someone else has, even perhaps what the deposed other has settled for after losing his primacy.[45] We will see more directly in later chapters how mimesis, and its relation to desire, affects the dream-life, but suffice to say here that it is a key point of contact between the inner life of the species, and its outer social mechanisms.

Girard offers the concession, not unlike Jaynes, that a developed sense of self-consciousness, with internalized mores and customs, can allow for some (weak) control over these mimetic impulses; but when this meta-reflection is not a part of cultural patterns, another solution is undertaken. This solution – which was the original, most ancient solution to the problem of mimetic crisis – was using collective violence as a unifier: the community ascribed its failure to achieve what it desired to a single actor, a scapegoat, and then, perceiving that scapegoat to be the source of all their ills, came together in the common and cathartic project of destroying him or her or it. The scapegoat mechanism channeled all the uncontrolled mimetic

[45] René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford UP, 1987), 3-47.

forces in the mind – which had been wildly manufacturing desired figures, calling to and agitating each individual – toward a single target. This gesture of unifying violence soon came to be repeated, at first whenever the society needed it, and then prophylactically, cyclically, to ensure a crisis would not happen again. Codified as a ritual it became what we know as sacrifice, and so the origin of the sacred. "The sacred is the sum of human assumptions resulting from collective transferences focused on a reconciliatory victim at the conclusion of a mimetic crisis," Girard summarizes.[46]

According to Jaynes, as we saw, the sacred originated in the coming to life of a being in the human mind which made un-disobeyable pronouncements regulating and shaping social life. According to Girard, the sacred began with the destruction of a being in social life which then regulated and shaped the inner contours of the human mind. To look at both of these thinkers together, and to look at them in the most general possible fashion, allows us to see that both believe inner life and social cohesion are intimately linked; both believe that ruptures between them are perilous to the superorganism of human society; and both believe that the mechanisms of culture (rites, gods, sacrifices, and a at a second remove, taboos, dances, architecture, kinship structures) arise in large part to prevent such ruptures from happening, or to suture them up when they do.

Most importantly for us, though, are two opposing yet analogous effects at the heart of these two grand theories: the decisive event for both occurs *at the threshold between life and death*, one moving towards life, one towards death. According to Jaynes, a living being *appears* where one was not before (frequently even the voice of someone who has returned from the grave), and so society is ordered. According to Girard, a living being *disappears* (banished into

[46] Girard, 42. The theories are first introduced in Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Johns Hopkins, 1977).

death or the wilderness), where one once was, and so society is calmed. Why does the threshold between aliveness and not-aliveness possess this power to unify? The attempt to answer that question will take us toward two theories: first, to the hypothesis that something in the deepest stratum of the dream-state is tightly bound up with our understanding of life and death, with what it means to exist as mortal beings on this earth; and second, to the theory that dreams and dreamlike behavior has long played a role, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, in forging social bonds. We will now have to look at each of these claims in turn, and only then be able to see how intimately they are linked.

Chapter 2.
A Theory of Emergent Aliveness

In his epic poem *Raven Travelling*, recounted in 1900 off the coast of British Columbia, the Haida mythteller Skaay narrates a brief episode from the life of the trickster Raven concerning nightmares.[47] The Raven has crawled into the skin of the newborn baby of the headman Pierced Fin, and has thus been remade (reincarnation of various kinds is a desperate imperative for the Raven, who it seems must be constantly reborn in order to live forever). The child – precocious because he carries within him the eternal trickster – tries to sleep with his aunt, but she rebuffs him. So one day Raven slips out of the child's skin, leaves the village, and goes about some mysterious business. He makes two rattles from limpet shells he finds on the beach. He takes the rattles to a remote grave, and there awakens the ghost of a shaman. He refashions the mat which lies over the grave into a ceremonial dancing apron, which he strings round the waist of the phantom shaman. The Raven commands his phantom to dance through the town, shaking the rattles. As the ghost passes each house, the sleeping inhabitants are seized with nightmares.

The nightmares somehow paralyze the village women, and the Raven makes his way into the houses and rapes their limp bodies, finally attaining both his aunt and his own mother. Only

[47] Skaay of the Qquuna Qiighawaay, *Raven Travelling*, *Being in Being: The Collected Works of a Master Haida Mythteller*, ed. And trans. Robert Bringhurst (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2001), 310-312. This collection of poems contains two major epic cycles – *Raven Travelling* and a series of interlocking narratives Bringhurst calls the *The Qquuna Cycle*. These oral masterpieces were preserved by the diligent work of the anthropologist John Reed Swanton, who lived from 1900 to 1901 on the archipelago of Haida Gwaii, off the coast of northern British Columbia, recording the stories of the last generation of classical Haida mythtellers. The result is one of the most important archives of pre-literate hunter-gatherer literature to ever appear in print. Skaay was the most expansive and perhaps gifted of all the mythtellers Swanton met. Robert Bringhurst has done the superb work of preparing poetic translations and a thorough introduction to the tradition from which these works spring in his trilogy, *Masterworks of the Classical Haida*, of which Skaay's book is volume three. This nightmare episode can also be found in John Swanton's translation in John Swanton, *Haida Texts and Myths: Skidegate Dialect*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin 29 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), 118-119.

an old woman is protected, somehow, from the dreams (perhaps because the elderly dream less) and she watches Raven satisfy his lust from a dark corner of the house. Once he is sated, he puts the ghost back to sleep and returns to his infant-skin and cradle, feigning innocence. But the damage has been done. The old woman denounces the Raven-child and he is banished along with his mother, Floodtide Woman, who is now incestuously pregnant with Raven's next incarnation.

Skaay's English translator, Robert Bringhurst, has written that "a myth is a theorem about the nature of reality, expressed not in algebraic symbols or inanimate abstractions but in animate narrative form."[48] It is a series of epistemic principles that are personified, manipulated and brought into contact with one another over the course of a story, just as fundamental axioms might be called to one another's service across several steps of a geometric proof.

What does this miniature mythological treatise tell us about dreams? What is the nature of this mythological inquiry, and what exactly are its objects? At the most superficial level of reading we must note that the story seems to be little interested in the actual *content* of dreams: that is, the nightmares that afflict the village women are not described, and moreover, whatever has transpired within them (a chase, a punishment, a humiliation) is irrelevant to the narrative logic of the episode.

This episode is concerned with the *causal structure* of dreams. But this is not an aetiological origin myth – Skaay is not narrating the *first* dream. Dreams seem to exist already in the world of this myth; they do not need to be summoned into existence and given a name by the story. Skaay rather seems to be describing how a dream comes into being *locally*: that is, he is asking, what conditions are required to generate the dream, and what do they create?

[48] Robert Bringhurst, "The Meaning of Mythology," *Everywhere Being is Dancing: Twenty Pieces of Thinking* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 63.

Skaay's answer to these questions is roughly as follows: for the dream to happen, that which was dead must be brought back to life, must be made animate (hyper-animate, even: the shaman shakes, and rattles and dances). The values of all things must be exchanged along these poles: the funeral mat, symbol of death, becomes a dancing apron, shaking and alive; the mute limpit shells now rattle and wheeze. Once this occurs, the dream can begin and the same transformation occurs in reverse: that which was living is trapped in a simulated death, as the women are scared into a state of stiffened objecthood. And then, this frozen, inanimate state gives rise to the animate – to the seed that Raven has sown in these women during their dream.

None of this – at least ostensibly – takes place within the subjective sphere of the women's dreams. It is an external description of the dream, an account of its exoskeleton. However, certain familiar aspects of subjective dream experience do appear in this story, transposed from the internal surface of the dream to the external surface, from the effects to the causes. First and most important, in this myth the dead return to life, as they often do in dreams. This is a fact we might recognize from episodes closer culturally to us than this one, such as Scipio's dream of his grandfather, Scipio Africanus, Brutus' dream of Caesar, Natasha's dreams of Prince Andrei, Romeo's shocking dream of being a dead man who still has "leave to think," as well as from our own frequent (indeed, almost proverbial) dreams of the dead and missing.

Secondly and of only slightly lesser importance, the dreams in Skaay's poem arise out of a series of transformations. Death into life and life into death (or again, more precisely: inanimate into animate, animate into inanimate) are the two most substantial, but smaller ones abound on the margins. The funereal mat becomes the dancing apron. The shells on the beach become rattles in the hand. A raven plays a metempsychotic game of peek-a-boo with the skin of

a baby. Thus the transformative logic of dreaming – the rapid shifting of names, positions, faces, forms and settings – is also foregrounded in this myth.

And finally, the last dreamlike attribute of this story, which is the ultimate and intended outcome of its nightmares (one which to students of Freud will seem especially familiar), is the violation of societal prohibitions. The raven sleeps with everyone, not discriminating between strangers and family, nor between his father's sister and his mother (in the matrilineal society of the Haida, sleeping with the former is excusable, but sexual contact with the latter is a sacrilege). The distinctions, hierarchies, and laws that shape a community – who is an insider, who an outsider, which relations are pure and which corrupt – are tested, flouted, confused, dissolved. The result of this dream-shame is then waking shame, humiliation, and expulsion.[49] The dream generates a template for the power of social relations, in their positive as well as negative aspect, and so it prepares the stage for the actual fulfillment of these relations. (Jocasta both knows and bizarrely does not know this truth about dreams when she tries to reassure Oedipus about his fears of incest by saying, not to worry, all men have lain with their mothers in their dreams.)[50]

All of this suggests that in Skaay's analysis, the inside and outside of the dream-world are continuous. Causes and effects, the subjective experience and (for a lack of a better word) the objective mechanics of dreaming bend in and out of one another, as the two sides of a Möbius Strip join at the visual threshold of paradox. We can infer something about the larger structure of dreaming from what is actually transpiring in the dreams as Skaay seems to do, for he models his allegory of the outer structure of dreaming on its internal characteristics. There are certainly

[49] The archetypical image of this kind of humiliation in western dreams is the dreamer appearing naked in a public place, often at a function where he or she has a formal role to play. In Papua New Guinea, I am told by the anthropologist Alan Rumsey, the humiliation dream often takes the shape of a feast which the dreamer is hosting and at which all of the leading members of the society are to be present, but when the time comes to serve the food he finds that he has prepared bowls of mud and feces.

[50] Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1984), 215.

limits to an inquiry based entirely on the analysis of phenomena as they appear; but for dreaming, the richness of the material such an inquiry opens up far outweighs its limitations. The radical subjectivity of dreaming makes an inquiry into the perceived experience of it of great importance for understanding what exactly it accomplishes within the mind and within the world. It's useful to postulate that the subjective phenomena in dreams might have their own logic of causation, which can be derived independently of any biological or purely socio-cultural explanations of the nature of dreaming. This does *not* mean that they are independent of these other explanations; on the contrary, for our argument to hold, they must be commensurate with them. But we can't test this necessary concordance between the phenomenal and the empirical before we have explored the former in some depth.

To sum up: the making of the inanimate animate has the effect of inducing a state of suspension in the animate, and finally leading to a further transformation, the birth of a child. All of this causes major disruptions in the fabric of reality: the laws of the community are broken along with the laws of physics and the laws of propriety. These breaks are then resolved by the banishment of the person responsible, the Raven, who becomes, as Girard would explain, a classic instance of the mythological scapegoat, whose violation of taboos is blamed for all of the community's failures.

At the heart of Skaay's dream-anatomy is a process that beats with the regularity of diastole and systole, alternating between fullness and slack, plenitude and absence. The pressure at these two outer edges of the recurrent cycle is exercised by two extreme ontological states, in fact the two most extreme ontological states, perhaps the most basic ontological poles: life and death. Re-stated: in dreams, according to Skaay the myth-poet, there is a constant, potent

alternation between life and death, and this alternation is in fact the mechanism, relentless and instrumental, like a steam-powered loom, that weaves the fabric of the dream.

The Inner Chamber of the Dream: Life and Death as Dream-Content

The dreams of men and women across space and time are concerned to an extraordinary degree with a two-way movement between life and death, and occupy a liminal position between the two. Reports of dreams in which a living person is killed, injured, or brought close to death abound. They are nearly as frequent as those dreams in which a person known to be dead (known to be dead not only in waking life but in the dream as well) returns to life, often to the surprise of the dreamer, sometimes even to the surprise of the deceased as well (my own mother remembers dreaming once of her recently deceased mother: "what are you doing here, mom?" she asked. My grandmother, bewildered, responded, "I don't know").

The Ming Dynasty scholar Sun Shi, in his preface to the dream encyclopedia *Forest of Dreams*, reports sliding between living and dying at the mercy of a great warrior:

> After becoming drunk, I draped myself over a bed and fell asleep. I was then completely entranced in a world of my own. I saw a mighty warrior who presented me with a single pill, which he then forced me to swallow. I immediately became aware of a sharp stabbing pain in my chest. After about a month or so, my illness reached a point of great danger. In the midst of the perplexing dark, the same mighty warrior suddenly entered through the door, brandishing a sword with which he pierced my chest. Sounds, fire and light burst forth and scattered. I was drenched with sweat, like life-giving rain, which startled me. I awoke and only then realized it was a dream.
>
> After this, I was suddenly sick. Swallowing a pill ought to heal illness, but it in fact caused illness. Being pierced in the chest ought to cause death, but it in fact caused a return to life.[51]

Not only does Sun Shi understand that his dreams operate at the margin of life and death, but also that each individual pole contains its opposite: life-giving instruments bring about

[51] Brigid E. Vance, "Textualizing Dreams in a Late Ming Dream Encyclopedia," Dissertation in History, Princeton University, 2012, 189.

destruction, death-giving instruments are embedded with life. The scholar He Dongru, in yet another preface to the same *Forest of Dreams*, says, by way of a definition, that a dream "is suddenly being alive or being dead, or revolving with the heaven or earth or ships flying on steep cliffs or rats transforming into oxen or dragons or other such scenes."[52] Of all the many metamorphoses that haunted the sleep of Ming Dynasty dreamers – all of which are familiar to a modern reader, if not from our own dreams, then from the many accounts and clichés of dreaming – the one that receives pride of place before all the others is the most extreme, that between life and death. The shifting world of dreaming is governed by that arch-transformation, which is the boundary and condition of existence.

In cultures throughout time and place, the return of the dead has been a major feature of dream-life. Anthony Shafton says that the return of deceased ancestors is the key characteristic of African and African-American dream-culture.[53] Galit Hasan-Rokem has written an article on Jewish dreams in the first millennium that is called – almost as if to say *this is the essence of the thing* – "Communication with the Dead in Jewish Dream Culture."[54] Steven Oberhelman's concordance to six Byzantine dream-interpretation books lists the many different dream-events that Byzantine commentators felt were common enough to need a standardized interpretation. They included, among others: the resurrection of the dead; seeing yourself as dead; dreaming of dead people; seeing dead people; being beaten by a dead person; seeing a dead person rise from the grave; having sex with a dead person; eating the flesh of a corpse; smelling a corpse; and, in

[52] Vance, 166.
[53] "Have you ever dreamed about a deceased family member, and believed that the person's spirit actually visited you? Most of the African Americans I interviewed have had this experience…ancestor veneration prevails virtually everywhere in Africa, and with it, the visitation dream." Anthony Shafton, *Dream-Singers: The African American Way with Dreams* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 2002), 17.
[54] Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Communication with the Dead in Jewish Dream Culture," in Shulman and Stroumsa, eds., *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (Oxford, 1999), 213-232.

three variations, speaking with the dead.[55] Among the Ki'che' Maya of Guatemala, the anthropologist Barbara Tedlock reports that dreams are either conceived as visits from gods and deceased ancestors, or as departures of the soul from the body – either life comes pouring into the dreamer, or it flies out.[56]

As with the dead coming back to life, so too the living are sent to death. Calpurnia dreamt of Caesar's death, Plutarch tells us, the physicist Heinz Pagels dreamt of his own. Central Asian shamans, writes Mircea Eliade, regularly travelled in dreams to the realm of the dead by shimmying down the trunk of the great world tree. A Toraja elder named Nene'na Limbong, who consented to be interviewed about his dreams by an anthropologist working in Indonesia, described a series of nine dreams, almost all of which contained visions of death. In one, vast numbers of people drowned in the ocean; in another, vast numbers of people were destroyed by bombs falling from the sky and Limbong himself was thought dead by many others; in another, his father returned from the dead to try to take him away; in yet another, his throat was cut; in another, a demon or witch pressed against his stomach and prevented him from breathing (sleep paralysis, again); and, in yet another dream, he vomited his own guts out.[57]

A Hopi farmer and herder shared more than 350 dreams with a white anthropologist named Dorothy Eggan from 1938 to the 1950s. His dreams were riven with illness, attempted murder, accidents and attempted suicide affecting himself, his family, others in his world, and

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[55] Steven M. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium: Six Oneirocritica in Translation, with Commentary and Introduction,* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008). In a passage especially reminiscent of Skaay's myth, the Oneirocriticon of Daniel says that "having sex with a dead person means a successful outcome to your actions" (100). In the Oneirocriticon of Nicephorus: "If you dream of a stinking corpse, you will see an enemy." "If you have become dead, you will find release from worries." "A dead person speaking: everything [that he says] is true" (144).
[56] Barbara Tedlock, "Sharing and Interpreting Dreams in Amerindian Nations," Shulman and Stroumsa, 87-103.
[57] In almost every case, the elder interpreted the dream as being actually fortuitous, effecting a reversal from the content itself. But our interest here is in the dream-events themselves, which must be separated from the interpretations, and which are characterized above all by an obsession with the border between life and death. Douglas Hollan, "The Cultural and Intersubjective Context of Dream Remembrance and Reporting: Dreams, Aging, and the Anthropological Encounter in Toraja, Indonesia," Lohmann, 172-175.

animals. Dozens of them included conversations with a spiritual guide "who once took him safely from the land of the dead." Fully 29 of the 70 published dreams from Eggan's research indicate a situation of near-death (illness, extreme, crippling old age, lethal incapacitation by being kicked by a mule, a child thrown into a fire, the informant's son threatening suicide) or death (a dead wolf, a dead person, a man killing an owl, the village starving). Another six dreams involve the return of dead persons (mostly relatives and especially two beloved sisters) to life (usually registered in the dream with surprise), and at least two others involve journeys which follow the common paths to the land of the dead in Hopi mythology.[58]

On the other side of the world, Jung noted a substantial class of dreams among his patients which illustrated "the meaningful coincidence of an absolutely natural product with a human idea apparently independent of it."[59] In one such dream, the dreamer "was in a wild mountain region where he found contiguous layers of triassic rock. He loosened the slabs and discovered to his boundless astonishment that they had human heads on them in low relief." The same dreamer once found himself, in another dream,

> travelling through the Siberian tundra and found an animal he had long been looking for. It was a more than lifesize cock, made of what looked like thin, colourless glass. But it was alive and had just sprung by chance from a microscopic unicellular organism which had the power to turn into all sorts of animals (not otherwise found in the tundra) or even into objects of human use, of whatever size. The next moment each of these chance forms vanished without trace.

In the case of a different individual:

> The dreamer was walking in a wooded mountain region. At the top of a steep slope he came to a ridge of rock honeycombed with holes, and there he found a little brown man of the same colour as the iron oxide with which the rock was coated. The little man was busily engaged in hollowing out a cave, at the back of which a cluster of columns could

[58] Dorothy Eggan, "Hopi Dreams and a Life History Sketch with Notes and Comments," in Bert Kaplan, ed. Microcard Publications of Primary Records in Culture and Personality, Vol. 2, No. 16 (Madison, WI: The Microcard Publication Society), 1957. Eggan explains that he lived a difficult life, riven with death and struggle also; but dreams were no respite from that. If anything, they were a magnification of it.
[59] Carl Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton UP, 1973), 88.

> be seen in the living rock. On the top of each column was a dark brown human head with large eyes, carved with great care out of some very hard stone, like lignite. The little man freed this formation from the amorphous conglomerate surrounding it. The dreamer could hardly believe his eyes at first, but then had to admit that the columns were continued far back into the living rock and must therefore have come into existence without the help of man. He reflected that the rock was at least half a million years old and that the artefact could not possibly have been made by human hands.[60]

In some other cases, the felt presence of the human can be vague or merely suggestive: a scientist working in the relative isolation of a remote base camp in the mountains of the Yukon once related to me dreams she'd had in which she saw the landscape around her camp dotted with enormous cairns – the stone mounds which mark prehistoric human occupation in the Arctic.

It may be objected that not all dreams and dream-experiences bring the dead explicitly back to life, or make things speak, or generate animate presences, or so directly confront the dreamer with a knife-edge between life and death. Yet it is true that in just about every dream the brain conjures up living presences from nothing – presences that are then suddenly extinguished by the end of the dream, or the onrush of waking. In other words, the very basic state of dreaming involves a straddling of the animate and inanimate, a constant, mutual conjuring of the one out of the other. I submit that the dreams that give a dramatic account of life-and-death are often present in descriptions of dreaming from many cultures because they are at once the thing itself – a dream about a dead person coming to life – and a figuration or announcement of a fundamental aspect of the dream experience. They thematize a structural feature of all dreaming, namely creating an umbrella of pulsing aliveness – emerging and withdrawing in rhythmic alternation – that completely surrounds the dreamer's self.

This penumbra of liminal aliveness resembles something that psychologist Justin Barrett has called the Hypersensitive Agent Detection Device, and also resembles a higher-order behavior the philosopher Daniel Dennett has called the Intentional Stance: together, these two

[60] Jung, 88.

concepts concern our human capacity to over-impute aliveness, agency, and even the characteristics of a distinctly rational actor, to the objects in our surroundings.[61] There are obvious evolutionary reasons for doing this: when you hear a rustle in the bushes, you're much safer thinking it's a lion even if it's not. It is a mechanism particularly valuable when you find yourself in isolation, without any companions, when vigilance is especially important. So isolation results in an intensification of the agent detection device: when you're by yourself in the woods, every stray noise sounds like a bear, and every imputed bear acquires a whole set of bear desires and actions. In this lies a key parallel with dreams. The isolation of dream-experience – closed off from the world by sleep – triggers an intense ascription of aliveness to everything around the self, or, more precisely the activation of the threshold state where anything might or might not be alive. As we'll soon see, many dream-sharing cultures see an essential identity between isolation in the wilderness and the dream-experience: shamans and other initiates are sent into the woods or desert so as to dream more intensely. Following a similar logic, many shamanistic cultures conceive of abandoned-seeming places as the ones most full of

[61] "We constantly scan our environment for the presence of other people and nonhuman agents. If you bet that something is an agent and it isn't, not much is lost. But if you bet that something is not an agent and it turns out to be one, you could be lunch." Justin Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 31. The Hypersensitive Agent Detection Device (Barrett calls it HADD), has to do what happens when we "perceive an object violating the intuitive asumptions for the movement of ordinary physical objects" and instead operating in a "goal-oriented manner." Barrett, 33. Dennett's "intentional stance" is a more specialized version of this, in which we treat things and beings around us as rational agents rationally pursuing their desires, and attempt to make calculations based on them. It is a kind of higher-order process, a precondition of which is assigning a kind of aliveness to the thing (or being) in question. If it seems strange to assign aliveness to a living being, it is nevertheless true that the designation (or recognition) of a living being as a living being is a unique mental act we carry out. "Here's how it works," writes Dennett, "first you decide to treat the object whose behavior is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have, given its place in the world and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on the same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs. A little practice reasoning from the chosen set of beliefs and desires will in many – but not all – instances yield a decision about what the agent ought to do; that is what you predict the agent *will* do." Daniel Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1987), 17. Both Barrett and Dennnett locate their respective concepts at the heart of a certain kind of psychology of pre-modern belief and religion.

life.[62]

Such an explanation can also be applied to model dreams that ostensibly seem not to concern matters of life and death, that is, to dreams that are banal and quotidian in their content. These dreams, though seemingly different from these dreams that explicitly thematize aliveness, are in fact the same in structure. For in every dream there is a remarkable projection of aliveness into the spaces of the dreamer's mind. Dreams very nearly always involve the sense that there is someone or something alive existing beyond the dreamer's self. And that thing or person is near, often nearer than in waking life. Dreamers have conversations; they have sex; they have fights; they are chased and they themselves chase. Sometimes they simply feel a *presence* – often malicious – in the room, behind a door, laying on their chest like Queen Mab and pumping the air from it. To say again, the dreams in which coming alive is explicit may be so common in the historical record and in our imagination of dreams because they are *figurations of a central structural principle common to all dreams*: the erection of an umbrella of emergent aliveness that surrounds the consciousness of the dreamer in the isolation of sleep. Aliveness is more than consciousness; indeed, it is the nimbus that surrounds consciousness, the calyx within which the corolla of the conscious self is encased until such time as it can unfold.

The Outer Chamber of the Dream: The Margin Between Life and Death as the Cultural Charge of Dreaming

This hypothesis resonates with a number of theories that suggest dreaming may have evolved in part as a rehearsal mechanism and habit-forming apparatus for waking survival. According to these theories the dream-space was meant to provide a cognitive framework for

[62] For example Bogoras reports that the most powerful Chukchee spirits, the *ke'let*, "live in desert places far away from human villages." W.G. Bogoras, *The Chukchee*, *Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, Franz Boas, Ed., Vol. 7, No. 2 (New York: G.E. Stechert, 1904-1909), 292.

consolidating and exploring crucial survival behaviors – fight, flight, action, reaction.[63] It also accords with research that has shown the importance of the fight-or-flight reflex in animal dreaming. The sleep scientist Michel Jouvet conducted a series of experiments in which cats were induced to sleepwalk by removing the part of the brainstem that blocks the link between the motor cortex and the body during sleep. These cats appeared to go through the motions of stalking prey.[64] The anthropologist Eduardo Kohn notes that among the Runa people of the Amazon, a dog is required to foresee its own death in a nightmare, which humans observe as the dog squirming and whimpering during sleep. If a dog dies without having foreseen his death in this way, the Runa are made extremely uneasy, for they find such a death improper and accidental, cosmologically and epistemologically unsound.[65]

It's important to recall that neither Michel Jouvet's experiments nor the Runa's observations have any access to the inner content of the animal's dream – in contradistinction to some of the earlier accounts we have considered in this section reporting on the interior content of human dreams. Like in Skaay's myth of the paralyzed women, we see only the outside of the dream, the animal's physical reaction to it, the way the dream interacts with and determines the body's physiological responses (or perhaps vice versa: the way the body's physiological state determines dream-content). In both cases what can be said is that for the animal, to be in a dream is to be in that heightened state of awareness associated with the outward signs of the hunt and the chase, with destroying or being destroyed. This distinct and heightened emotional and physiological tenor in dreaming can also point the way to why the cultural charge of dreaming is

[63] See Winson, *Brain and Psyche*, 241. "What is the function of REM sleep in animals? I have found it to be a basic physiological mechanism by which strategies of behavior based on an animal's experience are gradually constructed – a mechanism important for survival. The function of human dreaming cannot be far removed. That again is the way of evolution. And so I believe that the content of dreams reflects a stragegy for behavior in man."
[64] Michel Jouvet, "Paradoxical Sleep and the Nature-Nurture Controversy," *Progress Brain Research*, Vol. 53 (1980),132-147.
[65] Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Towards an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Berkeley: U. of California, 2013), 131-133.

very often a matter of life and death even when its content appears not to be.

The dream, when looked at from the waking outside, is also ascribed a life-and-death significance, not only in the vocabulary of evolutionary biology, but in many epistemic systems. When we turn to the cultural valence of dreaming – that looking in at the dream as the Runa do at their sleeping dogs – again we see that this rhythmic movement at the threshold between the animate and the inanimate is ascribed to dreams as instruments of transformation within cultural systems.

We have already seen that dreams cause conception and death in many Aboriginal cultures. The Buddha's conception was announced (some might say, achieved) through a dream had by his mother, Queen Maya. The Buddha appeared to her as a white elephant out of the north. "Holding a white lotus flower in his trunk, he circumabulated her three times. Then he gently struck her right side, and entered her womb."[66] Dreams of a tree prophesy death and madness in the Bible; Pharoah's dream of lean cows and fat cows describes the pendulum-swing between prosperity and starvation; the priests of Asklepios at Epidauros were trained to read their patients' dreams as markers of health or illness. Sorcerers on the island of Ambrym in Vanuatu destroy enemies through dreams, and healers restore them by the same medium.[67] Among the Chandalar River Athabaskans, a story was told about a powerful Eskimo lady-shaman: before being defeated by the shaman Ditcizik, "nearly every night she would kill a man by dreaming of him."[68] Villagers of the Friuli in the 16th century were accused by the Inquisition of being witches; they replied that they were indeed witches, but benevolent ones, the so-called *benandanti* who protected the harvest. They explained that they defended their families and their

[66] *Nidana-Katha*, quoted in Bulkeley, 81.
[67] Tonkinson, 89-90.
[68] Papers of Robert A McKennan, Series 2, Box 13, Folder 32: "Filed notes, ethnographic, Chandalar, legends, war, shaman, Takneha, the Shaman Who came Back to Life," Archives of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

crops against armies of evil witches by fighting battles on a field which could be only be reached in trance-dreams on the nights of the liturgical Ember Days.[69] The Ming Dynasty scholar Sun Shi went so far as to imagine that all life was incubated in a dream: "Primal chaos is a great dream," he writes, "This dream, once broken, opens heaven and settles the earth and people are born from within…After ten months [humans] are born into the world, just like awakening from dreams."[70] The closeness of dreaming to the knife-edge between life and death is such, in fact, that even now, in an age when old beliefs about dreaming are largely derided, stories and hunches as to its transformative power persist.

Outside and inside are in constant communion with each other in the dream, for how we talk about our dreams also influences them: the life-and-death, hunt-like energy of the dream itself is carried over into waking life through the cultural associations of the dream, and then these cultural associations, in turn, are transmitted and further vivified by cycling once more into the dream-state.

Charles Stewart's study of communal dream-experiences in 19th-century Greece is a powerful example of this process, where the many declensions of dream aliveness and not-aliveness pass back and forth between waking and sleeping.[71] For over a century, he reports, villagers in a remote mountainous region of Naxos regularly dreamed of crosses that came alive to speak to them, or of ships or chains or fantastical architectural elements within which were encased the spirits of the saints and the Virgin Mary. Their dreams told them of miraculous icons hidden within the ground, predicting their eventual discovery (sometimes they were discovered, sometimes they weren't). The potency of this experience was passed down in the nocturnal

[69] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1983).
[70] Vance, 175.
[71] Charles Stewart, *Dreaming and Historical Consciousness in Island Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012).

thinking – and waking imagining – of an entire community. The question of where these dreams came from, or indeed whether they were dreamt at all, is for our purposes secondary to the continuous reports of *aliveness* which permeate the contents of these dreams and also their cultural charge. For at every turn, the inanimate *things* of dreams speak, suggest, or transform suddenly into the blessed patrons of the village.[72] The girl Marina, one hundred years after the first such miraculous dreams were reported in her village, recorded that in her sleep on the 17th of July, 1930, she saw "a cross, and it was shining like the sun. We say to the Panagia [the Virgin], 'Why does the cross shine so?' And the Panagia says to us, 'This cross shines like that because my mom is inside it.'"[73] Thus the dream is a self-fulfilling structure: the dream's animation of objects comes to be part of the shared discourse of dreams, and soon it returns to the dreams generations later, echoing what had preceded it.

In subsequent chapters, we will see many examples, from cultures all over the world, in which dreams are brought into the community as vessels for communicating with the dead, for killing the living, for moving out of the precincts of mortal time, toward the realms of eternity or, alternately, the nothingness of not-being. And in many cases, we will see a process of reverse transposition: no longer is it just that dreams are associated with this liminal boundary, but also, whenever this liminal boundary is broached, dreams are *invoked*. In the *Aeneid*, for example, a first communication with the dead occurs in a dream – Aeneas speaks with the ghost of Hector in his sleep.[74] But a second, more dramatic communication with the dead occurs in the descent of the hero to the underworld, having undergone a quasi-shamanic initiation at the hands of the Sibyl (entering, as our schema would have predicted, places of isolation – the forest of the

[72] Stewart, 94-95.
[73] Stewart, 221.
[74] Virgil, *Aeneid*, II.268-280.

golden bough, then the dark cave of Averno).[75] The dead can visit us in dreams, or we can travel to visit the dead, and when we do, we enter something like the sleep-state. Certainly there is an inkling of this in Dante's rereading of Virgil; there the poet-hero embarks on his journey in the isolation of a *selva oscura* and *pien di sonno*.[76] When we encounter the border between life and death in our waking hours, does it also mean we have entered a dream or dream-state? We turn to this question in the next chapter.

[75] Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI.236ff.
[76] Dante, *Inferno*, I.2,11.

Chapter 3.
Spiritual Force: Towards a Definition of the Dreamlike

The dream, I have argued, is characterized by a state of worldwide emergent aliveness, one with which the dreaming subject is in a state of unself-reflecting engagement. I have also argued that the cultural representation of the dream often underlines this characteristic, so that emergent aliveness bleeds out of the dream into the dream's depictions within the waking world. But what about when the dream-state itself bleeds out beyond its customary borders? What about when the dream is not just an object of waking discourse, but rather the substance of waking experience? In what follows we will attempt a definition of the *dreamlike* – what is it that characterizes this intermittent and transformative state, by turns ecstatic and unsettling?

For the dreamlike to be like the dream according to our hypothesis, it must possess at least two qualities: first, it must engender an experience of reality in which self and world are locked together without the capacity for distanced self-reflection. In other words, it must be a state in which the narrativizing processes of linguistic consciousness are suspended (though they often double their efforts in the immediate aftermath). Second, it must be a state in which the whole world seems on the threshold of the animate and inanimate, in which the potential for aliveness – and the potential for its loss – put the self and surorunding cosmos into a state of hyper-alertness. In some sense, these two qualities are two sides of the same coin: the continuous alertness engendered by everything being indeterminately alive or not alive forces a state of the world without self-reflection, in which action and reaction are linked together without any intervening (or very little) time for introspection. Thus the dreamlike should also be associated with a perceived lack of agency – I say "perceived" because I'm not convinced that waking life has any more agency than dream-life, but it does have a greatly diminished capacity for

introspecting on our decisions, and thinking about our decisions may be a much greater part of agency than we generally accept.

To try to illustrate this, let us turn to a passage in literature where a character experiences something that her author explicitly marks as dreamlike. When Dorothea goes to Rome in *Middlemarch*, George Eliot points to the "dream-like strangeness" of this phase of her life. Then she gives us descriptions like this one:

> Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence; the dimmer but yet eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings; the long vistas of white forms whose marble eyes seemed to hold the monotonous light of an alien world: all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion.[77]

Rome is a world apart, a suspended, private place cut off from all of Dorothea's usual points of reference in rural, sheltered, Protestant England. And it overwhelms her with its vacillating aliveness, with the sense that it is both awake and asleep, vivacious and decrepit, alive and dead. Her relation to it is a kind of suspended intensity. She cannot either ignore her surroundings, nor can she escape them by activating a state of alarmed withdrawal. Instead, she maintains a continuous, exhausting, exhaustive attention to them, a total immersion. Eliot again confirms they are dream-images:

> Forms both pale and glowing took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through her after-years. Our moods are apt to bring with them images which succeed each other like the magic-lantern pictures of a doze; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaics above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina.[78]

[77] George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Oxford UP, 1996), II.xx, 181.
[78] Eliot, 181-182.

Dorothea is experiencing an episode of the dreamlike and it is characterized by an unavoidable, locked engagement with a whole world straddling the border between life and death, between total vitality and, in the next instant, complete annihilation.

The waking dream in Rome prompts Eliot to deliver one of her most famous pronouncements on human nature: "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence."[79] This is the default state of the dream, when the living force of the grass and the squirrel are fully present to the self, when even the most banal things have a fierce claim on our attention. To live like this in waking life when it is coupled with self-consciousness is unsustainable; it is the stuff of grandiose fantasies, paranoia, and the coming of madness. And yet, as Eliot's exalted description so clearly suggests, it hews close to that core of observation and attunement which define the imaginative arts. In fact, it underlines the subjective realness of the imaginative realm, and especially of those parts that most closely resemble the dream-realm: if some people consider the events in dreams to be counter-factual, then in contrast, the emotional experience of dreaming is often far more intensely felt than that of waking life. The subjective experience of this dream-state is far more acute than the subjective experience of the thing that we hold in common in waking life. We will soon see how this fact plays out in the reliance of artistic and imaginative works on the vocabulary of dream-life.

Key in this passage, too, is this experience's relationship to image and memory. To be on the threshold of emergent aliveness is to be taken possession of in such a way that it obliterates thinking about the past and future in the moment. The intensity and purity of this in-the-moment experience leaves powerful impressions in the memory, hence the haunting afterimages of

[79] Eliot, 182.

Dorothea's Rome, like the lingering patches of green that remain after exposure to a flash-bulb. To be in the dreamlike is to be in a state of absolute and engaged attention, an attention which then places itself firmly into the memory. Neuroscientists have long speculated that dreaming must have some relation to memory-consolidation, but here Eliot says something still more: the origin of involuntary memory, of its power to become like a "disease of the retina," lies in the kind of attention that this liminal state provokes. In chapter eight of this dissertation we will see this intuition greatly enhanced and expanded upon by Proust.

In Search of a Vocabulary for the Dreamlike

In clarifying this hypothesis of the dreamlike, let's try to distinguish it from two adjacent ideas: Freud's concept of the uncanny and Todorov's of the fantastic. Something very similar to what I have been describing in these pages under the rubric of the dreamlike is initially considered by Freud as a definition of the uncanny: he quotes the psychologist Jentsch as proposing that the uncanny is "doubt as to whether an apparently animate object really is alive, and conversely, whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate."[80] Jentsch takes as his example the uncertain ontological status of the doll Olympia in Hoffman's "The Sandman." But Freud quickly rejects this account of the uncanny as being insufficiently broad, for, he points out, even in the Hoffman story, there are uncanny features that cannot be accounted for by this wavering in what theorists of the robotics community would later learn to call the Uncanny Valley. In particular, Freud sees there to be a *temporal* dimension to the uncanny lacking in Jentsch's definition: the uncanny is not just this intense engagement with the liminally alive in the moment; rather it is the intrusion of something from the past. He suggests that the feeling of the uncanny is engendered a when an emotional impulse previously repressed – and so

[80] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 135.

"converted into fear" – suddenly recurs. Thus the *unheimlich* is the way it is because it is at once foreign and simultaneously *heimlich*: "the uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed."[81] Freud goes on to say that there is another displaced temporal source of the uncanny besides the return of the repressed: that is, the return of animistic, magical ways of thinking to the mind of a "rational," adult person. This kind of uncanny unsettles us because it makes some part of us wonder again whether the world is really governed by such magical principles, and thus unseats our own self-perception as rationally thinking beings.

It's without a doubt true that the aspect of dreams I focus on here is related to animism in the broadest sense of the word, and it is no accident that the record of emergent dream-aliveness is particularly rich in examples drawn from animistic cultures (nor an accident that animistic cultures so privilege the dream). In this sense, Freud seems to be coming very close to our definition of the dreamlike. But Freud himself points out he's after something slightly different: not all examples of resurrected animism, he notes, lead to the uncanny. The uncanny is only felt when a "primitive" animistic belief we thought we had surmounted – i.e. wishing someone dead making them actually die – seems to come true (we have wished someone dead; he has died), and so we discover, in a way that damages our sense of rational self, that we cannot fully shake the conviction that it must be true. Thus experiences, dreamlike or otherwise, can tip into the uncanny when they engender a distance between our introspection and our reflex: an unconscious feeling of fear or disorientation is not yet translated into a conscious articulation of its reasons. It's important perhaps to linger for a moment on Freud's use of "primitive" to describe animistic thought. It suggests animistic thought precedes a rational structure of understanding the world. Setting aside the question of whether such thinking should really be

[81] Freud, "The Uncanny," 148.

labeled primitive, and whether it really is "earlier" than reason, either in cultural history or in the history of the self, it's important to say, as a first way of distinguishing the uncanny from the dreamlike, that the uncanny establishes a distance in time between how we think now and how we thought or felt once in the past. The dreamlike, on the other hand, does away with such temporal structures, even half-conscious ones. In my account, the dreamlike is a state of potential aliveness that obviates the sense of time, that prohibits a sense of distance or dislocation. The uncanny, on the other hand, requires that feeling, even if still not consciously articulated, of distance or dissociation.

Freud himself makes a similar point when he explains that the uncanny disappears if it is *everywhere*, as for example in certain kinds of fiction.

> The world of the fairy tale, for example, abandons the basis of reality right from the start and openly commits itself to the acceptance of animistic beliefs. Here it is impossible for wish-fulfillments, the existence of secret powers, the omnipotence of thoughts, the animation of the inanimate – all of which are commonplace in the fairy tale – to produce an uncanny effect, for, as we have seen, a sense of the uncanny can arise only if there is a conflict of judgment as to whether what has been surmounted and merits no further credence may not, after all, be possible in real life.[82]

The uncanny relies on its opposite; the dreamlike, on the other hand, is like the uncanny without any opposite, overwhelming our entire state of being. We might hazard to translate Freud's animistic uncanny into our vocabulary by saying that the uncanny is the intrusion of the memory of a past dreamlike state into waking self-awareness without the total obliteration of that self-awareness; the dreamlike is the animism that is there *before* a self-reflecting thought breaks its completeness and internal logic. Even when it comes to Freud's other definition of the uncanny, as the return of the repressed below the articulate level of consciousness, there remains a sense of temporal disparity between feeling and language: the articulate part of the mind is searching for, but not able to explain, the much earlier source of the self's emotional distress. We might hazard

[82] Freud, "The Uncanny," 156.

that the uncanny intrudes at the moment when the dreamlike ceases to be fully present, seeming to be split between the present and a past that is somehow being bridged with the here and now.

Freud and Jentsch's intuitions about Hoffman connect them to Todorov, who also sees in gothic fiction a key instance of his liminal category, the fantastic. The fantastic is the moment of hesitation when we (or a literary character) stand before an event which cannot be explained by the laws of the world as we, up until then, have understood them. "The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and laws of the world remain as they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us."[83] The fantastic is our hesitation between the two, says Todorov, and therefore is the fork in the road leading either to the uncanny (laws of the world remain the same, and explain rationally what startled us) or the marvelous (the laws must change to make possible what has happened). Again the difference from the dreamlike is that the fantastic presumes some self-reflecting structure displaced in time: it allows us to be on the cusp of a dream and say to ourselves, *is this a dream?* and still have a chance of arriving at a real answer to the question. While in the dream-state, while trapped in the perceptual vortex of Rome with Dorothea, we do not ask whether there has been a violation of the rules of reality or not – we just accept the rules of the reality in which we've been plunged, and we cannot, while in the dream-state, truly reflect on whether or not they might be somehow different.

If the uncanny is an incomplete form of the dreamlike because the self experiences the dreamlike as an intrusion from the past, then the fantastic, on the other hand, is an incomplete form of the dreamlike because its meta-analysis displaces the dreamlike towards the future:

[83] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Cornell, 1970), 25.

which set of rules will this experience lead me to? Will I fall into a dream, or will I stay awake? The untrammeled experience of the dreamlike permits no past or future, at least in the experiencing of it. Freud and Todorov's concepts, we might say, are ways in which the dreamlike comes to be *integrated into waking time* by various other mental processes, but neither is the dreamlike itself.

The dreamlike, so goes our hypothesis, is linked to the complete elimination of self-conscious reflection because in this moment the mind is stimulated by the overwhelming *possibility* of aliveness – that is to say, not necessarily by meeting a living being, but by the extreme attention required when a living being might appear (or be taken away) at any moment. In *The Expression of Emotions in Man and the Animals*, Darwin writes about the continuum between suspecting the presence of a living thing and being certain that a living thing is present. He describes the gradient in a horse between "a mere glance at some unexpected object, with a momentary doubt whether it is dangerous, to a jump so rapid and violent, that the animal could not consciously whirl round in so rapid a manner."[84] What Darwin does not dwell on here is the phenomenology of this reaction, the felt experience of going from aware to alert to full alarm. Especially interesting is the middle state of heightened attention: the locking of senses with the surrounding world in anticipation of aliveness. Elsewhere in this work Darwin describes the astonishment of monkeys in the London Zoo when a tortoise was put into their cage. Their eyes widened ("we naturally desire, when startled, to perceive the case as quickly as possible"), and their ears pricked up, and they raised themselves up on their hind legs to get a better look at it. One monkey "moved its lips in an odd, rapid, jabbering manner, which the keeper declared was

[84] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and the Animals* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1894), 38.

meant to please or conciliate the turtle."[85] Bewilderment, intensified regard, a communion at once wary and engaged with the world – these are the signs of the border-state between the animate and the inanimate, the subject waiting on, negotiating with, the aliveness of the world.

The Dreamlike and Social Structure: Spiritual Force

Simone Weil writes of a distinctly similar phenomenon in her essay on the *Iliad*, and she argues it defines, in blunt and powerful ways, a set of social relations. She calls it *force*, and she defines it as "that *x* that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a *thing*." At the most extreme, literal level, Weil's definition means the turning of a person into a corpse by the act of killing. But, as she explains, there are countless other ways in which force is exercised without such finality – force can be exerted upon the self but not the body, causing a living being (still living, still possessing his soul) to become a thing. Such actions include threats, intimidation, defeat, humiliation – and their consequences are a kind of death in life:

> An extraordinary entity this – a thing that has a soul. And as for the soul, what an extraordinary house it finds itself in! Who can say what it costs it, moment by moment, to accommodate itself to this residence, how much writhing and bending, folding and pleating are required of it? It was not made to live inside a thing; if it does so, under pressure of necessity, there is not a single element of its nature to which violence is not done.[86]

Weil's point here seems to be that there is a continuum between the exercise of force in a physical and biological sense -- that is to say, the concentration of force by a hero's arm into the tip of a spear or arrow that brings about the termination of biological life – and the exercise of force in cultural processes, through forms of abasement and degradation that cause a person to cease to be, in the eyes of others, a true living being. It suggests that human societies have

[85] Darwin, 144. For a more detailed treatment of this passage, see Matthew Spellberg, "The Chimeric Element in Perception: A First Exploration," *Southwest Review*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (2014), 106.
[86] Simone Weil, "*The Iliad*, or the Poem of Force," trans. Mary McCarthy, *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, Sian Miles, ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 163, 165. "La force, c'est ce qui fait de quiconque lui est soumis une chose."

learned to induce a state of what I am calling the dreamlike for *political* purposes also: that a certain intense straddling of the threshold of life and death can be used to forge a new order in reality, to turn kings into slaves (or indeed slaves into kings). If physical force can cause death and injury, then this other, dream-use of force might be called *spiritual force*.

In fact, the phrase "spiritual force" is used by the historian Elisabeth Welskopf to describe something almost identical to what I have been describing in these pages: the deprivation of selfhood by cultural violence in slavery.[87] It may seem quite a stretch to move from such metaphysical and perhaps even quasi-mystical considerations to the brutal corporeal reality of slavery, but a certain school of scholarship, typified especially by the work of Orlando Patterson (and, standing behind him, Simone Weil, Hobbes and Hegel), sees in slavery not merely a system of economic and political exploitation, but a cruel form of applied ontology, a way in which societies have negotiated and defined the nature of human personhood through the enactment of its opposite, thingness. Slavery, shows Patterson, was not by any means restricted to economic purposes – in fact, in many societies, particularly Islamic ones, slavery was economically inefficient, and slaves were dependents of wealthy households. As often as not, slavery's primary function was to establish the honor of the master and the dishonor of the slave: or, to speak still more bluntly, the life of the master at the expense of the "social death" of the slave.[88]

[87] Elisabeth Welskopf, *Die Produktionsverhältnisse im alten Orient und in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, Schriften der Sektion für Altertumwissenschaft, Vol. 5 (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1957), pp. 158-177. Writing in a strictly Marxist paradigm (imposed by East German academia), Welskopf nevertheless must insist in the "besondere Rolle der außerökonomischen Gewalt" or what she then calls "geistiger Zwang" (159).
[88] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982), 35-76.

Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* details a kind of exercise of spiritual force very much akin to what Weil postulates.[89] Patterson explains that social death means a paradoxical status of non-status: the slave is kept in a liminal state, bound fast to the society he serves, but also banished from it. Social death is an internal exile, a paralyzing expulsion. But if slavery is a social death, there is a particular moment that constitutes the social killing: in many cultures slaves were inducted into their masters' households through a series of humiliating rituals meant to imitate death and a perverse form of resurrection as chattel. Mock executions, mutilations, the grabbing of the head in the hands, the shaving of half of the hair, all effected a transformation from being to thing. By way of these rituals, the physical force underpinning slavery was extended into the realm of culture, and so into the realm of mind. The transformations of Homer's soldiers and women into slaves is the exemplum, not the exception, in human history: most of the world's civilizations have in part depended upon the ontological shift of a person into a thing for some measure of their own legitimacy, to confer upon themselves stability and power. Some things must be made dead in order for others to continue to be safely and stably alive, or indeed to become still *more alive*, to reach a divine status. Acts of humiliation, subservience, mutilation, ritual entombment and renaming are all employed to carry out a complex and ingenious choreography of spiritual force, a choreography which has long stabilized and ordered human societies. Opposing acts, such as manumission, ennoblement, honoring, integration, have played an almost equally powerful role, so that we might say the discharge of spiritual or symbolic force works in both directions: from symbolic life to symbolic death, but also from death back into life, symbolic resurrection. The actual carrying out of the rituals, I speculate here, may have been intended to induce a state of total and terrifying immersion in a situation of

[89] Patterson comes to the vocabulary of social death from "la mort sociale" in the work of two other anthropologists of slavery, Michel Izard and Claude Meillassoux, especially the latter's *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: François Maspero, 1975).

emergent and evacuating aliveness, which forges for the people involved a new narrative structure, a new temporal ontology redefining their relations and status vis-à-vis one another.

It's important to consider these uses of force as more than mere metaphor. The work they carry out in the realm of human life is as real and consequential as any act of war, or famine, or tidal wave. In fact, Patterson has spent a lifetime arguing that without this cruel and widespread cultural phenomenon, the concept that we in the West consider most opposed to force, namely freedom, would have no real meaning – that it is in such acts of spiritual force that we come to feel its true nature, and chafe against it most intensely and intellectually.[90] The links between social death, spiritual force, political stability, and the possibility of freedom will return throughout this dissertation, particularly in the chapters devoted to Pushkin and Tolstoy. One of the claims I wish to make, both in the next few pages and over the course of this dissertation, is that these powerful sociological principles converge on the individual in decisive ways within dream-life, and in the experiencing of the dreamlike.

Patterson begins his classic study by rightly observing that "there is nothing notably peculiar about the institution of slavery."[91] It has been ubiquitous in time and space. So, too, for the spiritual force of which slavery is an extreme example. There need be nothing extraordinary about its place in the world. It may be disturbing, but nevertheless true, that certain daily actions in our own civilization (shaming, discipline, arrest, teasing) take place on a continuum of spiritual force alongside other behaviors that we now so fiercely condemn.[92] And as we will see,

[90] "Before slavery people simply could not have conceived of the thing we call freedom…That is the problem of freedom. Beyond the socio-historical findings is the unsettling discovery that an ideal cherished in the West beyond all others emerged as a necessary consequence of the degradation of slavery and the effort to negate it." Patterson, 340-342.
[91] Patterson, 1.
[92] See for example Jon Ronson's important recent book, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* (New York: Riverhead, 2015), about the resurgence of public shaming in the internet era, when people are brutally taken to task on Twitter and Reddit, often for politically incorrect comments. These episodes often lead to trauma, death threats, and losing jobs, family, reputations. See, likewise, Bernard Williams' argument that we share with the Greeks an

it is intimately associated with the dream and the dreamlike. I wish to suggest – if for now only speculatively – that the inducing of certain catalytic ritual states in human societies is brought about by creating dreamlike conditions. Because dreamlike conditions dramatically close-down self-reflection or distancing, they can be used to forge new ontological systems. If you are forced to dream you are a slave while awake, then, so goes the wager of certain forms of ritualized power, you will lose the capacity to keep some part of your mind free to whisper, *this is not who I am*.

These reflections bring us back to some of the theoretical insights offered by Jaynes and Girard. The threshold margin of the animate and the inanimate plays a distinctive and powerful role in constituting societies. In Jaynes, the generation of a state of mind where divine figures can speak at any moment generates a locked-in form of cognitive social cohesion. In Girard, meanwhile, we see described the process that exists before social cohesion is attained, or after the social cohesion has been threatened: here there is, as he describes it, a total effacement of social difference, of all hierarchies and taboos that create a social architecture in the society. Instead comes a panic in which no one can be sure of anyone's ontological status: a paranoia of all towards all. Girard indicates that one of the tell-tale signs of the mimetic crisis is the inability to distinguish between persons, animals, and things – as is dramatically illustrated, for example, in Euripides' the *Bacchae*, when the Maenads are seen to attack beasts thinking they are men.[93] The terror of the sacrificial crisis produces, in religious societies, the divine figure of a god who rallies the violence and directs it toward his opposite, the sacrificial victim. In this way social cohesion is achieved through a re-direction of violence toward a single object. But it comes with

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internalization of a watcher or witness figure that manifests in shame (whereas the internalization of a victim or enforcer figure manifests in guilt). Williams shows how social structures are structured in part through the animation of beings in the mind and the definition of relations between them. Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1993), 219-223.

[93] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 127-128.

a rejection of reflective self-identification: "the metamorphosis from peacable citizens into raging beasts is too terrifying and too transitory for the community to accept it as issuing from within itself."[94] The state of mind in which this takes place seems terribly estranged from the one that normally reigns in reflective social life, and is therefore ascribed to a god, or a demon. I submit that this state is in fact that of an induced dream, that it is precisely the triggering of the dream-mind in waking by the sudden erosion of distinctions between the animate and the inanimate – distinctions that also hold between socially regulated beings and socially unplaced beings – that generates these moments of total loss of reflection and individual autonomy. Jaynes describes what happens when a society can harness this intense experience for continuous social cohesion; Girard describes what happens when the society loses control of it. To restore it they must concretize spiritual force as physical force; where the threshold between the animate and the inanimate is no longer successfully located, there it must be newly forged by acts of killing and by acts of its opposite, namely the raising of beings into gods, the sensing and imputing of the divine.

I hasten to add that this is still largely a speculative anthropology of the political role of the dreamlike, but the novels I will treat in the second half of this work will provide some illustration of this process, I hope. They will show, in particular, how strongly this loss of reflection in the face of the surrounding aliveness of the world is manifest in dreams, and how the prophetic qualities attributed to dreams have to do precisely with dreams offering a first template for this process, a process that then plays out in waking life. If dreams are so often considered prophetic, I contend it is because they are the first site of instruction for all human beings in the dreamlike state which they return to in key moments of crisis and exaltation in waking life. I ask the reader to bear this in mind as we move in the second half of this

[94] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 134.

dissertation from Pushkin – terrified at the consequences of the unchecked movement from animate to inanimate that characterizes the dream-state – to Proust, who thinks he has found a method to safely induce it in waking life, and permit a kind of sacral ecstasy even in his own belated, modern world.

The Hunt and the Chase

There is yet another place where we can study a phenomenon resembling our definition of the dreamlike, apart from rituals of enslavement or sacrifice. Let us recall that some evolutionary biologists like Jonathan Winson see in dreaming a rehearsal for situations of primal emergency, of the hunt and the chase. Such conjectures find a sympathetic listener in the nature-writer Barry Lopez, who makes this claim: "the mind we know in dreaming, a nonrational, nonlinear comprehension of events in which slips in time and space are normal is, I believe, the conscious working mind of an aboriginal hunter."[95]

The principles of spiritual force – emergent perceptions of aliveness and not-aliveness – play an important role in the many rituals, practices, and stories that surround the hunt in hunting cultures. This stands to reason: what more crucial threshold of life and death is there than hunting for one's own sustenance, where the fate of all players is continuously hanging in the balance?

Franz Boas recorded a hunting narrative by a Kwakwaka'awakw (or Kwakuitl, in the rendering of Boas's time) shaman of the Na'k!wax•da^{e}x^{u} people, called NEnō'lo or Fool. Fool first describes to Boas how he was a fearless hunter, and for many years did not believe in any of his culture's shamanic dream superstitions. He had a brave steersman, and "Nothing frightened him, neither gales nor all the bad animals, or the bad fishes, or the sea monsters which are often

[95] Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams* (New York: Vintage, 1987), 200.

seen by hunters when they hunt game at night."[96] These lines indicate at once a highly self-conscious, even, in a way, disenchanted, understanding of the emergent aliveness of the solitary mind: to be out on the sea, alone at night, is to conjure the rabid and fearful aliveness of the monstrous. But to these things, Fool says, he and his steersman paid no heed.

All of this changes one day when, while paddling along on a seal hunt, he sees a wolf sitting on a rock, "scratching with his fore paws both sides of his mouth. When I came up to him, the wolf was whining and I saw that his mouth was bleeding. I looked into his mouth and saw a deer bone crossways in his mouth, stuck between the teeth on both sides of his mouth, and it was really firmly (imbedded). The wolf was sitting on a rock watching me and evidently expected me to do something; to kill him or help him out of his trouble."[97] In this moment in the wilderness, one predator facing another, the dreamlike displays its paralyzing majesty: it is the pregnant moment when a life will be extinguished or saved, where the most life-affirming gesture and the most life-cancelling are revealed not to be opposite ends of a spectrum, but rather two joined points at the very top of a circle, the place where the mouth and tail of the ouroboros meet, where it both devours and advances itself. Characteristic of an encounter in spiritual force, also, is the transmission of these feelings between beings in a shared field: the Fool describes his own perception of the wolf's perception of his power, reading in his adversary a map of his own range of options. It might also be read as a mirrored projection of Fool's own reactions, recognizing in the wolf his own awareness of the knife-edge between life and death the arrival of a wolf into one's field of vision might indicate, particularly if the situation were reversed and he were the one with a debilitating wound. The moment produces two beings with locked eyes, the one continuously imputing the possibility of salvation or annihilation to the other, the awareness of

[96] Franz Boas, *The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians*, Part II – Translations (New York: Columbia UP, 1930), 41.
[97] Boas, 41-42.

the generation of this powerful state within the mind of each, the ground zero for a certain fundamental form of intersubjectivity. The account continues:

> I sat down on the rock close to him and I spoke to him, as he was sitting still, looking at me. I said to him, "You are in trouble, friend. Now I shall be like a great shaman and cure you, friend. I will take out your great trouble and set you right, friend. Now reward me, friend, that I may be able, like you, to get everything easily, all that is taken by you, on account of your fame as a harpooner and of your supernatural power. Now reward my kindness to you, friend. Go on! Sit still on the rock and let me get my means of taking out that bone"…Then the bone came out after that. "(The wolf) only stared at me and I spoke to him and said, "O, friend, your trouble has gone, Now take care of your mind and reward me for what I have done to you," said I to him. After I had said so to him the wolf turned around to the right and trotted away, not fast. He did not go far before he stopped and turned his face. Then he howled. Once he spoke and howled and went into the woods. I stepped into my small traveling canoe and paddled with my steersman Łē'lamēdEnōł. Now we never talked about the wolf as we paddled along.[98]

The entrance into the dreamlike is the prelude and precondition to communication, the moment which calls forth a new reflective language, and establishes a structure of shared meaning (or, if you belong to the party that cannot believe that a man and a wolf could communicate over a life-and-death matter, then an *imputed* structure of shared meaning). The shaman's narration returns over and over again to *looking* and *speaking*, the one engendering the other, a mutual web of gazes leading to a performative utterance, anchored over and over again with "friend," until finally the wolf submits to have itself be helped, and, turning around for one more act of looking, discharges its own pent-up communication in a huge howl. This is a parable for the role played by the transmission of liminal aliveness into the domain of mental representation, marked out clearly by the continuous, almost balletic exchange of gazes which makes of "seeing" a figurative mental act as well as a literal one. It might be said that this narrative situates the dreamlike at the origin of social life, when a tiny society of man and wolf is suddenly, potently, erected. Whatever desires, needs, and negotiations arise – the transactional nature of the soon-to-be-shaman's aid to the wolf in exchange for better hunting in the future – these are secondary to

[98] Boas, 42.

this subjectivity-transforming bond enveloping both living beings across a simple surface of rock and water. That this process has generated its own reality with discrete borders is articulated by the silence between Na'k!wax•da^{e}x^{u} and his otherwise much-trusted and valiant steersman Łē'lamēdEnōł: "we never talked about the wolf as we paddled along." This is the generation of a universe, a society in miniature, and its borders impede communication to other worlds, at least until the entirety can be ordered into a narrative many years later, and recounted to a strange man from the other side of the world scribbling unknown signs into a discrete reality of a different kind which he holds in his hands.

Not surprisingly, this encounter returns in the form of an actual dream that Fool dreams while he and his steersman are asleep in a calmed inlet on their canoe, all alone amid the vastness of the Northwest channels. And in this dream dreamt in isolation, the encounter becomes now an initiation, and NEnō'lo, the Fool who didn't believe in shamans, has the first vision on the path to becoming one:

> Now I dreamed of a man who came to me in a dream speaking to me in a dream. In my dream he said to me, "Why do you stay here? There are many seals lying on this island, friend. Take care, friend, I am Harpooneer-Body on whom you took pity today, and now I reward you for kindness to me, friend. There is nothing hereafter that you will not obtain, whatever you wish to get. This also, do not lie down with your wife for four years, to pass through all that you will have to do," thus he said in my dream, Harpooneer-Body to Fool (NEnō'lo). Then in my dream he disappeared.[99]

The dream further cements the coming into personhood of the wolf, giving him the full range of communication hinted at previously. And the intersubjective nature of this exchange is emphasized by the sudden switch, once the syntax carries us into the dream, to the third person: "in my dream, Harpooneer-Body to Fool".

But the final transformation to shaman comes two years later, when NEnō'lo leads an expedition to the colonial outpost of Victoria. On the way home up the inland passage along

[99] Boas, 42.

Vancouver Island, his crew go ashore in Seymour Narrows and find a mess of abandoned supplies, four boxes full of white men's clothes and bags of flour and food. Congratulating themselves on such a lucky find, they load everything into the canoe.

Any student of Native American history will feel the grip of dread at reading this last detail, for trade goods were frequently dumped on the shore by ships trying to rid themselves of articles contaminated by smallpox. Often the pestilential things were left purposely along native trading routes, or even given as treacherous gifts to indigenous traders.[100] So NEnō'lo and his men, having taken the clothes and flour and food, find themselves a few days later seized with the disease, as were millions up and down the Pacific Northwest throughout the 19th century.

"Now I saw that all our bodies swelled and were dark red," he tells Boas, "Our skins burst open and I did not know that they were all dead and I was lying among them. Then I thought that I also was dead. I was as in a sleep and I awoke on account of many wolves who came whining and others howling. Two of them were licking my body and I saw two wolves vomit up foam and putting it on my body."[101] In the liminal moment on the threshold with death, the spiritual force activated earlier in the gesture of saving the wolf now returns. Like Romeo, NEnō'lo is in a sleep during which a dead man has leave to think, and in this sleep of life and death the contract of attentive regard he had made with the wolf is now fulfilled. The vomiting and licking of the wolves saves his life and pulls him definitively out of the hallucinatory borderland between existence and total surrender to the virus. When he crawls off again to sleep in the shade of a spruce, the wolves, now loyal standard-bearers of aliveness, follow him: "Then it was as though the two wolves came and one lay down on each side of me." Then the wolf whom he had earlier saved vomits a magic power into his sternum. It tips him into a sleep, this

[100] See Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline Among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).
[101] Boas, 43.

time full of life and not death, and finally his experience of spiritual force is consecrated by one more full-throated dream:

> Then I dreamed of the wolf who was still sitting there. In my dream he became a man. In my dream he laughed and spoke and said, "Now take care, friend, now this shaman-maker has gone into you. Now you will cure the sick and you will catch the souls of the sick and you will throw sickness into anyone you wish to die among your tribe. Now they will be afraid of you," said he to me in the dream. Then I woke up and my body was trembling and my mind was different after this, for all the wolves had left me. Now I was a shaman.[102]

In a society organized around the search for aliveness in the wilderness, the language of the dreamlike is omnipresent. Boas records, from another informant, that among the Na'k!wax•da^{e}x^{u} Kwakiutl, the most powerful shamans, besides Fool, were named Making-alive, Cause-of-Falling-down, Life Owner, and Bringing-life-out-of-Woods – each a more exquisitely direct moniker than the last for the phenomenon of emergent aliveness. Expressions about crossing over, or being at the threshold, are common in the figurations of indigenous cultures, as when among the Yup'ik in Alaska hunters "acted as *ek'eralria*, literally 'the one crossing over,' every year in preparation for the first seal hunt of the season."[103] Or as evidenced in the Northwest proverb, "the world is as sharp as a knife," itself a brilliant evocation of the fundamental role of force in the universe that surrounds us, elaborated in a story which Robert Bringhurst transcribes out of Boas:

> A man once said to his careless son: The world is as sharp as a knife. If you don't watch out, you'll fall right off. His son replied that the world was wide and flat; no one could fall off. And as he kicked at the ground to show how solid and reliable it was, he ran a splinter into his foot and died soon after.[104]

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[102] Boas, 44.
[103] Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Boundaries and Passages: Rule and Ritual in Yup'ik Eskimo Oral Tradition* (Norman, OK: U. of Oklahoma, 1994), 92.
[104] Robert Bringhurst, *A Story as Sharp as a Knife: The Classical Haida Mythtellers and Their World* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 373.

Wish-fulfillment and Nightmare: Extremities of the Dream-Life

In the oral literature of hunter-gatherers, too, this looking-out for the border between life and death plays a crucial role. Even if dreams are not explicitly mentioned, the analogy between sleep and physical isolation plays a key role.

Let us consider for a moment "The One They Abandoned Because He was the First to Spear Sea Lions," told by the Haida mythteller Ghandl of the Qayahl Llaanas – meaning *of the Sea-Lion Town People* – in 1900. It tells of a powerful hunter abandoned on a reef in the ocean by his jealous brothers-in-law. The story begins with a precise account of the techniques and tools for killing sea-lions: the taking of them with barbed spears, the creation of instruments and motions for concentrating force unto death, the herding of the sea-lions into a pool amid the reef to concentrate and pick them off. But then, the hunter is left to die on this reef, despite the protestations of his youngest (and weakest) brother-in-law. He weeps over the loss of his children, and then he lays himself down to sleep near the pool where he had only just been killing the sea lions. "As he slept there something said to him: 'The chief asks you to come in.' He looked for the cause of it. He saw not a sign of a thing. He saw something dive into the lake [pool]."[105] Even though the story doesn't explicitly speak of a dream, we have here once again the double and analogous isolation that engenders a state of emergent aliveness: being the only human in sight on a reef in the ocean, and then, on top of that, slipping away into the loneliness of sleep. Immediately these conditions engender aliveness, and aliveness pure and simple, yet without differentiation or designation, brilliantly encapsulated by the "something" pronoun, in Haida the word *giina*, which has powerful connotations of the animate, but indicates an animate

[105] Swanton, 282-284. The story was dictated to Swanton by Ghandl (also known as Walter MacGregor) during his visit to Haida Gwaii (then called the Queen Charlotte Islands) in 1900-1901. See also the more recent translation in Ghandl of the Qayahl Llaanas, *Nine Visits to the Mythworld*, trans. Robert Bringhurst (Lincoln: U. of Nebraska, 2000).

presence outside the realm of familial relations, and therefore beyond the familiar web of social life.[106]

The hunter gets up, drawn by the voice, looks around, and hears a sudden splash as something drops into the water. Then, still laying on the reef, he hears the voice again. This time he peers through the eyehole of his marten-skin blanket and sees a pied-bill grebe, who flies below the surface, so that the peek-a-boo of living and not-living is repeated at every level of the story, in its acoustics and in its cinematography, since, for example, the emissary from the spirit-beings is a sea-bird who can dive into the depths and return in a flicker.

Haida stories, Robert Bringhurst tells us, are in structure like pieces of western classical music; the introduction of a motif might require its later development and recapitulation, while a dissonance must have its resolution. But here the building-blocks are not chords or melodies, but rather themes, and so a story that begins with aliveness emerging in isolation must end with aliveness extinguished amid social life. The hero is taken down to the bottom of the sea, where he defeats the Killer Whales' attempts to make him one of their own. But this journey to the realm of the spirit-beings gives him new power, and he is sent back to his home village by the Chief of the Killer Whales in a magical sea-lion stomach. There, hiding from all but his loyal wife, this wandering hero catches and skins an amphibious beast called the sea-wolf, and then sets himself to whittling successive pods of whales out of wood: his first set into porpoises, his second into bigger white porpoises and, his last, into a powerful family of orcas. These inanimate carvings spring to life as cetaceans and wreak vengeance on the traitorous brothers-in-law, whom he orders killed at sea (saving only his youngest, who on the reef had tried to save him).

Then, to settle his last outstanding account, he begins to play a trick on his hateful and scheming mother-in-law. Using the skin of the sea-wolf, he goes hunting for fish and whale jaw-

[106] Personal communication from Robert Bringhurst, February 9th, 2017.

bones, leaving them at her doorstep. She fancies that her powers have made this possible, and so she puts on a dancing hat every morning and makes a show for the village as if she were a powerful shaman. Each day the hunter brings back an ever more extravagant catch, and everyday the mother takes credit, until one morning he kills ten whales and lays them on the beach. But as his mother-in-law comes toward them with her dancing hat on, he emerges out of the water, casts off his sea-wolf skin and says to her, "Why is your face hard? [why are there spearpoints in your eyes?] Does some supernatural power come through you by my help?" She immediately dies of shame, as the spiritual force of humiliation breaks through to the physical world.

The trajectory of the story is haunted by oneiric patterns. It begins with a distinct mimesis of the dream-state, the hero falling asleep and suddenly encountering, while still beneath his marten-skin blanket, a numinous aliveness. It passes into a period of wish-fulfillment, in which the hero can create – bring to life – whatever he desires in order to get what he wants. And it ends with a double-mimesis of a dream gone wrong, of what we may call nightmare, or two nightmares: that is, when spiritual force suddenly turns against the dreamer and extinguishes – in one way or another – his or her life. The carved killer whales come to life and kill the brothers-in-law. And then, the hero leads his mother to think she is a shaman, and then shames her to death when he reveals her impotence. In each case the story witnesses the destruction of the self in the fulfillment of someone else's wishes.

The nightmare state means here not merely to be killed, but rather to be killed, crippled, and shamed *as the victim of someone else's intentionality*, to feel not only your own powerlessness, but the concentration of spiritual force in the hands of another vessel of power. Etymologically, the nightmare is the "night-goblin," the personified witch who presses on sleepers and suffocates them. She is the living figuration of the state of sleep-paralysis, the half-

dream in which REM state engages before consciousness disappears, leading to an experience of being awake while being unable to move, and, most commonly, sensing a malicious and evil presence in the room, pressing the chest or lurking nearby.[107] The mentality of nightmare is distilled in Gloucester's words from *King Lear*: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the Gods; they kill us for their sport."[108] It appears again in Captain Ahab's paranoia, if we divorce it for a moment from his Satanic defiance and bravery: "All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event – in the living act, the undoubted deed – there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask."[109] It's no accident that earlier in *Moby-Dick*, Melville gives a terrifying description of a true nightmare, suffered by Ishmael as a boy:

> At last I must have fallen into a troubled nightmare of a doze; and slowly waking from it – half steeped in dreams – I opened my eyes, and the before sun-lit room was now wrapped in outer darkness. Instantly I felt a shock running through all my frame; nothing was to be seen, and nothing was to be heard; but a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung over the counterpane, and the nameless, unimaginable, silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my bedside. For what seemed ages piled on ages, I lay there, frozen with the most awful fears, not daring to drag away my hand; yet ever thinking that if I could but stir it one single inch, the horrid spell would be broken.[110]

These lines prepare the ground for Ahab's terrifying demonology of the whale, his sense of a looming and hated living presence lurking just out of view, pressing in on him from below and above, needing to be struck at, if only the arm and leg could be made to rise up and stab.

What we colloquially call nightmares – bad dreams, that is – constitute a dubious category, hard to pin down given the many and complex valences of our dreams, their pivoting from triumph to defeat to triumph again; their tendency to unsettle in a hundred nuances, to be

[107]Shelley Adler, *Sleep Paralysis: Night-mares, Nocebos, and the Mind-Body Connection* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2011).
[108] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, IV.i.38-40.
[109] Hermann Melville, *Moby-Dick or, the Whale.* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 178.
[110] Melville, 29.

strange, or weird, or disturbing, or erotically frightening and simultaneously arousing. But the word is useful to indicate the moment when spiritual force is rendered an instrument of social control, that is, into the instrument by which another being (or beings) acquire power over the dreamer. The nightmare state is the state in which the dreamer is placed helplessly at the mercy of others – it captures the sense that other beings have gained the advantage over him, and now turn their newly-acquired power against him, and captured him or banished him from the fold. In the nightmare the free-play of spiritual force turns into controlled terror. In Ghandl's story, the mother-in-law's destruction is brought about by her realization that all of the power she thought was hers belonged in fact to her son-in-law, and that she had been his mere plaything all along. Emerging from the sea in his sea-wolf skin, he debases her before the whole village; like one of Simone Weil's Greek warriors enslaving a Trojan, he transports her suddenly from the center of a fantasy to its periphery, from a person imbued with more-than-usual life to a *thing* trapped within a being's body. Her shame at having been shown to be a fraud is indeed the common stuff of nightmares: for when they are not physically violent, then they are frequently socially violent, and concern the humiliation that paralyzes a person like a blow to the spine and is the favored weapon of social death.

The medical anthropologist Shelley Adler gives an example of this interpenetration of spiritual and physical force from recent times: in the 1970s, Hmong refugees in the United States began experiencing high instances of sudden death syndrome at night. The community's fears of this epidemic were exacerbated by the myth of a vengeful nightmare spirit who attacked men while they slept if they had neglected their familial duties – which these refugees, all thousands of miles away from their ancestors' untended graves, feared they had done. And though the men were found to suffer from a congenital heart defect, the story of this vengeful spirit shaming and

punishing them had exacerbated the physical condition, which had never been known to cause death in the Hmong homeland in Southeast Asia.[111]

This discussion of nightmares may also put us in a position to offer some remarks on the relationship of dreams to wish-fulfillment. It was Freud's foundational contention, of course, that all dreams, no matter what their apparent content, were really wish-fulfillments, more or less disguised. (Later in his life he revised this claim somewhat, and we will come back to that revision). But if we are to pursue the implications of our present hypothesis, then it may be that manifestations of spiritual force in dreaming crest or converge at certain moments in an aliveness that allies itself with the dreamer entirely, or in an aliveness that stands completely against him. If nightmare is the dream-universe showing itself to be allied with others against the dreamer, then the wish-fulfillment is the dream-universe allied and harmonized with the dreamer, sometimes even to the detriment of others. Once the world is alive, we are faced with a set of possibilities arranged along a spectrum between two questions: do all living things follow and imitate me in my desires? Am I the originator of all voices, the God of all forms of mimesis? Or, do all living things conspire to make me less than even a follower or imitater, to make me the only non-living thing in a world otherwise crackling with being?

In most dreams the answer is: somewhere in-between. The map of the living dream-world originates in a complex push and pull between desire and necessity, the pressures of others and the forces of the self. But occasionally we find ourselves at the extreme: beautiful boys and girls throw themselves at our feet and we are showered with praise and riches; or we are raped and pillaged and imprisoned and battered with humiliating laughter. These extremes grow in the ground of spiritual force; but both exist somehow only *after* the manifestation of this force, as Ghandl's myth would indicate. Ghandl moves in his story from an awareness of the emergent

[111] Adler, 94-116.

aliveness of the world (the hero encountering the gods), to an annexation of that aliveness for the purpose of wish-fulfillment (carving the whales and capturing the sea-wolf), and then, only in the end, the collapse of human power through the betrayal and arrogance of desire. Thus wish-fulfillment is what happens when we succeed – or think we succeed – in harnessing the emergent aliveness of the dream-state to serve our desires.

This transition toward wish-fulfillment is even more apparent in two Tlingit versions of this Northwest Coast myth told in the 1970s. The sea-lion stomach (or bladder) in which the hero is sent away from the realm of the gods turns out to be, in these stories, a kind of wish-fulfillment enactor, which takes you wherever you think. Far from finding wish-fulfillment easy, however, the hero struggles, in dream-like fashion, to think about only one thing. His mind keeps wandering back to the experience he's just had amid the sea-beings, and so the stomach keeps taking him back. Only on the fourth try does he succeed in having the device take him home (one of the Tlingit mythtellers, Willie Marks, cheekily calls it a "hovercraft," so that human creation in the service of wish-fulfillment is foregrounded in all of its ambivalence).[112]

Another myth, this one from Central America, can help us in further understanding this transition from the harnessing of the world for wish-fulfillment to the rebellion of the world against it. One of the many apocalypses in the *Popol Vuh* describes a revolt of the animals and objects: a great darkness falls on the earth (if we are not asleep, then it must at least be nighttime when things come alive), and in this darkness, the animals, plants and objects rise up against their human masters. The people are abused by trees, rocks, plates, pots, dogs, mortars, pestles, and all the instruments by which they had themselves exercised mastery over the world. They are subjected to humiliating speeches by the avenging things: "Pain you have caused us. You have

[112] Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, eds., *Haa Shuká, Our Ancestors: Tlingit Oral Narratives* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1987), 108-137.

eaten us, and now we are going to eat you back," say their dogs and chickens. "We have been shattered by you Every day," say the grindstones, "Every day – Night and day…Crunch! Crunch! Scrape! Scrape! On our faces you went. If that was formerly our service to you when you were people then you can now try our strength. We shall grind up and we shall scrape your flesh." And still fiercer are all the pots, which shout, "Pain it was you inflicted on us. Sooty our mouths – sooty our faces. Always we were dumped on the fire. You burned us. We felt no pain, so you try it. We shall burn you."[113]

Contained in this myth is a theory of civilization expressed in the vocabulary of wish-fulfillment and nightmare. Human civilization is a project in wish-fulfillment, of re-making the world in the image of our needs and desires. To do so requires harnessing and stifling the aliveness of this world: hewing trees in houses; mashing corn into bread; firing earth into clay. As civilizations grow ever more complex, they forget the aliveness to which they were indebted, and make no effort at any kind of restitution – sacrifice, gifts, prayers – seen in the rituals of non-industrial and non-agricultural peoples. And so, finally, the suppressed aliveness of a world enslaved by wish-fulfillment rebels, and, as in a nightmare, burns the palaces and cities of gratified desire to the ground.

The wish-fulfillment of creation comes about when all other sentience dampens itself to amplify our own. The nightmare of apocalypse is when the sentience of the world excludes *us*, as dreamers, humans, individuals; when that sentience removes itself from us, and we are treated as Simone Weil's things with souls. And so it is, in this darkened nightmare from the *Popol Vuh*,

[113] *The Book of Counsel: the Popol Vuh of the Quiche Maya of Guatemala*, trans. Munro S. Edmonson, Middle American Research Institute, Publication 35 (New Orleans: Tulane, 1971), lines 713-820 (with my slight modifications in formatting). The topos also appears in certain myths in South America, and appears to be strikingly depicted in the pottery of the Moche people of Peru, a non-literate society which flourished in the first millennium AD, long before the Incas. See Jeffrey Quilter, "The Moche Revolt of the Objects," *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March, 1990), 42-65.

that the things that destroy men are the things that men themselves have dampened: dogs, chickens, trees; millstones, spears, pots, fires. These are the things that men have created to fulfill their wishes: a tame wolf; an easily-caught bird; a skinned tree; a roof and walls; food, and protection and warmth. In building civilization, humans harness this aliveness and transform their perception of it into inanimate things, to be killed and disposed of at will. Now these things rebel, reclaim their aliveness, and turn it against humans. Where human civilization has had a precarious relationship to its own power over aliveness, sharing dreams has become, as we'll see in the next chapter, a key process by which a balance can be struck between its power and the need to control it.

This line of thinking holds even for nightmares which do not fit the archetypical models of pursuit, imprisonment or shaming, as is the case for a terrible dream I once had. I was sitting alone in my then apartment, which had a long hallway leading from the living room to the front door. I suddenly looked toward this hallway and saw coming toward me the little girl in a white nightgown and long black hair who appears in so many Japanese horror films. She seemed to float forward, and the terror was very much in her absence of face, hidden as it was by the long ropes of black hair. But this was not yet the nightmare. I was afraid, but feeling brave, and so I grabbed her and carried her in my hand to the bathroom. As I did, she shrunk to fit into my palm, and I ran with her as you might a spider or scorpion you have trapped between a glass and a piece of paper, desperately trying to throw it outside. In this case I threw her down the sink, and turned on the water to flush her away. To my relief she slipped down the drain.

But then I returned to my living room terribly unsettled with the thought that this was not a normal occurrence. How could I have just flushed a Japanese horror-child down the sink? And a terrible unease came over me, quite unlike the adventurous fear of the preceding moments.

How could my mind have played such a terrible trick on me? Had I done drugs that day? I racked my brains to try to remember, but I couldn't recall having done hallucinogic drugs in years. Having considered the other options, only one seemed possible: that I was going insane. A panic that I had never experienced overtook me, precisely the terror of my perceptions being divorced from the world of others, that from now on I would have no standard for determining what was real and what was just in my own mind. I ran into the kitchen, and there, another seeming hallucination: a gong hanging between two barbaric spears, festooned with tassles and streamers. The very looking at it made it ring, and the sound of it woke me up. I came to screaming and sweating.

In this dream it was first the moment of self-awareness, the sense of the world around me and me myself being somehow different, incompatible, that was the start of the true nightmare, when I could no longer give and take in the push and pull with fear and desire, but was rather on my own with all the living things arrayed against me, not being able to call on any allies anymore, since no one would ever see what I suffer. Notice the moment of final resignation to madness was preceded not by unconsciousness but by distinctly *un*dreamlike conscious deliberation: a moment of scanning the memory and considering possibilities, so unlike the dream-knowledge that takes the form of "suddenly I knew, without knowing how," or "I just knew that he was X, even though his face was that of Y." In a wish-fulfillment, the dreamer is half-awake, and everyone and everything listens to that waking self, suddenly liberated from the intersubjective push-and-pull that governs the lives of everyone but autocrats. In a nightmare, the dreamer is half-awake or even a little more, and no one and nothing listens, so that even the little concessions that we get from others in waking life are nowhere to be found, replaced by the most savage forms of demotion: humiliation, madness, death, each one a mimesis of the next, each

stage descending into the stratum of non-being. The dreamlike occurs when we are locked into the world – the logical order behind it, whether wish-fulfillment or nightmare or anything in-between, cannot be questioned in that moment. It can only be processed analytically before or after, or in that quasi-lucid (in some cases, uncanny) state that arises if and when the dream and self-reflection find themselves uneasily co-present in the same moment. In the non-reflection of the pure dream, on the other hand, we are utterly at its mercy, if also utterly complicit in it.

Let me also take this occasion to take a step back and say something about the way in which I've been discussing dreaming, including this last dream of mine. It's not my intention here to provide an interpretation of the dream's *meaning*. It surely could be given many different and profound meanings related to my own psychic life; but again, here the goal is to understand how it functions as a reality; not what it means, but how it unfolds. In discussing dreams I don't aspire to develop a single fixed analytical vocabulary. Instead the guiding question will always be, what vocabulary can help us best understand what it means to *live* in a particular dream, or dream-state? Can we recognize the vulnerabilities of being in a dream – which are, as we have seen already, spiritual as well as political vulnerabilities? I ask the reader to bear this in mind as we proceed now to a study of the forms of dream-being that are purposefully constructed or harnessed by waking culture, both in literary representation, and in cultural artifacts less familiar to us, but in their own contexts equally, if not more, potent.

Chapter 4.
The Sharing of Dreams in Waking Life

Many of the world's cultures have developed, at some point in their history, a complex script by which dreams can be shared. The dream-world, though seemingly private and withdrawn and pulsing with life, is forever being pulled into the orbit of the waking one, or rather, the waking one is conscious of the need to harness and control the unchecked forces at play in its sleeping counterpart. And so the waking-world has continuously looked for ways by which the uncontrolled aliveness of the dream-world can be rendered into the controlled meanings of social life, to prevent individuals from dying of the roar which lies on the other side of silence. Why this is the case can be preliminarily explained once again with an analogy to isolation: when we are alone, the world seems dangerously alive. But when we are surrounded by a society – its friends, lovers, habits, and buildings – the world seems less threatening, and its potential aliveness shrinks from consciousness. This leads to peace of mind, but it can also lead to a dulling of the senses by the increased self-reflection of a highly social waking state. Hence the longstanding Romantic desire to escape the social world and find a living sense of the divine within the isolation of nature. A similar phenomenon may be manifest in the isolation of sleep: closed off from our peers, in dreams we feel an unencumbered aliveness. Awake and surrounded by living beings we know, the world loses the potential to jump out at us with fangs or feathers at every corner. Each comes with a tradeoff. Our own modern culture, with its pervasive, uninterrogated belief that dreams are boring and without interest (or otherwise the province of kooks), is unusual in not thinking this back and forth to be a matter of great urgency.

Cultures throughout history have dealt with this dichotomy: the waking state is a refuge from emergent aliveness, but it engenders a dulling of the attention; dreams and the dreamlike

are an intensification of experience at the price of fear. And so these cultures have developed mechanisms by which the dream can be experienced and its gifts returned to the social world without completely upending the safety net the social world provides. Such mechanisms are triggered by religious ritual; in certain journey-narratives practiced by shamans; in elaborate protocols for interpretation or incubation. The dream has long been a privileged vessel by which the most intense interior experiences have been conveyed into the realm of common culture.

There is convincing evidence that these processes are very rarely concerned with *explaining* the dream per se, as in the snow-globe model that has so flattened and frozen dream-life in intellectual discourse. Rather they serve to integrate it into waking life. One of the most seemingly straightforward methods by which this is accomplished is the long tradition of creating dream-interpretation books – that is, manuals by which any given image or event in a dream is translated into a fixed meaning (the Byzantine dream-books I have earlier mentioned, as well as the Ming Dynasty *Forest of Dreams*, are both works like this). But the interpretations themselves suggest that the translation is less an act of elucidation than one of socialization – making the singular and inexplicable experiences of sleep over into the shared ones of waking life. For example, in the Byzantine dream-book *Somnium Danielis*, "Dreaming of letters tattooed on one's own body signifies cuts from whips," while "Having sex with a woman you know signifies illness." Each of these readings provides a socially commonplace account of a bizarre dream-event: corporal punishment was more frequent in Byzantium than tattooing; illness, we might presume, was easier to discuss than the jealousies involved in extra-marital sexual desire.

In these examples, the fact that dream interpretation is tied to the needs of the waking world and not to the dream itself is somewhat disguised by the pretense of elucidating the dream-content. But in other cultures, it is made quite explicit. In the Babylonian Talmud, for example,

it's made quite clear that for prophetic dreams, what causes the fulfillment of a prophecy is not the dream itself (or its originator, who is presumably God), but rather the *interpretation* of the dream. If a Rabbi interprets a dream as foretelling the death of the dreamer and the dreamer dies, then it's the *Rabbi's* fault, not the dream's, certainly not God's.[114] Cicero similarly says that the people of Telmessa blamed dream interpreters if a dream prediction turned out to be false, not the dream itself.[115]

Meaning isn't created in the dream, but in the interpreter, in the society, which socializes the dream content. In many cases, interpretation is not the paradigm at all, but rather something far more explicitly creative: a prophecy, a song, a dance, a performance. Among Aborigines of the Western Desert, as we've seen, a predictive dream is only sought once an event has *already* happened. It matters so as to keep dream-life aligned with waking-life for fear that there might be otherwise some kind of epistemological crisis, *not* to tell the future.[116] During the Midwinter Festival of the Iroquois – their central religious event and a period of renewal – ritual visits would take place, in which the hosts would have to guess the content of a guest's dream from a few sly hints: meaning inhered not just in the act itself, but in the context surrounding it, namely re-weaving the fabric of the community on the occasion of the new year.[117]

Among the Urapmin people of Papua New Guinea, dreams continue to serve an explicitly social and political purpose. They are frequently employed as checks on the individual charisma and authority of powerful men. Since dreams can come to anyone, they allow even the powerless to attain, if only for a short period of time, a countervailing spiritual authority against those who

[114] In the Palestinian Talmud, Rabbi Yishmael blames his students for the death of a man when they foretell it by interpreting his wife's dream. "You have killed a man. The dream follows its interpretation, as has been said: "And it came to pass as he interpreted to us' (Gen 41:13; the master of butlers to Pharoah concerning Joseph)." Hasan-Roken, 220.
[115] Jacques Le Goff, "Christianity and Dreams (Second to Seventh Century)," *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (University of Chicago, 1988), 208.
[116] Poirier, "This is Good Country," 117-118.
[117] Dean R. Snow, *The Iroquois* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 7.

would seek to abuse their influence. In 1991 a man had a dream which was widely interpreted within the community as prophesying punishment for a local "Big Man" and his followers if they persisted in refusing to help build a new church because of a spat with another Big Man. Widely discussed throughout the nearby communities, the dream grew more and more portentous, and eventually led to a brokered peace and a return to work on the church. The man who had the dream, however, withdrew from the public eye immediately after the dream had been launched into conversation. Sharing the dream checked the Big Man's authoritarian behavior, but did not threaten the social order by propelling the dreamer into a prophetic or charismatic position.[118] In another instance, a local government official began to have episodes of charismatic spirit possession during the "spirit discos," ecstatic trance ceremonies associated with the local evangelical churches. This violated the tacit separation of lay and religious authority the Urapmin strictly enforce. A very minor pastor had a dream suggesting that this official would die if he once again became possessed and – once the dream was shared and widely discussed – the official stopped having possession episodes at the spirit discos. Without directly upsetting hierarchies, the populace was able to check an authority figure's augmenting power by socializing and disseminating publicly the spiritual force – the enacting of life and death – native to dreams.[119]

One of the most beautiful and involved examples of a process by which dreams are socialized into waking life belongs to the Ongees of the Andaman Islands. Vishvajit Pandya worked in the 1980s among these members of the last hunter-gatherer culture in the Bay of Bengal. He explains that the Ongees narrate to one another their previous night's dreams before going to bed. The goal is not to give a veridical account of the dreams: in fact, instead, it's

[118] Joel Robbins, "Dreaming and the Defeat of Charisma: Disconnecting Dreams from Leadership Among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea" Lohmann, 30-32.
[119] Robbins, 32-35.

gradually to bend the dream-narratives into one dream to reach a consensus and conclusion that everyone dreamt the same thing. This dream-negotiation, Pandya explains, is traditionally conceived among the Ongee as weaving a web over their campsite. The web, they explain, traps bits of being that have been lost during the day as they move through forest, leaving parts of themselves (manifest as scent) on the trees. If the dreams cannot be fully experienced and then narrated, the Ongees believe that the taut web woven over their campsites can break, and then they can no longer recapture the lost parts of themselves. As with the interpreters of the Babylonian Talmud, the goal is quite explicit, almost already translated into a vocabulary that makes a great deal of sense to modern readers: to ensure that the private parts of psychic life are all communal is to give each person – and the community – wholeness, cohesion.[120]

This need for harnessing spiritual force into a cohesive communal entity may itself be a consequence of a dreamlike isolation: strong dream-sharing cultures like that of the Ongees are often found in remote or harsh places, on islands or around the Arctic, in places where the aliveness of the world threatens to encroach upon the social safety of the hearth. The Japanese glaciologist Kenji Yoshikawa led a walking expedition with four men from the Antarctic shore to the South Pole; he made the men on his expedition recount their dreams every morning so that any nocturnal dissension or dissatisfaction could be aired and neutralized without endangering the cohesion needed for the months-long journey over ice and snow.[121] Such considerations may also help to explain why the only industrialized, western country to engage in dream-socialization on a large scale is remote Iceland, one of the last places in the world to be settled by

[120] Vishvajit Pandya, "Forest Smells and Spider Webs: Ritualized Dream Interpretation Among Andaman Islanders," *Dreaming*, Vol. 14, No. 2-3 (2004), 136-150.
[121] Kenji Yoshikawa, personal communication, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, August, 2014. The dreams of this expedition are discussed in N. Taniguchi, "Dream analysis of the Antarctic Walk," *Scientific results from the Antarctic Walk Environmental Research Expedition, 1991-1993*, K. Yoshikawa, K. Harada, S. Ishimaru, eds. (Tokyo: Antarctic Environmental Research Expedition Organizing Committee, 1995), 143-158.

humans. Its people have a tradition of dream sharing that stretches unbroken in the historical record from the first settlement in the 9th century to the present.[122]

These many examples suggest that, in their raw states, the spiritual force of dreaming and the binding mechanisms of social cohesion are somehow incompatible: an artificial process is required to reconcile them. In some cases one is even suppressed by the other, or the one is used to regulate, alter or transform the other. The intensified liminal aliveness of the dream can be a political and social instrument; but without careful safeguards, it can become an uncontrolled weapon, leading to hysteria and crisis. Taming the dream is a process which often reaches a state of considerable complexity, so complex sometimes that it obscures the central role played by the dream and other interior states behind the edifice of cultural exteriorization, especially in the apparatus of religion and myth. In fact, the more complex the artificial process, the more it obscures the original role played by dreaming. Or, more precisely, dreaming comes to be ever more positioned as an object created and controlled by the discourse, rather than being the originating force behind the creation of the discourse. The dream's powerful, liminal, animate energy pushes a society to construct a system of meaning by which it can be channeled and controlled; in the end, the society's system of meaning re-positions the dream as validating and embodying in its natural state the very system by which it was originally altered and tamed. This push and pull between the extreme privacy of the dream and the total sociality of the waking community helps generate notions of the inner life: it creates the possibility for different forms of mental privacy, defined in relation to the shared forms of life.

As we will see in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, art in the modern west both adopts certain aspects of this model and, in other ways, departs from them, leading to certain

[122] Adriënne Heijnen, *The Social Life of Dreams: A Thousand Years of Negotiated Meanings in Iceland*, European Studies in Culture and Policy, Vol. 12 (Berlin, Vienna, and Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2013).

unique and vexed notions of interiority. But it will be useful to have a cursory look at how the instrumentalization of the dream – and of other forms of life intended to evoke the dreamlike, that is, to unleash spiritual force – plays out in the complex cultural and religious contexts of certain societies. We can learn especially important lessons from closer attention to a few examples of the way dreams were used to translate interior experience into external experience in shamanistic cultures, in classical antiquity, and in the Hebrew Bible.

Dream-Journeys in Shamanism

Shamanism is thought to be one of the oldest, if not the oldest, surviving religious and cultural practice among human beings. Many of the examples given in preceding chapters of dream-life in pre-literate cultures involve certain kinds of practices that are associated with shamanism of different kinds. What exactly it is, where it is practiced, to what extent it has been corrupted, and whether in fact it ever existed in a "pure" form, are all fiercely debated by scholars. The term originates among the Tungusic and Samoyedic peoples of Northern Asia and Siberia, but has been used by analogy to describe many cultures all around the world. We should of course bear in mind that the idea of shamanism as a single category (indeed, an –ism) under which so many practices can be grouped, is, as Ronald Hutton writes, a "scholarly construct."[123] But it nevertheless allows us, however selectively and with whatever qualifications, to speak about certain spiritual practices that frequently appear in cultures where the basic unit involves a small community, examples of which have been documented on all continents in places where indigenous cultures still survive. Mircea Eliade's definition in his classic (though not undisputed)

[123] Ronald Hutton, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination* (London: Hambledon and London, 2001), vii.

Shamanism will serve as a placeholder with which we can begin. Shamanism is, according to him, a "technique of ecstasy."[124]

By this he means, specifically, that shamans are religious figures charged with entering trance-like states that usually culminate in some kind of journey of the soul outside of the body. The goal of the trance-like state varies: it can be for purposes of divination, to act as a psychopomp to the recently dead, to ascertain the reason for a sickness, to defeat evil magic, or to track down a lost soul. Many shamanic belief systems have it that all human beings have multiple souls. The straying of one of them (in dream, among other places) can lead to illness.

A central pillar of shamanic practice the world over is a religious intervention brought about by some form of intensely private experience, a dream, a trance, an ecstatic seizure. The emphatically dream-like nature of these processes is evident in their privacy: even if the shaman is giving an outward performance of possession or trance, it is his *inward* experience – often framed as a cosmological journey through a spiritual world, of the kind we have examined in chapter one – which defines his spiritual role. And this inward experience is inaccessible to anyone but the shaman himself – indeed, in many cases, jealously guarded by him and his disciples.

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[124] Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans.Willard Trask (Princeton UP, 1964). The legacy of Eliade's book is summed up by Ronald Hutton in his book *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*, especially pages 120-127. He applauds Eliade for his extraordinary research in the 1950s, for his respect toward his subject, and for bridging Siberian shamanism with techniques from all over the world. But he criticizes him for an aggressively selective use of evidence, which Eliade adduces to try to prove a claim about consistency in cosmological structure among shamanistic religions, and to argue (or at least suggest) that shamanism is the origin of all religion. There is general agreement that certain of Eliade's frameworks are outmoded and that his larger assumptions – especially about a universal sky deity, and perhaps about the death and rebirth cycle – are flawed. But these larger claims are not in question here; for our purposes, what's important is his command of the ethnographic literature of Central Asia– which, unfortunately, has not changed much since his day, as the 20th century and the Soviet Union were not kind to Siberian religion. In that sense, many of the generalizations about shamanistic societies that follow are taken from his summary of the ethnographic literature. To make matters more complicated, a Neo-Shamanic movement has arisen in Central Asia and in the west, which is largely *inspired* by Eliade's book, and so what looks to confirm his hypotheses in the post-Soviet world turns out to have been shaped by them. See on this last matter Hutton, 158-159.

In some cases, the ecstasy takes place during sleep, but in many cases, the shamanic trance occurs in a public space, often in front of the persons who have requested the shaman's assistance. Yet it is frequently modeled on the dream, and closely connected to it.[125] It follows that many of the shaman's practices, even when conducted in waking life, resemble the dream as we've described it, a living world through which the thinking self or soul moves freely. In Inuit culture, many shamanic voyages must be taken to the bottom of the sea, through a dangerous straight gate, to the home of the Mother of the Sea Mammals, who is surrounded by vast flocks of whales. The observers are left only staring at the body, as the shaman's soul undertakes its journey, in some cases narrating it as it happens. Before shamans we are like Heraclitus contemplating the dreams of others; we can know that a universe is being built, but we can't quite see what it looks like. The anthropological record is full of tantalizing but vague comments like that of W.G. Bogoras who, traveling among the Chukchee, says here and there that a sacrifice may be made if it is "directed in a dream" or that most shamanic rituals take place "in the sleeping room, at nighttime and in perfect darkness" – but there is little that he permits himself to say about the shape of the world that arises in those moments.[126]

A crucial point must be noted. This private experience is in almost no tribal society the exclusive religious practice. In fact, in general, shamanic cultures also have a public, ritualistic component to religious life, presided over by a priest entrusted with making sacrifices and leading communal ceremonies. In general (although not in every case), the Shaman is not responsible for these public ceremonies – he or she is entrusted with this more private form of religious experience. Shamanism signifies a division of spiritual labor in tribal societies between

[125] See, for example, the role of designated "dreamers" among the Déné Tha in Jean-Guy Goulet, "Récits de rêves et de vision chez les Dénés Tha contemporains: Vision du monde et principes épistémologiques sous-jacents," *Anthropologie et Sociétés,* Vol. 18, no. 2 (1994), 59-74, esp. 64-69.
[126] Bogoras, 303, 413.

the external practice of the religion, and its internal manifestation – something interior is bounded and defined within the person of the shaman in these cultures.

However, this is not to say that the shaman simply has dreams or hallucinations or daydreams and then makes up a religion based on them: shamans undergo very serious training in the culture's traditions and practices; it is their job to embody – to live directly in their mental lives – the myths and cosmogony of the society. The mystical journey that shamans undertake (or narrate having undertaken – for shamanism is also closely linked to a rich tradition of oral poetry) often includes movements through the various parts of the universe. It is a living tour of the metaphysical and cosmological principles of the society.

In many societies, shamans are explicitly called to this vocation by a dream;[127] in many societies, the term for shaman is *dreamer*;[128] in almost all societies, the dream or other initiatory event precipitates a massive psychological crisis, which might be described as a brutal in-pouring of spiritual force.[129] Many continue to use the dream as the main method by which to practice their art. In other societies, the most we can say is that a dream-like process, often sustained by or intensified through careful attention to dreams, plays the dominant role. Shamans in almost all shamanistic societies were and are required to isolate themselves periodically from the society that surrounded them. In other words, they mimic the isolation of sleep (and of death) by withdrawing from the social world. In many cases, this was meant not only to mimic the dream-life, but also to intensify it. Vishvajit Pandya reports that the Ongee shaman-figure, the *torale*, is the only one permitted to have regular contact with the spirit-world, and so serves as the

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[127] Perrin, 34.
[128] As, for example, among the Dunne-za of Northern British Columbia, who use the word *Naachin*, dreamer, to signify those who can dream not only of the earthly hunt (as all members of the community do), but of the Trail to Heaven. Robin Ridington, *Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community* (Iowa City: U. of Iowa, 1988). See also Robin Ridington, "Beaver Indian Dreaming and the Vision Quest," unpublished paper, 1988, Xwi7xwa Library Archives, University of British Columbia.
[129] See for example, Joseph Campbell's comments on the "shamanistic crisis" in *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: Penguin, 1976), 253.

intermediary between the living Ongee society and the dead and divine spirits who surround them in the world. Without him, it is generally believed, Ongee society would be devoured by the spirits. The vessel of the torale's mediation, as by now will be unsurprising, is the dream dreamt in the isolation of the forest. Crouching alone in his maternal family's forest area, he goes to sleep and dreams, calling the spirits to him. He is woken from the dream, but his dream-self, the *enetea*, will not re-enter the bodily self, but remains while awake in its free-floating, oneiric state. The spirits "are blind so they put hands and feet all over my body…I shiver and feel more cold. With so many spirits touching me like a blind person I become very light. All my body liquid is sucked up; I feel very dry and cold."[130] A.R. Radcliffe-Browne, who lived among the Ongees three quarters of a century before Pandya, writes that these *torale* shaman-figures were known at that time quite explicitly as "*Aka-Jeru oko-jumu* (literally 'one who speaks from dreams')."[131] It was the job of the shaman to enter into this dangerous state of mental isolation, and so trigger the swarming aliveness of spirits. And it was his job to return from this dangerous state to the social world and share what he had learned.

The Tsimshian ethnographer William Beynon collected numerous stories about shamanic initiation among peoples in the Tsimshian-speaking part of the Northwest coast, and many key moments of initiation focus on a dream, usually dreamt, once again, in the wilderness. A man named Isaac Tens tells the story of how he became a shaman:

> When I was a growing child, I knew that I had strange powers. This was why I knew I had different powers from other people. One day I went up into the hills to gather wood, and it was very cold. There were many other people gathering wood as it was now winter, and it was in the hills above the village where they were. When I got to the hills, I heard strange noises at the top of the tree which I was cutting. I looked up and behold there was a large white owl sitting on the top of the big tree. Then the owl flew down and grasped my head, and flew up with me into the sky. Well it was then that I lost my senses, and it

[130] Vishvajit Pandya, *Above the Forest: A Study of Andamanese Enthoanemology, Cosmology, and the Power of Ritual* (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1993), 153.
[131] A.R. Radcliffe-Browne, *The Andaman Islanders* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 48, 175-177.

> was then I started to dream and this is what I dreamed. I dreamed that I was now flying way up into the Sky, and here I saw a great many strange things. And I knew that it was the owl which was flying me up by grasping my head. Then I suddenly awoke (came to my senses), and behold! I was lying on the snow, and with my face downward. And my face had sunk into the snow. I had been away now all day. When I returned to the house of my father, I told him what had happened to me. So he said to me, "The reason this has happened to you, is that you will be a great Shaman Halait."[132]

Thus to be a shaman is both to dream, and then to return home, tell the dream, and have its function revealed. It is not merely the indication of vocation, but the calling to it. And it is almost never the case that a single dream suffices: rather a dream must be had; the dreamer must awake and go back to his community; and then he goes out again, dreams once more; returns again; dreams a third time, and, upon the final return, assumes his newfound role.

In all shamanic societies shamans possess, as part of this vocation, something we can call, in our anachronistic vocabulary, an interiority that is acknowledged to have a functional orientation: these experiences, closed to everyone but the shaman, perform a kind of work. That private mystical experience should be considered to be work seems to come about for two interlocking reasons: like work in all forms, it involves degrees of physical and psychic stress (the shaman undergoes pain to accomplish an end, just as the hunter or wood-cutter stresses his body to gain something in the world), and, secondly, this physical stress and its outcome are confirmed as purposeful by the community. Interiority, insofar as we can use that word in shamanic cultures, is given certain designated carriers who in some measure perform it, that is to say, allow it, obliquely and paradoxically, to be witnessed by the community, and allow that community to sanction this imaginary (non-material) experience as a means to an end (and, conversely, give them a chance explicitly not to sanction it if the shaman fails in his duties).

[132] Isaac Tens, "How a Medicine Man (Shaman) Was Created (*Willa Dzapsa Su wanksam Halait*)," collected in William Beynon, *Tsimshian Stories*, Vol. 2 (Metlakatla, AK: Metlakatla Indian Community and Columbia University, 1983), 22.

The anthropologist Dennis Tedlock has written that, as a general rule, Native American societies in which ordinary people were allowed to have visionary experiences prioritized the dream in their mythology and culture. In societies, on the other hand, where ecstatic experiences were monopolized by secret societies or powerful priesthoods, the role of dreaming was obscured.[133] Here is another principle by which the dream-state's relation to society can be measured: the more highly acculturated manifestations of ecstasy and spiritual force are, the more their raw originary existence in the dream is obscured.[134] We will see similar phenomena at play in the attenuated dream-forms of the highly stratified civilizations of the classical world.

Dreaming and Belief in the Classical World

As is also the case with tribal societies, the relationship of the Greek and Roman world to dreaming was fantastically complex, and our knowledge of it will inevitably be incomplete. But we can glean certain lessons from how this civilization balanced an ever-more complex social world, with ever more actors, against the private manifestations of spiritual force that came about through dreams and visions. In particular, we can see how dreams were treated within an epistemological paradigm that was foundational for the modern West.

William V. Harris offers a thorough survey of the varying kinds of dreams and thoughts about dreams available to Greeks and Romans in *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*.[135] He is rather impatient with his subject-matter ("In all this we shall keep in mind

[133] Dennis Tedlock, "Mythic Dreams and Double Voicing," Shulman and Stroumsa, 105.
[134] This might be a generalizable claim: there was prohibition on dream-telling and dream-interpretation in Hebrew Culture during the Temple Period and recorded in Deuteronomy; but during the diaspora when the authority of the Temple was shattered, dreaming returned. Ancient Greece had a very active dream-culture; Rome, with its more regulated state-religion, was more restricted. Hubert Cancik, "*Idolum and Imago:* Roman Dreams and Dream Theories," Shulman and Stroumsa, 170.
[135] William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009). See also Christine Walde, "Dream Interpretation in Prosperous Age? Artemidorus the Greek Interpreter of Dreams," Shulman and Stroumsa, 121-142.

that dreams are a peculiar subject," he writes, "inaccessible and always of very debatable importance") and, as a result, his study becomes highly focused on the question of *belief* in dreams: who believed in them, and when, and to what extent. He finds, almost to his relief, that many Greeks and Romans did not take dreams seriously – at least not many educated Greeks and Romans, a highly exclusive qualification in the classical world. But the question of belief is very complicated indeed, and a person need not subscribe to a prophetic or medicinal belief in dreams to think of them as significant or purposeful, or indeed to have some kind of functional relationship to them. In fact, what Classical Antiquity can most uniquely teach us about dreaming is its relationship to the notion of belief, and our own vexed ideas about what "belief" means. What does it mean to *believe* in dreams? To think they might be truthful, useful, meaningful – and what are the distinctions between these three possible objects of belief?

Among Harris's most striking and convincing claims is that a specific kind of dreaming was relatively widespread in the classical world and no longer is – that is, there is at least one distinct difference between the repertoire of dream experience available before the modern era and now. This is what he calls the Epiphany Dream: when a single figure (or figures), often someone of authority (a god, an ancestor, a divine messenger) appears to the dreamer and gives them direct instruction. Macrobius, drawing on Artemidorus (who may himself have had other sources), calls this kind of dream the *chrematismos* in Greek, or the o*raculum* in Latin.[136]

As Harris convincingly shows, although the Epiphany was clearly a literary and religious convention, it may actually have sometimes happened, either as a dream or waking vision. It is reasonable to assume that because of the prevalence of such an epiphanic script, the dreaming of some individuals resembled epiphanies, just as it is hardly surprising that those of us who watch

[136] Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia, 1990), 87-88.

a great deal of television often have dreams that resemble police procedurals or costume dramas. It also stands to reason that certain epiphany-like dreams were quickly and unthinkingly subsumed into the 'Epiphany Script' upon waking, just as certain sinister or fantastical dreams might be now thought of as being, in atmosphere or plot, like *Law & Order* or *Game of Thrones*.

Perhaps what is most striking to the modern reader about the epiphany dream is how undreamlike it seems to have been (and, indeed, Harris makes the point that most surviving classical dream accounts seem to us surprisingly undreamlike). There is no narrative structure, no particularly striking bizarreness, and, perhaps most interestingly, no sense of enigma. It delivers its message in plain Greek.

It would be wonderful indeed to know whether the messages delivered in Epiphany dreams were in fact sensical, or only smoothed into coherent pieces of advice upon waking. But of course that is beyond the reach of scholarship. What can be said, however, is that the Epiphany Dream appears to have had certain very clear social uses – and, as is customary when talking about a civilization of such complexity – the word "social" must be continuous with the word "political." Generals commonly exhorted their soldiers before battle by telling them of a wondrous dream they had predicting victory. This was often an Epiphany Dream or, otherwise, a very clear *oneiros* (Latin *somnium*: what Macrobius calls the "enigmatic dream," which foretells the future by signs that must be interpreted). Constantine's dream before the Milvian Bridge is the most famous such military dream, and Cicero's Dream of Scipio is an elaborated literary example, but other such instances are attributed to Sulla, Xenophon, Alexander the Great, and the eastern emperor Licinius. In some cases the dream may largely be an invention of the chronicler, but in some cases, Harris argues, the dream was actually declaimed to the soldiers. Needless to say, such perfectly useful dreams are almost certainly false (insofar as Constantine

did not dream that night, "By this Sign you Will Conquer"), but the fact that dreaming was instrumentalized in such a fashion tells us something about the relationship between inner life and outer life, between spiritual force and the social as it existed in the classical world. Harris tends to think that patricians would have laughed at such dreams, and that in general, "more credulous ideas came in from the poor and uneducated." But he comes dangerously close in his reasoning to the kind of condescension identified by Bruno Latour: "We moderns believe in belief so as to understand others."[137] In the language of Sylvie Poirier, to call someone else's epistemology a "belief" is immediately to neutralize it without taking account of its own underlying vocabulary of function and use.[138]

In fact, the available evidence might equally suggest that Roman soldiers both believed and did not believe in such dreams – or had uses for dreams that were a matter of praxis, and not our anachronistic, post-Reformation idea of belief. In other words, the circumstance that a general could have a feeling (or wanted to project having a feeling) of victory, and that this feeling ought to be conveyed to the troops, and that the troops might consent to receive and validate this feeling – this complex social and emotional configuration could quite conceivably be encased rhetorically within the trope of the dream. In fact, the dream is well-suited to the expression of such a circumstance because of the fierce commitment to reality that exists in the dream-state. The dream is a subjectivity that tyrannically holds the dreamer's attention, and effects changes in the fabric of aliveness; thus it makes sense to use it rhetorically as a sophisticated emblem for invincibility born from fierce conviction, as a way of inducing the ontological primacy of the dreamlike (as would again be the case before the Lincoln Memorial in 1963).

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[137] "Les modernes croient en croyance pour comprendre les autres," Bruno Latour, *Sur le culte modern des dieux fétiches* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009), 28-29.
[138] Poirier, "The Dynamic Reproduction of Hunter-Gatherers' Ontologies and Values," 59-60.

That some (or even many) Greeks and Romans might not have *believed* in dreams seems quite reasonable given the ambiguity of belief as a concept, but that they saw the cultural function of dreams as having to do with the structure of veracity seems equally plausible, and not mutually exclusive. For example, Athens sent three men to sleep in the temple of the god Amphiaraus in the 330s BC to determine, by dream, whether a certain mountain could be settled by the city, or whether it needed instead to be left to the god. When one of the men did in fact have a dream deciding the matter in the god's favor, he was impeached before the assembly by opponents of the decision, who accused him of lying.

The status of dreaming here is as complicated as in any modern account. It stands to reason that the Greeks – no fools – must have understood that the accusation of lying in this case was also bound up with the pragmatic question of whether or not the mountain should be exploited, and yet they continued to discuss the situation in terms of the veracity of the dream. The complexities of the political situation – the mixture of the personal and the impersonal that it entailed – were debated here through the instrument of the dream. So it was also with the literary accounts of Greek dreams: a dream-figure might be speaking a cosmic truth, or he might be lying, or he might be doing both at once; a dream might be authoritative and yet it might simultaneously be false (in Greek literature the gods often send Epiphany Dreams with false messages, for example, to Agammemnon in the Iliad, to force dreamers into disastrous situations). Dreams, as Homer and Virgil both tell us, come either through the false door of horn, or the true door of ivory. In this way the dream is a thing open to negotiation and its significance is precisely in the contested nature of its epistemological status. As a result the kind of internal experience represented by the dream gains meaning from its evocation and disputation in the communal sphere. This evocation may in some cases be cynical – as with the generals before

battle, for example – but our standard definition of cynicism does not do justice to the way a cultural form can function even when truth-value does not primarily inhere in its content.

The tradition of dream-incubation at temples of healer-gods, present throughout the ancient world (although, as Harris explains, variously popular depending on time and place) was similarly a public negotiation of one's internal experience through the vessel of dreaming, in this case, of the highly private and difficult-to-describe sensations of health and illness.[139] Such complex acts of negotiation constitute an anthropological moment in which the individual experience of being intersects with the larger rhythms of a society's cosmology. That the priests at Epidauros made use of very complex protocols in these dream-healings – whether seriously, or self-consciously as charlatans – argues for a tradition in the classical world of dream-interaction that far surpasses the simplistic, one-to-one interpretative schemata that survives in Artemidorus and others. We also know that the dream-life of the classical world was historically labile, dependent upon the tenor of the times. The classicist Hubert Cancik has argued that Romans of the Empire dealt with their dreams much less publicly than Greeks did: perhaps, we can speculate, this was a symptom of their much more centrally controlled (and overtly worldly) state religion, which had little use for ecstatic personal spiritual experience.[140]

These examples all straddle two paradigms about the nature of belief: on the one hand, the idea that to believe means to make a statement about the independent and objective truth of something; and, on the other, the sense that to believe can be a pragmatic action, designed to facilitate a certain instrumentalization of reality. In this light it is no accident that Greek and Roman civilization also developed many highly naturalistic accounts of dreaming, in which an attempt was made to describe dreaming independent of the web of religious and cultural beliefs

[139] It is no accident that one of the major dream-recorders of the classical period was a hypochondriac named Aelius Aristedes. See Harris, 118-122.
[140] Cancik, 173.

in which it was imbricated. Aristotle and the Epicureans, in particular, developed theories of dreaming that would play an important role in the western intellectual tradition.[141] But these proto-scientific theories of dreaming would come at the expense of self-awareness about the communal aspects of dreaming, about the pressures it exerted upon dreamers to share and codify and transform their dreams; it would lead instead to an idea of dreams as belonging solely within the dreamer, creations of his mind and the pressures exerted on it by his body. In a scientific account of dreaming, social experiences – prophecies fulfilled, rituals begun, songs transcribed out of sleep – are inevitably thought of as corruptions of the "objective" nature of dreams, something for the credulous, something to be looked at with *disbelief*. This attitude would become a powerful prejudice in western civilization. It would come to be the unexpected ally of another sentiment, born of the Judeo-Christian tradition: that to dream too powerfully is to partake in a kind of experience which society cannot accept save with terrible convulsions.

The Bible: Joseph and Daniel, Lonely Dreamers

From a superficial perspective, many of the dreams in the Bible function similarly to those in shamanic traditions and in Classical Greece: they are religious mediations between private experience and social and political structure, becoming communal as prophecy, dynastic legitimation, and as condemnation. Thus, private experience is transferred to public experience, which then re-defines the private experience. It is a commonplace among scholars that biblical dreams cannot be considered psychologically, that they are instruments of an ideology of the

[141] For the importance of Epicurean and Aristotelian dream theories in the Renaissance, for example, see Matthew Spellberg, "Feeling Dreams in *Romeo and Juliet*," *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Winter, 2013), 62-85.

sacred and not at all reflections on a historical individual's dream experience.[142] This may be true in a narrow sense, but it should not prevent us from examining what these stories suggest about the relationship of the individual to the strictures, religious and political, that bind him. We will understand them as having a very particular – in fact, vexed – relationship to the waking narrative of the People of Israel.

Two dream-stories in the Old Testament betray a remarkable self-consciousness – bordering on ambivalence – about the ways in which dreams acquire their meaning through acts of sharing, about how the raw spiritual force pushes on the mind to produce a re-structuring in the waking world. The first of these is among the most famous dream stories in history:

> Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic. And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.
>
> Once Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers; and they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: There we were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright; then your sheaves gathered around and bowed low to my sheaf." His brothers answered, "Do you mean to reign over us? Do you mean to rule over us?" And they hated him even more for his talk about his dreams.[143]

This passage turns on its head much of what we have so far said about the dream acquiring meaning in public life. Here, rather than gaining meaning from its harmonization with others, the

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[142] "Die alttestamentlichen Schriftsteller, die uns von 'Träumen' berichten, haben diese Träume nicht selbst geträumt, sondern es handelt sich dabei entweder um ein Stilmittel, das sie verwandt haben, oder um nur traumhafte Elemente, die in die Darstellung verwoben worden sind. Ein solches literarisches Produkt ist im allgemein anders zu beurteilen als ein wirklich geträumter Traum. Der Traum im Alten Testament ist weniger ein psychologisches Phänomen also vor allem ein traditions- und religions-geschictliches." Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, No. 73 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1953), v.

[143] Genesis, 37.3-8. All citations from the Bible are in the Tanakh Translation, from Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. The Jewish Study Bible (Oxford UP, 2004). For the historical context of biblical dreams, see Jean-Marie Husser, 'Songe' in *Supplément au dictionnaire de la Bible,* XII (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1996), also translated by Jill M. Munro as *Dreams and Dream-Narratives in the Biblical World* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, Vol. 46 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956); and Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible,* trans. Lenn J. Schramm, Monographs of the Hebrew Union College, No. 25 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001).

telling of the dream sets the dreamer *against* his kin. Inner experience, of which the dream is the paragon, still has an effect on social life, but it is antagonistically, violently separating. To disclose interiority is to become *distinct* –Thomas Mann will call this story *Joseph and his Brothers*, the one and the many. And distinctness has a price: that price is arousing jealousy.

It is striking in this respect that the Bible presents exterior distinctness before the interior one: Joseph is first favored with the coat of many colors, and only then with the dream of singularity and supremacy. It is further striking that the Bible's account of interiority – and here I am speaking of Joseph's interiority as the only interiority, for the brothers are not given this kind of distinct life at this stage of the story, only a collective one – is consonant with the overriding narrative in Genesis of patriarchal legitimacy. The child that Jacob-Israel favors is in fact the child favored by God, the one whose dreams confirm the social structure the patriarch has already established by investing Joseph with the coat. In other words, there is a larger harmonization between inside and the (cosmic, world-historical) outside.

But the strangeness in this story is that in the short-term this election disrupts the social fabric rather than strengthening it – in fact, interior election seems to require separation, disruption, and expulsion, and of a much longer and more uncertain kind than in a shamanic initiation. The strict economy of direct speech in the Biblical narrative here serves to create inwardness by limiting our access to feelings. Is the dream-recitation meant to be an account of Joseph's future power? If so, then why does it lead to his immediate demise? Is the dream-recitation an indication of his *naiveté*, or an indication of his preternatural gifts, or both? And to what extent are all of these questions annulled by the fact that the dream, its telling, and Joseph's sale into slavery are all the will of God made manifest in the events of history? Does it matter what Joseph thinks about it, for he is the servant of God? Such questions arise out of the quality

that Auerbach describes so acutely in *Mimesis*: "The personages speak in the bible story too; but their speech does not serve, as does speech in Homer, to manifest, to externalize thoughts – on the contrary, it serves to indicate thoughts which remain unexpressed…Everything remains unexpressed."[144]

Joseph's first two dreams (a second, similar dream follows this one directly) cause the boy to be distinguished, marked as different, different because there is some great and threatening power looming unseen, a power absconded, speaking almost dumbly from the mouth of a young boy seemingly unaware of his surroundings. That power may in fact be destiny, or God himself, but it is expressed as a dream that suggests something beyond itself through the very flatness of its delivery.

In the rest of the story, dreams will once again be distinguishing: but this time, positively, as Joseph's interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams elevate him to the highest position in Egypt. Joseph, with the vast, undescribed, hardly even articulated presence of God inside him, will triumph ("Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, 'Not I! God will see to Pharaoh's welfare'"). In fact, this presence inside Joseph will become his vital tool; it will raise him above the Egyptian priests and counselors whose dream interpretation methods rely on an empty web of inherited signs. In contrast to this diluted intellectual and material inheritance, Joseph's suffering and alienation from both Egypt and Israel will be the mark of his legitimacy as a dreamer and a prophet.

The Joseph story dramatizes a crux in the history of the socialization of spiritual force, one to which the Bible is very sensitive: the shamanistic tradition has degenerated into the empty ritualism of the sorcerers; though it continues to have a socio-political function, it is no longer

[144] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton UP, 2003), 11.

connected to the spiritual force of the dream-world, and so it offers merely hollow reflections of Pharaoh's own wishes. In the new world where the shamans are no longer to be trusted, election to the experience of spiritual force must be verified not by priests but, in fact, by their *suspicion*. The fact that spiritual force and social life are at odds with one another must now be used as the litmus test for determining who has access to the spiritual force of dream-life: and only then, after much struggle and resistance, can it be accepted as a guide to shaping and changing society. Joseph signals a changed position: the prophet can no longer withdraw with the consent of the people; now he must be *expelled* and, if his prophecy proves effective, only afterward can he be returned to the fold. The Bible encodes this anthropological shift by its extreme ambivalence toward dreams. One the one hand, as in Numbers 12:6-8, God says, "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." On the other, as in Deuteronomy 13:1-3, the Hebrews are told:

> If prophets or those who divine by dreams appear among you and promise you omens and portents, and the omens or the portents declared by them take place, and they say, "let us follow other gods" (whom you have not known) "and let us serve them," you must not heed the words of those prophets or those who divine by dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you indeed love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.

A deep wisdom about this ambivalence is articulated by the Joseph story, one which is born from alienation rather than integration, and which requires an interiority, sanctioned by dreams, that is hostile to the exterior. This temporary lack of understanding about the need to turn inward and toward the dream generates a new kind of interiority, distinct and alienated from the communal world. Thus it is that a dreamer – it could be no one else – can present the imposing face of the Vizier to his own brothers, demanding they bring the youngest brother and leave a hostage, but then, in the decisive moment, excuse himself from the room to become again – this time secretly, *inwardly* listening to their despair – their brother. "They did not know that

Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between him and them. He turned away from them and wept. But he came back to them and spoke to them; and he took Simeon from among them and had him bound before their eyes." The presence of the interpreter is one of the most remarkable details. The public identity (Joseph the Egyptian-speaker) disguises the fact that the private identity (Joseph the Hebrew-speaker) understands everything, better indeed, than would be possible for any public, disclosed identity. We are here both very close and very far from the Ongees with their dream recitations and soul-webs. To share the dream builds social cohesion, but now there is a price: and that is that the inner self becomes aware of its distance from the outer self, the harmonization of spiritual force with the needs of others can only be effected by doubling the self, by creating an inner Dreamer and an outer Vizier, by accessing the dream-state alongside the self-consciousness that is inimical to it.

This great power associated with an isolated interiority (itself associated in the Bible with the inward presence of God) is again on display in the Book of Daniel, commonly thought to be an amalgam of stories from during and the after the Babylonian Exile, modeled explicitly on the Joseph story of the Torah. Daniel gains power in Nebuchadnezzar's court for his skill as a dream-interpreter, but the authors of this book are not primarily interested in the mechanics of dream-interpretation; they're after something much more audacious. For when the Babylonian soothsayers flatter their king and offer to interpret the dream once he tells it to them, he refuses, demanding that they not only interpret his dream, but divine *the dream itself*. If they are truly powerful, they should not only know the meaning of the dream, they should be able to describe what the king saw in his sleep. The soothsayers are shocked: "The Chaldeans said in reply to the king, 'There is no one on earth who can satisfy the king's demand, for great king or ruler – none has ever asked such a thing of any magician, exorcist, or Chaldean. The thing asked by the king

is difficult; there is no one who can tell it to the king except the gods whose abode is not among mortals.' Whereupon the king flew into a violent rage, and gave an order to do away with all the wise men of Babylon."

Nebuchadnezzar has grown disillusioned, in other words, with socially-negotiated interiority. *Belief* in dreams is here treated much more complicatedly than in many Classical sources: it is understood to be social and powerful, but also unsatisfactory. There is a kind of acknowledgment of what we would call the cultural production of meaning, but a pained dissatisfaction with it, a search for new ways of channeling the animate force of dreams into life without the dilution required by social life. Dreams and visions still have a function – a pre-eminent one, even – but their meaning is only to be had in the rejection of the community's consensus (in Nebuchadnezzar's case, in the execution of all the descendants of the shamans). The king only trusts someone who experiences his own perceptions – and thus he makes a crucial distinction between internal perception and the designations that language can offer to that perception.

Only Daniel can tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream, and that is because he also dreams it. The Bible wisely treats this perfectly shared interior experience as an absolutely extraordinary event, a basically impossible event: "Truly your God must be the God of gods and Lord of kings and the revealer of mysteries to have enabled you to reveal this mystery," says the king, prostrate on his feet before Daniel the dreamer.

The change in attitude here from the Greeks and the shamans is in many way even greater than that between rational Aristotle and his superstitious contemporaries: whereas dreams, however disputed and re-worked, were always talked about as being something somehow sharable despite their privateness, here their defining characteristic is how they alienate us from

one another, make each one's experience inaccessible to the other (except those gifted by God, and so Daniel and the King's shared dream is the exception that proves the rule). It is a fearsome and unexpected miracle for dreams to be shared. In other words, interiority is privileged with a new kind of purity and singularity – but the price is that it reveals the social world to be a corrupted illusion.[145]

These two dreamers contain within their stories a kernel of the prophetic tradition in Judeo-Christianity: the banishment into the desert, the denunciation of kings, the need for alienation in order to prove the legitimacy of one's access to spiritual force. The New Testament is comparatively poor in dreams, but its few dreams are about withdrawal, not reintegration: the Wise Men dream that they should *not* return to see Herod after visiting Jesus, (the second) Joseph dreams he must *flee* to Egypt, Pilate's wife dreams that her husband should have nothing to do with that holy man brought by the mob. If there is a final transformation of the sanctioned exile of shamanism into a new, starker form of withdrawal, it is the forty-day dream of Jesus in the Desert: alone and hungry, he faces the ever-more dramatic delusions and hallucinations of the devil in preparation for the final preaching of his message of transformation. Unlike Joseph or Daniel, this message will not be heeded by those in power soon enough for the Prophet to be lifted up in his own lifetime. Jesus will not be made Herod Antipas' vizier, nor Pilate's counselor, nor Caesar's dream-interpreter. The crucifixion will signify instead an anguished conviction that the locus of spiritual truth and the generator of spiritual force have forever withdrawn from the communal institutions that govern this world.

[145] This is not to say that there could not have been a Greek dreamer rejected by a community, or indeed a shaman disavowed by his dream. In fact, Cassandra and certain other female characters in Greek literature (the mother of Xerxes in Aeschylus' *Persians*, for example) often fulfill exactly that role. But in those cases, the separation between the individual and the society is depicted as a fatal error – either on the part of the individual if she is indeed a false soothsayer, or on the part of the society, if it ignores a true prophesy. The Bible suggests that the separation of the dreamer from his surroundings is *absolutely necessary* – otherwise he is nothing more than a sycophant soothsayer or, like the cupbearer and baker in the Joseph story, blinded by his social concerns to the real meaning of his interior life.

The Long Sleep of the Dream in Europe

The Middle Ages and the modern West stand at the confluence of the biblical world, Classical tradition and also, in the shadows behind them, having quietly survived in folk culture, what remained of European shamanism. What happened to dreams in the confluence and transformation of these three systems? In what follows I will sketch a very preliminary and hypothetical account of the changes in the matrix of dreaming that brought the West into modernity. It is meant to open the door for future thought and is meant to be, as Foucault would say, a "history of the present" as much as a history of the past.

Jacques Le Goff's writings on the imagination in the Long Middle Ages give us a good place to start.[146] The emergent Christians of late Antiquity were initially steeped in dreams. They participated in and abetted a "democratization of dreaming" which occurred throughout the Mediterranean world, perhaps related to the breakdown of temporal and spiritual authority in the Late Empire.[147] Pagan Neo-Platonists and Christian mystics alike celebrated the potential of anyone's dream to contain powerful messages and to allow for ecstatic communication with a deeper stratum of reality. In the second century Tertullian made certain to say that *all* humans dream, and that *any* dream might be inspired by either demons or by God; he cautioned his readers not to assume that only emperors or priests dreamed importantly.[148] In the Fourth Century AD, Synesius of Cyrene denounced the old oneiromancers and exhorted all men and women to make meaning out of their own dreams, rather than rely on charlatans in the

[146] This analysis is most indebted to "Christianity and Dreams (Second to Seventh Century)," *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (University of Chicago, 1988), 192-231, but also "Les rêves dans la culture et la psychologie collective de l'Occident medieval," *Pour un autre Moyen Âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 299-306. See also in English translation, "Dreams in the Culture and Collective Psychology of the Medieval West," *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (University of Chicago, 1980), 201-204. See also Guy Stroumsa, "Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse," Jean-Claude Schmitt, "The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West," both in Stroumsa and Shulman, *Dream Cultures*.
[147] Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 201-203.
[148] Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination,* 209.

marketplace.[149] Hagiographies regularly associated dreams with the conversion experiences and ecstasies of saints and martyrs; Origen writes that "Many came to Christianity in spite of themselves, a certain spirit having turned their hearts from hatred of the doctrine to resolution to die for it by presenting them with a *vision or dream*."[150] The early hermits developed powerful techniques for disciplining the dreaming imagination in its solitude, and greatly enriched the history of inner life as a result.[151]

But a problem quickly emerged. Dreams were a key pillar for ecstatic experience and the charismatic embrace of spirit. As the Church consolidated its authority and orthodoxies, it became apparent that dreamers could not be so easily controlled. The Gnostic sects and various populist heresies placed great stress on dreams; new movements were frequently founded by prophets claiming inspiration in dreams from God. The Church had found itself in a bind: the Judeo-Christian tradition, as we have seen, denounced the old systems of dream-sharing as idolatry and charlatanism. It had advanced an ideology whereby the only remaining legitimating circumstance for the spiritual validity of the dream-world was its total and even violent alienation from political and social authority. When the Church had been itself so alienated, dreams could flourish within its community and serve as rallying points for resistance to persecution. But when the Church became the dominant political and social authority, it found itself the persecutor, forced to oppose the dream: rival Christian sects claimed legitimacy for their own ecstatic dream-life by underlining their marginal status. The Church used the rhetoric of charlatanism and diabolical paganism against the dreams of these heretics; but it could not

[149] Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination,* 201.
[150] Origen, *Contra Celsum* I.46, quoted in Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 203.
[151] See on this matter the preface to Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1957). It is my personal belief that St. Anthony the Hermit plays a key role in the history of the western understanding of solitude and imagination. See Matthew Spellberg, "The Holy Fire and the Lonely Saint," *Cabinet*, No. 57 (Fall, 2015), 55-63.

counter them by instituting its own rival form of socially controlled dream-sharing for fear of becoming like the Chaldean priests of Babylon, purveyors of institutional dream pabulum. Le Goff tells us that "for centuries this created a type of society that deserves more study than it has yet received, a society in which dreaming was impeded, which suffered from disorientation in the oneiric realm."[152] The dream was gradually banished from the general spheres of social life, and restricted to certain elite or marginal communities. The clergy, for example, were permitted to discuss dreams, and monasteries often developed rich traditions of dream-sharing and dream-recording. Here Dennis Tedlock's powerful thesis about Native American dream practices seems to apply: the more spiritual life in Christendom was hierarchized, the more dreams were reserved for the initiated, and excluded from the common life of all.

Throughout the Middle Ages the Church drew on the ecstatic experiences of certain dreamers, like, for example, Hildegard von Bingen or Julian of Norwich, to enrich, enlarge, and re-confirm its orthodoxy. But, being unable by its own ideological strictures to codify dream-life, it remained wary of visions going astray. The peasant Leutard led a heretical uprising after having a prophetic dream in the 11th century; the Cathars were known to draw strength and inspiration from their dreams.[153] So intellectuals developed an account of dreams as pollutions or confusions. Their originator was Satan and, increasingly, the human body. This led, ironically, to commonalities between the medieval account of dream-life and the pagan naturalism of Aristotle and the Epicureans. When the dream was rehabilitated during the enlightenment of the 11th and 12th centuries, it was primarily as a bodily and psychological phenomenon, not as a social and spiritual one.[154] This process would continue into the Early Modern Period, culminating with the

[152] Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination,* 211.
[153] Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 228-229. Le Goff's source on the Cathars is E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village Occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975), 608-609.
[154] Le Goff, "Les rêves dans l'Occident médiéval," 305.

work of Descartes and his successors in an account of dreams as private entities because of their burial within the body, because they are confined to psychology by the unbreachable barrier of physiology.

In these formative centuries for the West, another phenomenon came to play a key role in the working of dream-sharing and related protocols for mediating interiority. And this was the changing status of the written word. The medieval period saw the rise of a new sense of primacy attributed to writing. C.S. Lewis describes the phenomenon in a classic passage:

> When we speak of the Middle Ages as the ages of authority we are usually thinking about the authority of the Church. But they were the age not only of her authority, but of authorities. If their culture is regarded as a response to environment, then the elements in that environment to which it responded most vigorously were manuscripts. Every writer, if he possibly can, bases himself on an earlier writer, follows an auctour: preferably a Latin one. This is one of the things that differentiate the period almost equally from savagery and from our modern civilization. In savage community you absorb your culture, in part unconsciously, from participation in the immemorial pattern of behavior, and in part by word of mouth, from the old men of the tribe. In our own society most knowledge depends, in the last resort, on observation. But the Middle Ages depended predominantly on books. Though literacy was of course far rarer then than now, reading was in one way a more important ingredient of the total culture.[155]

Though his use of the word "savage" grates on our ears, and his generalizations are broad, Lewis's account is important in delineating a change in behavior that the Middle Ages signify. The rupture with the Classical world meant that a heterogenous range of sources from across earlier European and Mediterranean cultures penetrated into the present bereft of much of their original context. What texts and contexts survived were arbitrary and sometimes haphazard. A new intellectual culture was built in order to create a larger framework within which to reconcile these disparate and distant cultural sources. This is what Lewis famously called the Model of the medieval world, the "Discarded Image" haunting our own post-medieval vision of the world. The medievals, at least among the literate and in elite circles, became "bookish and clerkly:"

[155] C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 1964), 5.

> They are indeed very credulous of books. They find it hard to believe that anything an old *auctour* has said is simply untrue. And they inherit a very heterogeneous collection of books; Judaic, Pagan, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoical, Primitive Christian, Patristic. Or (by a different classification) chronicles, epic poems, sermons, visions, philosophical treatises, satires. Obviously their *auctores* will contradict one another. They will seem to do so even more often if you ignore the distinction of kinds and take your science impartially from the poets and philosophers; and this the medieval very often did in fact though they would have been well able to point out, in theory, that poets feigned. If, under these conditions, one has also a great reluctance flatly to disbelieve anything in a book, then here there is obviously both an urgent need and a glorious opportunity for sorting out and tidying up. All the apparent contradictions must be harmonized. A Model must be built which will get everything in without a clash; and it can do this only by becoming intricate, by mediating its unity through a great, and finely ordered, multiplicity. This task, I believe, the Medievals would in any case have undertaken.[156]

The Middle Ages thus signifies the beginnings – however uncertain, and however limited to certain elites in certain moments in time, however qualified by many exceptions – of an era when written artifacts come to occupy a more central and ubiquitous position in the generation of social meaning. At the center was *the Book* with a capital B, followed by the many Patristic and Classical texts taking up residence beneath it in a Pantheon of the written word. Yet, said even better, what occupies a central position in the generation of social meaning is not the books themselves, but the immense and elaborate edifice for understanding and interpreting and linking them. The work of the *ars grammatica*, of biblical typology, of allegory and hermeneutics, of commentary and Talmud, are defining intellectual events of the transformation represented by the Middle Ages.[157] This is not, of course, by any means to say that the Middle Ages lacked oral and communal cultures, nor that the Middle Ages were somehow uniform in the ways such reverence for textual culture was manifest – on the contrary, recent scholarship has shown an

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[156] Lewis, 12.

[157] For example, "For over 1,200 years, textual culture in Western Europe was governed by *grammatica*, the first of the liberal arts, which was known as 'the art [or science] of interpreting the poets and other writers and the principles for speaking and writing correctly.' But the social effects of *grammatica* were different in kind and degree from other arts and disciplines: *grammatica* was foundational, a social practice that provided the exclusive access to literacy, the understanding of Scripture, the knowledge of a literary canon, and membership in an international Latin textual community. The centrality of *grammatica* throughout *la longue durée* of the late classical to early Renaissance era is itself an astonishing fact of Western culture." Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge UP, 1994), 1.

extraordinary richness of sources detailing resistance, heresy, and skepticism, not to mention the remnants of a rich folk and spoken culture.[158] Nor do I wish to say that the classical world or other cultures have been devoid of textual practice. But it is to say that what is important for this account is the arrival on the scene of a highly self-conscious new locus of cultural authority amid older traditions, inimical to some of them, an ally to others: the text is powerfully magnified as a repository for worlds of knowledge, an idea whose influence on the West would be decisive.

In a classic study of mythtelling in the Pacific Northwest, Melville Jacobs writes that oral literature is difficult for a literate audience to understand because such an audience easily fails to understand the full extent of the artifacts being employed. The story or the literature inheres not only in the telling, but in the entire context within which it exists. In oral cultures, "narrators usually delivered relatively bare bones of their stories, while the native audience immediately filled in with many associations and feelings which a non-member of a group could not possibly have. An outline, no matter how excellently translated, is not likely to maintain a reader's curiosity because too much of the original, whether spoken or sensed, is missing."[159]

We might extend this: in a culture with an oral focus, the vast majority of a given imaginative work inheres not in a verbal work itself, but in the cultural memory that surrounds it. What is activated in the actual performance, on the contrary, is not so much content as the play of spiritual force. Aliveness emerges not in the narrative itself or the cosmology in which it participates; but they are lent such aliveness by the living presence of speaker and audience, by

[158] See, as one source among many, Steven Justice's powerful *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: U. of California, 1994). Justice argues that the peasants of the famous revolt were deeply aware of the clerkish authority but didn't cow to it; rather they tried to find ways to make use of it and its language of legal convention and political theology to justify and bolster their own cause. Furthermore, he shows, they wrote and spoke and circulated matters in English in a gesture of self-conscious democratization of *auctoritas* (13-64). He also shows how the politics and customs of rural life had their own logic, and made their way into the textual record so as to change it, rather than be subsumed in it (140-160). But what matters here, as elsewhere in this section, is that the communal world of the village, or the charisma of a rebel leader, is *not enough* to generate meaning and power: the legitimacy of the text has become too strong.

[159] Melville Jacobs, *The Content and Style of an Oral Literature* (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1959), 1.

call and response, by the continuous back and forth that generates a powerful structure of attention, of the kind that enthralled communities and kept the encroaching darkness of night at bay for millennia.

But in a culture that idolizes the authority of the text as symbol of the past, the relationship between memory and aliveness changes. For the living thing is now no longer a contribution of the present which activates a past and turns it into the pulsating performance whose content we call myth; instead the aliveness is consigned to the past, and all that can be done is the excavation of its traces in the written record it has left behind. Thus the spoken process of myth – the universe conceived as an animate proposition – moves in the direction of the written project of history, in which the universe is conceived as the result of completed actions. Aliveness can no longer be directly experienced to the same extent in cultural artifacts; it must now be re-constructed. In this sense the Long Middle Ages play an important role in our story because they give rise to the modern tradition of hermeneutics, which begins, one might say, precisely when revelation ends. Once the dictates of a Living God have been completed, the newly-historical and past-tense nature of his aliveness must be compensated for with an interpretive apparatus which offers explanation instead of presence, just as it offers counsel instead of action. Modern hermeneutics, born in the Bible before moving towards every and all textual artifacts, is a profoundly Pauline enterprise: not the resurrection, not the Second Coming, but something in-between, trying to live according to the dictates of a living universe which exists in the past and in the future, but cannot give commands in the present.[160] The brutal

[160] See Robert Meister's magisterial *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Columbia UP, 2011) for how powerfully Pauline temporality has penetrated the epistemology, historiography and ethics of the West. "Paul assured the members of his movement that everything necessary for messianic justice had already occurred, even though a time still remained in which the world would seem to go on as before. In addressing those who lived in this time between the forgiveness of sin and the coming of justice, Paul's task was to explain what it would mean to live as though everything had already changed because of Christ…Now is a time to wait in faith that the deferral of justice is necessary to allow *more* time for the world to acknowledge that everything has changed" (10).

suppression of heretics who claimed, on the contrary, to still be living within the time of revelation, was the reaction that proved the rule.

"Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn," writes Walter Benjmain in his great elegy to "The Storyteller."[161] A culture of experience has different epistemological standards, and different standards for judging authority, than a culture of text. We see this vividly manifest in the Soviet psychologist Aleksandr Luria's remarkable studies among illiterate communities in Central Asia in the 1930s. Herders were told by Luria and his team that in the North, all bears are white, and that Novaya Zemlya was in the North. Then they were asked, "What color are the bears there?" The answers were: "There are different sorts of bears." Or even, "we always speak only of what we see; we don't talk about what we haven't seen." The only concession that many of the subjects were willing to make was along the lines of: "If a man was sixty or eighty and had seen a white bear and had told about it, he could be believed, but I've never seen one and hence I can't say."[162]

An oral culture encourages a valuation of lived experience; a textual culture encourages a suspicion of lived experience, both of its ephemerality and the unreliability of its telling. Instead, it values the seemingly unchanging (unchanging because *not alive*) nature of the text, which it takes to suggest indisputability and an objectivity won by persistence in time. The very structure of this dissertation – with its hundreds of footnotes seeking to anchor the argument to the temporal authority of the written word – shows how strongly our present culture, in spite of post-

[161] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 84.
[162] A.R. Luria, *Cognitive Development, Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, trans. Martin Lopez-Morillas and Lynn Solotaroff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976), 108-109.

modernism's apparent victories, remains firmly anchored to this epistemic model, and not to the model of Luria's villagers.[163]

What happens to a dream – that paragon of in-the-moment aliveness, that world of memory and experience re-animated and made entirely phenomenological – in a culture that has moved toward the text as repository for culture and knowledge? It is forced to retreat from the reenactment and re-translation of aliveness into waking social interaction, and instead encased within the text and its many conventions. The rise of the dream as a frame for literary works in the Middle Ages (Guillaume de Lorris, Chaucer) is a symptom of this: the dream now has fled into the counter-factual realm of poetic convention; its functioning as a part of this our shared world is diminished. Jesse Keskiaho has shown, for example, that the rich dream-tradition of Late Antiquity became a culture of admonishment and warning when Patristic dream-texts came to be used as authoritative templates. [164] The snow-globe model of dreaming ascends. How exactly this snow-globe expands from its origins in medieval clerk culture to the modern literate world is a topic beyond our scope here, but an example from 1381 might help us. In that year the Peasants' Revolt shook England, and dreams were everywhere a part of it. But they were already halfway to being *literary* dreams: John Ball, one of the rebels' leaders, is recorded in the chronicles as calling "Peres Ploughman go to his werk, and chastise wel Hobbe the Robbere" – summoning to the service of the revolt the dream-poem *Piers Plowman* (or otherwise the folk

[163] We should also not see as a rebuke to this argument the common trope by which a text is "alive." This is a rhetorical formulation: its aliveness is always lent it by beings who must bring it to life. We should be wary of the ideological utopianism assumed by humanists who disdain students who do not just *immediately* become enraptured by classics like *The Iliad* or *War and Peace*. The rhetoric goes: such a masterwork should be enough on its own to interest students in the humanities! But a love of a text – or any human artifact – is only possible if it follows from a love of persons, if love has been channeled from persons toward books or artworks or artifacts, whether in that moment, or long ago (in my own experience, hearing the Greek myths out of my father's mouth while sitting in the bathtub). This is why teaching is an essential profession: the teacher is a person whose very duty is to confer, for the benefit of others, his or her aliveness onto ideas, forms, and artifacts which cannot speak for themselves, or do not fully speak the language of the milieu in which they find themselves, and so cannot, without a medium, enter into the local forms of aliveness.

[164] Jesse Keskiaho, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages: The Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas*, *400-900* (Cambridge UP, 2015), 1-14.

figure behind the poem, whose complete transformation into literary artifact is signaled by the fact that we can no longer know which John Ball is referring to; the oral tradition, if it existed, has otherwise vanished into the text). After the revolt, John Gower penned a dream-poem about it, called the *Visio Angliae*. But this highly textual artifact, maybe even more than Cicero's Platonic *Somnium Scipionis*, is less a dream of the world as it is a dream of texts: whole lines are lifted directly from Ovid, and the structure is carefully modeled on Virgil.[165]

Talking Cure, Curing Text: The Search for Modern Aliveness

These developments – the dismissal of the power of dreams by Christian orthodoxy and later by materialist explanations, on the one hand; and the development of a culture of the text in which the work of social cohesion is achieved primarily through hermeneutics on the other – these lead to a profound rupture in the social fabric of dreaming. Rousseau begins his *Rêveries* with the paradigmatic aloneness of the dream-initiate, but now there is sorrow and bitterness in it. "Here I am alone on this earth, without brother, confidante, friend, or any society but my own."[166] And as if to underline that this is unwilled, he continues: "the most sociable and friendliest of all men has been banished by a unanimous agreement." To go into the dream means you cannot get out. To enter that private place where we sense emergent aliveness, and to do so not simply for picturesque amusement, or to discuss Virgil, but to experience the full force of being – this seems to Rousseau, at the close of the 18th century, like a permanent exile. To go there means there is no method for coming back. The stakes of banishment from Paris seem very

[165] See Ian Cornelius, "Gower and the Peasants' Revolt," *Representations*, Vol. 131, No. 1 (2015), 22-51.
[166] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960), 3, my translations. Rousseau's unconscious echoing here of my own argument about Judeo-Christianity – spiritual authority is affirmed precisely by unwanted exile from the community – gives yet another nuance to Erich Auerbach's brilliant insight that "Of the men who are well known in European history, Rousseau is the first who, despite a thoroughly Christian constitution, was no longer able to be a Christian." Erich Auerbach, "On Rousseau's Place in History," *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach*, James I. Porter, ed., trans. Jane O. Newman (Princeton UP, 2014), 246.

high indeed, for it was part of Rousseau's genius to express in his self-pity a world-historical elegy for what was lost in the birth of western modernity, to show that such cultural losses would now be experienced as intimate, psychological ones.

140 years later Walter Benjamin puts this inability to share our subjective life in the simplest and most expansive terms: "It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences."[167] In place of experience, Benjamin posits, we have the anti-social phenomenon of information, which is "understandable in itself," the thing already inextricable from its interpretation, and therefore in no need of animation and enactment. "Every morning brings us news of the globe," Benjamin writes in the 1930s, "and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information."[168] More than a narrative of disenchantment, this is rather a lament at the over-hermeneuticization of the world.

What holds true of storytelling, must hold doubly true of dream-telling. In this spirit of loss through explanation we come to Freud, who confronts the dream at its most isolated and lonely moment. Dreams, he writes in the *Traumdeutung*, are "completely asocial;" they are communications by the dreamer, for the dreamer. Furthermore, the scientific account of dreams has completely suppressed their social function: "in their view," he writes with disdain but also genuine distress of the psychologists of his day, "a dream is not a mental act at all, but a somatic process signalizing its occurrence by indications registered in the mental apparatus."[169] Freud saw that the inability to share dreams was a hindrance to self and society, and he attempted to

[167] Benjamin, 83.
[168] Benjamin, 89.
[169] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon, 1965), 128.

instate a new system by which their spiritual force could be healthily integrated into social life, at least in the small social system constituted by the analyst and patient. In light of our line of argument here, it seems clearer why the psychoanalytic project took as its first object the dream, and as its first method the talking cure. In the dream Freud saw the raw proving ground for unself-conscious thought, requiring as it did that initial inducement of the threshold state between aliveness and not aliveness. And in talk therapy (*not* written therapy) he saw the possibility of a way to re-socialize this aliveness; he saw that if it was not brought back to life bodily and vocally within the intersubjective sphere, it could prove utterly destructive. "What we make use of must no doubt be the replacing of what is unconscious by what is conscious"[170] – we must find a way to create a social structure for discussing and engaging the non-reflective state of what I have been calling here the dreamlike. Freud's discovery of the concept of transference is key, in that the therapist becomes through the transference almost like a figure from a dream-enacting culture, whose own aliveness re-animates the memories and structures of the past. But now the world has become so atomized that these memories and structures – once upon a time the common matter of a culture – can only be parsed for a single person's mental structure. "All the patient's symptoms have abandoned their original meaning and have taken on a new sense which lies in a relation to the transference"[171] – we might try to translate this idea the vocabulary of our hypothesis by saying that the key is not the epistemic fact of the transference, but the ontological one, namely that the symptoms now come to life because the patient has been able to borrow the recognizable aliveness of the analyst and confer it upon the dormant and unexpressed experiences of the past.

[170] Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1966), 541.
[171] Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, 553.

In this sense, Freud may be imagined as the champion of a long-dormant tradition, inheritor of the Ongee dream-circle and the Aboriginal Songline, in which voices and bodies ventriloquize the dream-world and make it a part of the waking one. The fact that, in Freud's version of this process, dream-protocols which once unified whole communities are reduced to interactions between just two individuals – interactions which take years and years to succeed, if at all – shows just how difficult dream-sharing and all of its attendant qualities had become in Europe by 1900.

But Freud is also the product of the Long Sleep of the Dream in Europe. He could not entirely shake the snow-globe theory and rid himself of a millenium's worth of hermeneutic approaches. He speaks proudly of the boldness of the title of the *Traumdeutung*: it "makes plain which of the traditional approaches to dreaming I am inclined to follow."[172] A few pages later he adds:

> I have been driven to realize that once more we have one of those not infrequent cases in which an ancient and jealously held popular belief seems to be nearer the truth than the judgement of the prevalent science of today. I must affirm that dreams really have a meaning and that a scientific procedure for interpreting them is possible.[173]

But as I hope I have been able to show in the preceding pages, the long history of dreams as interpretive objects is not so straightforward as Freud makes it seem. It may be true that in textual culture, the traces left by dream-practice are frequently interpretations, but these must in many cases be understood as part of – even subservient to – traditions of embodiment, engagement, action and reaction.

At times, Freud seems conscious that the mind (in dreams or otherwise) can be approached as a creative space rather than an interpretable text, as for example in his late essay, "Constructions in Analysis:" "Often enough we do not succeed in bringing the patient to

[172] Freud, *Interpretation*, 128.
[173] Freud, *Interpretation,* 132.

recollect what has been repressed. Instead of that, if the analysis is carried out correctly, we produce in him an assured conviction of the truth of the construction which achieves the same therapeutic result as a recaptured memory."[174] Or again, from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: "Psychoanalysis was…first and foremost an art of interpreting. Since this did not solve the therapeutic problem, a further aim quickly came in view: to oblige the patient to confirm the analyst's construction from his own memory."[175] In these moments Freud's epistemic model for inner life is astonishingly close to the Ongee dream-circle or the Aboriginal search for someone to have dreamt of the working car: it concedes that meaning is a profound negotiation between inner aliveness and social reflection, each one shaping the other in a continuous oroubouros. But in other writings, Freud's vision of inner life is much more dogmatic, and seems to refuse this elastic give-and-take between the dream-state of non-reflection and the modifications of self-consciousness. In his sweeping theoretical schemata – his multi-dimensional interlocking maps of the mind, his vocabularies of id and ego, of repression and censorship, which came to dominate the 20th century – he helped spread another snow-globe theory of the dream-world, in which all things could be dispatched by the use of an after-the-fact heuristic toolkit.

Let me hasten to add, though, that a full reckoning with Freud's work lies beyond the aims of this dissertation, which has sought to begin its study of dreams outside the familiar parameters of psychoanalysis on the wager that this will bring to light certain unseen aspects of the dream-life. As a brief summation of my own position toward Freud, let me say again that the dynamic aspects of psychoanalysis seem a remarkable response to the attenuation of means for addressing and harnessing spiritual force within the waking life of the modern West. Many of the insights gained from its techniques are powerful and profound. And yet, psychoanalytic

[174] Sigmund Freud, "Constructions in Analysis," *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October, 1938) 385.
[175] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 12.

heuristics have exerted such a pull on the intellectual sphere – in criticism, philosophy, theory – that they have sometimes foreclosed other fundamental approaches to states of mind.

It is interesting to me, however, that the key text in which Freud departs from the wish-fulfillment theory of dreams furnishes instead an idea which parallels very closely the account of spiritual force offered in these pages. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud concedes that traumatic dreams – in which a terrible waking trauma is rehearsed, sometimes over and over again, every night – cannot merely be seen as wish-fulfillments, no matter how disguised. This leads him to speculate that the psyche must also participate in "something that seems more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it over-rides."[176] This he diagnoses as the death-drive and, in a passage that many commentators find to be the most bizarre in his entire oeuvre, he associates it with the deep structure of organic matter. "*It seems then that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things* which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life."[177]

The nature of organic instinct is to return to the originary state which is the state of inorganic death:

> It would be in contradiction to the conservative nature of the instincts if the goal of life were a state of things which had never yet been attained. On the contrary, it must be an *old* state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads. If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for *internal* reasons – becomes inorganic once again – then we shall be compelled to say that '*the aim of all life is death*' and, looking backwards, that '*inanimate things existed before living ones*.'[178]

[176] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 17.
[177] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 30.
[178] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 32.

Freud's insight here is profound: organic matter is deeply tied to the inorganic, the animate rises out of and returns to the inanimate.

> The attributes of life were at some time evoked in inanimate matter by the action of a force of whose nature we can form no conception. It may perhaps have been a process similar in type to that which later caused the development of consciousness in a particular stratum of living mater. The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavoured to cancel itself out. In this way the first instinct came into being: the instinct to return to the inanimate state.[179]

This magnificent description of something very close to what we have been calling spiritual force connects us again to the myth-wisdom of Skaay the Haida poet and the rapturous political theology of Simone Weil. In the upsurge of the world into consciousness that is dreaming, the entire process by which the layers of the world produced one another is dramatized: physical interactions generate the chemical which generates the biological which produces the psychological which creates the anthropological which generates the cultural – but this apex (at least seen from our own narrow human, western, belated point of view), still looks backward, contains the fundamental alternation between itself and its own annihilation. The curious, grand, often self-defeating position that Art occupies in the West may be due to its drawing so deeply from the well of spiritual force, from existing so far down the path of an ever more complex life that it totters ever more recklessly and dramatically on the precipice of total annihilation and return to the simplicity of the inanimate. In the modern novel the ideology of art will show itself to be just such a particularly volatile and narrow precipice, purchasing insights at the price of falling into the nothing.

Benjamin, again: "The earliest symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling is the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times."[180] The novel is the textual

[179] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 32.
[180] Benjamin, 87. Ian Watt might add that the novel annexes to its own domain the recounting of experience, creating a new idea that experience is not re-lived in the telling, but rather only in the solitary act of reading.

replacement for immediately communicated imaginative experience. The ideology of the novel gives pride of place to situations in which the world of the fiction is mistaken for reality, or reality is mistaken for the world of the fiction: Don Quixote in his waking dream of Amadis de Gaul, Cervantes writing into the second volume of his work the sham *Don Quixote* that had in the meantime been published. The ideology of the novel places great importance on anecdotes like that of readers sending impassioned letters to Rousseau demanding he admit Julie was real, or young men dressing in blue and yellow and shooting themselves in imitation of Werther. The novel wagers that a text read in solitude can induce the kind of dreamlike state of suggestability and non-negotiability, the crucible of ontological transformation, that has hitherto required a sacrificial ritual, an ecstatic trance, the sack of Troy, or the confrontation with a wolf to be achieved in waking life.

In the following part of this dissertation, we will examine the novel's gambit to be like a medium of dream-sharing in a world so complex and crowded that a shared set of cultural protocols for dream-sharing is no longer assured. The novel, we will see, is drunk on the complexity of the world that has produced it, and yet separated from that world by the covers of a book; it chafes at its own solitude and lack of access to aliveness and possession. We will see a series of novels in which dreams play an important part, not only as units within the economy of representation, but as exhortations toward an end-goal of representation. The novels which stage dreams also aspire to *become* dreams, to be shared conduits for emergent aliveness. Despite, or rather because, the novel exists in a solitary time-structure, saddled by habits of explanation, it aspires to make, on the un-living page, a living communion of imaginations, a shared dream

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Because of the constraints and advantages of this new structure – solitude, words on a page rather than face and hands, yet a hugely dilated scale of information-delivery – experience is replaced by a new construct, an ideology that might be said to replace it: realism. See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, Fielding* (Berkeley: U. of California,1964) 31-34; 35-59.

taking place between writer and readers, taking for its grand subject the mimesis of social relations.

Yet the novel as an art-form also encodes a terror at the thought that the dream-state has the power to obliterate all forms of individuation. The dreamstate threatens the delineation of distinct selves, and the creation of a narrative structure for the self in time: such delineations are the source of modern ideas of political and personal freedom, and also the prerequisite for the development of character in fiction. The paradox of taking dream-sharing as a model for the modern novel is that at once it makes the novel's project of imaginative communion possible, but also risks doing away with the distinctions between self and others upon which the novel as a genre very deeply depends.

For these reasons of history and imitation, as we will see, the novel first acknowledges the dream only as a nightmare, and then very slowly, precariously, never completely, manages to accept it as a sanctuary and workshop for creation. In this the novel's relationship to the dream is also the novel's relationship to itself.

Part II
Scenes from the Dream-Life of the Novel

Chapter 5.
Pushkin: Laughter and Social Death

We begin our study of the novel with Pushkin, especially his prose fictions and his great novel-in-verse *Eugene Onegin*.[181] In his work we'll be able to investigate further the mechanics by which the dream-state and the dreamlike become instruments of social control and ontological change. Characters in his works rise and fall based on whether they can change in response to a dream; the experiences of dream-life are tests for the experiences of waking life.

This process is by and large painful in Pushkin. His attention to the dream is characterized above all by anxiety: his intuition of its spiritual force and his sense of its role in social life are dark counterparts to one another. In the Pushkinian dream the self's relationship to others grows ever more constrictive and humiliating because the dream's power is in the ascendant but finds no relief in social life. The dream has no way to exhaust itself except by turning inward and battering the dreamer. Pushkin's dreams are nightmares in the sense I have defined in chapter three; the aliveness of the dream-world has begun to persecute the dreamer at the behest of some other agent.

The marker for this melancholy state of affairs in Pushkin is laughter; his nightmares are the kind which achieve their effect not through physical violence but humiliation, as when Ghandl the mythteller describes the mother-in-law dying from shame. Laughter haunts the dreams depicted in Pushkin's plays, poems, stories, and in *Eugene Onegin*. Outbursts of cruel laughing or grinning, almost always directed at the dreamer, precipitate a vertiginous loss of control and, at the same time, a paralysis. They cause the dreamer to be at once isolated from and trapped within his dream. The stratifying effect of this laughter – emerging from the mouths of

[181] A version of this chapter was published as "On Laughter and Dreaming in Pushkin," *Pushkin Review*, Vol. 18-19 (2015-2016).

dream characters, and battering the dreamer – is one of Pushkin's most complex and melancholy commentaries on the intersubjective nature of our existence, and the bind the people of his world – in which the restrictions of the social became ever tighter under the noose of autocracy – found their own relationships produced.

Bakhtin ended *Rabelais and his World*, his great study of laughter and social life, with one of Pushkin's dreams:

> Внизу народ на площади кипел
> И на меня указывал со смехом;
> И стыдно мне и страшно становилось…[182]
>
> The people swarmed on the public square
> And pointed laughingly at me,
> And I was filled with shame and fear

This is Grigory Otrepiev's voice from *Boris Godunov*, recounting his prophetic dream while still a novice in the monastery. Bakhtin understood the passage as being a kind of mystical historiography of carnival: "Every act of world history was accompanied by a laughing chorus," he glosses. But it is very important to recall that the dreamer here is being laughed *at* by the Muscovite people. He is perhaps a participant in the carnival of world history but, if so, he stands outside the stratum of laughter (in Bakhtin's largely positive account of carnival, it is precisely the indiscriminate ubiquity of laughter that makes it so liberating and restorative; the butt of the joke laughs with the joker).[183] Bakhtin's interpretation of Otrepiev's dream, therefore, implies a

[182] Pushkin, *Boris Godunov,* quoted in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kultura srednevekovya i Renessansa*, in *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow: Yaziki Slavyanskikh Kultur, 2010) vol. 4, part 2, 508. English references in the text are to *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 474. All further references to Pushkin in the Russian are taken from *Polnoye Sobranie Sochinenii v desyati tomach* (*SS*), Akademia Nauk SSSR: Leningrad, 1978. English translations of Pushkin's short fiction are from *The Captain's Daughter and Other Stories*, trans. Paul Debreczeny (New York: Knopf, 1992).

[183] "This experience," writes Bakhtin, "opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretense at immutability, sought a dynamic expression; it demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms. All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities. We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the "inside out" (à l'envers), of the "turnabout," of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and

disturbing hypothesis, perhaps at odds with the general joy of the carnival world: to be in a carnival where you can no longer laugh is to live in a dream, and to be in a carnival where you are being laughed at and cannot reciprocate – that is nightmare.[184]

What makes a Pushkinian nightmare?[185] It is a mass of people (or just one person) swarming, pointing, grinning and laughing *at* the dreamer. Pushkin was highly sensitive to the social aspect of dream-life, how it borrows from and twists the waking world, how it disfigures that world and unveils it at once. And the intersubjective, social nature of dream-life is best revealed through the uses of dream-laughter, for dream laughter – its shame and sense of inequality, its inability to restore equilibrium and well-being – most dramatically defines the self's relation to others. It leads to isolation and self-awareness; it casts into relief our relation to

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travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings." Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 11. It is interesting to note that the transformations and travesties of carnival bear a marked resemblance to the metamorphoses and incongruities we associate with dreaming. It seems crucial, then, that dreaming should differ from carnival in the quality of the laughter so often present.

[184] It is possible that the full implications of Otrepiev's dream for carnival eluded Bakhtin. In the study of Dostoevsky, he makes reference to this passage as well, this time interpreting it as "the same carnival logic of self-appointed *elevation*, the communal act of comic *decrowning on the public square*, and a falling *downward*." Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. and ed. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1984), 169. But Otrepiev is not a willing participant in the carnival; this is merrymaking in its violent and fateful guise. He is, if anything, part of the "ambivalence" of carnival laughter that Bakhtin elsewhere discusses, how its joy is coupled with (or engendered by) a perception of crisis. The looming sense of crisis may, by the time of the Rabelais book, make the reading of *Boris* – short and elliptical though it is – more ambiguous. The "laughing chorus" of history is a joyous, but also awful, force.

[185] The philosophical meanings behind Pushkin's dreams have been much explored in the scholarly literature. For Michael Katz, many of Pushkin's dreams can be explained by the tension between the two Russian words for dreaming: *mečta* and *son*, that is, a dream as a wish and a dream as a nocturnal vision. Michael R. Katz, "Dreams in Pushkin," *California Slavic Studies*, vol. XI, Riasanovsky et al., eds. (U. of California, 1980), 85-88. In other words, a Pushkinian night-dream is at once a vision and a desire, and the vision often upsets the desire manifest within it. David Bethea, on the other hand, has recently read at least one of Pushkin's dreams as an exposition of a Freudian family romance. David Bethea, "Taboo and the Family Romance in *The Captain's Daughter,*" Alyssa Gillespie, ed. *Taboo Pushkin: Topics, Texts, Interpretations* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin, 2012), 321-349. See also in this regard another important Freudian family-oriented reading in Caryl Emerson, "Grinyov's Dream: The Captain's Daughter and a Father's Blessing," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1981), 61-62. Richard Gregg, meanwhile, thinks of dreaming in Pushkin as a strategy for characters to consider their alternatives within waking life (Tatyana, for example, deciding whether to embrace an "unwanted spouse" or a desired, "demonic lover"). Richard A. Gregg, "Tat'yana's Two Dreams: The Unwanted Spouse and the Demonic Lover," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 48, no. 113 (1970), 492-505. My own commentary on these variant readings would be to say that in some respect they miss the forest for the trees: Pushkin is concerned with *social life and social death* in his dreams – and taboos, family romance, wish-fulfillment, are all individual components of this larger, graver preoccupation.

those whose opinions and affects we have internalized enough to rehearse them in our nighttime thinking.

His dream sequences and their strange laughter owe a direct debt to the gothic movement of the preceding generations.[186] E.T.A. Hoffman, for example, punctuates his stories with moments of malicious and terrifying laughter (though not necessarily in dreams), as in this passage from *The Choosing of the Bride*: "On the street outside he heard his two uncanny acquaintances burst into a piercing shriek of laughter behind him that froze the blood in his veins."[187]

But dreaming in Pushkin is more than just an exploration of the Gothic: it surpasses generic markers by carrying out a very distinct and very strange act of social mimesis, reimagining relations between dreamer and society in terms of rejection and thus of interdependence. Pushkin quickly discards the quaint and attenuated Russian folk dream interpretation traditions of the wedding night and of childhood, and instead embraces a much more profound account of the force in dreaming, its straddling of social life and death. In fact, dreaming in Pushkin almost always carries out a rehearsal of *social death*, the moment when a person is utterly discredited in the eyes of others and, as a result, most patently aware of their influence over him or her. As we have seen, the term *social death* is most commonly used to describe slavery and other forms of culturally-imposed bondage, in which the slave is at once

[186] R.L. Busch reminds us that the école frenetique, or the gotho-freneticist tradition – Hoffman, Byron, the early Hugo, the fantastical Balzac – came to have an important influence on Russian literature of the 1820s and 30s. It was a school that "sought to captivate or jar the reader by foregrounding features such as suspense, terror, horror and crime." R.L. Busch, "Pushkin and the Gotho-frenticist Tradition," *Canadian Slavonic Papers,* vol. 29, no. 2/3 (1987), 165. In many cases, Russian writers expanded the gothic idiom to color their attempts at realism, as Katherine Bowers has persuasively argued, though Pushkin was in general less susceptible than Gogol or Lermontov. Katherine Bowers, "Through a Glass, Darkly: Use of the Gothic in Early Russian Realism," *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 108, no. 4 (Oct. 2013), 1237-1253.

[187] E.T.A. Hoffman, "The Choosing of the Bride," in *Tales of Hoffman*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1982), 353. See the chapter on Pushkin in Norman Ingham, *E.T.A. Hoffman's Reception in Russia* (Würzburg: jal-verlag, 1974), 118-140. Though anecdotal evidence suggests Pushkin enjoyed reading Hoffman, Ingham finds that the one decisive sign of Hoffman's influence appears in *Pikovaya Dama*, of course a very important dream-text.

cast out from the community and tightly bound to it – a being forced to play a non-being while still alive.[188] But we have also seen that it bears a striking resemblance to fundamental laws of the dream. We will see now that this simultaneous alienation and entrapment is vividly represented in Pushkin's dreams, and the symbolic trigger is laughter. Why laughter is the key trigger for this mechanism can be partially explained by some of the oldest philosophical accounts of its purpose. Laughter has long been seen by western philosophers as primarily derisive: Plato says in the *Philebus* that someone ridiculous is ignorant of himself, and that when we laugh we draw attention to the vice of self-ignorance.[189] Thus it is that laughter directed at a person serves to deflate and damage that person, to put him in his place. It is for this reason, in part, that Plato suggests only slaves should be allowed to play in comedies.[190] A certain kind of laughter has long played a locking or securing function, a kind of metaphysical manacle which serves to lower a person, and in many cases render him or her socially impotent (there are of course other, gentler kinds of laughter, but these are in short supply in Pushkin's dreams).

Bakhtin repeatedly draws attention in his study of Dostoevsky to the laughter of the old crone in Raskolnikov's dream. He says that this is the intersection of the social wisdom of carnival with the psychology of the dream, that laughter is a bridging mechanism between pleasure and pain, life and death: "this same dream logic made it possible to create here the image of a *laughing murdered old woman*, *to combine laughter with death and murder*. But this is also made possible by the ambivalent logic of carnival."[191] In speaking of Raskolnikov's dream, Bakhtin explicitly signals Pushkin as a forerunner; it is from Pushkin that Dostoevsky came to learn about the dream-logic which combines death with laughter, entrapment with

[188] Patterson, pgs. 35-76.
[189] Plato, *Philebus*, 48-50.
[190] Plato, *Laws*, 7:816.
[191] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* 168.

merriment.[192] We will see that it is not at all hyperbolic to compare the bondage of dream-laughter in Pushkin to enslavement, for dream laughter constitutes one of Pushkin's most important demonstrations of the spiritual power and attendant tragedy of social relations. The autocratic and oppressive culture in which Pushkin lived afforded him a privileged view onto the social death at the heart of social life. And we will see that his intuition about how to set a dream into the context of fiction will be an early commentary on the relation of fiction itself to waking life in the era of the novel.

The Pattern of Unexpected Laughter and Social Death in Pushkin's Dreams

In all but one of the dreams in Pushkin's corpus, a laughing voice is heard or, as a metonymy, a laughing face is seen. Laughter (or a laughing grin) is in all of these cases coterminous with a terrible upset for the dreamer. It is the moment at which the reality of the dream turns against him – and by this I mean especially that other people in the dream (or simulacra of people) turn against him. Furthermore, laughter plays the catalytic role in a distinct and repeated schema, as follows: Mocking laughter causes the dreamer to be alienated from his dream, rejected by its world. At the same time, and paradoxically, mocking laughter causes the dreamer to become trapped in his dream, held in place as if by chains. This paradox – simultaneous expulsion and entrapment – is the definition and cause of social death, when a person assumes a status at once marginal and yet bonded, an internal exile.

The schema is immediately apparent in Otrepiev's dream from *Boris*, in which he climbs a high tower, stares out over Moscow, is mocked by the people, suddenly becomes ashamed and afraid – *stydno menya i strashno stanovilos'* – and then plunges down toward the ground, at once dying and waking in fright (2:201). The dreamer has ascended to the pinnacle of his dream-

[192] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 168.

world, laid out before him as an empire. But then, at its apogee, the dream turns about and is reoriented; there is a sudden dislocation of the dreaming subject caused by laughter. He is thrown out of place, dropped from his serene position at the center of the universe. He is stripped of his social status, going from king to clown.[193] The double-movement we have described is enfolded into the fall: he plunges headlong into the mass of people in his dream; at the same time, it propels him out of the dream, into a startled waking. It is important to recall that, in contradistinction to Bakhtin's exultation of the joyous crowning and uncrowning of fools at carnival, this experience is lived not by a mass of people in the city square, but by a single, agonized consciousness – the nervous, agitated, impatient Otrepiev.[194] In the city square, mockery may liberate, but in the confines of a single subjective consciousness, it imprisons.

The same schema is at play in *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. Here the knight Ruslan dreams that his beloved Lyudmila, whom he has just rescued (in waking reality, not in the dream), leaps down an abyss. Quickly he jumps after her, not knowing that, as he sleeps, she will be stolen by his rival Farlaf. He finds himself dreaming of Lyudmila's father's hall, where all are mourning her disappearance. But this somber atmosphere is quickly ruptured – not, as M.O. Gershenzon claims, by Ruslan's falling into the abyss,[195] which actually occurs earlier in the dream – but rather by a smirk. Ruslan turns to see Rogdai, whom he had earlier killed, alive among the guests, drinking with a grin: "*iz openyenogo stakana/ on, vyesel, pyot*" (from a frothing cup he,

[193] It was this demotion from king to fool by means of defenestration that Bakhtin thought so carnivalesque in this passage. It bears a marked resemblance to the medieval ceremonies in which fools were crowned and dethroned as kings of the day, ceremonies celebrated in *Rabelais and his World*. Sergei Fomichev claims that this scene also echoes a tradition of Russian folk plays in which the tsar-character is unmasked as an actor and humiliated or beaten up. It is possible, Fomichev explains, that Pushkin knew one such play, *The Comedy of Tsar Maximilian and his son Adolf*. Sergei Fomichev, "The World of Laughter in Pushkin's *Comedy*," Chester Dunning, ed. *The Uncensored* Boris Godunov: *The Case for Pushkin's Original* Comedy (Madison: U. of Wisconsin, 2006), 147.
[194] See Bakhtin, *Problems*, 126-7.
[195] M.O. Gershenzon, "Dreams in Pushkin," trans. Stephen Aspden and Ray Parrott, *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 23 (1990), 164 [originally published 1924]. This article is an important study of Pushkin's dreams, and addresses primarily the fact that the dreams contain two parts: an in-gathering of perceptual material from past memories, and a rearranging of those materials into predictions of the future. In many instances the prophetic aspects of Pushkin's dreams – which I argue are really to be understood as the moments of *social mimesis* – are triggered by laughter.

merrily, drinks) (4:67). The cheerful presence of a dead man cannot but be uncanny: I imagine, in the middle of the solemn banquet, a grinning skull. If he is not outright laughing, his *vyeselo* (merry) demeanor stands on the verge. As if on cue, Ruslan is frozen in place, unable to wake, and Farlaf steals up and kills him.

Like in *Boris*, the grinning Rogdai triggers the two-fold schema. Ruslan both recoils and falls head-first; he is isolated from the environment of the dream by the shock of seeing the dead man, and he is paralyzed in mind and body. It is as if the dream has both expelled him from its world and, at the same time, been poured over him like a cast of bronze.

In both of these cases, simultaneous expulsion and entrapment in the dream cause a mimesis of *social death*. The dreamer is, in an almost ritualistic fashion, derided and mocked by those whose approval or submission would otherwise sustain him. His ambitions are blocked by the laughter of others. In both cases, in turn, this social death heralds its truer double. In Ruslan's case, Farlaf's knife will arrive momentarily. Otrepiev's plunge into the reality of his dream is also a counterfeit death; and although the intervening time is greater, it, like Ruslan's dream, also turns out to be a placeholder, a fair copy, of Otrepiev's true death several years later at the hands of the laughing Moscow mob.[196]

Pushkin's short verse-tale "The Bridegroom," *Zhenikh,* also features a dream-sequence at the center of which is an irruption of dream laughter. The Bride narrates a dream of a wedding suddenly interrupted by "shouts, laughter (*khokhot*), singing, din and ringing." The bridegroom asks what could be so bad about such a cheerful feast and the Bride answers: "*pir vyeselo bushuyet,/ Lish' dyevitsa goruyet"* (The feast merrily clatters, alone the maiden sorrows) (4:416-

[196] Engulfment accompanied by deranged laughter also appears in Pushkin's narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman*. The hero Eugene bursts into laughter after seeing his beloved's house swept away by a flood, and it is this unexpected outburst that signals his estrangement from society and absorption in delusions: *I vdrug, udarya v lob rukoyu,/ Zakhokhotal*, *SS*, vol. 4, pg. 283. After this laughter he becomes a paranoid recluse and, as always, this death in the social world prefigures an actual death.

417). Once again, the very moment in which laughter – and the by-now taunting *vyeselo* – appears, the dreamer herself is cut-off from the rest of the dream. The stakes are high and once again justify our use of the vocabulary of social death, for a moment after the alienation comes the entrapment: she dreams she is grabbed and killed by her eldest brother, who then cuts off her hand. Once again the dream proves predictive, although this time more obliquely: in waking, the bride suddenly notices her own ring on the bridegroom's hand, indicating he's the one who years ago kidnapped her. He is then shamed and strung-up.

This constellation of events – antagonism between dream and dreamer, entrapment of dreamer in the dream, mimesis of social death and foreshadowing of physical and spiritual death – is also present in two of Pushkin's gothic pastiches, where the dark structure of the dream is replicated in the gothic structure of the entire story. In these stories certain parts of the schema are transposed onto waking life, as if to suggest that the dreamlike mode can extend beyond the boundaries of the dream itself. But the causality is still quite clear. In "The Coffin-Maker," *Grobovshchik,* from *Tales of Belkin*, a coffin-maker or undertaker is humiliated by a joke at a neighbor's party (6:81-87). Cowed by what he perceives to be the malicious laughter of the other guests, he returns home in a drunken stupor, and tells his servant that he will have a party of his own, inviting all of his dead clients. In the middle of the night, they arrive, filling his home with corpses. One rushes to embrace him, and, in his horror, he is thrown to the ground. He then awakes with a terrible hangover to find the house perfectly in order. Laughter, although transposed into waking life, causes the initial rejection; when its effects are replayed in the dream, it engenders simultaneous imprisonment (the corpse wrapping his arms around the coffin-maker) and alienation (the fall backwards out of the dream). Both of these are explored through

the imagery of death, and are clearly symbolic of the destruction (however buffoonish in this case) of social position.

The schema is treated in a more complex fashion in Pushkin's other great gothic semi-parody, "Queen of Spades" (*Pikovaya Dama*). Here, the signs reveal a dream-state rather than just a dream. More precisely, they indicate to us that a dream is happening in waking life – and that it will ultimately become madness.

When Hermann approaches Countess N.'s open coffin (having been the one to have scared her to death in the first place), he is shocked to see the deceased cast a laughing glance at him: "*myertvaya nasmyeshlivo vzglyanula na nyevo*" (6:232). He reels in surprise, and pitches to the floor. This mocking glance, this intimation of cruel laughter, is a pivot-point for the novella. It is the straight gate through which Hermann passes from reality to a waking dream. Until then, the uncanny and supernatural have only been implied and are easily explained away; after that moment, they are unmistakably present on the plane of the story. The laughter of another person, followed by a pitching backwards, a literal alienation, causes the dream to rise up and swallow Hermann – and, as we see once again, it will lead him to social death.

The fall is the key to indicating the onset of the dream and its attendant characteristics. Gershenzon reminds us that the "headlong downward plunge" is the sign of the transition from the mnemonic to the prophetic in Pushkin's dreams; Michael Katz, too, remarks that Pushkin must have felt a falling sensation often in his own dreams, so ubiquitous is it in his dream-depictions.[197] At the first appearance of the queen of spades, when the countess's face screws up into a grin, *Hermann falls backward to the ground*. Even if this does not literally signal the onset of a sleep-dream, it is the Pushkinian marker that we have entered a domain where subject and world are no longer reliably distinguishable. Malicious laughter, social humiliation, and fall are

[197] Gershenzon, 167.

the crucial signs. That the rehearsal for Hermann's own death also begins at this moment is hidden in plain sight by the fact that the malicious smile belongs – just as in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* – to a member of the already-dead.[198]

That night he is visited by the ghost of the countess, who does in fact reveal the secret of the cards: he is to bet on the three, seven and ace on three consecutive nights. From then on Hermann's desire, his dreams, and his waking life bleed into one another in a kind of improvised act of monologic, masturbatory, pseudo-dream-sharing.[199] His mind is over-determined, and his perceptions are pushed towards dreamlike metamorphoses: a pretty girl looks like the three of hearts, a fat man resembles the ace. His actual dreams, too, are made on the same stuff. In his sleep, the three blooms as a "*grandiflora*," the seven appears as a gothic gateway, and the ace as a huge spider (6:234). Pushkin gives us in Hermann a figure who perceives a continuity between the dream and waking – but doesn't know what to do with it. He see no warning in it, he sees no wisdom in it; he indulges in the dream as a vessel for stoking and intensifying his waking fantasies of wealth and winning.

We see here that the horrible grin has signaled a total immersion of Hermann into his dream – from here on, there is no distinguishing his life from his hallucinations. But for our schema to hold fast, Hermann must at the same time be expelled from the dream. That he is in fact expelled – betrayed – by the dream is only made clear in the final lines when, having placed

[198] Incidentally, a person whose social death has occurred long ago, when she gave herself to the Comte de Saint-Germain in exchange for the secret.

[199] For an account of the interwoven nature of dreams and desire in Pushkin's Russian, see Katz's "Dreams in Pushkin." For Katz, the key to Hermann's dream, and to many of Pushkin's dreams, is the tension between the two Russian words for dreaming: *mečta* and *son*. Hermann's dreams, according to Katz, are various attempts by his subconscious (although Katz is somewhat coy in using the term) at fulfilling his aspirational dream (*mečta*) of becoming rich. The thrust of "Queen of Spades" for Katz is the fact that the *mečta* is never fulfilled in reality through the *son*. Thus, Hermann is punished by being trapped in reiterating his own, mistaken *son* – which, rather cryptically, Katz calls "a punishment designed to fit the crime." His conclusion is that Hermann's "dreams (*sny* and *mečty*) have come to naught. He resides forever in the realm of his deranged imagination" – which although true, seems to ignore the fact that there is a clear continuum in this story (as in countless other cases in the history of literature and in reality) between madness and dream. Katz, 85-88.

his bets, he discovers he has accidentally laid money on the Queen of Spades. The queen screws up her face and grins (*usmyekhnulas'*) just like the old countess; Hermann screams, *starukha! The old woman!* (6:237). We realize now that, as always in Pushkin, the turning of the dream against the dreamer is exactly the same act as its merging with the dreamer. The prophecy has completely absorbed Hermann, but from the outset it has also *betrayed* him. The phantasm of the old woman consumes him and yet also misleads his hand.

True to our schema, this double act of becoming and betraying is an instrument of social death. Hermann is ruined financially; he loses his one chance at finding a suitable wife; he is disgraced. Hard on the heels of social death follows psychic death. The last we hear of him, he has lost his mind and is confined to a mental hospital, muttering rapidly: "three, seven, ace; three, seven, queen!" (6:237).

The queen of spades is the necessary final term in the sequence: it is only because both ace and queen are drawn by the dealer that Hermann loses all of his money. She seals the envelopment of the dreamer by nightmare; she is the equivalent to Ruslan's paralysis and Otrepiev's pitch off of the balcony.

It is important to observe that these dreams, while rehearsing social death, are also more literally prophetic: they tell the future (although not perhaps as clearly as we, readers who already know the ends of Pushkin's stories, perceive them to).[200] Pushkin's association of dreaming and social death with future prediction can be seen somewhat more clearly in Grinyov's dream from *The Captain's Daughter*, but it is important to understand that even in this story, in which a quite obviously symbolic and predictive dream appears, that dream is not

[200] After all, Hermann's predictive dream is false; the Coffin-maker's is at best a confusion of past and future; and *Ruslan*'s is about reversal and foreboding but is, at best, not so much a prediction of the future as the enabler of the future (insofar as it permits Farláf to attack Ruslan by paralyzing him).

merely a vehicle for prophecy and symbolism. It is, as always, a highly wrought phenomenon, with the dense texture and schema typical of the Pushkinian dream.

Before the dream even begins, Pushkin goes out of his way to establish, as in *Pikovaya Dama*, a world continuous with dream-reality. A snowstorm overtakes Grinyov and Savelich, wiping away the perceptual conventions governing reality and casting the whole world in an estranging light (snow, as Caryl Emerson has shown, and as we will see again in *Eugene Onegin*, has special connections to dream life).[201] The appearance of the mysterious and metamorphic muzhik – the coachman is at first unsure if he is a tree or a bear or a wolf – further contributes an aura of constant, unexpected transformation. All of this prepares the stage for the dream that springs upon Grinyov as the rocking carriage puts him to sleep. He dreams he has emerged out of the storm and returned home, where he finds his mother in distress, a crowd of people, and his father on his deathbed:

> I go down on my knees and raise my eyes to the invalid. But what do I see? Instead of my father I behold a muzhik with a black beard, looking at me gaily. I turn to mother in bewilderment, saying, "What's the meaning of this? This is not father. And why should I ask a muzhik for his blessing?"
>
> "It's all the same, Petrusha," answers mother; "this is your father by proxy: kiss his dear hand and let him bless you."
>
> I could not agree to that. The muzhik jumps off the bed, draws an ax from behind his back, and starts flourishing it in all directions. I want to run, but I can't; the room is filling with dead bodies; I stumble over the corpses and slip in the pools of blood. The terrifying muzhik calls out to me kindly, "Don't be afraid, come to receive my blessing." (6:269-270)

The prophetic quality of the dream is immediately apparent to those who have already read the rest of *The Captain's Daughter*: for the muzhik who guides Grinyov through the snowstorm and

[201]For the importance of snow in Pushkin's dreams, see Emerson, "Grinyov's Dream," 61-62. Furthermore, I note that there are certain natural experiences which, without our completely knowing why, immediately evoke, as if analogically, the dreamlike, especially those which fracture the perceptual field, like flickering leaves, pouring rain, and falling snow. Pushkin makes great use of this fact in *Onegin*. *See* section iii, below. The dreamlike nature of fractured perception is treated in much greater detail in my essay, "The Chimeric Element in Perception: A First Exploration," 92-116.

then haunts his dream will turn out to be Pugachov; he will repeatedly spare Grinyov's life and even play a kind of perverse father-figure to him during his violent rebellion.[202]

But once again, the double schema is crucially present, and, in fact, the prophetic strain must be accessed through its doors (there is much more also going on in the dream, especially having to do with the curious vocabulary of *posazhennyi*, the stand-in, but that is not of direct concern to this essay).[203] The dream catches Grinyov off guard, its logic is suddenly no longer his own when the muzhik looks at him merrily – *vyeselo*, the same unsettling word as in *Ruslan*. And, as it does, it also ensnares him deeply: he is trapped in the room with the rampaging Pugachov, he cannot exit and, as in Pushkin's other dreams, he *falls*. Once more, this double motion of isolation from and insertion into a dream-world is coupled with a rehearsal for death: for not only is Grinyov witness to terrible slaughter in his dream, he is also, unwittingly, rehearsing a later scene in the novella when he is pardoned by Pugachov on the way to the gallows.

The muzhik's skullish grin is the gateway not only to the merging of dreamer and dream, but also to projection into the future. This is the moment when the dream shifts from what had been – the home, conflict with the father – to what will be. What can we (or Pushkin) mean, without recourse to mysticism, by the claim that a dream portends the future? Perhaps we mean that dreams are concerned with *ended things* rather than beginnings: in a dream, the constituent material of the past is reassembled into a situation that has no parallel in the waking present. But perhaps we mean something else as well, namely, that dreams, if not actually prophetic, are highly predictive. The stakes of the Pushkinian dream, as we have repeatedly seen, are social

[202] This is the reading given by both Gershenzon and Katz. "The dream in *The Captain's Daughter* provides information about the two main characters, Grinyov and Pugachev, and develops the narrative connection between the personal and historical themes" (Katz, 90). "It is impossible to explain the second part of the dream rationally; it obviously contains prophetic elements" (Gershenzon, 166).
[203] See Katz on this matter, pg. 90-92.

survival and social death – and, following those almost inevitably, physical survival and physical death. In this way, these dreams may suggest that physical survival is almost impossible without social survival, and thus evaluating present chances for the latter are tantamount to unveiling future chances for the former.

The dream in Pushkin affords a privileged window into social relations; amid the confusions and carnage of dreaming, a window into the deep reality of our relationship to others is opened. The dream longs to play a part in the communal life; it begs the dreamers to find some way to integrate it into the waking world. In the opening sequence of *The Captain's Daughter*, Grinyov depends deeply on Pugachev; without the muzhik, he and his manservant are unable to make it through the snowstorm. This is a fact of his life that is, at that moment, defining of his present options. As far he is concerned, it may even be defining of his future. It is this frightening, identity-upsetting dependence on the muzhik that Grinyov stages for himself in the dream. This is not so much explaining the future to himself as it is working out ramifications of the immediate present, playing with and rearranging its constituent parts (how strange to be lost in a snowstorm where an unknown peasant is more important to your immediate survival than all the fathers and mothers in the world!). Our future (or at least a good part of it) inheres in the social relations available to us, in the allies, dependants, superiors, and enemies we might gain; Pushkin intuits, as we have been suggesting, that dreams are a place where we can rehearse our interactions with these figures. Perhaps Grinyov's dream is like a chessboard on which a player is practicing for his next match. He arranges the many pieces – muzhik-guide, father, mother, servants, observers –into multiple combinations, acting out possible situations for the play of real life (where of course he will have to play *with* someone, and will have to account for unanticipated moves, moves which do not originate in his mind). But why it is that the dream, of

all forms of consciousness, allows us to play with the pawns and pieces of our own social future will only become clear in Pushkin's greatest and most elaborate dream.[204]

The Laughter of Possession: Tatyana's Dream

This great dream is Tatyana's in the central chapter of *Eugene Onegin*. It is an immensely complicated aesthetic and thematic achievement, and we will only grasp its full significance by moving slowly through its many layers. The day of the dream, it snows for the first time that year – a late snow, on the 2nd of January. The world is thus estranged from itself and made new. It is the second half of the Christmas season, the dark rather than sacred half, the moment for portents and pagan visions. Pushkin gives us, in his prologue to the dream itself, a careful catalogue of folk-divination ceremonies practiced by young Russian women. Much has been made of the relation between these incantations and the dream that follows hard upon them.[205] I will note only that it is not merely the logic of this folk divination that mirrors dreaming, but also its phenomenology. The mutation of lumps of wax when poured into cold water for fortune-telling closely resembles the mutability of objects within dream. Looking at the moon through a mirror in order to see your husband's face is much like the oneiric blurring of two friends into a single composite person. Walking out into the street to ask a stranger his name, thinking that this will be your future husband's name too (Tatyana asks and hears in reply the appallingly rustic "Agafon" – a little Pushkinian joke), replicates the experience of the strange being

[204] There is, two my knowledge, only one other important dream in Pushkin's corpus. The dream of Maria Gavrilovna in "The Blizzard," *Metel'*, is a nightmare suffered on the night before a clandestine marriage, which foresees the intended bridegroom's death on the battlefield. Although it too is concerned with the power and terror of social life, it is, again to my knowledge, the only dream without any echo of malicious laughter in Pushkin's oeuvre.

[205] See among others, W.F. Ryan and Faith Wizgell, "Gullible Girls and Dreadful Dreams. Zhukovskii, Pushkin and Popular Divination," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 70:4 (Oct. 1992), 647-669, as well as Olga Peters Hasty's study, *Pushkin's Tatiana* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin, 1999), especially pgs. 140-144. Much has been more generally written about the dreamlike nature of folk traditions – the work of Carl Jung, for example, is almost entirely predicated on the seemingly analogous modes of operation between dream consciousness and folk tradition.

interchangeable with the familiar (an unknown muzhik becoming a father, for example). We may thus have in Pushkin's staging of these traditions, a nod to the remains of attenuated, archaic techniques for sharing dreams and dreamlike states that had come down in Russian folk culture of the early 19th century.

But Pushkin will take us beyond the superstitions these rituals evoke to some more directly ontological form of dream-sharing. As Tatyana lays herself to sleep, she is transported to a world of austere, snowbound beauty. Commentators have made much of the interweaving of exact details from other scenes. Nabokov, for example, sees in many lines of the dream-sequence echoes of the verse-forms of earlier chapters, suggesting, for example, Tatyana's disastrous encounter with the object of her desire, Onegin.[206] Commentators, too, are quick to fixate on the great bear who rises up from the snow almost immediately – perhaps a surrogate bridegroom, a symbol of the corpulent general she will later marry (Nabokov), or some kind of sexual emblem.[207] But in doing so they lose sight of the fact that the first four stanzas of the dream (Pushkin devotes a total of eleven to it, or 154 lines of the poem) are primarily a cold, exquisite description of a winter landscape. An imaginative reality is magnificently evoked in Pushkin's poetry so as to generate a copy in our minds of the world in Tatyana's.

Tatyana enters a reality in a state of radiant flux. Neither sublime in the model of a mountain, nor exactly beautiful like a flower, the wintry patterns of starlight, ice and rushing water which surround her are the torchbearers for a frequentative perceptual state, built of phenomena which constantly renew themselves. She is encircled by a halo of imperfective verbs and trembling adjectives - *shumit*, *klubit**,** siyayet; khrupkoye,* the misty-gray *sedoye* – which give the impression of a world cracking open, ready to reconfigure at any moment.

[206] Vladimir Nabokov, *Commentary to* Eugene Onegin (London: Routledge, 1964), Vol. 2, 503.
[207] Nabokov, 504. See also Hasty's chapter on Tatyana's dream.

It's true that Tatyana feels fear in this world: first at the stream which she must cross over two slim, icy poles, then at the bear who offers his paw to help her across and doggedly follows her, like a lackey, as she runs through the trembling forest. But her fear is not so great, nor her feet so fleet, that the dream-voice cannot acknowledge the pines that stand still in their stern beauty (*nakhmurennoy krasye*), or the linden, birch and ash bespangled with starlight. We are perhaps meant to pity Tatyana that in her fear, she can't simply attend to the world of beauteous-becoming her mind has manufactured – there are pressing concerns latent in her own sense of becoming, concerns of desire and the fear and despair of rejection, that she must confront in her sleeping life as she has in her waking one – but we cannot honestly claim that she ignores this icy creation either. For without her perception, we would have no access to the details of the dream, and so she inhabits a world at once astonishing and terrible. Even the bear is emotionally doubled: he is Tatyana's pursuer but also somehow, as Pushkin writes, her docile footman and enabler.

Perhaps none of this should be surprising: all the attentive students of dreaming – Freud first and foremost among them – have noticed that dreams are charged with a great many contradictory emotional and spiritual valences. But the dream at the center of this novel is not just or only a boiling down of its matter to symbols, but rather an intensification of the descriptive and world-creating mode of the fiction itself.

We might say that the ambivalence in these first four, lyrical stanzas of the dream dramatizes the conflict between Tatyana the gardener of the inner life and Tatyana the maiden thrown into the anxieties of the social world, both by her love for Onegin, and by the onrush of courtship and responsibility that accompanies the arrival of the marrying age in a woman of her social standing. Tatyana is a solitary figure in her waking life – her pose is by the window, alone,

or withdrawn into a book. She has no use for gossip or games; as a child, she would not even play with dolls. The tranquil vigor of the imagination – the stillness that shakes, glistens, trembles – is the work of her early life, and she has sculpted a beautiful double for it in her dreams. Her declaration of love and Onegin's condescending rejection, however, have injected into this tranquil world another kind of urgent trembling, that of desire, both erotic and social, that of a fear of unfulfillment, and also of disgrace and humiliation. That this desire is also part and parcel of Tatyana's world of aesthetic tension cannot be doubted. Just before her dream, Pushkin explains that in terror, too, she found pleasure, one of Nature's great paradoxes.[208]

But another archive of mutable images replaces the fluidity of snowfall and escape when the bear, having finally swept her up in its maw, deposits her gently on the threshold of a hut. She peers through a crack in the door, and sees a circle of monsters: "*za stolom/ sidyat chudovishcha krugom.*"[209] The famous list contains all the laughing monsters of the carnival spirit, the strangeness of dream, and the grotesqueries so beloved by Bakhtin: the horns and muzzle of dog, the head of a cockerel, a crayfish straddling a spider, a witch with a goat's beard. The jovial death's head, the chimera, the *Mischwesen* – all proportions and figures are outsized, displaced, and conjoined in an edifice of interruption.[210]

A certain element of hilarity manages to suggest itself in spite of Tatyana's fear. The dancing windmill, the pouting skeleton, the goose-necked death's head proudly flaunting its red hat – this is a send-up of the vanities, nightmare reduced to mockery and placed in a festal

[208] *Evgenii Onegin,* chapt.5, stanza *7*; *SS* vol.5, pg. 88.
[209] *EO*, chapt.5, stanza 18; *SS vol.5, pg. 93*.
[210] A crucial figure for Bakhtin in his celebration of carnival is the grotesque manuscript illumination: "The free designs [on the border of manuscripts] represent chimeras (fantastic forms combining human, animal, and vegetable elements), comic devils, jugglers performing acrobatic tricks, masquerade figures, and parodical scenes – that is, purely grotesque, carnivalesque themes." Bakhtin, 96.

setting. These monsters are engaged in the carnival pursuits of feasting and drinking, making merry and dancing.[211]

In other words, the dream has the dethroning, intercalating energy of a festival – and yet it inspires terror in its only spectator. This terror is compounded when we are given to understand what is at stake. Onegin, we learn, is the host of this feast, and Tatyana, her curiosity piqued by this fact, leans farther into the door, only to send a gust of betraying wind into the room. It is not long before Onegin singles out the pair of eyes behind the door. What happens next I will cite in full, in both Russian and English, as the following stanza is a unit of poetry devoted to presenting, in its most naked form, the pattern manifest in all of the other dreams we have seen in Pushkin.

> И страшно ей; и торопливо
> Татьяна силится бежать:
> Нельзя никак; нетерпеливо
> Метаясь, хочет закричать:
> Не может; дверь толкнул Евгений:
> И взорам адских привидений
> Явилась дева; ярый смех
> Раздался дико; очи всех,
> Копыты, хоботы кривые,
> Хвосты хохлатые, клыки,
> Усы, кровавы языки,
> Рога и пальцы костяные,
> Всё указует на нее,
> И все кричат: мое! мое![212]

[211] Nabokov sees the inspiration for the windmill in a burlesque comic opera Pushkin once saw in Petersburg and later adapted into a play; and the skull's red cap, he claims, might be an echo of the habits of a club of feasting carousers Pushkin once frequented (Vol. 2, 507). That there is a carnival satire of the established world in this passage is, again according to Nabokov, further confirmed by the "guffawing, barking, whistles, claps." This list belongs to a series of grating catalogues of sound, found throughout Pushkin's poem, which mock the ugly noise made by crowds of supposedly respectable people, whether at a name-day party in the country or at a princely ball in Moscow (2, 95). Nabokov also shows us that the combinatory nature of these dream-demons is paramount when he remarks laconically, "Pushkin had considerable trouble in choosing his animals." In earlier drafts, Nabokov points to "horns and a bear's muzzle," "a mouse's head," "a donkey's head," "tiger's mane," "rat paws," "hawk nose," "red eye," "a proud proboscis," "a fish with feet," "half crane, half mole" (2, 506).

[212] *EO,* chapt. 5, stanza 19; *SS* vol.5, pg. 93.

And fear assails her, in a panic
She tries to flee…but feels too weak;
In anguished writhing, almost manic,
She wants to scream…but cannot speak;
Eugene throws wide the door, revealing
To monstrous looks and hellish squealing
Her slender form; fierce cackles sound
In savage glee; all eyes turn round
All hooves and trunks – grotesque and curving,
And whiskers, tusks, and tufted tails,
Red bloody tongues and snouts and nails,
Huge horns and bony fingers swerving –
All point at her and all combine
To shout as one: 'She's mine! She's mine!'[213]

This is the moment at which the dream turns decisively against Tatyana (even the bear, as we have seen, had helped Tatyana while menacing her). Onegin pulls open the door, she tumbles into the room, and the dream is flooded with malicious, even hellish, laughter. The dreamer, who has been suddenly rejected by the dream, is equally as suddenly made inseparable from it: the moment of social death. Invisible chains lock her in place; her field of vision is drowned in the list of monstrous appendages crowding the doorway. And then, the monsters shout in chorus – as if they were the pealing voice of the dream itself, confirming what we have learned about laughing dreams in all of Pushkin's stories – *Moyó! Moyó! Mine! Mine!*

What follows is an amalgamation of desire and prophecy. Onegin dispels the monsters and declares Tatyana *his* possession – *moyó,* he shouts, in the neuter (as if to say *it* is mine), compounding Tatyana's object-like integration into the dream. The monsters disappear. He takes her to bed and, at this moment, Tatyana's sister Olga and her betrothed Lensky appear, intruding upon the intercourse of the dreamer and dream-projection. Onegin draws a knife and stabs Lensky – an exact foreshadowing of Chapter 6 of the novel, except that Onegin's weapon in the duel with his former friend will of necessity be a pistol.

[213] For the English here, I use James Falen's verse translation of *Eugene Onegin* (Oxford UP, 1995), 118.

Why does the energy of the incongruous and potential turn tragic in Tatyana's dream? The answer, once again, is to be found in the fact that the tension in this dream, while of course overtly and conventionally erotic, is essentially social in nature. The dream is perfectly acute about the surrounding circumstances of Tatyana's social life – and yet there appears at first no window for its insights and intersubjective structure to pass into waking and re-shape the social world. Pushkin understands how profoundly intersubjective dreaming is – or, to be more precise, how mimetic of intersubjectivity. Tatyana recreates in her head a map of her relations with others, both specific others, that is with Lensky and Onegin, and also with intentionally obscured figures, monsters and animals whose life-force is anthropomorphic but whose actual identities are beside the point (there are hints of Buyanov and other bores, but the anonymity is paramount). For Tatyana confronts here, perhaps for the first time, the fact of others in the world – not just the others she knows or reads about in novels, but all others. In other words, she encounters in her dream the unfathomable and, perhaps for her, *unbearable* fact that millions of other consciousnessness, as full as her own, exist, and what's more, are *instrumental in making her exist*. Here is another instance in which the solitary status we ascribe to dreaming is not entirely accurate, for although it is true that no other mind shares our dreams, our dreams are full of placeholders for other minds. The more we become aware of these others' presence in our own minds, the more we become aware of their constitutive role in the creation of consciousness. In dreaming, their presence in our minds becomes explicit, palpable: they take a bodily form, and interact with us on the surfaces of the inner life. Pushkin, who died for the sake of honor and the social standing it entailed, understood this deeply, and made it the center of his literary dream-life. This is why, over and over again in his writing, the moment of separation between the dreamer and the other inhabitants of the dream is also the moment when they cleave together. As

we are rejected by others, we become fully aware of how chained we are (for good and for ill) to their expressions of approval and disapproval. Insofar as there exists agency in Pushkin's world, its opposite is clearly the paralysis that follows scornful laughter and public shame. It is perhaps because this shame appears without alternative or exit in dreams (unlike, say, the duel in real life) that they are so associated with a lack of agency.

This too, is a powerful reflection of the world in which Pushkin existed, touched by Enlightenment ideas of the individual and his autonomy, and yet suffocated under extraordinary political oppression. Joe Peschio documents the highly personal policing of the self under Nicholas I: the Tsar was known to write his gendarmes directly to complain of Pushkin wearing a tailcoat when everyone else at the ball was in uniform.[214] In such a world it was impudence and the flouting of social norms – the multivalent *shalost'* of Russian play, pranking, humiliation – that offered the most powerful form of resistance, and so also merited some of the severest punishments (in some cases administered by the Tsar himself).[215] Pushkin's was a culture straddling modern, individual-based notions of guilt and autocratic forms of restriction and shaming. In such a culture the ribald undoing of social stricture was the only window onto the true nature of the relationship between self and society. This upsetting of social norms that outlined the true nature of social norms was the waking echo of the monstrous mixing-up and simultaneous illumination of social bonds in the dream-state.

It might be argued that Tatyana's dream, with its elaborate mimesis of social forces, anticipates the polyphonic Dostoevsky Bakhtin so celebrates. When Bakhtin writes of a "genuine polyphony of fully valid voices," he might be speaking of Tatyana's dream, except that *voices* is

[214] Joe Peschio, *The Poetics of Impudence and Intimacy in the Age of Pushkin* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin, 2012), 18.
[215] As when Nicholas I summoned the rascally poet Polezhaev to his *kabinett* in the Kremlin over a burlesque poem, and forced him then and there to join the army. The Tsar saw to it that he was hounded from miserable posting to miserable posting until he succumbed to tuberculosis. Peschio, 3-4.

not quite the word: instead, there is a polyphony of fully valid *forces*, a sense that each relation to a person (or, since this is a re-creation of a dream, each image of a relation of a person), creates a valence in the psyche, with its own charge and timbre. If we were to borrow the phenomenological vocabulary of the philosopher Max Scheler, we would say that Tatyana has fully come to understand the power of *Mitgefühl* – fellow-feeling – in precisely the moment when it has been denied to her. If as, Scheler believes, our self is constituted by our various sympathetic (that is, emotional) reactions and interactions to others, then we fall into a psychic abyss when those reactions no longer have traction. Scheler argues that when human relations turn cruel what is actually happening is that *Mitgefühl* has given way to *Nachgefühl*, that is, to mere vicarious feeling, sensing someone else's feeling without accepting any of the responsibilities such an act entails. We sense someone's subjective state, but we refuse to accept (or cannot accept) responsibility for acting appropriately in response to it. Scheler says that a malicious person or torturer refuses *Mitgefühl* in favor of *Nachgefühl*: an aggressor *senses* his victim's pain (in fact, his success as an aggressor is predicated on his ability to know when and how pain is being inflicted), but at the same time he resists the impulse to embrace his inclination to care for a person in pain.[216]

Tatyana is a voyeur in her own dream, and then a victim; she reaches out for Scheler's *Mitgefühl*, only to be suddenly treated by the other dream-characters with brutal *Nachgefühl*. She watches a feast at which she is not a participant, at which the laughter excludes her. And the power of this exclusion – this alienation and sudden awareness of her status in relation to others – shocks her into clairvoyance. In other words, she sees, as if in a self-hating mirror, her own *Nachgefühl*, and is finally given the impetus to convert it into *Mitgefühl.* Once she has reached

[216] Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath (Hamden, CT: Archon Books), 1954, see esp. pages 12-36.

this moment of *social death*, the deep nature of social relations, and her duties toward them, suddenly becomes clear to her. Her infatuation with Onegin will implicate Olga and destroy Lensky. The dream has shaken Tatyana from her self-centered romanticism, and in its place comes a moment of terrible and banal lucidity – the pressures of the outside world make her relationship with Onegin impossible, and immediately have consequences for all the other wills and minds in her small countryside world. The privacy of dreaming, in other words, is the stage upon which Tatyana unveils to herself the interdependence of her actions, and thus manages to understand their larger implications (though still not enough to prevent Lensky's death). Dreaming such a dream and confronting the world through its parameters is the most telling sign of the courage and sensitivity embedded within the fabric of Tatyana's character. (We can now see to what extent Grinyov's clairvoyance is likewise social in nature. It is a revelation of a true set of social relations, of sincere Schelerian *Mitgefühl*, made clear by the erasure of his self-deceptions: he realizes that he must no longer seek his father's approval, and that later he must swallow his pride so that his Masha can intercede on his behalf to the *Matyushka*-Empress Catherine).

This is not to say that the dream in Pushkin is a symbol for the social world. Rather again it is an enterable mimesis, an immersive imitation. Its inhabitants do not *represent* something (we cannot say definitively that the monsters are Buyanov or old Larin or the Id, or for that matter that Lensky or Onegin symbolize something beyond themselves). Rather, taken together, they *embody* the social energies and anxieties that Tatyana refuses to heed when awake, but which in a fundamentally psychic sense make her who she is. If Tatyana truly were prepared to risk everything (including Olga and Lensky and her parents' reputation) for Onegin and suffer the consequences she would never need to dream such a dream. But Tatyana has to rehearse for

herself the power of the social world – and she makes a perceptive study of the consequences involved in abandoning it. In this way, the dream and its implications also stand against the romantic (and operatic) interpretation of Tatyana as a helpless, lovesick girl. The woman who dreams this decisive dream understands very clearly the meaning of living outside society: it is no whimsical Byronic adventure. The dream is the chrysalis out of which the adult Tatyana will emerge (and simultaneously, as Richard Gregg suggests, it is the place where Pushkin the romantic poet gives way to "Pushkin the chronicler of contemporary *mores*").[217] She is destroyed in her dream to be re-born in waking; she's able to figure out in the dream what could have only been realized too late in waking life. This new, emergent Tatyana will reach her full maturity as the princess who, in the final moments of the book, lectures Onegin from a position of ennobled sadness on duty and honor.

The fundamentally social aspect of dreams for Pushkin (which is laid bare by scornful laughter) also explains why his dreams always vacillate between horror and satire. They are meant to be genuinely macabre and frightening (even the dream of the "The Coffin-Maker," although a ludicrous gothic parody, has something legitimately sinister about it). But, at the same time, all of his dreams have an element of the absurd and mocking, yet another layer of laughter, this one directed at the text. The monsters of Tatyana's dream are buffoons. Grinyov's dream has a plot taken straight from Commedia dell'Arte, with a dying father switched out for an imposter just before the final blessing. *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, even at its most serious, borders on farce. "The Queen of Spades" winks at its own melodrama. This is because Pushkin's subject, both in dreams and beyond them, is the problem of social life – a problem which might be phrased as *the tyrannical stranglehold of the quotidian*. Every little thing in Pushkin's social world is a matter

[217] Pushkin "knew that in real life the alternative to the *mariage d'amour* was neither vows of celibacy nor a pathetic death, but the *mariage de convenance*; and his novel exhibits a sustained awareness of the fact." Gregg, 494.

of life-and-death – a nod, a glance, a harsh word, the possibility of an inheritance, a card game (the first inklings of the underground man, furious at the officer walking in his way, are felt here).[218] Pushkin's strategy for representing social life is is to display the immense power it invests into the smallest of acts, dramatically expanding the scope between cause and effect. It is for this reason, I hope, that my use of the term *social death*, with its attendant connotations of enslavement, will not seem exaggerated when applied to the mental lives of Pushkin's aristocratic dreamers. For they were in a profound sense slaves to social life, members of an enslaving, autocratic society, caught up in a strange state of being, at the mercy of others even when they most seemed alone. Pushkin's insight here was made possible by the oppressive milieu of Nicholas I's Russia: but it is my belief that Pushkin nevertheless thought this (ambivalent, painful, necessary, delicious) imprisonment to others, greater or lesser depending on the circumstances, was a universal fact of human experience.

Tatyana's dream is the culmination of Pushkin's oneirology. It is, as Nabokov observes, an ingathering of material from across the stanzas of *Onegin*. But it is also the distilled essence of all of Pushkin's other dreams: Grinyov's snow, the coffin-maker's skeletons, Hermann's spider and wicked hag, Otrepiev's laughing multitude, even (as Sigismund Krzhizhanovsky points out) the very language of *Ruslan*.[219] It is the clearest and most complex statement in Pushkin's corpus that dreaming is the theater for the private performance of social experience. Chapter 5 of *Onegin* argues that dreaming possesses a certain privileged mystical clarity: that it makes clear the highly spiritual fact that we build our selves from the outside in, by making

[218] Consider for example, the appalling complexity of emotions, recriminations, ironic dismissals, and sexual jealousies involved in Nicholas' appointment of Pushkin as a *Kammerherr* in 1833. Irina Reyfman, *Rank and Style: Russians in State Service, Life, and Literature* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 55-67.

[219] Krzhizhanovsky gives us a quite remarkable schematization of the parallels between the language of Tatyana's dream and Ruslan's dream in "Po strofam 'Onegina'", as well as an account of the stanza-by-stanza accretion of the monstrous, of the unending raising of the stakes. Sigismund Krzhizhanovsky, "Po strofam 'Onegina,'" in *Sobranie Sochinienii v pyati tomach* (Saint Petersburg: Symposium, 2006), vol. 4, 416-449.

partial and imperfect (and often ingeniously transformed) copies of materials, affects, and behaviors from those people (and, to a lesser extent, things) we see around us, and stitching them together after our own inscrutable logic of synthesis. When we integrate these copies of external forces – primarily shards of the crystal faces of other beings – into our inner lives, we never entirely dispense with the bonds they retain to their originals in the outside world. We examine these bonds – their strength, their weaknesses, their breaking points – every night in our dreams.

The absorption of the animating force of the world into the mind is, as we've seen, a sacral experience; here it becomes literary through the attenuations of sacrifice in the tragic mode. There is an echo of the Girardian *pharmakos* in Tatyana's dream, but she emerges from it to reverse course and achieve for herself a generic ending not of tragedy, but comedy: she leaves infatuation behind, makes a good marriage, and so secures her life. But the dream's tragic valence lingers. The good marriage is not a guarantee of happiness, and simultaneous alienation from and entrapment in the social will suffuse waking life right until the final stanzas. The novel for Pushkin remains the genre of uneasy compromise. His dream wisdom can prevent catastrophe, but it doesn't pretend to offer exaltation.

Chapter 6.
Tolstoy: They Share Not What They Know

Two complementary ideas may be said to have been with Tolstoy from beginning to end. First: that the means for true communion between human beings has broken down in the modern world. And second: that some technique must be developed or reclaimed so that such communion might happen again. The first of these ideas endures the monumental span of his life steadfast and unchanged: from his earliest writings to the living polemic that was his own death, Tolstoy was loyal to his sense of what it looked like for a man to be uncommunicative with his fellow humans, and he never tempered his disgust for it. The second idea, on the other hand, was capricious and underwent a dramatic series of transformations through his life. He tore through ideologies and convictions, emotions and reasonings, rituals and games, art-forms and religions, species of love and belonging, the family, the commune, the congregation, in the search to find one which might serve as an adequate medium for repairing the fallen bridges between each of us. These two positions were complementary, but for their holder, they were also self-cancelling. Tolstoy's anger at the loss of human intimacy was his bulwark against the suffering it caused; his search for a new form of such intimacy sucked him back into social misery.

The self-cancelling nature of these intimately linked philosophical positions explains, in part, Tolstoy's paradoxical consistency. On the one hand, this man began life as a princeling and a rake and ended it as a prophet and would-be peasant, in-between partaking of a curious interlude, later dismissed by him as wasted time, when he produced two of the supreme achievements in the history of the novel. On the other hand, this was a thinker whose early diaries contain, sometimes almost word-for-word, the same sentiments that would metastasize into the late polemics against art and bourgeois society, and in favor of radical abnegation and

moral simplification. Tolstoy's relentless imagination was without equal in its capacity to diagnose the crisis of human social life, its ten thousand drolleries and self-destructions, its earnestness as well as its wretchedness. He is at his most powerful when displaying the genuine pathos to be found in the attempt to overcome the loss of true interpersonal contact, the way humans of Tolstoy's world – the modern world, the 19th-century world – come close to overcoming it, but inevitably fail in the attempt. Yet Tolstoy's monumental insight was also his failing, for he could not face in his own intellectual development what he feared in his novels: namely that this compassion for the lack of communion was also the *limit* of possible communion, given the circumstances of his era and milieu. His novels attain one apogee (many would say, *the* apogee) of what is possible within the classical paradigm of the novel – in fact, it's more correct still to say that they *created* the paradigm – and yet they express a continuous and unworkable frustration with its limits. Tolstoy could condemn what he had done, could aspire to an alternative, but he could not see a real method by which to attain it for himself and others. When the possibility of a way forward failed him, he turned backward, toward a traditional life of pre-industrial work and classless faith, and embraced an atavism whose charisma belied a set of moral and epistemic impossibilities.

That there was a tense duality at the heart of Tolstoy's imbricated life and work is a commonplace in the critical tradition. Donna Orwin points to Apollon Grigoryev's 1862 essay on Tolstoy's early works as the first time his contemporaries noticed it; there the opposition is said to be between a ruthless analytical power, able to knock down all idols, and a desperate desire to find a true ideal, immune to analysis.[220] Aylmer Maude draws attention to the fact that Nikolai Mikhailovsky had already written in 1875 on *The Right and Left Hand of Count Tolstoy*,

[220] Donna Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880* (Princeton UP, 1993), 3.

predicting crisis as the outcome of the contradictions at play in the novels and the work.[221] Boris Eikhenbaum claimed the division was best characterized as an irreconcilable conflict between particularity and generalization; Isaiah Berlin, of course, by the all-considering fox and the single-minded hedgehog.[222]

What follows is an attempt to justify another vocabulary for this duality, to say that the aesthetic and epistemic divisions in Tolstoy were matched by two aspects of his sociology, or, better yet, by his vexed attempts to understand our duties toward one another, and our failures to live up to them.

In all of this the dream is a key connector. It is both an emblem for the aspirations of Tolstoy's aesthetics, and for his analysis of the individual's relation to others, and therefore the individual's purpose in the world. As I hope to show, wherever in Tolstoy's work the breakdown of human communication butts up against the faint possibility of its renewal, the dream intrudes. Dreams appear, as we've seen in chapter one, in the earliest known piece of fiction he wrote. They are everywhere in his diaries. At least two pieces of writing – an unpublished story from 1858, and an essay on the oppression of the poor from 1911 – are called "Dream" (*Son*), and in each Tolstoy emphasizes their origin in real dreams. Dreams play decisive roles in the great novels, and also serve as lynchpins in many of the later fables. "It is difficult to name a work by him where a description of sleep and/or a dream does not play a vital role in the unfolding of the plot," writes the neurologist and historian of Russian medicine Alla Vein.[223]

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[221] Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, Vol. I: First Fifty Years (Oxford UP, 1930), 380.
[222] Boris Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Sixties*, trans. Duffield White (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1982). Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953).
[223] Alla A. Vein, "Leo Tolstoy's Theory of Sleep," *Sleep Medicine* (Historical Issues in Sleep Medicine), 9 (2003), 322. Janet Malcolm makes the still more dramatic claim that "If the dream is father to imaginative literature, Tolstoy may be the novelist who most closely hews to its deep structures." Janet Malcolm, "Dreams and *Anna Karenina*," *New York Review of Books*, June 25, 2015.

The dream in Tolstoy offers the possibility of a prophetic lucidity in inner life, unclouded by the corruptions of the social world, an inner life true to itself (afraid or happy, miserable or innocent), fully alive and not stifled or rendered pat by unspoken rules. Dreams in his work are not merely the privileged sites for understanding the social, they are also sometimes *even* sanctuaries for the self against the social. Pushkin had carried dreams into the novel as nightmares unveiling the unwilled power of intersubjectivity over the self; Tolstoy enlarged the literary vocabulary of the dream to straddle both such alienation and also now refuge from it. The dreamer is not just withdrawn from the world of his dream; sometimes he is protected from the world *by* his dream, though usually only for a short and unsatisfying time. In "A History of Yesterday," the autobiographical narrator slips into a dream after a long and tedious game of conversational cat and mouse with a flirtatious woman; in *A Confession*, the laborious meditations on Tolstoy's own intellectual errors give way, in the final page, to a luminous dream-vision in which prose comes as close as it can (while still being prose) to wordless understanding; across *Anna Karenina* it is dreams that display the terror and possibility everywhere left unspoken by polite society. And it is in *Anna Karenina* that the novel as an art-form most explicitly reaches a crisis in its relation to dreaming, both aspiring to something more than Pushkin, and failing even what his characters had achieved. For Vronsky and Anna both dream the same dream – nearly identical, urgent, frightening – opening up a real possibility for a new negotiation of social life, intimacy and interiority. And yet they *fail*, at the decisive moment, to share it with one another, and so to make use of it in their lives.

It is one of Tolstoy's great gifts to be able to animate, in prose, the world of the dream, to open up a window onto its imaginative aliveness. Far from the cliché that other people's dreams are boring to listen to, the dreams described in Tolstoy's prose manifest as vivid flashes in the

darkness. His techniques for dream-description – their economy, and the particular standpoint of dreamer in relation to dream and dream-narrator (which we will soon discuss in detail) – are distillations and summations of his achievements as a writer of imaginative prose. It was his intention to make prose itself an invisible lens through which life could be seized: to undo the textual tyranny that had put the dream and other forms of conjured aliveness to sleep in the European communal sphere after the Middle Ages. Instead, the novel, though a textual artifact, would be a transparent one, a mere conduit for encoding and transmitting aliveness to the reader, reading as an act of incubation or impregnation in images and feelings. And yet if dream-sharing is the representative project for his art, then Tolstoy sometimes forgets, when thinking about his larger project, his own tragic attitude towards sharing imaginative life. For the dreams in his writings can be said, by and large, to *fail* as instruments of social communication; the social structures conspiring to banish spiritual force are stronger than any individual's reserve.

Further still, his powerful attacks on linguistic and intellectual forms of understanding belie his own prowess as an artist of language; he is at his most exalted when claiming to have left behind language for the direct communication of feeling from one being to another. It's maybe not uncommon for writers (and many other artists) to denounce – or at least lament – the limitations of their own art-form. But Tolstoy is peculiar in that he glorifies the moment of implicit denunciation as the height of representation. When he rejects language, as in scenes where emotional and physical upwellings overwhelm the consciousness of his characters and obviate their need to speak, or when he corrals the prejudices and distortions of language into a corner and makes as if to banish them with a decisive judgment, then (or immediately thereafter) does he most exalt human expression – and in those moments does his own art attain some of its greatest triumphs. In Tolstoy, the attack on the medium is closely bound up with the apogee of

the medium. Such a methodology was bound, in an aspiring hedgehog, to generate an aesthetic and epistemic impasse.

Tolstoy's crisis was one where representation is repudiated at its most successful moments, and it led down two paths: one, a terror about the close border of life and death, the characteristic of an unregulated imagination that has bucked existing representational structures and knows no others. This is the crisis elaborated in "Diary of a Madman" and in the worryings of the pseudo-Tolstoys Levin and Pierre, in all but the last paragraph of *Ivan Ilych* and in all but the final dream of "A Confession." The second path, not without its own serious problems, is a retreat to an earlier culture, a culture which might be said to take as its model of representation something like dream-sharing. This was, Tolstoy believed, the culture of peasants and nomads and farmers, where dreams and visions are told and retold as immediately comprehensible units of experience. Tolstoy forces us to confront a serious problem in the entire project of tracing the cultural history of dream-sharing: if dream-sharing has been lost in the modern West, and this loss has been somehow detrimental, can the models of the past in any way help us with the present, or will the models of the past only serve to remind us painfully of what we will never attain? Can we only ever fantasize about them, or exoticize them, without learning from them?

I will argue in these coming pages that in Tolstoy's work, especially in *Anna Karenina*, the asking of these questions came to a head. In that novel Tolstoy made a monumental effort to answer them in the affirmative: *Anna Karenina* is an attempt to make the pre-modern connection to a communal dream-world – at least as Tolstoy understood it – possible within modernity. When after writing the novel (or in fact, while still writing it), he judged this project to have been a failure, he decided to turn his back on modernity altogether, and return to a pre-industrial world where such techniques, he thought, had flourished, and would again.

Pushkin saw the alienated aliveness of the dream – that intensified and truer mirror of waking alienation – with a tragic resignation. Tolstoy, who could glimpse in dreams a real alternative to alienation, raged against his inability to carry it over into waking life. And so, yet another paradox: if Tolstoy is among the modern west's most beautiful dreamers, he is also a violent and destructive dream-sharer. Where his predecessor reached an accommodation with the social for his dream-heroine Tatyana, Tolstoy found himself in battle against the forces that would suppress and re-shape the reality of the dream; he forced Anna K., at bayonet point, to lead the suicidal charge. Pushkin's dreams are instruments by which the self seeks and can even sometimes achieve balance – in this, they are metonyms for his works. Tolstoy's dreams are instruments by which the self reaches for unity – and their failure to do so records Tolstoy's dissatisfaction with the results of his artistic efforts. The question before us is whether his oeuvre is to be counted as a Pyrrhic victory in that fight to re-take the dream for modernity that is the history of the novel, or whether the terms Tolstoy set for himself made defeat inevitable.

The Conflict in Embryo: "A History of Yesterday"

Tolstoy wrote "A History of Yesterday" in 1851 at the age of twenty-two, and it was not published until after his death. But this piece of juvenilia contains in embryonic form the structure of this alternation between rage at the breakdown of social communion and attempts to remedy it; and it signals the proximity of this conflict to the dream. The work begins with a disarmingly straightforward statement of its intentions:

> I am writing a history of yesterday not because yesterday was remarkable in any way, for it might rather be called unremarkable, but because I have long wished to trace the intimate side of life through an entire day. Only God knows how many diverse and diverting impressions, together with the thoughts awakened by them, occur in a single

> day. Obscure and confused they may be, but they are nevertheless comprehensible to our minds.[224]

"The intimate side" is the "*zadushevnaya storona,*" the side of the soul, the individual's peregrinations through the internal world. Tolstoy continues: "If they could be recorded in such a way that I myself – and others after me – could easily read the account, the result would be a most instructive and absorbing book; nor would there be ink enough in the world to write it, or typesetters to put it into print" (279). How remarkable, the baldness of these lines: in this first paragraph of Tolstoy's first work – a sketch he never published – already comes a programmatic statement for his ideology of the novel, its representational aims. The inner experiences of men and women should be recorded in such a way that they could be read first by the experiencer himself, and then by others after him. A work of this kind, in other words, carries out two necessary steps: it makes of an individual's experience a representation that the individual himself can process, and then, the making of such a representation makes possible in turn the understanding of his experience by others. Implicit in this statement is the hypothesis that experience on its own is illegible, even to the person experiencing it, and that there does not yet seem to be an agreed-upon way to make experience legible, and the writer has to figure it out.[225] A doubling is necessary: I must describe myself *to* myself, and only then can I describe myself to others. In this world – Tolstoy's world, the bourgeois world scene through the legacy of Rousseau – the *I-am* consciousness gains its value as the conduit between the inner life and others.

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[224] Tolstoy, "A History of Yesterday," 279. I give quotations in this chapter in English. The Russian was consulted, when necessary, in the standard *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe iizdatel'stvo, 1928-1958), unless otherwise indicated (see references below in particular for editions of the correspondence with Strakhov and *Anna Karenina*).

[225] Though the inescapability of textual culture in mediating these processes in our world is made manifest by the figurative charge of the word *legible*.

The semicolon in Tolstoy's sentence also straddles the self-cancelation that characterizes this project from the outset: "nor would there be ink enough in the world to write it, or typesetters to put it into print." To truly render into language the totality of a day's inner experiences would already exceed the entire apparatus of written culture. Writing sets itself up to fail: it could expend all the ink in the world, creating books that Henry James would call "loose and baggy monsters," and still fail in its essentially infinite and numinous aim to capture the texture and feel of human aliveness.

"However, let us get on with the story," the narrator says, for we must in this vision of art *do*, not write, even when all we are doing is writing. The narrator recounts playing cards the day before yesterday ("Here I must apologize for going back to the day before yesterday. But then, novelists devote whole chapters to their heroes' forebears"). Cards, he observes, have become a mere stand-in for conversation. Immediately his analysis goes in two directions. On the one hand, conversation fails not "from any deficiency in intelligence, but from egotism" – no one can talk about anything but him or herself (perhaps they have not been able to explain themselves to themselves yet, and so they convey only their individual, outward-facing consciousness, not the inner sensations that might be of such interest). But Tolstoy explains that the making of card-playing into a poor conduit of social life is also lamentable because it deprives card-playing of its real function. No one plays cards any more "from a passion for the game than one who dances the polonaise does so from a passion for promenading" (279). We have yet to see in this dissertation such a frank description of the damage a sterile social life can do: it precisely deadens experience by making it over into a thing to be handled and interpreted. To dance the polonaise, in Tolstoy's polemic, is no longer to move according to the living dictates of your body, but rather according to an empty symbolic structure with coded

motivations. The polonaise strips the life from promenading, and makes it over into a pro forma object, whose only meaning can be secondary, in interpretation and social calculation (whom will I partner with in the second figure, etc.).

Let us suspend for a moment any obvious objections to this dismissive treatment of dancing or card-playing, so we can follow Tolstoy's logic to its full elaboration. "There are also conversations between people who are interested in the same thing, and where no one disturbs them, but such cases are even worse. Each speaks of the same thing from his own viewpoint, transposing everything to his own key, and measuring everything with his own yardstick" (280). And then there are conversations that do not even rise to the level of a desire, however narcissistic and impossible, for self-actualization. These are the ones where we talk just because we are supposed to, and they are "the same thing as a swallowtail coat, a calling card, and gloves – a matter of decorum" (280). If the narrator is not outright horrified at these deadening arrangements, it is because they are approached with cynicism, even a raffish nihilism. Thus when he speaks of the woman who is sitting with him, he says that she has "the bad habit" of flirting with her husband in public; but he adds that the flirting "means no more to me than if she should kiss the stove or the table. She plays with her husband as a swallow plays with a blossom" (281). The language of social death and spiritual force is here in a debased and jaded form: the husband is three times demoted from being to thing (stove, table, blossom), and each demotion is met with a yawn. For social convention is so deadening that even scandalous acts of communion, like flirtation, have become chaste and so lose their particular animation. (Hence Algernon's parallel complaint in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, furnished with yet another

metaphor of thinghood: "The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public").[226]

If there is anything the young Tolstoy has preached thus far, it's that words fail. And indeed the only window for an alternative is opened up by a curious subsequent phenomenon of a different order: "She very carefully drew something which I could not see, lifted the chalk, a little higher than was necessary, and placed it on the table" (282). The woman has transmitted a message onto the felt of the card-table, but the message cannot be read: it is the gesture itself that has suggested some communication, not the content of the message being drawn or written, which in fact cannot be seen (the chalk here anticipates both Tolstoy's own marriage proposal, and Levin's in *Anna Karenina*). Thus meaning is once again displaced toward the body's affirmation of its own aliveness and *not* toward any written signs. If writing is partially rescued, it is writing as human action, as making in the world.[227] Still more importantly, there is a powerful draw to the image of the chalk, its apparent suggestiveness and visual distinctiveness. Here is a first example of the effects achieved by Tolstoy's *against-language* aesthetic: the babbling cynicism of these pages enables, by contrast, a momentary transcendence of descriptive narration; this apparent presentation of being as a body signaling its own meaningfulness comes off, by comparison, as above the mere language of the narrator's neurotic monologue. The trick, at once clever and very broad, is to make some language *not* seem like language, by drawing attention to how clumsy and overt the rest of language happens to be.

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[226] Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest,* Act I, *The Importance of Being Earnest and Four Other Plays* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003), 15.

[227] These lines touch ever so lightly on the powerful debate running through the 19th century on the nature of work. Hegel and his successors wanted to see it as a creative enterprise; Nietzsche would turn this on its head, seeing it as a stultifying project. Tolstoy was deeply read in these debates, which in the end he rejected outright, preferring a model of work requiring only the barest of spiritual justifications. See "The Problem of Work" in Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, trans. David E. Green (New York: Columbia UP, 1964), 263-288.

In this case, the transcendence is tightly circumscribed and quickly punctured. The affair of the chalk only draws attention to a change in the woman's face, which the narrator is at pains to describe: "At this moment who could say what it expressed? There was pensiveness and mockery, and pain, and a desire to keep from laughing, dignity and capriciousness, and intelligence, and stupidity, and passion, and apathy, and much more." Indeed, there is everything, and therefore nothing, such that language, in its proliferation, turns out to be once more impotent before the complexities of a facial gesture, with its direct drawing on the inner reserves of a person's aliveness. In a moment of awkward exchange, the narrator describes a secret, inaudible conversation that finally begins between himself and the woman. Here looks and feelings create a telepathic link between the two figures – the first of such conversations which will appear throughout Tolstoy's oeuvre, all the way through to his late masterpiece *Hadji Murat*.[228]

But now that supra-lingual communication has been achieved, what do the narrator and the woman commune about? Why, of course, about their inability to communicate. "I know why you repeat what you have already said. It is awkward for you to be alone with me and you see that it is awkward for me…That is true, your observation is correct, but I don't know why *you* feel awkward." Even when there is a true meeting of the minds, no one knows what to talk about. And there is another problem: this half-hearted piece of mystical communion takes place wordlessly, yet it can only be described to us in prose. Its translation into prose is in its own way as much an estrangement of the essence of this communication as is the out-loud conversation being carried on between the narrator and the woman, which consists of them saying "So that's how it is," and "Oh yes," to one another ad nauseam, while their eyes play cat-and-mouse with each other's insecurities.

[228] See, for example, the conversation between Hadji Murat and Vorontsov in Chapter 10 of the work.

First Search for a Dream-Alternative: "History of Yesterday," Continued

The contrast from the beginning of "History of Yesterday" to the end could not be greater or more abrupt. From the social life in a parlor we move to the solitary experience of sleep. And yet, for the great evangelist of social communion and human love, what a surprise: "Sleep in all its phases is a wonderful thing: the preparation, falling asleep, and sleep itself" (291). Just as the tedium of the day has declared itself so simply and directly, so the delight of nighttime makes itself known. Such a line would have been impossible in Pushkin, who seems so invested in the social order of waking that the distance between it and the dream can only terrify. In Tolstoy, this distance delights before it terrifies; sleep offers relief and refuge. From what? Tolstoy's answer in this first work is once again devastatingly succinct: relief from consciousness. "All the pleasures of the body are destroyed by consciousness….How annoying! Why did God give us consciousness when it only interferes with life? – Because moral pleasures on the contrary are felt more deeply when one is conscious of them" (291). Tolstoy's position here hearkens back to many of the claims from the first part of this dissertation: namely that dreaming (or sleep) resembles a state without meta-reflection, of greater attention than waking life, for it is attention unencumbered by the self-consciousness of thought. We are saddled with consciousness because moral life depends on self-reflection; in the dream-state we are deprived of the *satisfactions* of morality for we do not think *about* our thoughts, cannot judge them as good or ill; instead we bring them to life as acting agents.

Tolstoy's thinking here faintly echoes the reading of Genesis put forward by Heinrich von Kleist in his great essay on puppets, "Über das Marionettentheater." According to Kleist, grace, that state in which movement is perfectly natural and harmonious, in which the body moves unhindered according to the laws of gravity and the universe, is possible only in

conditions of unself-consciousness. Puppets can achieve it, as can animals. But humans have been cursed with consciousness – or more precisely self-consciousness, meta-reflection – and this has prevented them from being graceful, for by thinking of things, they destroy their ability to simply and naturally do them. In humans there is a lag between intention and action, and this lag ruins the fullness and completeness of action. This, says Kleist, is the meaning of the story of Adam and Eve. In eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they entered self-consciousness (as Tolstoy underlines, consciousness also means moral life) and so lost all the "pleasures of the body"[229] – an idea that of course resonates with the distinction between reflective and unreflective thought we've been probing in this work. Tolstoy returns expansively to this idea, first explored in the tiny arena of sleep, in *War and Peace*. There he asserts: "Only unconscious action bears fruit, and a man who plays a part in an historical event never understands its significance. If he tries to understand it he becomes ineffectual."[230] Kleist adds an addendum which Tolstoy, as we will see, could never fully accept: if you have lost the grace of unself-consciousness, the only way forward is ever greater self-consciousness. Grace, Kleist says, is possible in total unthinking, and in infinite thought, in the puppet and in God. Tolstoy's unwillingness to embrace the momentum implied by this idea will play a key role in his post-*Karenina* crisis.

Sleep for Tolstoy is an Edenic state, a return to a non-self-conscious time, when the mind exists in a certain kind of innocent relation to its world, graceful, thoughts and actions in sync (of

[229] Heinrich von Kleist, "Über das Marionettentheater," *Sämtliche Erzählungen und andere Prosa* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984), 331-339. That is, to have grace to be either a puppet, or to be a god.
[230] For the centrality of this idea in Tolstoy's thought and in *War and Peace* in particular, see Gary Saul Morson, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in* War and Peace (Stanford UP, 1987), 126-128. Morson links this to Tolstoy's idea that it is the "swarm life" which creates history, namely the whole aggregate of human social life acting according to the patterns traced by each individual's pursuit of his or her objectives, quite in the manner of our earlier analysis of ant colonies. It is as if, for Tolstoy, when humans are seen in their greatest aggregates, consciousness dies away, and something once more like Julian Jaynes' bicameral civilization – all people, acting below or beyond their willpower towards a single aim – arises.

this we will see a much more elaborate description in Proust). Aliveness arises in every direction: "It always seems as if some one or something is grabbing me or something cold or hot is touching my bare leg" (291). Tolstoy describes sleep as such an active and creative state, filled with a kind of agency, and he seems to think the loss of consciousness increases the radius of possible action, or at least makes the relationship between feeling and doing less obstructed. In this he stands strongly apart from the prevailing materialist account of much mid-19th-century European science, in which, as Alla Vein reminds us, sleep was considered a state of paralysis and passivity; the brain, it was thought, ceased to communicate with other parts of the body. Tolstoy, on the contrary, talked about "the particularly active work of the brain" during sleep in his diaries, a phrase that would have been considered laughable in some parts of the empirical scientific community until 1929, when Berger's experiments showed considerable brain activity during sleep.[231]

The tendency to personify the world in dreams returns when the narrator is tickled to remember the anecdote of a woman who was offended when someone came by and told her, "*Quand je suis passé chez vous, vous étiez encore dans les bras de Morphée*," for she assumed that Morphée was a real man and a lewd insinuation was being made. This last anecdote comes in the midst of a long paragraph detailing the narrator's thoughts as he falls asleep; or rather, this is not a detailing, but a representation, a picture in words of the transition from words to images that characterizes the beginning of the sleep state. It might be the first experiment in what could be called stream-of-consciousness narration in Tolstoy (so famously mastered at the end of *Anna Karenina*). But the fact that this passage begins in the transition toward dream (and away from consciousness) gives us some sense of the inadequacy of that term:

[231] Vein, 320-321.

> A splendid expression, *dans les bras*; I picture to myself so clearly and elegantly the condition *dans les bras*, – and especially clearly the *bras* themselves – arms bare to the shoulder, with little dimples and creases, and a white chemise discretely open. – How wonderful arms are in general, especially if they have a little dimple! – I stretched. Do you remember, Saint Thomas forbade stretching. He is like Diedrichs. We rode with him on horseback. The hunting was fine. Gelke rode beside the district police officer hallooing to the hounds, and Nalyot was doing his best, even on the frozen mud. How vexed Seryozha was! He's at sister's. – What a treasure Masha is – if only I could find such a wife! Morpheus would be good on a hunt, only he would have to ride naked, or else you might find a wife. – Oh, how Saint Thomas is tearing along – and the lady has set off to overtake them all; she stretches out in vain, but then that wonderful *dans les bras.* – Here I suppose I went to sleep completely. – I dreamed that I wanted to overtake the young lady, suddenly there was a mountain, I pushed it with my hands, pushed it again – it collapsed; (I threw down the pillow) and I came home to eat. Not ready yet. Why not? – Vasily was swaggering loudly (it was the mistress of the house asking from behind the partition what the noise was, and the chambermaid answering her; I heard this, that is why I dreamed it). Vasily came in just as everyone wanted to ask him why it wasn't ready. They saw that Vasily was in his undershirt and that there was a ribbon across his chest; I became frightened, I fell on my knees, I cried and kissed his hands; it was as pleasant to me as though I were kissing his hands… (291-292)

What might be called stream-of-consciousness is here more like *stream-out-of-consciousness*, the tipping of the reflective thinking in language toward thinking as embodiment. The narrator's thoughts wander at the onset of sleep; they generate the images commonly known as hypnagogia, Greek for "leading-into-sleep"; and, true to their word, they carry the narrator in that direction.

Tolstoy uses this passage to illustrate his theory of sleep. It progresses, he claims, in three phases: first, consciousness is wiped away; then, feeling; and finally, the body itself disappears in the deepest of dreamless sleeps. The dashes that pepper Tolstoy's sentences may betray some sense of the difficulties the young writer faced as he attempted to translate the dream into the resistant medium of language; they betray a restlessness with the limits of representation when it comes to the progress of the dream-life. The passage proceeds by a set of jumps, trying to render within the constraints of narrative the "hidden recesses outside of time and space" experienced in

the dream.[232] Arms are on display, and they move – so now the mind thinks of stretching and the French tutor Saint Thomas. Saint Thomas bears some resemblance to Diedrichs, a hunting companion. Now it's natural to imagine the hunt, and Seryozha, and that he's at their sister's. Then a jump to the beautiful face of the sister. And a jump – dangerous, slightly incestuous – to wanting a wife like one's beautiful sister.

The idea here is to use writing to achieve a hint of a non-narrative, non-linguistic form of reality. The phenomenologist and psychoanalyst Ludwig Binswanger makes the claim that waking life takes the form of *Leben als Geschichte*, life as history or narrative, while the dream renders experience into *Leben als Funktion*, life as function, as pure enactment.[233] Waking life is structured narratively; dream-life offers a vision of reality without the architecture imposed by a distanced self-consciousness. Tolstoy senses this acutely, even very extremely, for he goes on to claim that the dream as we remember it only constitutes itself upon waking: "In the moment of awakening we unite all the impressions which we received while going to sleep and while asleep (a person almost never sleeps completely) under the influence of the impression which caused us to awaken."[234]

Tolstoy, as we saw with the mother's dream at the beginning of chapter one, is extremely suspicious of interpreting dreams in any way. "If one of those persons who are in the habit of interpreting dreams had dreamed my dream," he says about his stream-out-of-consciousness, "here is how it would be told. 'I saw Saint Thomas running and running for a long time, and I said to him: 'Why are you running?' and he said to me: 'I am seeking the bride.' – So you see, he will either get married or there will be a letter from him…" Tolstoy's suspicion of interpretation

[232] Irina Paperno, *"Who, What am I?" Tolstoy Struggles to Narrate the Self* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2014), 19.
[233] Ludwig Binswanger, *Traum und Existenz* (Berlin: Gachnang & Springer, 1992), 135.
[234] Tolstoy, "History of Yesterday," 293.

is also a suspicion of telling, of *Leben als Geschichte*, which always has an interpretive structure built into it, beholden to the ulterior motives of interpretation.

The pleasures of sleep, then, are connected to the liberation not only from the oppressive nature of social interaction, but from some other epistemic oppression, perhaps also social in nature, but which carries over even into the comparative (or ostensible) solitude of the writing table or inner monologue. Sleep and dream-life resist narrativization, and narrativization is a distortion of the world; it unavoidably distorts it for the sake of ulterior motives. Hermeneutics are the enemy of reality, as is storytelling: for each makes the world over into language with all of its attendant political prejudices. The critique of dream-telling in "A History of Yesterday" might be said to be the distilled kernel of the expansive attacks on the writing of history in *War and Peace*, and on writing and art-making of all kinds in the late polemics. Ironically, though, it helps serve to make the imaginative work around it *seem* somehow exempt from its own dictates. Tolstoy implicitly contrasts his own imaginative writing with the kind of more obvious interpretive and secondary representations he denounces in his abstract and critical reflections.

In the end, what is the difference between Tolstoy's "accurate" version of his Saint Thomas dream, and the "inaccurate" one, told by someone under the distorting star of interpretation? Both are retrospective narrativizations. Both are textual reconstructions, the one advancing conditions of representation that will come to be called "realism," the other expressing an allegorical or parabolic structure. The first description tries to do what Tolstoy has already announced is his goal in the first paragraph of "A History of Yesterday," that is, to convey in its fullness the impressions of a day, to outstrip and bleed dry all the ink and paper reserves of the publishers with a full account of the conditions of human mental life. But it also tries to make that completeness somehow sharable; it believes deeply in the moral urgency of sharing and

sharability; and it finds itself making its own compromises in order to make inner life legible and readable in the span of a few pages. Why it seems to be a real stab at inner life may be because of the contrasts Tolstoy introduces alongside it: he follows it with the mother's ridiculous and sanctimonious dream of her daughter, and by the over-determined interpretation of the St. Thomas dream – each attributed to some meaner intelligence than his own. Thus to build an image of life rendered pure and uncorrupted within a narrative, Tolstoy deploys weaker straw-man narratives all around, and so gives one the sense that *that dream* told by the mother is *mere* interpretation, but *this dream*, told from the inner side, is the real thing. The strategy, cunning as it may be, generates a build-up of hypocrisy on the heart of aesthetic success: and for a seeker of unity like Tolstoy, this poses a major conceptual and moral peril.

A small detail in "A History of Yesterday" indicates the stakes of this project. In the midst of his dream-monologue, Tolstoy interjects: "Here I suppose I went to sleep completely." The voice jumps uncertainly from the inner side to an empirically more certain and familiar outer side. Burying this more conventionally novelistic act of narration within the dream-monologue generates an implied continuity between the two: it suggests that the person who can render inner life free of the corruptions of analysis, might also be able to render, through his subjective perception of that inner life, a vision of the life that we all share in common, and this also free from analysis. I submit that this line signals a hypothesis to be picked up again and again across Tolstoy's career, and especially in *Anna Karenina*: if a reader can enter a writer's dream, then that is the first step to reader and writer having a shared and irreducible picture of their common reality. Tolstoy's attempt to pursue this line of thinking – its ontological, moral, even political consequences – is what links him most directly with Woolf and Proust, who took this experiment to much greater lengths, as we will soon see.

That sleep, and by extension, dreams, were to play such an important part in this project is also suggested by a curious anecdote in Aylmer Maude's biography. "It was a peculiarity of Tolstoy that he not only liked to have his sleep out without being disturbed, but never could or would wake any one from sleep, and in cases of absolute necessity would ask some one else to relieve him of that disagreeable task."[235] Something very important was going in sleep, Tolstoy seemed to think, and we had an obligation to it (the dream-sharing Ongees also had a prohibition on waking each other up). Tolstoy's brother-in-law recalled once being forced to tiptoe around a servant who had fallen asleep in the pantry and forgotten to serve them dinner. When Maude later asked Tolstoy to explain why this was so important to him, he gave an answer at once flippant and touching, for it said something of the Edenic charge he ascribed to sleep: "While a man is asleep," he said, "he is at any rate not sinning."

Towards the Functionality of Dreams in Criticism and the Novel

For the entirety of Tolstoy's career as a writer, denouncing and deriding the whole project of linguistic expression was intimately coupled with its most spectacular efflorescence. Each one of Tolstoy's attempts to deny language's capacity to render the emergent aliveness of the interior self gives way, almost too predictably, to an outpouring of imaginative writing, its product often staggeringly close to the felt experience of aliveness. We have seen how attacks on dream-telling lift his own act of dream-telling into a higher realm in "History of Yesterday." We could trace similar tactics with dreams in early works like *Childhood* and *The Snowstorm*, but we can also see this process play out on a grand scale in his intellectual biography. Irina Paperno describes how in 1859, despairing over the proofs of *Family Happiness*, Tolstoy foreswore writing altogether. In letters he described his work as shameful, disgusting, artificial and stilted.

[235] Maude, 321.

"Art is a lie," he wrote his friend Fet in 1860, "and I can no longer love a beautiful lie."[236] As was frequently the case with Tolstoy, this moment of crisis forced a turn toward the dream. In a letter to the critic Botkin from that time, he explained he would now devote his life to working his estate and educating peasants. In the same letter he offered a parable based on a dream his brother had had, which "depicted him speaking to millions of people who listened with rapt attention."[237] Once more a disgust with all forms of linguistic communication led to an exhilarating glimpse of a dream reality in which millions were all in harmony with one another (or in harmony worshipping one genius, as the case may have been). And, of course, predictably, Tolstoy was driven to make of this dream a written work. But this is all prelude: for emerging from this crisis comes an outpouring of language against which the dream-exertions of "History of Yesterday" or the letter to Botkin seem but a trickle. In 1863, newly married, Tolstoy emerged from this first crisis to write *War and Peace*.

A similar process – denunciation of the inadequacy language serving as a kind of foil and challenge to a spectacular outpouring of imaginative work – took place in the years leading up to *Anna Karenina*. In 1870, Tolstoy wrote to Fet to say, "Thank God this summer I feel stupid as a horse. I work, fell the wood, dig, dig, mow, and thank God, don't even think about the accursed lit-t-terature and lit-t-terateurs."[238] In this letter he explicitly finds an opposition to the pseudo-French *lit-t-terature* in peasant life: to work dumbly like a horse is to be freed from the oppressive inadequacy and fakeness of language. For two years he was to devote himself to once again working with peasants, developing a primer to teach literacy and managing the estate. But inevitably the pendulum swung once more, and fiercely toward literature: the result was *Anna Karenina*.

[236] Paperno, 34-35.
[237] Paperno, 34.
[238] Paperno, 37.

It is worth mentioning anecdotally that this return to writing was greatly facilitated by Pushkin. Tolstoy reread his fiction in the early 1870s and was very taken; it may have helped him see once again real potential in the task of imaginative writing. He was beguiled by the *in medias res* beginning of one of Pushkin's fragments – "the guests had arrived at the dacha" – and it served as the template for immersion in the life of the Oblonskys at the start of *Anna Karenina*. Tolstoy also reports, in a famous draft letter to Strakhov: "Never have I admired Pushkin so much, nor anyone else for that matter. 'The Shot, 'Egyptian Nights', *The Captain's Daughter*!!!"[239] As we now turn our attention to *Anna Karenina*, it's worth recalling that the dream-works like *The Captain's Daughter* which were of interest to us in the last chapter were not far from Tolstoy's mind at the inception of what I hope to show is his great dream-novel.

Anna Karenina stands in a new position in relation to Tolstoy's fictional oeuvre; the crisis he faced led him toward a change in philosophical disposition, a change which makes *Anna Karenina* so important to our analysis here. The change is best summarized by Donna Orwin: within Tolstoy's career, this novel is explicitly and newly concerned with the role of culture and tradition in shaping human behavior.

> Whereas in *War and Peace* life required only to be revealed and celebrated by the poet, in *Anna Karenina* the poet had to show his reader how to live well. Life had been the answer to mankind's problems in the first novel. In the second one it itself becomes the problem for each individual and for the author to solve.[240]

Anna Karenina is no longer naïve about there existing a simple division between the sweetness of natural communion and the staleness of social convention; it no longer imagines that the natural parts of ourselves, speaking unprompted in dreams or in our encounters with nature, can always correct those parts of ourselves debased by life in civilization. Instead it sees that these

[239] Lev Tolstoy, draft letter to Strakhov, quoted in Richard Pevear, Introduction to *Anna Karenina*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkonsky (New York: Penguin, 2000), ix.
[240] Orwin, 144.

experiences in of themselves *must* be integrated into communal life in order to be made sense of, for they can mislead as often as enlighten. The question is what kind of communal life most healthily and appropriately makes use of them. *Anna Karenina* anguishes over the different strategies for achieving this sharing of dreams and other parts of the inner side, and sees most of them as failures – except one. Donna Orwin again explains: "As Tolstoy perceived a split between nature and moral goodness, he turned from nature to culture – and peasant culture became his new standard for morality."[241]

In the years leading up to the writing of *Anna K.*, Tolstoy's encounters with pre-industrial (or what he perceived to be pre-industrial) cultures grew more intense. Irina Paperno calls his work with the peasants around Yasnaya Polyana "Tolstoy's first engagement with the 'other.'"[242] She means not only the cultural other, but also an awareness of the needs and thoughts of other beings, the basic existence of which Tolstoy, for all of his protestations to the contrary, always struggled to truly cognize.[243] In teaching peasant children, he found, or at least thought he found, a way to no longer simply tell of himself, as he had done in "History of Yesterday," in his diaries, and in his semi-autobiographical works of fiction.

Several times, beginning in 1862, Tolstoy also took rest cures among the Bashkir nomads of Samaria, living in a yurt and drinking fermented mares' milk. He was taken with the beauty of the place and the seeming drowsiness of life there; he returned several times, including in 1875, in the middle of working on *Anna Karenina*. He participated in feasts, organized a horse race, and heard stories from an old hermit, including most likely the inspiration for the late story "How Much Land Does a Man Need?"[244] He wrote Fet in the summer of 1875 to say that "One

[241] Orwin, 145.
[242] Paperno, 36.
[243] To which his wife's diaries bitterly attest. See Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, Vol. 2, 1-12.
[244] Maude, Vol. 1, 354-355 (Vol. 1 hereafter).

must live as we live, in a healthy out-of-the-way part of Samara, and see the struggle going on before one's eyes of the nomadic life (of millions of people on an immense territory) with the primitive agricultural life, to realize all the importance of that struggle."[245] In a letter to Strakhov from the same summer he writes, "Only with difficulty can I understand and remember here the life which I usually live, but to live it here, I cannot. Just as only when it storms and rains, only then do you believe in the sky, which you had once seen deceptively shining, so now I believe in my spiritual life."[246] In these pre-industrial forms of life – among the Bashkirs and the peasants of his estates – Tolstoy thought he saw the potential for a greater unity of being and self; he thought he saw some way for spiritual force to hew much closer to our conscious existence. How to achieve something like this within our modern world – whether it can be achieved – is a problem that haunts *Anna Karenina*.

The dreams in *Anna Karenina*, of which there are many, play an important role in the novel's ecosystem, responding to and influencing waking events in many delicate and complex ways. They have been extravagantly analyzed according to various symbolic models in the critical literature. Alexander Burry has seized on the allusion to Mozart in Stiva's dream to build an interpretation of the novel as a Don Juan story;[247] Ian Saylor has taken the same quotation from *Don Giovanni* to be an ironic inversion of the novel's biblical epigraph.[248] Gary Browning, following in the footsteps of Richard Gustafson and Edward Wasiolek, suggests Anna's dreams

[245] Tolstoy, letter to Fet, 26 August, 1875 quoted in Maude, 355.
[246] Letter from Tolstoy to Strakhov, 24-25 July, 1875, (my English translation), L.N. Tolstoy i N.N. Strakhov, *Polnoye Sobranye Perepiskii,* Vol. I, A.A. Donskov, ed. (University of Ottawa and State L.N. Tolstoy Museum, Moscow, 2003), 213. 'Как когда хорошо обложило и мочит дождь, только потому и веришь, что есть небо, что видал его и кое-где как будто обманчиво просвечивает, так и я верю, что есть моя духовная жизнь.'
[247]Alexander Burry, "A Stony Vengeance: Donjuanism and Retribution in 'Anna Karenina,'" *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2013), 544-560.
[248] Ian Saylor, "Oblonsky's Dream in *Anna Karenina*: The Vengeance Motif," *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, No. 8 (Jan, 1995), 112-116.

are disguised representations of Karenin and Vronsky,[249] while Sydney Schultze, also taking the characterological route, thinks they are symbols for her own exiled status.[250] Some have seen the dreams in terms of Russian folk archetypes;[251] others have used them to indulge in dazzling psychoanalytic wordplay.[252] But all around there seems to be a distressing consensus, explicit or implicit, on one point. James Rice puts it frankly: "Obviously Tolstoy had long puzzled over the structure and meaning of dreams before he designed the dream of Oblonsky. But his extant views on the subject do not afford much insight into the function of dreams in his novels."[253]

It will on the contrary be my claim that Tolstoy's use of dreams in his novels, and particularly in *Anna Karenina*, are the culmination and full articulation of his thoughts on dreaming and sleep. But for this to be the case, the *functionality* of dreams has to be re-conceived within literary discourse in the ontological direction I've been exploring. Dream criticism in a novel like *Anna Karenina* tends to assume that the point of dreams is to offer a symbolic condensation of the novel's themes or plot, or otherwise of a character's psychology. Criticism frequently takes the stance that: *the dream confirms what we have already learned from the rest of the text; the game is to decipher the dream so that its hidden meaning corresponds to what we know from the clearer parts of text*. But Tolstoy stands directly against this tradition. In *War and Peace* he writes that it is only the feelings of dreams that tell the truth.[254] I will argue that such a claim must be understood in a still more complex way in *Anna Karenina*: that the feelings in

[249] Gary Browning, "Peasant Dreams in *Anna Karenina*," (*The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Winter, 2000), 525-526.
[250] Sydney Schultze, *The Structure of* Anna Karenina (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982), 125.
[251] Barbara Lönnqvist, "Symbolyka zheleza v romane *Anna Karenina,*" Knut Grimstad and Ingun Lunde, eds. *Celebrating Creativity: Essays in Honour of Jostein Bortnes* (Bergen: U of Bergen, 1977), 105.
[252] Especially virtuosic, bordering on tiresome, are James Rice's variations on the name "Alabin" from Stiva's dream: aLaBiN, he claims, is an anagram for aBLoNskii, but also *alibi*, *Albin* ("*albus*," white), and the Uzbek Khan *Alabysh* or *Alabuga*, or the French-inspired stock exchange term *a-la-bess* ("*à la baisse*") and *Alabyr*, the mysterious metal found under lakes in fairytales, and *Alabastr*, and so on and so forth. James L. Rice, "Some Observations on Stiva's Dream," *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, No. 8 (Jan. 1995), 121-122.
[253] Rice, 122.
[254] On this passage, see Michael Katz, *Dreams and the Unconscious in Nineteenth-Century Russian Fiction* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1984), 117, 121-134.

dreams, and the describing of them subsequently, have to do with how much of the inner perception of one's own aliveness can be felt by another being. In this chapter, therefore, we will be concerned not only with Tolstoy's relation to dreaming, but the relation of dreaming to the enterprise of literary criticism. Just as the novel talks about itself in the dream, so too does literary criticism display its own intentions in dream-interpretation. The aspirations and limitations of both will be present at the threshold of the dream, as we look at whether it is possible to achieve the non-hermeneutic method of experiencing art Tolstoy aspires to.

Stiva's Dream: The Antechamber to Anna Karenina

The first dream in *Anna Karenina* takes place on the very first page of the novel, and this is of paramount importance because the opening section of the novel is a small encapsulation of the entire work. Stiva has cheated on his wife with the French governess, and this episode is a parodic take on the rest of the novel, a Commedia dell'Arte intermezzo which prefigures the tragedy to come. The dream thus presents itself also in comedic form. But it foregrounds the characteristic inner aliveness we have seen over and over again:

> "Yes, yes, how did it go?" he thought, recalling his dream. "How did it go? Yes! Alabin was giving a dinner in Darmstadt – no, not in Darmstadt but something American. Yes, this Darmstadt was in America. Yes, Alabin was giving a dinner on glass tables, yes – and the tables were singing *Il mio tesoro*, only it wasn't *Il mio tesoro*, but something better, and there were some little carafes, which were also women," he recalled.
>
> Stepan Arkadyich's eyes glittered merrily, and he fell to thinking with a smile. 'Yes it was nice, very nice, There were many other excellent things there, but one can't say it in words, or even put it into waking thoughts.'[255]

As I've already suggested, criticism has found a thousand roads into and out of this dream: through sonic echoes and the allusion to *Don Giovanni*; through erotic foreshadowing and

[255] All English quotations from *Anna Karenina* are taken from the translation by Pevear and Volokonsky (New York: Penguin, 2000). The Russian has been consulted in L.N. Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina: Roman v vosmii shastyakh*, V.A. Zhdanov and E.E. Zaidyenshnur (Moscow: Akademia Nauk SSSR, 1970).

displacement across Tolstoy's drafts. But Nabokov offers perhaps the sanest surface description of the function of the dream:

> The interesting point is that Steve's [sic] light-hearted, transparent, philandering, epicurean nature is cunningly described by the author through the imagery of a dream. This is the device for introducing Oblonski: a dream introduces him. And another point: this dream with singing little women is going to be very different from the dream about a muttering little man that both Anna and Vronski will see.[256]

The dream, in other words, tells us something very obvious: that Stiva loves pleasure and that his good nature is imperturbable. And it tells us another thing, slightly less obvious: that dreams will be important in the novel. But the dream's interest in *telling* these things is not the only factor here: for it is also an exquisite piece of dream-showing, of evocative dream-description, and it is a showpiece for Tolstoy's representational strategies. Stiva is rehearsing the dream by himself to himself, but he does so in a kind of pseudo-dialogic form: *Yes, yes, how was it? Yes, yes!* This call and response creates a doubling: Stiva the waking questioner and Stiva the dreamer discuss the dream together, trying to hammer out its details in a comprehensible format. They seem to be engaged in syllogistic negotiations. *It was a dinner in Darmstadt; no, not in Darmstadt, but something American. Therefore, a compromise: Darmstadt was* in *America.* Or again (as the *Don Giovanni* symbolists fail to notice): *The women were singing* Il mio tesoro. *No, not* il mio tesoro. *Synthesis: something like* Il mio tesoro*, but better!*

This is a form of dream-description in which the recounting of the dream, even to oneself, involves a kind of negotiation with one's own memory not unlike the Ongee dream-sharing we saw in chapter four. It corresponds closely to Tolstoy's assertion in "History of Yesterday" that dreams only constitute themselves into narrative structures upon waking (a hint of his more extreme opinion that dreams do not exist except upon waking). At the same time, this dream-description represents an advance over the stream-out-of-consciousness we saw in

[256] Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1981), 151.

"History of Yesterday." This approach was carefully worked out over the early drafts of this chapter. In the first version, Oblonsky – then in fact called Alabin (!) – dreamt that

> Misha Kortnyev gave a dinner in New York on glass tables. Yes, and what little women, very good…much more that was excellent, but I can't recall.

In the second, Oblonsky (now given his final name) dreams,

> Yes Alabin gave a dinner in New York on glass tables, yes and what little carafes and they were women…[257]

As Tolstoy piles on the condensation of the dream in each version, he also creates a new way for unpacking it: presenting a series of active qualifications, a back-and-forth that allows for the parts of the dream to accumulate in layers in the reader's mind. The role played by the dashes in "History of Yesterday" – as spaces for imaginative projection – are replaced by Stiva's interjections. The excited, exclamatory *Da! Da!* refrain that characterizes this passage is Stiva lending his own waking aliveness to the dream itself, each unit of its distant and bizarre landscape vivified with the smile and jump that surely accompanies every one of these exclamations.

Thus Stiva ventriloquizes and embodies his own dream, but he does so precisely by achieving a certain distance from it. He turns himself as the dreamer instead into the dream storyteller, his exclamations serving to render, in prose, something of the full experience of storytelling, the gestures, the raising of eyebrows, the smacking of lips, the changes in inflection. To use Kleist's vocabulary, Stiva has split himself into a puppet and a puppetmaster, together enacting the dream, generating at once a theatrical hyper-self-awareness, and, through its tricks, re-creating the feel of direct access to the unselfconscious charm and grace of the dream itself. His good-natured narcissism is betrayed by the fact that all of this rather dazzling artistic work

[257] The translations are mine. The Russian is cited in Rice, from Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, v. 20 (Moscow: GIKhL, 1939), 79, 86-89, 92-94.

has been done only for his *own* pleasure, permitting his own private savoring of his dream memories, though Tolstoy nevertheless makes him accidentally generous in allowing us to partake in the vision (Tolstoy's characters benefit, more than most, from what Bernard Williams calls "moral luck").[258]

And in what does this charm and grace consist? Once again, a world is erected which sustains its own logic at all costs; if both America and Darmstadt are there, then the niceties of waking geography or logic be damned, they must both be coincident. And once again, this world pulses with aliveness, the little ewers become women and sing a delicious song. And to create some separate image of the dream-self and lend it one's own waking aliveness, so that one is and is not the waking Stiva, but also an enactment of the dreaming Stiva, is to make possible a real immersion into this pleasurable world.[259]

It is pleasurable in part because all of this doubling and ventriloquizing and coming into and out of aliveness is not tarnished by insincerity. To make these different copies and forms of the self in the privacy of the study is not to betray it, or become inauthentic, as it might be in

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[258] How vividly Stiva's dream performance has entered other minds might be seen anecdotally from Nabokov's need to explain to his students at Cornell, "You must not imagine these tables as merely covered with glass – but made completely of glass," for the picture generated by "*na steklyannykh stolakh*" in Nabokov's own mind needed sharing, so that any linguistic misperception by his English-speaking students reading the Garnett translation had to be preempted. Nabokov, in his meticulous illustrating and diagramming of *Anna Karenina*, placing an utmost premium on generating consonant pictures in the minds of his students, demonstrates a deep intuition about the dream-sharing project at the heart of this novel. It's no accident that in his lectures, the dreams of the novel take pride of place. Nabokov, *Lectures*, 151. See also Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (Cambridge UP, 1982), 20-39. One of Williams' examples in this famous essay is Anna Karenina, who can abide the cost exacted by her relationship with Vronsky so long as it fulfills for her everything she expects and desires; but, Williams reminds us, how is she to know it will or won't until it's too late? Yet what I mean here is something more whimsical: namely that to be a character in a novel by Tolstoy is to have indeed a kind of moral luck, for one's faults and failings, as much as one's virtues, come to play a redeeming role in world history when a part of a supreme and enduring piece of fiction.

[259] Such aliveness is present even in the most momentary and peripheral dreams of this novel, as when little Seryozha dreams of his mother coming to him and caressing "him with her loving eyes. But windmills came [*yavilis'*], a penknife came, everything got confused and he fell asleep" (527;444). Or, an even briefer aside, "When Darya Alexandrovna went to bed that night, the moment she closed her eyes she saw Vasenka Veslovsky dashing about the croquet ground" (634). Such tiny moments serve to return our contemplation of the threshold aliveness of dreams to the fore, and remind us of their fundamental structural similarity to the imaginative imperatives of this novel, filled with specific colors and costumes and motions.

high society. There is no image of the authentic, respectable self to be maintained, or rather it exists as one of many options. And it is pleasurable, too, because its world outruns designation by language, it cannot be fixed because there is no vocabulary with which to fix it: 'Yes, it was nice, very nice," he continues. "There were many excellent things there, but one can't say it in words, or even put it into waking thoughts" (2). In dreams, then, there is a surfeit of aliveness beyond the boundaries of signs and symbols, and this surfeit is precisely what is so liberating. It is the moment of highest relief from Tolstoy's world-controlling voice, that impersonal pronouncement Gary Saul Morson has called "absolute language."[260] Of course, when this surfeit manifests in waking life, it usually leads to chaos: for the surfeit transgresses social structures, taking advantage of its own wordlessness to get around what words would prohibit. Hence the smile of the governess, and Stiva's own reflexive, good-natured smile, get them both into trouble. "That stupid smile is to blame for all," Stiva thinks to himself (3). The vital surfeit of Stiva is only a small taste of its role in the novel to come, as is the inconsequential distance, at least for the time being, between the dream and waking life. For even Stiva's misery when he remembers he is sleeping in the study to avoid Dolly's anger is infected by the cheer that spills over from the distilled sweetness of his dream-life.

Anna's Aliveness and the Conventions of Realism

This surfeit of aliveness makes a set of key appearances in the novel, as many have noted (Donna Orwin again: it is an "excess of natural vitality" that "simply overwhelms Anna's conscience and sweeps her to her death"[261]). It is encased in the adjective that is mainly associated with Anna in the early part of the novel. When Vronksy first sees her getting off the

[260] *Anna Karenina* begins, of course, with one of the most famous of Tolstoy's formulations of absolute language. Morson, 11-14.
[261] Orwin, 159.

train he's struck by the "*restrained animation* that played over her face and fluttered between her shining eyes and the barely noticeable smile that curved her red lips" (61). In Russian, it is her *ozhivlennost'* (57) that so takes Vronsky, and this *ozhivlennost'* is derived from the verb *ozhivat*,*' ozhivit'* – meaning to revive or bring back to life, as one might by pouring water over an unconscious soldier. Anna is thus not only animate, but somehow all the more so for being at its threshold, the intensified figure of aliveness emerging and struggling against its restraints, which are the restraints of social order. In the very next sentence Tolstoy glosses: "it was as if a surplus of something so overflowed her being that it expressed itself beyond her will, now in the brightness of her glance, now in her smile" (61). The parallel with Stiva's own "stupid smile," unable to contain itself, is overcome by the seriousness with which Anna's aliveness takes center-stage. This is in large part because our access to Stiva has been through the mirror: we have observed him observing himself, and experienced his pleasure at aliveness as an essentially masturbatory activity. But here, another being, Vronsky, looks in toward Anna, and senses, dimly, the outlines of the aliveness inside of her. We stand now in a complex intersubjective act of dream-divination, of feeling for the spiritual force present in another being, a strange combination of projecting one's own propensity for spiritual force onto another being, and enjoying the place where it seems that projection meets with another's sense of threshold aliveness. The aliveness of Anna seems to respond in kind to Vronsky's own searching gesture, for when she finally has occasion to speak with him a few moments later in the train car, Tolstoy says she finally allowed "her animation, which was begging to be let out, to show itself in a smile." Such glimmers of communion at the threshold of the animate, where the activation of emergent aliveness also demands a surrender of agency to it, is the beginning of the erotic – or

rather, of a process of negotiating the understanding of other beings to which eroticism belongs as one component.

This famous moment, in which Vronsky is so captured by Anna's animation, is juxtaposed immediately with the first intrusion of the death-theme in the novel. This very same chapter contains a dramatic evacuation of aliveness, the negative proposition to Anna's surfeit. The watchman is run over by the train because he didn't notice it coming – either because he was drunk, Tolstoy tells us, or because he was so bundled up he couldn't hear. The watchmen's capacity to sense animation and movement around him – the very thing that the novel has shown itself so sensitive to, that even Vronksy and Stiva have been able, in their narrow circumstances, to indulge – has been impaired. The huge power of the train, the mastery of industrial force, its amplification of human force, has not registered, until too late, on this man. This is the first of the prominent sequence of overt symbols that will lead us directly to Anna's death, and we might offer, in contemplating it, a theory of the symbol's function within a realist novel like *Anna Karenina*. Events and persons become symbolic when they fail to participate in the surfeit of aliveness beyond symbolism. The bundled up workman has been deprived of any real role in the give-and-take of awareness and intentionality with which, as we've seen, a certain sense of the self is articulated. In that moment he loses any capacity for resistance to the inevitable conditions of mortality that surround him. In that moment, we can no longer make sense of his actions as motivated characterologically; so they are acquired by the impersonal machinery of ideas. To be a symbol is to be a prisoner of the social and cultural world into which one was born, and over which – this is the moment of turning into a symbol – one no longer has any say.

In contrast to the watchman, Anna brings aliveness with her everywhere, at least in the early part of the novel. She is often described as being sensed – by the rustle of her dress, by her

light footsteps – even before she enters a room. In this sense she is the opposite of a symbol: Anna represents an aliveness that has not yet crystalized into a definitive meaning; the sound of her petticoats in the drawing room engenders in others the same kind of feeling. To return to a recurring image in this dissertation, that feeling is like what a rustle in the bushes might engender in a solitary walker in the woods: heightened attention born of the indeterminate status of another being.[262]

Such a person, you would expect according to our schema, would have a very active dream-life – and especially a dream-life desperate to get out of the confines of the self, like the animation spilling from her face, one which no one had yet, the dreamer included, calcified with an interpretive schema or externally imposed logic. And indeed, from the very beginning, Anna has an exceptionally full dream-life, and a dream-life that is always spilling out of sleep. (Let us contrast Vronsky who, early in the novel, before his problems begin, is described as falling "into a sound and peaceful sleep, as always.")

Here is the beautiful passage where Anna dozes off in the railway car and gives in to a series of animate hallucinations:

> She felt her nerves tighten more and more, like strings in winding pegs. She felt her eyes open wider and wider, her fingers and toes move nervously; something inside her stopped her breath, and all images and sounds in that wavering semi-darkness impressed themselves on her with extraordinary vividness….What is that on the armrest – a fur coat, or some animal? And what am I? Myself or someone else?' It was frightening to surrender herself to this oblivion. But something was drawing her in, and she was able, at will, to surrender to it or hold back from it. She stood up in order to come to her senses, threw the rug aside, and removed the pelerine from her warm dress. For a moment she recovered and realized that the skinny muzhik coming in, wearing a long nankeen coat with a missing button, was the stoker, that he was looking at the thermometer, that wind and snow had burst in with him through the doorway; but then everything became confused again…This muzhik with the long waist began to gnaw at something on the

[262] This vocabulary of vitality, as many have pointed out, is directly indebted to Tolstoy's reading of Schopenhauer, whose deep intuitions about the role of life-force subtending representational life carries many parallels to our analysis of spiritual force, both in *Anna Karenina*, and more broadly. See Orwin, 150-157. The implications of Schopenhauer's philosophy for dreaming is discussed in greater detail in chapter eight of this dissertation.

> wall; the old woman began to stretch her legs out the whole length of the carriage and fill it with a black cloud; then something screeched and banged terribly, as if someone was being torn to pieces; then a red fire blinded her eyes, and then everything was hidden by a wall. (101)

Here is a broad exploration of the wavering aliveness of the dream-state: the fur coat that becomes an animal; the muzhik gnawing on the wall; the woman's legs that swamp the carriage and turn into a cloud; the screeching (presumably of the train) interpreted as someone being torn to pieces, the blinding fire, and then the sudden emptiness with the wall. But the interruption to the dream is equally as important. Most of the passage is a reporting of Anna's hypnagogic hallucinations; the narrative is consumingly subjective, reporting events that only she experiences. But in the middle of this long passage is Anna's taking stock of a muzhik with a missing button who is, as she gradually realizes through the haze of her dream-aliveness, the stoker for the train-car stove. The ontological status of this particular fact is different from everything that surrounds it in this long paragraph: for, within the novel, the stoker with his button is, presumably, a detail that anyone else in the car might have noticed, that is meant to be a part of the shared fictional world of the novel, belonging also to Annushka sitting next to her, and all the other train passengers and men and women so indelibly a part of Tolstoy's fictional world.

Here we see once again Tolstoy, as in "History of Yesterday," wagering that the intensification of a dream-communion between a character and a reader can be made to elide into an identity of perception in the waking world as well. If we can dream with Anna, if we can follow her into a state of pure subjectivism (not unlike our own subjective world-creation in reading a novel), then we can stray beyond it with her eyes. Hence the importance of the stray details here, the button and the tallness of the muzhik. They are at once the apparently un-signifying things that Barthes would say belong to *l'effet de réel*, and yet at the same time border

so closely on the grotesque or bizarre (the stretched-out muzhik is ever so close to the stretching scissor-legs and Anna's later nightmares) that they might easily also be a part of what we could call *l'effet de rêve*.[263]

Tolstoy is a virtuoso of moments when only the thinnest of barriers separates the outside world of *Anna Karenina* from the inside world of Anna Karenina. The crux is perhaps to be found in the sentence, "But something was drawing her in, and she was able, at will, to surrender to it or hold back from it" (90). This liminal border represents a curious moment of *choice* between the dream state and wake-state, a kind of choice we will see present again at the threshold of the dream in the opening to Proust's *Recherche*. In the wake-state comes the possibility of observing oneself, of considering one's own choices, rather than merely making them. The *holding back* that Anna carries out in the next sentence is the waking world of the novel. She stands up in order to "come to her senses," or, to be closer to the Russian, *to recall oneself*. The realist parts of this novel require characters to "recall themselves," to draw attention to the limits of their being, and therefore to the extension of the world that surrounds them. This is precisely what Stiva does on the opening pages when he doubles himself in the description of the dream: he remembers himself, makes clear the boundaries between his own sense of being and the dream that had so fully enveloped him the night before. With Anna's threshold state, the theme of remembering oneself is subtly developed further: "For a moment she *recovered* and *realized*…" begins the next sentence (with my italics). These two words allow for the muzhik to exist outside of Anna on the reader's plane of representation, for they spell out an ontological formula: to *recover oneself* is to *understand* by making visible bright boundaries between beings. Pointing out these bright boundaries helps create the sense of a novelistic world, a world of different beings moving towards and away and around one another. Alex Woloch argues that

[263] Roland Barthes, "L'effet de réel," *Communications*, No. 11 (1968), 84-89.

narrative character exists at the interstice between story and discourse – *fabula* and *syuzhet* – that is to say, in the tension between our sense of the natural unfolding of life and our awareness of life's integration into a discourse.[264] It may be said that the continuous calling attention to one's boundaries as a person in Tolstoy is precisely the moment of becoming a movable unit within the larger landscape. It is an act of objectification, so that what was a full inner being now becomes an outer image, a chess-piece to be moved along the board of the novel. Each time a character calls attention to herself in this way, Tolstoy has almost imperceptibly flexed spiritual force: the living being has become a kind of movable object, before flipping back to living being again.

It is precisely the blurring of these boundaries of self-conscious characterhood that seems to take place in the entrance into the dream-sphere, as is evidenced by the next line, "everything became confused" – "*smyeshalos*" (the word that also serves as the incipit into the imaginative world of *Anna Karenina*: "All was *confusion* at the Oblonsky's household"). An ellipsis follows this word, and it seems to mark, in the wake of confusion, the loss of self-awareness, the loss of reflective thought. Without the distance of meta-reflection, we plunge straight into Anna's world, and now there is no escape. A new kind of pure presence, liberated from calculation, appears. The boundaries of the self – understood as the self reflecting on itself – melt away, and in its place, all those things that are normally distanced – eroticism, annihilation – come to the fore (we are here in the vocabulary of Kleist once more, and also of Julian Jaynes who believes in the ubiquity of unconscious human action). Hence: "Anna felt as if she was falling through the floor. But all this was not frightening but exhilarating."

Tolstoy wants us to see that all this has to do not only with dreams, but also with the novel as an art-form. In fact, in this same passage on the train, just before she falls into this

[264] Alex Woloch, *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton UP, 2003), 38.

dream-state, Anna is reading a novel, and bucking against the constraints of reading: "When she read about the heroine of the novel taking care of a sick man, she wanted to walk with inaudible steps round the sick man's room; when she read about a Member of Parliament making a speech, she wanted to make that speech; when she read about how Lady Mary rode to hounds, teasing her sister-in-law and surprising everybody with her courage, she wanted to do it herself. But there was nothing to do, and so, fingering the smooth knife with her small hands, she forced herself to read" (100). The novel offers the tantalizing promise of turning into someone else, and yet, as a precondition for its artistic structure, it must make very clear that that someone else is distinct, and not you. The novel reader must be like Stiva, re-enacting the dream, but paradoxically separating oneself from it, having the self be some other self, to be observed rather than inhabited.

The novel permits a social communion that is nevertheless estranged from the bodily self, for the self is projected into some place far away, both itself and not itself. The novel is designed to be read quietly in a train car, as Anna respectfully does. It is *not* meant to be read in such a way that the reader gets up in the train-car and delivers a speech to parliament, or jumps up and down as if on a horse, or throws herself to her knees to weep over a dying relative (or even, as in the theater, shouts and throws things in response to the actions of others). In novel-reading, the mind imputes aliveness, but the body does not participate in that aliveness; even when it does, it does so by doubling itself, and leaving the actual physical body behind (in dreams it may double itself, but it has forgotten the existence of the physical body in this our shared realm). If, for realism to function, as we saw, characters must continuously remember who they are and where they are, then readers must, in some sense, do that also. When we read we are secretly admonished in two contradictory ways: you *are* Anna Karenina; but also no, you are *not* her,

don't get carried away, can't you see? Books that fail to make the second admonishment are mad books; readers who fail to heed it are mad readers. To be *in* a novel without having the reader's luxury of recalling, at any instant, *I'm not really in it* – this would be not reading, but rather dreaming, a novel.

But only to *imagine* communion with other living beings, and always with the qualification of distance which counts as sanity – this is not enough for Anna. "Anna Arkadyevna read and understood, but it was unpleasant for her to read, that is, to follow the reflection of other people's lives. She wanted too much to live by herself" (100). It may be significant that in this moment Tolstoy calls her *Anna Arkadyevna*, her formal name with patronymic, her public person (in the next chapter, we will see, too, the difference between being Mrs. Dalloway, the social being, and Clarissa, the private one). In other words, he, and she, remember who she is from the outside, and so therefore they allow her to understand, but this understanding comes at the expense of feeling life only through doubles. Waking imagining, therefore, distances us from the dream by making us only a spectator, by retaining self-consciousness as a filter between our sense of self and our experience of aliveness. It allows us to flirt with the alternative, and Anna flirts slightly past what is appropriate: she is suddenly driven to take her little page knife and with exhilarating sensuality, as if transmitted directly from the novel, press its cold surface to her cheek. It might be said that *Anna Karenina* as a novel aspires to come as close as one can to being the knife on the cheek, to reaching out and touching beyond the reflective distance that a linguistic artifact keeps coming back to in order to circumvent the risks of direct embodiment.

The Double Dream: Anna and Vronsky at the Limit of Individuation

Nabokov is right to say that the "double nightmare plays an especially important part in the book."[265] He sees it as a lynchpin to the novel's structure, and as a careful inbuilding of Anna and Vronsky's perceptions into a distilled master-image. He is quick to brush aside the possibility of psychoanalysis,[266] in favor of something else, at once more superficial – how did the dream come to be assembled from the things Anna and Vronsky saw and experienced? – but also quite profound, in the sense that Nabokov is concerned with the dream as something outside of language, at the level of perceptual and affective experience. He is concerned not with how the dream can be rendered in language, but how it is composed of elements that resist language, or try to live without language. In this he is Tolstoy's direct disciple, an adherent of the ideas laid out in "History of Yestedray." But he also butts up against the paradox we have been thinking about across this chapter: what does being beyond or above language mean when we are talking about a world, like *Anna Karenina*'s, built entirely of words?

And so Nabokov points to the muzhik being killed and a sequence of images which take on a life of their own throughout the book: "Muffled up, tattered man, battered by iron." These images – the fact of the exact words used to describe them, for Nabokov, is irrelevant – gradually coalesce, he would have us believe, in the minds of Anna and Vronsky to create their dream. Their exposure to these images has been so similar, the feelings around them so parallel, that their inner lives have produced the same structure to organize them. They have, so to speak, seen very similar footage, and had very similar editors working it in the cutting room.

First Vronsky has the dream:

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[265] Nabokov, *Lectures*, 175.

[266] "I am politely but firmly opposed to the Freudian interpretation of dreams with its stress on symbols which may have some reality in the Viennese doctor's rather drab and pedantic mind but do not necessarily have any in the minds of individuals unconditioned by modern psychoanalytics." Nabokov, *Lectures*, 175.

> ‘What was that? What? What was that terrible thing I saw in my dream? Yes, yes. The muzhik tracker, I think, small, dirty, with a disheveled beard, was bending down and doing something, and he suddenly said some strange words in French. Yes, that’s all there was to the dream,’ he said to himself. But why was it so horrible? He vividly recalled the peasant again and the incomprehensible French words the peasant had uttered, and horror sent a chill down his spine. (355)

And then, Anna’s dream, only a few pages later, in the very next chapter. She is sick and bed-ridden (pregnant with Vronsky’s child, as we’ll momentarily find out). The passage merits citation in full.

> “No, it’s true.”
> “What, what is true?”
> “That I will die. I had a dream.”
> “A dream?” Vronsky repeated and instantly recalled the muzhik in his dream.
> “Yes a dream,” she said. “I had this dream long ago. I dreamed that I ran into my bedroom, that I had to get something there, to find something out – you know how it happens in dreams,” she said, her eyes wide with horror, “and there was something standing in the bedroom, in the corner.”
> “Ah, what nonsense! How can you believe…”
> But she would not let herself be interrupted. What she was saying was much too important for her.
> “And this something turned, and I saw it was a muzhik with a disheveled beard, small and frightening, I wanted to run away, but he bent over a sack and rummaged in it with his hands…”
> And she showed how he rummaged in the sack. There was horror in her face. And Vronsky, recalling his dream, felt the same horror filling his soul.
> “He rummages and mutters in French, very quickly, and rolling the *r*s in his throat, you know: “*Il faut le battre le fer, le broyer, le pétrir*…” And I was so frightened that I wanted to wake up, and I woke up…but I woke up in a dream. (362)

This is one of the great dreams in Tolstoy’s oeuvre, on a par with Tatyana’s in *Evgenii Onegin*, or (as we’ll soon see) Peter Walsh’s solitary traveller in *Mrs. Dalloway*. That it recurs twice to two people says a great deal about its function. In Vronsky’s version of the dream we see a repetition of Stiva’s dream-dialogue strategy: once more we have the insistent self-questioning and the blank space of the affirmative: *what, what? Yes, yes.* But then, like a reader putting down a novel he doesn’t like in a moment of extreme reflective distancing, he declares the whole thing nonsense.

Anna's moment of dream-sharing, however, is of a new order in the scheme of the novel. The internal dialogue of Stiva or Vronsky has now become a public recitation. Anna has taken a much greater risk than the other characters by offering to negotiate her dream with another being, not merely with her own waking self-consciousness. Vronsky, she senses, is primed to engage in this negotiation, as Tolstoy tells us, for as soon as she invokes the magical word "dream," his own muzhik comes rushing into his consciousness. He can only repeat his disavowals – *Nonsense!* – but Anna will not be stopped. Most remarkably, Anna finally makes good on her desire not only to watch dreams, but to be in them: for she moves her hands (despite her weakened condition) and *acts out* the dream for Vronsky, as if she understood that the telling of it was insufficient to convey what was so unsettling about this muzhik, making these indecipherable motions with his back turned to her.

Anna reports that her nursemaid, on hearing the dream, said that it was a prophecy of death, and she is convinced that she will die right then and there. But in this she is proven wrong; we are only halfway through the novel, and she will not die for many hundreds of pages yet. In this way Tolstoy explains that to see the dream as a prediction of the future is wrong, for its predictive power is either ineffective or overly obvious (all of us will, after all, die at some point or another). But it's wrong, too, to take Vronsky's attitude, that this is all simply unreasonable foolishness.

Then what is the right thing to do with dreams? What is Anna trying to do with them? One answer is she is trying to do something like Tolstoy's later definition of art:

> …a boy who once experienced fear, let us say, on encountering a wolf, tells about this encounter and, to call up in others the feeling he experienced, describes himself, his state of mind before the encounter, the surroundings, the forest, his carelessness, and then the look of the wolf, its movements, the distance between the wolf and himself, and so on.

> All this – if as he tells the story the boy relives the feeling he experienced, infects his listeners, makes them relive all that the narrator lived through – is art.[267]

If we were to substitute the specifics of Anna's dream for those of the boy's encounter in the wild – not the forest, but a room, not the wolf but a muzhik – this would be a perfect description of Anna's desperate attempt to infect Vronsky with her dream. The telling of it to someone else allows her to relive it fully in her motions and language; like an actress (or a marionette), she obliterates self-consciousness in the performance of the role, and it allows her to transmit it, in sensations, to another being. Anna's performance, like the boy's, might be said to be an attempt to surmount the barrier of self-consciousness blocking communion between two individuals. In the vocabulary of Julian Jaynes, Anna tries to induce a state where her words are experienced without the distance of commentary, in a kind of self-willed bicamerality. If two people could only communicate in the purely sensual realm of perception and feeling, and be saved from the need for the filter of analytical language, then they might truly begin to respond to one another. Through mimesis and movement we can, to use Tolstoy's pregnant word, *infect* one another, implanting states of mind that are now unquestioningly a part of the reality of the one infected as they were a part of the infector's. Each use of language as a reflective medium inhibits this process: Vronsky's rationalistic cynicism and the maid's superstitious hermeneutics are opposites sides of the same coin. If only Vronsky were to surrender to Anna's desire for a meeting of their dreams, then he would have a chance to infect her as well, and together they might build a negotiated world of feelings, and then they would be able to…

Do what? It is precisely here that Tolstoy's dream-demonstration stops. Anna desperately desires to create a dream-sharing culture with her lover, to engage in that tradition spanning the Ongees and Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar and leading us to the talking cure of the early Freud.

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[267] Lev Tolstoy, *What is Art?* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin, 1995), 39.

Tolstoy shows us plainly here that failure to do so is a disaster. But what might have happened if they had succeeded? Here there is more silence than solution.

Anna's dream corresponds closely to our earlier definition of a nightmare, broadcasting an intentionality which withholds its specific intentions from the dreamer, which makes the dreamer into a kind of figure in someone else's dream. Part of the problem is that in nightmares, the aliveness inside of us actively ignores us, refuses us. The world is alive and yet its aliveness has no use for the dreamer, has no message for her. This state of affairs is made explicit when the muzhik dream returns: "as always in this nightmare (here lay its terror), she felt this little muzhik paid no attention to her, but was doing this dreadful thing with the iron over her, was doing something dreadful over her" (752). Dream-sharing, we might infer as a negative proposition, would allow for this aliveness to be yoked to a kind of meaning, or at least bent to a purpose. If Tolstoy is against dream-interpretation, perhaps he wouldn't be against dream re-direction: Anna and Vronsky, in negotiating and reenacting this dream, might in the end transform it, run up to the muzhik and seize him, and throw him out the window, and find themselves in the same dream-room locked in an honest embrace, freed from the calculating doubts and posturing that plague them both. They might be able to fully feel the life of the child growing in Anna, whose stirrings rescue the end of this scene, as if to illustrate once again the threshold subjectivity between life and death that is characteristic of the dream.[268] But all of this is rank speculation; we do not know, and it seems hard to believe in a viable solution, given the air of inevitable tragedy that hangs over the novel from its first words, from the fact that Anna's possessive and sincere

[268] The scene of the double dream ends with: "But suddenly she stopped. The expression on her face changed instantly. Terror and anxiety suddenly gave way to an expression of quiet, serious and blissful attention. He could not understand the meaning of this change. She had felt the stirring of new life inside her" (362). Perhaps this is the model for what dream-sharing should cause: "blissful attention" like a pregnant mother feeling her child inside her. But *how* could such a thing be done with gestures and words and expressions? Even when it happens to us in reading Tolstoy – and it does happen – do we have any real sense of what the mechanism is?

love for Vronsky is the source of her downfall, not her redemption.

In any case the isolation of the dream, its inability to be shared, is a matter of life and death. The dream continues to haunt Anna across the novel, and in the moment of her death, momentarily, consumes it:

> "Lord forgive me for everything!" she said, feeling the impossibility of any struggle. A little muzhik, muttering to himself, was working over some iron. And the candle by the light of which she had been reading that book filled with anxieties, deceptions, grief, and evil, flared up brighter than ever, lit up for her all that had once been in darkness, sputtered, grew dim, and went out for ever." (768)

These three sentences have a remarkable relationship to one another. The first records Anna's last words before she throws herself under the train. The third gives us a summation of her life in an exceedingly simple metaphor, one which Tolstoy has already favored in conveying the boundary between life and death at the birth of Kitty's child.[269] And in-between, this remarkable sentence: *muzhichok, prigavarivaya chto-to, rabotal nad zhelezom* (644). This is of course the image from the dream, but it carries with it no subjectivizing qualifiers: not *she dreamt she saw a little muzhik;* not *she imagined she saw*; not *she thought she saw*; not *she seemed to see*; not *she remembered*. It is a purely unqualified descriptive statement. It is the opposite of the sentence about the skinny muzhik with the missing button: there a set of qualifiers made clear to us that he lived in the shared reality of the novel; here, no qualifiers tell us who shares what, or what this muzhik's ontological status is. In this moment the world of the novel has become the dream and the dream has become the world of the novel. But it's too late, because there is no one to share it with, not even Anna: for during the unfolding of this sentence, she jumps under the train, and by the time the next sentence has begun, she is dead. She has perished off-stage, like in a Greek

[269] Nabokov draws attention to the parallel between the two: "We shall mark later the image of the light in connection with Anna's death, in the chapter of her suicide. Death is the delivery of the soul. Thus childbirth and soulbirth (death) are expressed in the same terms of mystery, terror, and beauy. Kitty's delivery and Anna's death meet at this point. Nabokov, *Lectures*, 165.

tragedy, and what has covered her death like a veil is the image of the dream. Now a reality no longer mediated by a character in the novel, it has instead become an image directly transmitted from writer to reader, though perhaps glowing with the last embers of the aliveness Anna's character has so dearly wrested from seven hundred lifeless leaves covered in little marks of ink.

The Search for a Solution: Tolstoy's Repudiation of Modernity, and the Road to Modernism

Tolstoy, when pressing himself to answer the question of why the boy should infect others with his sensuous experience of the wolf in the first place, comes to the conclusion that it must after all serve a rational purpose, or otherwise be debased: "The purpose of art in our time consists in transferring from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that people's well-being lies in being united among themselves and establishing, in place of the violence that now reigns, the Kingdom of God – that is, of love – which we all regard as the highest aim of life."[270] To transmit embodied existence after the manner of a dream can only be justified, so concludes Tolstoy in the wake of his crisis of faith, through embracing the principles of Christian love. In *Anna Karenina*, such a transmission redeemed by love is given to Levin and Kitty, in the wedding proposal by chalk. Tolstoy himself had courted Sofia Behrs in such a manner,[271] and we have seen that the use of the ubiquitous card-table chalk for purposes of sending wordless signals had fascinated him as early as "History of Yesterday."

The proposal between Kitty and Levin seems to be a conscious replacement of the dream: the two of them forego sleep for a night and live in a delirious state in which they learn to communicate wordlessly, writing out with chalk the first letters of the words in the sentences they wish to speak. "Occasionally she glanced at him, asking with her glance: 'Is this what I

[270] Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, 167.
[271] Maude, 285.

think?'" Meaning is directly perceivable, and requires no (perhaps we should say *almost* no) act of interpretation – thoughts pass directly between their minds without the mediation of language, or rather, the mediation stripped to the barest gestures, the merest imputation of it. Nabokov saw that this scene was Tolstoy's answer to the question posed by the failure to share dreams, and Tolstoy saw it too, as when he describes how Levin, immediately afterward, "followed, as in a dream, [*kak vo sne*] the images and memories that arose in his imagination" (402).[272]

The sterling beauty of this scene, its emotional intensity, arises not only from the immediate circumstances of the act itself, but from its making so explicit – for Tolstoy is a master of *explicitness*, so unexpected in a genre like the novel, which often trades on the implicit – the aspiration of the work as a whole. Signs on a surface permit the feel of wordless communication; written marks preempt the usual byways of speech, and instead jump directly into sensorial life. Irena Paperno explains that Tolstoy was a man on a lifelong mission "to define the non-self of being that lay outside language and time. Tolstoy was tormented with the paradoxical desire to write himself into a state of silence."[273] Stranger still, the push toward silence unleashed in him a flood of words, and the greatest transports of his talent. Bakhtin was critical of Tolstoy for the un-dialogic nature of the novels, for the absolutist quality of his language.[274] But language was absolute for Tolstoy in part because he thought that true dialogue had to take place anterior to language: once the meta-reflective qualities of language came into

[272] "You will also mark that Anna and Vronski, in that flash of telepathy, undergo technically the same experience as Kitty and Lyovin do when reading each other's thoughts as they chalk initial letters on the green cloth of a card table. But in Kitty-Lyovin's case the brain-bridge is a light and luminous and lovely structure leading toward vistas of tenderness and fond duties and profound bliss. In the Anna and Vronski case, however, the link is an oppressive and hideous nightmare with dreadful prophetic implications." Nabokov, *Lectures*, 175.
[273] Paperno, 4.
[274] Caryl Emerson, "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin," Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989), 149-170. Bakhtin saw Tolstoy as absolutely convinced of solitude as the only source of enlightenment. But it's fairer to say that the kind of social communion Tolstoy longed for he could not imagine in social situations, and therefore he hoped would arrive, as if by a back-door, in conditions of muteness and solitude.

play, it was too late. Language at its best could only report what had been negotiated in transactions of aliveness – facial expressions, and gestures, and sighs, and the mystical out-pouring of the inner side of the self – that were wordless.

Anna Karenina, in its guise as a dream-novel, is dedicated to the investigation of two questions: one, can we write and talk ourselves into wordlessness; and two, when we get there, will wordlessness be enough to redeem us? Anna and Vronsky, in their failed dream-sharing, answer the first question with a *no*: they cannot talk themselves into mutual understanding. Levin and Kitty, on the hand, attain an affirmative answer to the first question; they *do* supersede language. But now they must answer the second question. Even after the transcendent moment, Levin must show Kitty his shameful diaries; and still they will fight, and be jealous of one another, and fall in and out of affection with one another. It begins to look like even if you can answer the first question with a *yes* – already a rare and precious thing – the second question will still get a *no*. Shared aliveness does not equal utopia; and at this realization, Tolstoy puts his foot down. There has to be *something* that will hold inner experience to a standard. For we will always fall, as Levin knows he will in the final pages of the novel: we will be angry with the coachman, and speak our minds wrongly, "and there will be the same wall between my soul's holy of holies and other people, even my wife" (817). Maybe you can get past Anna and Vronsky; but to survive does not mean to transcend. There is no workable method, Tolstoy finally decides, except to be *good*. And there, theorization and speculation ends: absolute language intervenes and tells aliveness, in a single word, what it must bend itself toward.

On this overwhelming conviction *Anna Karenina* ends: Levin, Tolstoy's stand-in, knows that his life will now be meaningful and some communion with others will be possible because he will devote himself to being (trying to be) *good*. Such an ending reads one of two ways: either

as a bittersweet gesture of sympathy for our inability to create a stable ethical community for the mutual benefit of humankind, and applause for our quixotic and defiant desire to try anyway; or, as a sign of the failure of all our efforts to reach the good that we tell ourselves we aspire to.

The first is the reading that elevates this book to such an esteemed place in the pantheon of human expression, as being a document at once so complex and yet so universally touching. The second is the reading that can be said to have preoccupied Tolstoy in the years following the completion of this novel. This second interpretation might be elaborated as follows: *if all we can do is construct a splendid and intricate civilization, whose highest apex is the building of splendidly intricate and long verbal models of itself; and if all we can achieve through this work – creating the civilization, as well its sublime miniaturizations in prose – is a realization that being good is hard but we'll try as best we can, then our entire project, from the post office and railways to the printing presses and philosophical works, not to mention the novels that contain reproductions of them all, has failed*. Tolstoy's post-*Karenina* reading of Levin's final words suggest that the entire project of making miniature universes between the covers of a book, meant to be entered and absorbed in a dream-like manner perhaps unprecedented in the history of the verbal arts, has still failed to answer the only fundamental question: how can we commune in brotherhood and love with one another?

And it is here that Tolstoy's admiration for peasants and Bashkirs seems important. Tolstoy saw in – or projected onto – pre-industrial life the possibility of a re-awakening into sensuous, communal aliveness; such a life would, as he had written Strakhov, make the soul feel as immediate as a thunderstorm, and no longer a distant and attenuated illusion amid the abstractions of systematized thought and practice. The scenes in *Anna Karenina* where spontaneous acts of inner communication take place or almost take place (Anna and Vronsky;

Kitty and Levin; Kitty and Levin's dying brother; and we might add, too, Levin and the dog Laska) are an attempt to translate into a contemporary idiom what Tolstoy perceived as the Edenic shared aliveness indigenous to non-industrial culture. *Anna Karenina* is Tolstoy's boldest and last attempt to lift a non-industrial vitality, available in modernity only in dreams, into the waking world of the 19th century, with its railways, telegrams, and debates over Schopenhauer and socialism. It was his attempt to be a Bashkir while still being Count Lev Nikolaievich; to see if it was possible to conjure characters who accepted the modern world and found a way to be true and graceful – in Kleist's sense of the term – while still living in it. In this sense *Anna Karenina* is an important anticipation of the mythopoetic strain in modernism, which tries to use pre-modern ritual and thought to overcome the alienation of modern life – something we will explore in the next two chapters of the dissertation.

But for Tolstoy, this did not seem to work – at least *he* judged it a failure. It seems to me that this is how we should understand the despair about *Anna Karenina* he voiced to Strakhov upon his immediate return from the Bashkirs at the end of summer, 1875: "I'm at work at the moment on that dreary A. Karen and all I ask God is that he give me the strength to be rid of it as soon as possible, to free some space – I do need free time, and not for pedagogical, but for other, more pressing matters."[275] During the last phase of *Anna Karenina* he seemed to conclude that the modern world did not, under any circumstances, allow for the communion of inner being he craved. So he decided the only solution was to retreat into his own highly moral and moralizing vision of the pre-modern world.[276] If we all began living again like Bashkirs or peasants (or again, to emphasize, how *Tolstoy* thought Bashkirs and peasants once upon a time had lived),

[275] Tolstoy, letter to Strakhov, August 25, 1875, quoted in Paperno, 37.
[276] In the late 1870s Tolstoy played host to storytellers and folk singers. But his enthusiasm often outstripped his understanding of their culture. When he sent a collection of folk songs to Tchaikovsky, for example, the composer had to gently inform him that these had been totally corrupted by imposed meters and modern major and minor modalities. Maude, 365.

then suddenly deep feelings would become understandable between individuals and, furthermore, these deep feelings would be always good. He could not see how to bend the existing cultural framework of modernity to this purpose, so he decided to retreat to a framework he thought was already set-up for it.

This retreat into a pseudo-atavistic framework that would enable immediate sensorial understanding of truths is dramatized by the epilogue to Tolstoy's pivotal *Confession*, the main document of the post-*Karenina* crisis. Up until its final appended pages, the *Confession* denounces modernity, but speaks modernity's language. It recounts the social humiliation of being excessively pious in bourgeois surroundings; it debates and dismisses philosophical speculations on the meaning of life; it makes short work of rationality and mathematics. As always Tolstoy heaps especial scorn on what he took to be the signature invention of modernity, the medium of his own genius: "How often have I envied muzhiks their illiteracy and lack of learning! Those statements in the creeds, which to me were evident absurdities, for them contained nothing false; they could accept them and believe in the truth – in the truth I believed in. Only to me, unhappy man, it was clear that with truth falsehood was interwoven by finest threads, and that I could not accept it in that form."[277] Then, in the final two pages of the work, all of this analytical and polemical worrying gives way to a truly beautiful dream-description, on a par with anything in *Anna Karenina* or *War and Peace*. About this dream, Tolstoy has this to say:

> This dream expressed in condensed form all that I had experienced and described, and I think therefore that, for those who have understood me, a description of this dream will refresh and elucidate and unify what has been set forth at such length in the foregoing pages.[278]

[277] Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession*, trans. Aylmer Maude (Oxford UP, 1921), 88.
[278] Tolstoy, *A Confession*, 96.

The dream presents everything distilled and made over into a living experience, the direct power of which obviates the need for discursive explanation, and makes clear that Tolstoy's conversion has happened at the cognitive and epistemic level. The dream is Tolstoy's signal to his readers that he is aspiring towards the cognition involved in an illiterate, unselfconscious state of being. Most importantly, this dream is now only "for those who have understood me:" you must have also made this transition in order to understand what comes after it. In this final addendum, written three years after the rest of the text, Tolstoy draws the chalk-circle of his new atavism. One must stand within it alongside him; only then can the dream become immediately comprehensible and morally safe.

So, too, in the late story "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" set amid the beloved Bashkirs. The greedy farmer Pahom comes to the Bashkirs seeking land, and they offer to let him take as much of their steppe as he can encircle in a day of walking. During his night in their camp he has a dream that perfectly elucidates his situation; it reveals that his greed, abetted by the devil, will kill him. But he doesn't know what to do with this crystal clear vision. "What things one does dream," he says with a shrug, and then goes blindly to his fate. During his death-march over the steppe, the Bashkirs look on with amusement, and then, when he drops dead at the finish line, they click their tongues in a resigned and indifferent sympathy.

To be able to live in harmony with your dreams you must be a permanent resident of Tolstoy's fantastical indigenous utopia of moral certainty; then your dreams will be clear and need no interpretation. They will not have to speak, for they will *be*. Pahom, blinkered by the post-lapsarian phantasm of ownership, cannot understand that the dream is not a symbol for his life; it *is* his life. As I have endeavored to argue over the course of this dissertation, the idea of dreams as a state of being rather than a language is a powerful idea, and one which is in fact

associated with many non-industrial cultures. Tolstoy's intuition about it was extraordinary, and his sorrow at its absence in his own society was genuine. How close his works come to being actual substitutes for dream-sharing is easily attested by countless readers who claim to have truly *known* Anna and Kitty, to have truly *been* at Schöngraben and Borodino. But his attempt to re-create a culture where dream-being could once again happen in the here and now was drastically reductive; it must serve as a warning to any project (including this dissertation) which admires indigenous culture through modern eyes: we cannot ever hope to re-live what was not ours to live the first time. In the end, what it meant to Tolstoy to be a peasant was not so much to be as to *behave*, and to behave with absolute moral certainty and restraint. The conviction that genuine being was an ever stricter form of behaving led Tolstoy to years of terrible misery, his life made over into a symbol within an ever-narrower system. Small wonder that in his late diaries, under the sway of this regime, dreams came more and more to serve as metaphors for the precarity of life and the nearness of death.[279]

Yet against such reductive moral symbolism, even his own, Tolstoy's masterpieces of the 1860s and 1870s are like Roland's horn-call. They call for relief in the struggle to make a communion of shared aliveness within the analytical constraints of modernity. At least two other writers, both avid readers of Tolstoy, heard that call and, a generation later, set themselves, in his footsteps, to exploring aliveness through the dream. They picked up the sense that dreams could be a connection to a vitality absent in a culture of industrial production and militant individualism. This time, though, they were under no illusions about making language invisible or playing peasant. Instead, Woolf and Proust would make language as obtrusive as possible in order to push it beyond itself toward the embodied world-thought of the dream, and looked for some way to safely and harmoniously inject this vitality into the world that surrounded them –

[279] Paperno, 148-149.

made up, as it unavoidably was, of trains and telegrams, duchesses and tea parties, mustard-gas and machine guns. They resisted the thought that these things might be disenchantments of the world, and instead had the audacity to imagine that the dream could swallow and reinvent them too. If Tolstoy had tried to go back to Eden, to return to being Kleist's puppet, then Proust and Woolf laid wagers in the opposite direction, as Kleist prophesied we must: to push self-consciousness to such extremes that it becomes divine, and so finally, at the end of the world, re-attains *by design* what, at the beginning, was there as a given. The price they paid was an aesthetic elitism in its own way as aggressive as Tolstoy's polemical populism. Where he wanted a world-community of dream-sharing muzhiks, they aspired to found a little clan of oneiric aristocrats. But the lessons we can learn from these two dream-modernists are, I hope to show, of wide-ranging psychological, ethical, and even political importance.

Chapter 7.
Woolf: The Solitary Traveller Returns

In the middle of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Peter Walsh falls asleep on a bench in Regent's Park, and tumbles into an episode sometimes known as the "solitary traveller."[280] It is, as we will see, at once Peter's dream and not his dream, or rather it is both his dream and a dream of the dream. On the page, it takes the form of a parable about an unnamed wanderer traveling through a forest of animate trees, experiencing an abstract arc of loss, transcendence, resignation. The passage is written in a quasi-operatic vocabulary, and marks a rupture in the fabric of the novel, perhaps the most significant such rupture, during which Woolf's careful evocation of life in post-war London is for several pages suspended in favor of mythopoesis. Many critics have passed over this strange passage in silence.[281] Those who have written about it, meanwhile, are at odds over its significance, and often seem to be reaching for external referents: André Viola thinks it is Peter's dream-vision of archetypes drawn from Frazer's *Golden Bough*;[282] Molly Hoff believes it to liken Peter, in ambivalent fashion, to the epic heroes of Homer and Dante;[283] Francis Gillen, in a deeply perceptive essay, thinks this passage to be an allegorical summation of the entire novel's approach to consciousness.[284]

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[280] All citations for *Mrs. Dalloway* taken from Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt, 1925). The solitary traveller episode occurs on pgs. 56-58.
[281] Such is André Viola's contention: he notes a few pages in Jean Alexander's *The Venture of Form in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* (1974) and a reading of the solitary traveller as being an example of Woolf's conception of "universal mind" in J. Hillis Miller's *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982). André Viola, "'Buds on the Tree of Life': A Recurrent Mythological Image in Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway,'" *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Winter, 1996), 240 n. 12.
[282] Viola, 241-244.
[283] Molly Hoff, "The Pseudo-Homeric World of *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Twentieth Century Literature*,Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), 194.
[284] Francis Gillen, "'I am this, I am that': Shifting Distance and Movement in *Mrs. Dalloway,*" *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall, 1972), 490.

This passage is at once stranger and more local than these earlier readings suggest: we will see that, first, this passage represents Woolf's most complex statement about the nature of dream-life. In it she gives what might be termed her dream-cosmology, or her dream-physics: a description, in allegorical, narrative form, of the general qualities and limits of dream-life. And we will see, secondly, that this mythically externalized analysis carries with it – like a stowaway in the solitary traveller's knapsack – Woolf's key message about the kind of experience that emerges in isolation, and what we can do with such experience in a culture where there is no certain protocol for sharing it. This passage is a confrontation with the fact that, in modernity, there are certain experiences that we must live through entirely alone – the dream being the emblematic one – without any other person sharing their burden or helping us interpret their meaning. But here comes the crux of the matter, the transition into modernism and the search for a new (or rather, very old) way of understanding dreams. Woolf demonstrates how this isolation exerts an incredible pressure on the self to seek out the solace and society of others: it is the shock of confronting the isolation of our most inward forms of consciousness that makes us fully aware of the social nature of our being.

Woolf carries out a serious aesthetic and philosophical exploration of the loneliness of dreaming: the way dreaming and dream-like states at once underline the fundamental isolation of the mind, and generate the impetus by which the mind can overcome that isolation, teaching the mind to question the very meaning of isolation. We will see that, in Woolf, isolated states of consciousness greatly intensify an individual's relation to the surrounding world by transferring all the energies of social life onto that world. We will see that this form of experience, if reintegrated into communal life and ultimately shared with others, is restorative: it wipes away the deadened conventions by which social life is normally governed. But if it fails to reintegrate,

then it is just as destructive as what we have seen in Pushkin and Tolstoy, and can lead, in both art and life, to madness and, ultimately, the annihilation of the self. The lessons learned about the dream in the evolution of the novel and the consciousness of the artist are precarious, and can be easily lost.

The Outer and the Inner Dream: The Traveller and Peter

"The grey nurse resumed her knitting as Peter Walsh, on the hot seat beside her, began snoring. In her grey dress, moving her hands indefatigably yet quietly, she seemed like the champion of the rights of sleepers, like one of those spectral presences which rise in twilight in woods made of sky and branches" (56). Peter has withdrawn inside himself; his eyes are closed; the reader cannot follow to the inner place where he has gone. So Woolf makes a lateral move and assigns the motions of dream-life to the nurse sitting next to him. Thus she splits the sleep-state into two characters: Peter's motionless body is the external form of sleep, while the nurse's continuous knitting – a forward momentum that is also an act of creation – is the emblem for the inner experience of sleep. (If this were a film, we might imagine the sleeping Peter next to a nurse who gradually transforms into a gossamer apparition, the motion of her hands superimposed in fade-out over Peter's face).[285] Woolf's language is deliberately grand: the nurse is the "champion of the rights of sleepers," a phrase indicating there is an elevated ethical

[285] To split a sleeping person into two figures – one standing for the sleeper in our world, the other standing for the dreamer and his dream-world – is an unusual move on Woolf's part, but not entirely unprecedented. Something similar is brilliantly achieved in Act 4, scene 3 of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Brutus is alone in his tent with the servant-boy Lucius, who falls asleep while playing music. Brutus graciously allows the boy to sleep, only to find himself visited by the distinctly dreamlike apparition of Caesar's ghost. The entire episode plays out with Lucius asleep onstage, while Brutus is awake and faces his dead tormentor. As the ghost leaves, Brutus screams for Lucius, who mumbles in his sleep. "Didst thou dream, Lucius, that thou so criedst out?" Brutus says. "My Lord," the boy replies, "I do not know that I did cry." But of course the person who has cried out – and thus, by sleight-of-hand, the person who has truly been dreaming – is Brutus. Shakespeare has staged the scene in such a way that Lucius takes the place of Brutus' sleeping body, even while Brutus plays his dreaming self, confronting his nightmare.

dimension to sleep. And over these ethics – the values of the Republic of Sleep – the nurse keeps an allegorical watch, like Blind Justice before the courthouse or Lady Liberty in the harbor.

Woolf's dense prose carries out a second doubling on top of the doubling between Peter and the nurse: not only is the nurse an external symbol for the world of sleep, she is also simultaneously *inside it*. Not only is she the champion of the rights of sleepers; she is also "like one of those spectral presences which rise in twilight in woods made of sky and branches." The extreme opacity of this image is only partially remedied by the next sentence, itself almost appearing like a non sequitur: "The solitary traveller, haunter of lanes, disturber of ferns, and devastator of great hemlock plants, looking up, suddenly sees the giant figure at the end of the ride."

The nurse has now become a looming life-force in a twilight forest through which moves an unspecified "solitary traveller." As we read on, it becomes clear that the solitary traveller is the dreamer (or *a* dreamer?), moving through the forests of sleep. Maybe Woolf is suggesting that Peter Walsh has enfolded a glimpse of the nurse – surely the last person he saw before dropping into sleep – into his dreams. But her language has suddenly abandoned its usual specificity, its interest in the mechanics of a single person's mind: this is not a description of a specific dream, but rather a description of the general trajectory of dreaming; it is a meta-dream description:

> By conviction an atheist perhaps, he is taken by surprise with moments of extraordinary exaltation. Nothing exists outside us except a state of mind, he thinks; a desire for solace, for relief, for something outside these miserable pigmies, these feeble, these ugly, these craven men and women. But if he can conceive of her, then in some sort she exists, he thinks, and advancing down the path with his eyes upon sky and branches he rapidly endows them with womanhood; sees with amazement how grave they become; how majestically, as the breeze stirs them, they dispense with a dark flutter of the leaves charity, comprehension, absolution and then, flinging themselves suddenly aloft, confound the piety of their aspect with a wild carouse.

> Such are the visions which proffer great cornucopias full of fruit to the solitary traveller, or murmur in his ear like sirens lolloping away on the green sea waves, or are dashed in his face like bunches of roses, or rise to the surface like pale faces which fisherman flounder through floods to embrace. (57)

The solitary traveller is an atheist, for his world is entirely a state of mind; it is a complete creation of which the mind (if not *his person* exactly) is the sole author, leaving no room for the world created by God. And yet, this self-authored and enclosed world provides moments of otherworldly and transcendent exaltation. Something miraculous happens whereby the solitary traveller himself coaxes the world into a state of aliveness – "But if he can conceive of her, then in some sort she exists, he thinks, and advancing down the path with his eyes upon the sky and branches he rapidly endows them with womanhood." The dream-world is continuously ready to spring to life; it leaps up into a state of aliveness. The trees and the sky and the stars and the path are all suffused with an animation not there only a moment before. In fact the dream-world seems to pile aliveness upon aliveness: these living presences are feminine, generative, full of forgiveness and acceptance, and yet also sensual, even sexual, flinging themselves about, confounding their piety with a "wild carouse."

As we have come to expect, this emergent aliveness is twinned with annihilation, packed into allusive symbols: "great cornucopias of fruit," "sirens lolloping away," "pale faces which fisherman flounder through floods to embrace." They are the sirens whispering in the traveller's ear; they are smothering bunches of roses in his face; they are mermaids luring fishermen down under the waves. (The solitary traveller, this language suggests, might be a doppelgänger to Odysseus, the man of twists and turns, the traveler between the living and the dead. He may also

be haunted by that more recent Ulysses – Leopold Bloom, that is – whom Woolf was first getting to know, and in general disliking, just as she was conceiving this novel).[286]

The little narrative of the traveller is a succinct expression of the paradoxes of dream-life: dreaming is a solitary endeavor, and yet it is paradoxically filled with presences. None of our acquaintances in waking life can follow us into our dreams, or ever share them; and yet simulacra of them are packed into the dream-world. The dream bursts with aliveness, and yet that aliveness sits very close to death. The dream seems a pure solipsism, and yet there is an exalted sense of alienation, a sense of the self transcended, left behind. The dreamworld presents an unexpected unity, one in which incongruities and confusions melt together, becoming a seamless form of experience:

> Such are the visions which ceaselessly float up, pace beside, put their faces in front of, the actual thing; often overpowering the solitary traveller and taking away from him the sense of the earth, the wish to return, and giving him for substitute a general peace, as if (so he thinks as he advances down the forest ride) all this fever of living were simplicity itself; and myriads of things merged in one thing; and this figure, made of sky and branches as it is, had risen from the troubled sea (he is elderly, past fifty now) as a shape might be sucked up out of the waves to shower down from her magnificent hands compassion, comprehension, absolution. (57)

The solitary traveller, for all the strangeness and agitations of dreaming, is finally offered a sacral peace, a place of stillness and beauty. The language is religious – promising not only comprehension but absolution – and seems to recover an ancient notion of the spiritual in an atavistic corner of the self. The beneficent feminine figure rising from the waves suggests Botticelli and the culture of Aestheticism: the ghosts of Walter Pater's Gioconda and Ruskin's

[286] "I finished *Ulysses* and think it a mis-fire," Woolf writes in her diary on September 6th, 1922, "Genius it has, I think; but of the inferior water." Early sketches of what would ultimately become *Mrs. Dalloway* had already been written; the main phase of work would begin the following year. Molly Hoff makes a case, not always convincing, for the Homeric (or, as she puts it, 'pseudo-Homeric') overtones in *Mrs. Dalloway*, in an article that is itself a performance on the verge of parody. Speaking of the solitary traveller, she writes, "The hero must endure multiple cycles of initiatory death and rebirth in all their quasiritual forms. These are foreshadowed for the napping Peter, whose sleep is conventionally the brother to death, in his dream as the solitary traveler, guarded by the nurse. Emerging from a Dantean dark wood, he passes through amniotic waters to the figure of a mother, thus experiencing a symbolic death and rebirth." Hoff, 194.

Queen of the Air hover over these lines.[287] But they are coupled with a spiritual selflessness, a remarkable self-abnegation: "let me blow to nothingness with the rest," the solitary traveller decides in the end, having lost all interest in waking.

The crescendo of the solitary traveller passage brings the link between aliveness and isolation to a head:

> The solitary traveller is soon beyond the wood; and there, coming to the door with shaded eyes, possibly to look for his return, with hands raised, with white apron blowing, is an elderly woman who seems (so powerful is this infirmity) to seek, over a desert, a lost son; to search for a rider destroyed; to be the figure of the mother whose sons have been killed in the battles of the world. So as the solitary traveller advances down the village street where the women stand knitting and the men dig in the garden, the evening seems ominous; the figure still; as if some august fate, known to them, awaited without fear, were about to sweep them into complete annihilation. (58)

The mother who waits for her son, knowing he will never return, is the mirror-opposite of the maternal forest: the first is emptiness swelling into plenitude; the other is plenitude preparing for emptiness. The aliveness of the world is tied to an inevitable sense of its exhaustion. Where a place teems with animation, it begins to tempt, even beg, for its own extinction. And amid all of this, the solitary traveller feels even more acutely his isolation:

> Indoors among ordinary things, the cupboard, the table, the window-sill with its geraniums, suddenly the outline of the landlady, bending to remove the cloth, becomes soft with light, an adorable emblem which only the recollection of cold human contacts forbids us to embrace. She takes the marmalade; she shuts it in the cupboard.
>
> "There is nothing more to-night, sir?"
>
> But to whom does the solitary traveller make reply? (58)

Woolf's final question – to whom does he make reply? – resonates at frequencies both internal and external to the dream: the traveller is trapped in the loneliness of his dream, in the sense that even the familiar figures are somehow cut off from him. At the same time, there is the simpler, but stranger, fact that all of this takes place inside the echo-chamber of his own skull, and that

[287] It may also, as André Viola has argued, harken to images of the Mother Goddess and the Sacred World-Tree introduced to fin-de-siècle culture by Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Viola, 241-3.

there is no waking person – like Clarissa, or the admirable Hugh – on-hand to hear what the traveller is saying.

Maria DiBattista has drawn attention to the importance of the inner adventurer in Virginia Woolf's writings. "An adventure encompasses more than an experience marked by risk and latent either with death or self-transfiguration," she writes. "Adventure is not experienced or even recognizable *as* an adventure unless and until the mind acknowledges the possibilities of extinction or exaltation that the adventure fortuitously but fatefully presents. There is no adventure but thinking makes it so."[288] The language of adventure – that is to say, the language of rupture in the usual rhythm of thought – appears in many decisive Woolfian moments, and it's there from the very beginning. In an early letter to Lady Robert Cecil from 1905 Woolf declares, "I don't so much care for Red Seas, and Rocky Mountains, but I love this Human Inside." DiBattista glosses: "Woolf's sense of adventure is deeply implicated with her fascination with the unknown or seldom visited expanses of this Human Inside, and eventually it becomes assimilated to her vision of all creative response to the vicissitudes and mysteries of the world."[289]

DiBattista relies heavily on Georg Simmel's 1911 essay on "The Adventurer" for this account: for Simmel the adventure is an event at once removed from the rhythm of life – a rupture, a break – and yet somehow possessed of a totality, indeed, mimetic of the totality of life itself. In the adventure it is the case "that an action is completely torn out of the inclusive context of life, and that simultaneously the whole strength and intensity of life streams into it."[290] The adventurer's state of mind is one in which there is a perceived connection between self and world

[288] Maria DiBattista, "Virginia Woolf's Sense of Adventure," *Literature Compass*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2007), 204.
[289] DiBattista, 208.
[290] Georg Simmel, "The Adventurer," *On Individuality and Social Forms*, Donald Levine, ed. (University of Chicago, 1971), 198.

–the same connection between self and world that characterizes the dream. In fact, the dream is Simmel's master-metaphor for the adventure:

> Because of its place in our psychic life, a remembered adventure tends to take on the quality of a dream. Everyone knows how quickly we forget dreams because they, too, are placed outside the meaningful context of life-as-a-whole. What we designate as "dreamlike" is nothing but a memory which is bound to the unified, consistent life-process by fewer threads than are ordinary experiences. We might say that we localize our inability to assimilate to this process something experienced by imagining a dream in which it took place. The more "adventurous" an adventure, that is, the more fully it realizes its idea, the more "dreamlike" it becomes in our memory.[291]

Although DiBattista makes no mention of the solitary traveller in her essay, he is one of Woolf's paramount inner adventurers. His vocabulary is that of the quest, the journey from civilization into the wilderness, and the return, finally, to the world of marmalade and lampshades. His is the sense of existence rendered discretely, and yet full of plenitude: the little passage has nothing to do with the rest of the novel, and yet it seems – as several critics intuit – to encapsulate the whole thing.[292] Above all, he is the literalization of Woolf's metaphor from 1905: the Human Inside transformed into Red Seas and Rocky Mountains, the journey inside the self (and maybe not even really the self, but inside the human, inside being) rendered as an actual journey.

A journey of such magnitude and distinctiveness requires its own style, and so Woolf writes here with elevation, so much so that she might even be suspected in this moment of pastiche were she not being so serious. Her writing is Wagnerian, its mythical wanderer moving, like Wotan in his guise as *der Wanderer* in *Siegfried*, through an enchanted forest, every detail

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[291] Simmel, 188.

[292] Gillen: "The full significance of Mrs. Dalloway's return to the party and of her relation with Septimus is heightened and controlled by an elaborate allegory placed in a central position in the novel. It is necessary that the reader comprehend this theme clearly, yet such a comprehensive view is beyond the consciousness of any single character and too central to the theme to be left to chance recognition. So Mrs. Woolf invents a purely allegorical figure – a solitary traveller who encounters on his way 'one of those spectral presences which rise in twilight in woods made of sky and branches,'" Gillen, 490. Miller: "'Nothing exists outside except a state of mind'…The sentence [from the solitary traveller] provides an initial clue to the mode of existence of the narrator of *Mrs. Dalloway*," J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982), 178.

pregnant with some ponderous and largely inscrutable meaning.[293] The rhythm of the passage has an epic quality, a sense of time intensified but not quickened; as Lukács might observe, the world of the solitary traveller is in full communion with the traveller; self and surroundings are, if not friendly with one another, then engaged in a sensitive and reactive dialogue.[294]

The extent of Woolf's innovations in dream-writing in *Mrs. Dalloway* is only fully in evidence once the solitary traveller passage has finished. For then Walsh suddenly snaps awake, and falls to thinking:

> "Lord, Lord!" he said to himself out loud, stretching and opening his eyes. "The death of the soul." The words attached themselves to some scene, to some room, to some past he had been dreaming of. It became clearer; the scene, the room, the past he had been dreaming of. (58)

Woolf finally makes clear that whatever the solitary traveller was, it was *not* a description of Peter Walsh's dream: although he may have been the traveller, the content of his dream was something else entirely. It is important to note here that the critical literature, when it mentions the solitary traveller at all, has seemed to miss this: most critics seem to think, simply, that Peter is dreaming of *being* the solitary traveller. J. Hillis Miller seems to suggest that Peter is dreaming

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[293] Woolf, like so many thinkers of her generation, was deeply touched by Wagner. Two essays from 1909 – "The Opera," and "Impressions at Bayreuth" – testify to the power of his work over her. The latter is a dispatch from the famous Festspielhaus in which she writes about a performance of *Parsifal*, "Somehow Wagner has conveyed the desire of the Knights of the Grail in such a way that the intense emotion of human beings is combined with the unearthly nature of the things they seek. It tears us, as we hear it, as though its wings were sharply edged. Again feelings of this kind that are equally diffused and felt for one object in common create an impression of largeness and, when the music is played as it was played on the night of the 11th, of an overwhelming unity." Virginia Woolf, "Impressions at Bayreuth," *The Essays of Virginia Woolf,* Vol. I: 1904-1912, Andrew McNeillie, ed. (New York: HBJ, 1986), 289. Though Woolf would a few years later find the *Ring* totally unmoving, the role of Wagner in her work, and of music in general, is profound, and lasts until the very end of her life, culminating with the musical structure of both *The Waves* and *Between the Acts*. For an analysis of Woolf's relation to music, and especially its deep link to the concerns of subjectivity and communal life, see Elicia Clements, "Virginia Woolf, Ethel Smyth, and Music: Listening as a Productive Mode of Social Interaction," *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Summer, 2005), 51-76.

[294] "The world is wide and yet it is like a home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature of the stars," says Lukács of the "Integrated Civilization" and its corresponding literature, the epic. The solitary traveller, it seems not unfair to say, lives in a world where, quite literally, the stars and soul burn with the same material, as do the tree branches and clouds. These lines will resonate still more strongly when we turn to Proust. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (MIT Press, 1971), 29.

of the solitary traveller, though he may not actually *be* the traveller.[295] A few, like Francis Gillin, seem to ignore Peter entirely in their reading, thinking that it is a free-standing allegory.[296] But in fact I believe it is something still more unusual than these: a vision of what might be called the *outside* of the dream, the exterior structure of dream-life. Whatever the content of a given dream, Woolf seems to suggest, the dreamer has also embarked – allegorically, perhaps phenomenologically – on a solitary journey through a living forest. In other words, dreaming is conceived in its general structure as a journey through a forest of aliveness, regardless of the particular visions that come before a particular dreamer on a particular night. If we could watch someone dreaming from some neutral and all-seeing vantage-point – from the vantage point, perhaps, of the godlike and consciousness-penetrating narrator of the novel itself – only then would we see him as the solitary traveller. Can you imagine, Woolf asks implicitly, a gaze that would see into another person's sleeping mind, but would remain impassively outside of the sphere of that person's subjectivity, a sympathetic observer of the general patterns of cognition that underpin the specific and transient matter of our thoughts?

In contrast – and this is very important – if we were looking at the dream from the perspective of the dreamer himself, we would *not* see the solitary traveller and his forest. We would see the content of the dream, what might be termed the *inside* of the dream, which in this case is explained in the following pages: Peter Walsh has been dreaming of a tea-party from long ago, in which Clarissa made cruel remarks about a scandalous marriage between a squire and a housemaid. Learning that the maid had even had the baby before the wedding, Clarissa says "Oh, I shall never be able to speak to her again!" And Walsh, offended and angry at her manner, says to her "The death of the soul," meaning the death of *her* soul – and then, as if uncannily

[295] Miller, 178.
[296] Gillen, 490.

prompted by this event, Clarissa meets her future husband Richard Dalloway, and Peter is effectively banished from her life. This is a much more conventional dream than the solitary traveller: it depicts the kind of classic social humiliation so familiar to us from the dreams of Pushkin and Tolstoy (and from many anxiety dreams), in which the dreamer experiences a form of isolation and social exclusion.

But Woolf's innovation of depicting the outer dream – the solitary traveller – adds a complicating factor not seen in dreams of humiliation from other works of literature. For at the same time that Peter Walsh has been rehearsing these acts of social stratification in what seems a rather banal and ugly parlor drama, he has also been on the metaphysical journey of the solitary traveller, filling the inner forest with living presences. Dreams, Woolf is suggesting, no matter what their content, can be conceptualized – at least from this curious perspective, still within the dreamer's mind, but outside his own experience of the dream – as solitary journeys through an ever more living world, a world in which overwhelming aliveness is accompanied by a painful awareness of one's own alienation from it.

With the solitary traveller's forest suddenly surrounding Peter Walsh's memory of the luncheon, little turns of phrase take on a new meaning: "They had always this queer power of communicating without words" (60) he recalls; "She knew directly he criticized her. Then she would do something quite obvious to defend herself…Not that he said anything, of course; just sat looking glum. It was the way their quarrels often began" (60). Or later, Walsh recalls: "She was talking to a young man on her right. He had a sudden revelation. 'She will marry that man,' he said to himself. He didn't even know his name" (61). In each of these cases, a fundamental paradox is at play: the moment of deepest communion with another person, the moment in which she is understood wordlessly, intuitively, is also the moment at which a separation, silly or

serious, temporary or permanent, is effected. As the recollection of the dream blurs with the recollection of the event itself, Peter Walsh replays the entire domestic tragedy in his mind, culminating in Clarissa's decisive rejection of him. "He felt he was grinding against something physically hard; she was unyielding. She was like iron, like flint, rigid up the backbone" (64). Clarissa's aliveness has gradually been evacuated from her person, and she has become flint and iron. The solitary traveller no longer has anyone to whom he can make reply; there is but silence.

The wounds of social life are made to bleed again in sleep; in fact, they are re-cast in the epic, mythical mode. In sleep even the biting little squabbles of the British bourgeoisie take on heroic weight. "The death of the soul" is not just a catty remark if it's also a journey through the forest. There is no naiveté about the necessary goodness of wordless communication, but as a result these slights take on a certain poignancy, even dignity. In what follows I will show how this dream-mode is a method for investigating and, in many cases, repairing social life in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In many cases we will see that certain aspects of the solitary traveller are invoked – the aliveness of the world, the co-presence of alienation and intimacy, the emotional grandeur behind certain everyday slights and flirtations – without explicit reference to dreams. It will thus be the argument that the *dreamlike* as Woolf lays it out in the solitary traveller and as we've earlier explored it, rather than the dream itself, will be the vehicle for the creation of social communion.

There is, however, one dream sequence in Woolf which lays out the parameters of this argument with exceptional clarity. It occurs in the early pages of her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, and might be considered an early moment of candor about a theme that would become more deeply and more subtly entwined in all of her fiction. In *The Voyage Out*, Clarissa Dalloway – this is her first appearance in Woolf's fiction – is stuck aboard a ship with Richard and a strange

cast of characters: a stolid shipping manager; a pretentious scholar of Greek; various disagreeably bohemian wives. A first dinner with them goes quite poorly, although Clarissa is more amused than dismayed. In good spirits she writes a letter in which she says her companions "might have come trailing out of an old number of *Punch*."[297] Then she falls asleep and something splendid happens: the inanimate becomes animate – she is "visited by fantastic dreams of great Greek letters stalking round the room" – and suddenly all the distinctions of class and taste seem to fall away. A commingling of ideas and forms brings all the sleeping minds together:

> The dreams were not confined to her indeed, but went from one brain to another. They all dreamt of each other that night, as was natural, considering how thin the partitions were between them, and how strangely they had been lifted off the earth to sit next each other in mid-ocean, and see every detail of each others' faces, and hear whatever they chanced to say.[298]

It was in the dream-life, Woolf understood early on, that the question of communication with other minds would be settled.

To Share in the Aliveness of the World: Madness and Myth

The solitary traveller brings trees to life by conceiving of them; to think something in the dream is to give it animation.[299] Our first clue that the dream-system is working throughout *Mrs. Dalloway* is that trees (and other inanimate things) regularly come alive. Perhaps the most important moment when they do follows directly on the heels of Peter Walsh's dream-episode, as the narrative gaze shifts to another part of Regent Park:

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[297] Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 43.
[298] Woolf, *Voyage Out*, 46.
[299] That trees are an ideal object for the transformation of the inanimate into the animate should come as no surprise, since there has been a long tradition in art and literature of using the rustling of leaves and branches as a prelude to the arrival of fairies, demons, ambushes, and wild animals: the movement of vegetation inspires in the mind an idea of aliveness. See again my essay on this matter, Spellberg, "The Chimeric Element in Perception: A First Exploration," 92-116.

> The supreme secret must be told to the Cabinet: first, that trees are alive; next, there is no crime; next love, universal love, he muttered, gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out these profound truths which needed, so deep were they, so difficult, an immense effort to speak out, but the world was entirely changed by them for ever. (67)

The world is alive, and because it buzzes with aliveness there is the promise of all-embracing communion, of universal love. These sentiments belong of course to Septimus Warren Smith, thinking himself towards a breakdown. Woolf draws an immediate parallel between dreams and madness: Septimus is himself a solitary traveller, at once full of love and terribly cut-off, surrounded by living presences who seem to him the symbol of love and also reminders of its unfulfillment. His status is terrifying for our inability to reach it: how much of what he says is the trauma of the war? How much the wounded poetry inside of him? Why is this happening to him and not to another veteran of the trenches? What we have, as Woolf's willfully unsettled answer to these questions, is a powerful connection between his person and the world around him: "The earth thrilled beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh; their stiff leaves rustled by his head" (68). He too imagines suffocating bouquets of roses: "Now he withdraws up into the snows, and roses hang about him – the thick red roses which grow on my bedroom wall, he reminded himself" (68). And above all, he feels, in the thick of aliveness, the omnipresence of isolation and death:

> I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought. I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive, but let me rest still; he begged (he was talking to himself again – it was awful, awful!); and as, before waking, the voices of birds and the sound of wheels chime and chatter in a queer harmony, grow louder and louder and the sleeper feels himself drawing to the shores of life, so he felt himself drawing towards life, the sun growing hotter, cries sounding louder, something tremendous about to happen. (69)

Woolf's mixed metaphor has a wonderful richness and precision to it: to go mad is first to feel yourself drowning, and second to feel yourself asleep, just out of reach of waking life. Here Woolf returns us to the original valence of Heraclitus' pronouncement on sleep: that it is a state

in which each man turns aside into his own world, a pronouncement traditionally interpreted as associating sleep with madness and spiritual sickness. The echo of *The Tempest* completes the tipping from sleep to madness to death itself.[300]

Septimus' envelopment in a waking dream is accompanied by an astonishing state of – to borrow another word from the solitary traveller – exaltation:

> Long streamers of sunlight fawned at his feet. The trees waved, brandished. We welcome, the world seemed to say; we accept; we create. Beauty, the world seemed to say…To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy. Up in the sky swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out, round and round, yet always with perfect control as if elastics held them; and the flies rising and falling; and the sun spotting now this leaf, now that, in mockery, dazzling it with soft gold in pure good temper; and now and again some chime (it might be a motor horn) tinkling divinely on the grass stalks – all of this, calm and reasonable as it was, made out of ordinary things as it was, was the truth now; beauty, that was the truth now. Beauty was everywhere. (69)

The flickering of sunlight and the rustle of the leaves is the portal towards Septimus' ecstasy. It is the avenue toward terror and beauty. We become aware that Septimus is by some condition deeply isolated from the world. He no longer plays a part in the elaborate and stabilizing social system to which other humans belong. Although he is sitting in the middle of a crowded park – in fact, although he is sitting right next to his wife – he is a kind of hermit, completely enclosed in a world of buzzing divinity. Like Saint Anthony and the other desert hermits surrounded by hordes of demons and angels, this private world vacillates unbearably between extremes of

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[300]" Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! now I hear them,--ding-dong, bell."
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, I.2.

transcendence and terror. To be alone – even in this purely subjective fashion – is to lose all the sense of stabilizing proportion the social world provides.

The proof is in the next moment when the beleaguered Lucrezia turns to him and says, "It's time." But he cannot process what she means by this phrase. Instead:

> The word 'time' split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself –
>
> "For God's sake don't come!" Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead. (69-70)

Each human utterance is so unbearably full of signification that it can no longer serve as a bridge between minds: "time" has exploded in mid-air like an artillery shell, and in the explosion it has birthed a universe, an epic poem, an all hallows' eve. Above all it has produced Septimus' beloved comrade Evans, returned from the dead: the "branches parted" and Evans approaches. Septimus cries out,

> raising his hand like some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone with his hands pressed to his forehead, furrows of despair on his cheeks, and now sees light on the desert's edge which broadens and strikes the iron-black figure (and Septimus half rose from his chair), and with legions of men prostrate behind him he, the giant mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole –
>
> "But I am so unhappy, Septimus," said Rezia trying to make him sit down.
>
> The millions lamented; for ages they had sorrowed. He would turn round, he would tell them in a few moments, only a few moments more, of this relief, of this joy, of this astonishing revelation –
>
> "The time, Septimus," Rezia repeated. "What is the time?" (70)

At the very moment when Evans returns from the dead, when the millions of mourners of the Great War seem marshaled at his back, Septimus is depicted as a lonely colossus in the desert. And each time Rezia speaks – the only true moment of human contact – it comes not as a relief but as an interruption, an attack upon the ritual of mass-mourning Septimus enacts in his mind.

Septimus is dreaming while awake: because he has been – by the trauma of the war, by the inscrutable causes of his mental illness – cut adrift from real human communication.[301] Rezia's interventions fall on deaf ears, or rather, she is like the nurse sitting beside Peter Walsh, her motions no longer her own, but rather swallowed up and reinterpreted as great hemlocks and sacred utterances, fully integrated into Septimus' solipsism: "And he would lie listening until suddenly he would cry that he was falling down, down into the flames! Actually she would look for flames, it was so vivid. But there was nothing. They were alone in the room. It was a dream, she would tell him and so quiet him at last, but sometimes she was frightened too" (141).

And yet, the process of analogy and echo by which *Mrs. Dalloway* progresses makes it very hard for us merely to dismiss Septimus as a cautionary tale about exaltation and social isolation, or indeed about the traumas inflicted by the Great War. There are at least two reasons for this: the first is that he is hardly the only person in the novel to be cut-off from others, to be unable to understand them, and he is one of an entire generation reeling from unprecedented carnage. Woolf's angry satire of Septimus' doctors indicates as much, as do her many scenes of selfish posturing and unfeeling gossip at various luncheon tables and in tea-parlors. Her handling of the scene in Regent's Park is still more explicit: after we have journeyed into the cosmic terror of Septimus' mind, Woolf shifts our perspective once more to Peter Walsh who, seeing Lucrezia and Septimus, says to himself, "And that is being young, Peter Walsh thought as he passed them. To be having an awful scene – the poor girl looked absolutely desperate – in the middle of the morning" (70). Walsh's surmise of the scene is hopelessly naïve. He has failed to see the literally life-threatening situation about to play out. In a stroke Woolf makes very clear that to be isolated

[301] It is beyond the scope of this essay, and perhaps beyond the scope of Woolf's oeuvre, to speculate on the causality of the relationship of madness to isolation. Is madness the cause of this subjective isolation? Or is this subjective isolation, if unrelieved, the cause of madness? And in what relation do madness and isolation stand to the horrors Septimus witnessed at the Front?

from meaningful understanding of other beings is not the sole province of mad poets or – and here perhaps she is even more polemical – war victims. In fact, far from it, for Septimus, though impervious to contact with his flesh-and-blood wife, is at the very least deeply aware of the social impulse inside his mind: he is haunted by the millions in his brain and in his memory, and especially by the obligations and love he owes to the dead Evans.

But there is a second, and still more compelling, way in which Woolf complicates Septimus' dream-episode. And that is that the acute alternation between the animate and the inanimate which seems to be the primary marker of his insanity is in fact present throughout the novel. It is especially present in our dreamer Peter Walsh, who by the end of the long Regent Park sequence seems almost a foil for Septimus (though, as we've just seen, he has his moments of callous recourse to cliché). Peter uses the language of the animate world in order to describe a raggedy street singer, who sings with "a voice bubbling up without direction, vigour, beginning or end, running weakly and shrilly and with an absence of all human meaning into *ee um fah um so/ foo swee too eem oo* – " (80). Peter thinks that the song seems to bubble up out of the earth: "it issued from so rude a mouth, a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grasses, still the old bubbling burbling song, soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure, streamed away in rivulets over the pavement" (81). A living being is here reimagined as an inanimate spring; but then the inanimate spring becomes again an animate being, as Walsh begins to imagine the spring as a mythical woman who sings the story of her eternal love for her dead lover. She is now a forever living presence who "would still be there in ten million years" but who, nevertheless, can only sing about how "death's enormous sickle had swept those tremendous hills, and when at last she laid her hoary and immensely aged head on the earth, now become a mere cylinder of ice, she implored the Gods to lay by her side a

bunch of purple heather, there on her high burial place which the last rays of the last sun caressed; for then the pageant of the universe would be over" (81).

The imputation of aliveness generates a powerful narrative energy: the back-and-forth – that a human is like a spring which is like a human – causes Peter Walsh to generate a universe in which such a thing might exist. It stretches back to pre-Christian times, and runs through the long evolution, both physical and mythological, of British history. The imputation of aliveness is coincident here with the origins of narrative, and with the origins of hermeneutics. The psychologist Jerome Bruner writes of the importance of "intentional state entailment" to the creation of explanatory narratives in the world. This means that when "animals or nonagentive objects are cast as narrative protagonists, they must be endowed with intentional states for the purpose, like the Little Red Engine in the children's story."[302] It may be inferred from Woolf's account of Walsh that there is a further level: the sudden perception of intentional states within otherwise inanimate objects leads to narrative creation.

In this narrative creation we begin to see where the border between madness and sanity lies. For Peter Walsh can take the aliveness of the world and tame it with the conventions of story. He is cognitively returned to the fold of British history and Romantic myth: his story of the lonely woman is consistent, continuous, structured with a mind toward ends. Walsh's process, in contradistinction to Septimus', is a conversion of the living dream-state into the communal story-state, with its canon of conventions and above all what Jerome Bruner calls its capacity for "narrative accrual." Storytelling is only really storytelling, Bruner suggests in agreement with the analysis of Melville Jacobs we saw in chapter four, when it fits into a larger cultural tradition, when the stories being told weave in and out of the stories that precede them, until such "narrative accruals achieve, like Émile Durkheim's collective representation, 'exteriority' and

[302] Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Autumn, 1991), 7.

the power of constraint."[303] In contrast to Septimus' wild surmisings – which end frequently in overwhelming interjections of "Beauty!" and "Love!" and seem to abandon even the basics of grammar – Walsh's fantasia on the woman, the water-spigot and the deathless maiden takes on an almost-artistic coherence. It resembles the myth as we've seen it defined by Robert Bringhurst: "a theorem about the nature of reality expressed not in algebraic symbols or inanimate abstractions but in animate, narrative form."[304]

The mythtelling impulse, then, is one road by which the uncontrolled aliveness of the dream is integrated into the matrix of culture. Septimus cannot stabilize his dreams into myths: they remain wild proliferations of images, discontinuous, protean, quickly falling away. To approach the dream with dream-logic is to fall into an abyss of unchecked imagining; to approach the dream with the narrative discipline of myth is to tame it. When Walsh mythologizes he is perhaps being naïve and atavistic: he favors folklore to explain the singing woman over, say, a sociological account of her poverty, or a critical analysis of her voice (we could imagine a world-weary character at some Woolfian luncheon saying, *rather reedy and thin, and yet forceful in its naïve way…)*. But by placing him in such close proximity – narrative and thematic – to Septimus, Woolf implies that this mythologizing act is a bedrock of society, a life-saving gesture of mental hygiene, and one that is given up at great peril. It may be that this provides a partial explanation for the curious nature of the earlier "solitary traveller" passage: this is not a scientific description of the dream, or even a phenomenological or subjective account; it is a mythical analysis of the dream-world, and it provides the mythical template for analysis that is of such decisive importance in this work.

[303] Bruner, 19.
[304] Bringhurst, "The Meaning of Mythology," 63.

This mythical analysis can be literally life-saving. Peter experiences in many places throughout the novel in-rushings of aliveness comparable to those of Septimus. But he manages to contain them, to continue on with his conversation or his walk. Sitting with Clarissa early in the novel, for example, he is suddenly put into a state of high excitement, "urged by the assembly of powers which were now charging this way and that and giving him the feeling at once frightening and extremely exhilarating of being rushed through the air on the shoulders of people he could no longer see" (44). But he can contain it; he can hold it in place; he can say "rather dryly to Clarissa Dalloway," that he is in love with a girl from India. Later, just before Clarissa's party, Peter is wandering the streets of London, and falls into a rhapsody over its bewildering aliveness, doors opening, people spilling out, the boats and the smoke and the drunks. But then, he does what Septimus cannot do, and stops himself: "The cold stream of visual impressions failed him now as if the eye were a cup that overflowed and let the rest run down its china walls unrecorded. The brain must wake now. The body must contract now, entering the house, the lighted house, where the door stood open, where the motor cars were standing, and bright women descending: the soul must brave itself to endure" (165). *The soul must brave itself to endure* – in this little exhortation is the narrative structure of cognition that marks the bright boundary of sanity. And in this myth-making is an outlet for ecstasy within the realist social structures of the novel: myth, with its oral and communal structure can be called in to save the novel from the loneliness generated by its own generic constraints.

Meaning and Meaningfulness

In an essay written by Simone Weil in the year of Woolf's death (and only two years before Weil's own), the French philosopher attempts to describe something which she calls, for

lack of a more precise term, "reading." Weil draws attention to the fact that strong sensations – the pain, for example, that results from a punch to the gut, or from laying a hand on a hot stove – cause a violent and involuntary reaction in the human body. But the mystery, she goes on to say, "is that there are sensations that are pretty much insignificant in themselves, yet, by what they signify, what they mean, they seize us in the same way as the stronger sensations. There are some black marks on a sheet of white paper; they couldn't differ more from a punch in the stomach. Yet, they can have the same effect."[305] Reading the words *we regret to inform you that your son has died in battle* can have as fully involuntary and brutal a physical effect as a punch to the gut; it is much more than just semiosis. In some cases, says Weil, meaning can have a primary existence in the world, as fully immanent as sensation. In such cases it's not merely that we process the world perceptually and then make an interpretation from it; it's rather that the higher-order function of language is also a somatic experience. With this claim Weil explains the vivid aliveness of the solitary imagination:

> If at night, on a lonely road, I think I see a man waiting in ambush instead of what is actually a tree, it is a human and menacing presence that forces itself on me, and, as in the case of the letter, it makes me quiver even before I know what it is. I get closer and suddenly everything changes, and as I read a tree, and not a man, I no longer quiver.[306]

When this solitary traveller is crossing through the forest, in other words, the living presences he calls forth in his mind are no less real for being called forth. To think you perceive a menacing person and to perceive a menacing person are, at least in the instant, indistinguishable. "There is not an appearance *and* then an interpretation," Weil concludes; "a human presence has penetrated to my soul through my eyes, and now, just as suddenly, the presence of a tree."[307]

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[305] Simone Weil, "Essay on the Concept of Reading," *Late Philosophical Writings*, trans. Eric O. Springsted and Lawrence E. Schmidt (South Bend, IN: U. of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 22.
[306] Weil, 23.
[307] Weil, 23.

In Simone Weil's sense of the word, both Peter Walsh and Septimus Warren Smith have been fiercely reading over the course of *Mrs. Dalloway*. But their ways of reading differ in a key respect: Septimus reads in the non-narrative state of the dreamlike, where each perception is determinative of an entire world, which then collapses and is replaced in the next moment by the next fully created world, so that each action is fundamentally unstable and its impact on the psyche unabating. Peter Walsh, meanwhile, has learned to control his waking dreams by making them into stories, by linking them to the longstanding and stabilizing traditions of storytelling, causing them to spool outward, to re-direct their energy away from him toward history and society. Each radically private experience he encounters – each moment when, alone, he is confronted with his mind's unending capacity to impute agency to its surroundings – he renders communal through his deep anchor in the storytelling conventions of the culture. In this way, he is an unexpected model for the Woolfian artist. He wrestles the dream across the threshold of wakefulness; he takes the impulses of madness and delivers them to the realm of sanity. He enters a mythtelling state without having to don a peasant's smock and renounce train-travel or telegrams. (He is also, I hope, by this reading somewhat rehabilitated: for he is frequently and to my mind unjustly dismissed in the critical literature).[308]

The possibility of modernity accommodating such a narration of the private life of the dream is treated in the novel's airplane episode. The people of London are much taken by an advertising plane writing out huge letters in the sky. Woolf presents the experience as an echo of ancient traditions of augury, prophesying the future from birds and signs in the heavens. As the

[308] For example, many critics see him, in Jean Kennard's words, as "representative of the British administration of India," an empty and nostalgic symbol of imperial patriarchy. See Jean Kennard, "Power and Sexual Ambiguity: The Dreadnought Hoax, *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando*," *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter, 1996), 158. Rachel Bowlby sees him as Clarissa's imagined and rather tinsel "romantic hero," and elsewhere as the observer of "masculinity institutionalized and imposing." Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 89-90.

plane flies over, "the whole world became perfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, first one gull leading, then another, and in this extraordinary silence and peace, in this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up there among the gulls" (21). On the ground, meanwhile, Woolf describes a process of communal meaning-making: the men and women on the ground – Mrs. Coates, Mrs. Bletchley, Mr. Bowley – try to decipher exactly what is being written: a K, an E, a Y, "Kreemo," "Glaxo," "toffee." It is a moment of communal exegesis born from the confusions of solitary life: each person is individually struck by the alienation and majesty of the airplane passing through the sky, of the singular and unexpected nature of its signaling. But this alienation prompts a coming together to decipher the matter – a coming together that far outstrips the fact that the message itself turns out to be an advertising gimmick. Woolf's narrative voice captures the grandeur of the project, providing a kind of free indirect discourse for the whole of London, for all of the individual consciousnesses witnessing this experience:

> The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was – a mission of the greatest importance. Then suddenly, as a train comes out of a tunnel, the aeroplane rushed out of the clouds again, the sound boring into the ears of all people in the Mall, in the Green Park, in Piccadilly, in Regent Street, in Regent's Park, and the bar of smoke curved behind and it dropped down, and it soared up and wrote one letter after another – but what word was it writing? (22)

Woolf's people are engaged in a rapturous act of Simone Weil's reading: the airplane is "bored" into their ears, its sense of meaningfulness impressing itself even before the actual meaning is clear. It is only in the solitude of one's own subjectivity that the meaningfulness of the external world can be apperceived, Woolf suggests. But it is only in the transference of that solitary perception into communal consensus that meaningfulness can be made into a distinct meaning. To know that the plane is saying *something* – to feel the urgency of an external agent trying to

express something to you – you must be alone. But to truly know *what* it is saying, you must be able to confer with others. This is confirmed by Septimus' altogether different reaction to the airplane.

> So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signaling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! (22)

Septimus' reaction to – reading of – the airplane is infinitely more intense than Mrs. Coates' or Mr. Bowley's. Every indication of meaning hits him like a punch to the gut or a kiss on the lips. To receive a message causes him to laugh and cry and choke. But Woolf resists the tendency to romanticize such a relation to the world: "he could not read the language yet." It is important to recall that this line – written by a great writer and reader about a supposed poet – is damning: the overwhelming intensity of solitary experience is not enough to produce meaning. It allows for a visceral understanding of the meaningfulness of the world; but it prevents that meaningfulness from ever reaching articulation.

Wittgenstein writes that the images in dreams bear a resemblance to a series of marks on paper or sand. "There might be no mark which we recognized as a conventional sign in any alphabet we knew," he continues, "and yet we might have a strong feeling that they must be a language of some sort: that they mean something."[309] One of the essential features of dream-consciousness, suggests Wittgenstein, is not a message, but rather "message-ness," not an alphabet but "alphabet-ness," not a definite meaning but the sense that *something* is transmitting meaning. For Woolf this is also the condition of madness, an ambivalent condition, one which

[309] Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Conversations on Freud," in *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Belief*, compiled by Yorick Smythies, Rush Rhees, and James Taylor (Berkeley: U. of California, 1967), 45.

leads to moments of poetic ecstasy, but also which leads to alienation and, ultimately, death. To live waking life as a dream has a phenomenological as well as ethical charge: it forces you to recognize, in a visceral and completely unavoidable way, the aliveness of the surrounding world, its status in the mind as an agent, and its claims to meaningfulness. No callousness, no cynicism, no dismissal is possible. Self and world stand in lockstep. But in the character of Septimus, Woolf insists this is both too much and not enough. To experience only this state – to live forever in the dream – is crippling. To fully attend to the mind's capacity for animating the world is in fact, in the end, to become blind to the existence of other minds in the world – as we see with Septimus forever ignoring Lucrezia even as he attends to the thousands of simulated beings inside his own head ("To love makes one solitary," thinks Lucrezia, for her loyalty to Septimus forbids her from discussing her misery with anyone else; his isolation not only cuts him off from her, but cuts her off from others as well). The dream reveals to the individual his relationship to the world; but until he can wrestle it back across the threshold into communal life – until he can explain what the writing means to another person, until he can make feeling into story, intuition into language – it will do him no good.

In this respect it's not accidental that Peter Walsh – the dreamer who can still step out of the dream, the person who straddles the private world and the public one without really belonging in either – gets the last word in *Mrs. Dalloway*. For although he is both a failure as a romantic and as a realist, neither succeeding in the social world nor capable of fully rejecting it, he can experience spiritual exaltation without the self-destruction it brings about – and this is no mean feat. In the final moment of this novel, as Peter stands awkwardly at Clarissa's party, he is suddenly seized with emotions: "What is this terror? What is this ecstasy? He thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?" (194). This is the inarticulate intensity of

Septimus; the world has come to Peter like a punch to the gut, like a kiss on the lips; his proprioception has fully carried the living weight of the world inside his body. But then the famous final lines arrive: "It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was." These simple lines are Septimus surpassed, and the redemption, however modest, of Peter. The indescribable feeling has received a description; the sky-writing has been deciphered, and it spells C-L-A-R-I-S-S-A, that more intimate synonym for the novel's title and for its very first words ("Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself"). Only by way of the dream-tremors of isolation, those inarticulate mergings of self and world, can we re-emerge into social intimacy, can we come to be, so to speak, on a first-name basis with our fellow beings. To stay too long in that isolation is dangerous; but never to have been there, that is perhaps worse still. The sensibility of art, as opposed to the world-view of madness, permits this removal, though it's not always certain. It is a lesson that Woolf had learned, among other places, from her reading of Tolstoy. While reading his books, "One shuts one's eyes to escape the feeling of pleasure and fear" – it brings us to a level of intensity that, without an escape, might make Septimuses of us all.[310]

The last line of *Mrs. Dalloway* is a merging of creator and creation, the moment when a consciousness gives communicable voice to its inner world and so renders it art. The finishing of it is the stepping away, the shutting of the eyes needed to prevent the dream from becoming madness. This process is made beautifully clear by Woolf's first journal entry after she had finished the novel, when she felt a powerful need to write down again, but this time in her own voice and not in Peter's, those final words: "I did run upstairs thinking I'd make time to enter that astounding fact – the last words of *Mrs. Dalloway*…'For there she was.'" Then she writes, in a curious phrase whose language confirms that the weight of the inner world has in art found for

[310] Virgina Woolf, "The Russian Point of View," *The Common Reader: First Series* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1953), 186.

her its proper receptacle, "I feel indeed rather more fully relieved of my meaning than unusual."[311] To be full of meaning but to find no communal vessel to bear its weight and take it from you is to risk being crushed by it – something which Woolf long suspected, worried over, resisted, and, in the end, after long struggle, succumbed to.

A Room of One's Own, and When to Leave It

A word about Woolf the social theorist will serve as a postscript to these ideas. It is perhaps noticeable that in the dream-life of *Mrs. Dalloway* the healthy dreamer and the unhealthy dreamer are both men. Many of the women in this novel seem never to have progressed even to the stage of Septimus, much less Walsh: Miss Kilman, for example, touts a transcendence that is merely self-righteousness piously disguised. Even Clarissa, for all of her beauty of character and spiritual intelligence, seems to shy away from the intensity of isolated experience. She comes perhaps closest in the early pages of the novel, as she is walking up Bond Street and has "the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (11). Clarissa attains a moment of alienation from her position in the world, a distance from the self as she knows it, but this isolation does not lead, as with the solitary traveller or the mad poet, to a subsequent animation of the world. In fact, it never progresses beyond formal titles: she is Mrs. Richard Dalloway, a visiting card, the address on a formal invitation. In the next moment, seeing a roll of tweed and salmon on the iceblock she

[311] Virginia Woolf, Diary from October 17th, 1924, in *A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Leonard Woolf, ed., (New York: HBJ, 1954), 66.

says to herself, "That is all," as if to say, in contrast to Septimus who will be introduced only a moment later, *no, I see no secret meanings in this world, I keep myself on the surface*.

Though there is a certain dignity and even nobility in Clarissa's approach, something of the essence of this novel is missing from the sensibility of its title character.

Woolf may have suspected as much when, early on in the project, she confided in her journal, using Septimus' and Peter's arboreal language, that "*Mrs. Dalloway* has branched into a book; and I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side – something like that."[312] There is little direct mention of Mrs. Dalloway herself in the journals until quite late in the project when, a year later, she writes, "The doubtful point is, I think, the character of Mrs. Dalloway. It may be too stiff, too glittering and tinselly."[313] The sense that women enable men to negotiate their relationship to society, that they stand as bystanders to this struggle between alienation (insanity) and reintegration (sanity) without having the right to participate, is strong. It is explicitly thematized in the moment of Clarissa's withdrawal into solitude, in the final pages of the novel, when she finds herself alone in a small room in the house in the middle of her party, meditating on the death of Septimus, whom Lady Bradshaw has just mentioned. We see that Clarissa is indeed capable, in moments of solitude, of Simone Weil's and Septimus' intensive world-reading: "He had killed himself – but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt" (184). But she will never be at home in solitude: "so strange it was to come in alone in her finery" (184) is a telling detail – her very clothes are the clothes of parties, suddenly ill-fitting when surrounded by quiet.

[312] Woolf, Diary from October 14th, 1922.
[313] Woolf, Diary from October 15th, 2014, 1923. In the same entry she writes, "I am now in the thick of the mad scene in Regent's Park. I find I write it by clinging as tight to fact as I can, and with perhaps 50 words a morning."

Clarissa reflects that the terror and ecstasy in her heart have never had a chance to come to a full realization: "Even now quite often if Richard had not been there reading the *Times*, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished" (185). The very syntax of the sentence enacts the perpetual holding away of solitude – as the detail of married life accretes, the possibility of solitary perishing runs further and further away, until it becomes synonymous with the one and final solitude, death. And indeed Clarissa cannot conceptualize solitude as anything other than death: she contemplates an old woman alone in her room in the window across the street; it evokes in her mind the funeral dirge of *Cymbeline*, "fear no more the heat of the sun." She identifies with Septimus; she understands the power of his solitude. But she can only conceive of it as death, death which restores life: "She felt glad that he had done it [committed suicide]…He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun" (186). She cannot appreciate the intermediary state, the controlled variation, of Peter Walsh: not death restoring life, but only (and so preciously *only*), solitude restoring community.

Clarissa, then, can witness the power of solitude, but she cannot instrumentalize it (like Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, who can make herself the wedge of darkness, but only for a moment before the formulaic language of Sunday School comes rushing back). In *The Hours,* Michael Cunningham's novel-fantasia on *Mrs. Dalloway*, this situation is amplified and multiplied: one heroine of this book is the mother of a poet straddling life and death, sanity and insanity; another woman is his devoted friend, eventually his desperate servant. But both stand outside of artistic life and its interplay between alienation and exaltation, isolation and

transcendence (Cunningham's latter-day Clarissa is not a writer, but an editor, the writer's handmaiden).[314]

The exception to this in Cunningham's book is the third major character, Woolf herself. Like so many modernists, she is a paradigmatic figure for an artist conceived as a person who mediates between the social world and private one, a spiritual hermit (and a literal one, locked up in the study most of the day) who is nevertheless continuously connected to the communal world. The artist ingests social life, transforms it in the privacy of the study, and returns it, spiritually intensified, to the community through her art. Woolf's feminism may be conceptualized as making the case that women, too, should have the right to this kind of dialectical withdrawal from the world: not to run away, but to have the right to sever, periodically, connections with other humans in order to fill up the world with their own sense of aliveness. This, in essence, is the argument of *A Room of One's Own*. The essay is a plea for a state of continuous alternation between community and privacy, a call for women to be given a new set of obligations, a new structure of responsibility, by which they too are allowed to feel the aliveness of the world instead of having to subordinate it to their preexisting relations with others, and especially with men. When she asks why women have not produced as many great works of art or science as men, she answers her own question by claiming "we have had other work on our hands."

> Without our doing, those seas would be unsailed and those fertile lands a desert. We have borne and bred and washed and taught, perhaps to the age of six or seven years, the one thousand six hundred and twenty-three million human beings who are, according to statistics, at present in existence, and that, allowing that some had help, takes time.[315]

It has been the job of women to create and sustain the social world (literally to give birth to all the inhabitants of that world), and it is the armature of the social world, in turn, that supports

[314] Michael Cunningham, *The Hours* (New York: FSG, 1998).
[315] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, 1989), 112.

departures from it, that allows for men to depart into the unknown – whether on a voyage of discovery or into a novel – and then return, to reintegrate themselves and their innovations into the fold.

Each dream – and we see here how the metaphorical use of that word maps onto its literal meaning – is powerless without waking life on either side of it; for in the dream's re-translation into the waking world, its potential for meaning becomes actual meaning. This is why in a book about the importance of solitude for the female artist, Woolf also devotes so much time to lamenting the exclusion of women from libraries and universities: the communal institutions that sustain solitude must be opened to women, for without them solitude is no longer solitude, but madness (perhaps the madness of Septimus or perhaps, as the cruel sexist euphemism would have it, *hysteria*). Hence the importance of the 500 pounds a year: to be usefully alone, you must still be integrated into the world; you must be a part of the network of exchange. And hence also the use of stirring communal language in Woolf's final call for privacy:

> For my belief is that if we live another century or so – I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals – and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body she has so often laid down.[316]

This call rests on a paradox: only when women can all have their own little rooms can they truly live in "the common life which is the real life." Only once they are freed from their obligations and relations to others can they begin to have obligations and relations to reality, can they begin

[316] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 113.

to communicate with the sky and the trees (those favorite places of spiritual communion in *Mrs. Dalloway*). Only then can they raise the dead who, literally and figuratively, have been put down by oppression and lack of opportunity. To be alone is to witness the living fullness of the world; but you must be alone without being cast away (Coriolanus' cry to the people of Rome, "I banish *you*," will not do). Women who have separated themselves from society have in the past been declared mad or immoral, sent to institutions and nunneries; Woolf calls for women to have the right to withdraw without risking banishment. In her political statement – at once feminism but also a new, mystical sociology of modernism – she says that society must include solitude, and solitude must always look to society, and that to deprive anyone, or indeed a whole gender, of this arrangement is a catastrophe. For society should resemble the human being who alternates between dream and waking life. The alternatives – eternal sleeplessness or unending nightmare – are unbearable and, in the final count, impossible.

Chapter 8.
Proust: The Dreamtime Regained

At the gates of Proust, we know already that the landscape of the dream-life, so tentatively, fearfully, self-consciously sketched in the novels we've so far treated, will now be as vast and full as the work itself.[317] The beginning of the beginning contains it all in all its strangeness; this will be no ordinary novel. ''Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure,'' reads the disingenuously modest first line of *In Search of Lost Time*: "For a long time I went to bed early." Critics like Gérard Genette, Roger Shattuck and Terence Kilmartin have long been fascinated with this sentence, and especially with its tense, for the adverb longtemps and the perfective "je me suis couché" are mismatched (one would expect, under normal circumstances, the imperfect, "je me couchais").[318] But the subtleties of grammar have tended to obscure the much stranger and grander fact, the fact that is key to all that follows: that this three-thousand-page novel begins with its narrator and protagonist falling asleep.

Even though, as we have seen, many novels contain scenes of dreaming and sleep, even though I have argued that the dream haunts the novel as one of its primary templates for representation – this is an almost unprecedented move. Beginnings of novels are usually crowded and alert, precisely to signal their immersion in the social world. Even the high aesthetes, swaddled as they are in their own linguistic worlds, tend to follow this rule. In *Madame Bovary*,

[317] This chapter is both the culmination of this dissertation and also, in some sense its beginning. Some passages can be traced back to an unpublished undergraduate thesis completed at Harvard in 2009, entitled "Art and Dream in Marcel Proust," which was the first inquiry into many of the ideas that have taken on greater life and amplitude in this present work. Portions of this chapter were presented at a graduate conference in the Yale University German department called "Versuch über den Roman," in a lecture entitled, "Marcel Proust in the Dreamtime" on April 10th, 2015. Portions also appeared as an article called "Proust in the Dreamtime," *Yale Review*, vol. 104, no. 2 (April, 2016), 55-79.

[318] See, for example, Roger Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars: A Study of Memory, Time, and Recognition in* À la recherche du temps perdu (New York: Random House, 1963) 80-2, and Terence Kilmartin, "Translating Proust," *Grand Street*, Vol 1, No. 1 (1981), 136, and Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit: essai de méthode," *Figures III* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), 145-153.

for example, Flaubert lifts the curtain on a schoolroom where the young Charles Bovary is about to endure the first, though not the worst, of his many humiliations. In *Ulysses*, Joyce makes the very classical decision to begin at daybreak, with Buck Mulligan waving his bowl of shaving lather at Stephen Dedalus and pretending to be a Catholic priest (in chapter four there is a second beginning, again at daybreak, with Bloom fixing breakfast for his indolent and unfaithful wife). On the first page of *Buddenbrooks*, Thomas Mann gives us little Toni stumbling over her catechism with three generations of the family surrounding her, no one yet knowing that she will be the only one of them still alive on the last page. And Woolf makes certain that we know Mrs. Dalloway says she will buy the flowers herself.

And while it's true that, as we've seen, on the first page of *Anna Karenina* someone is asleep, it's already morning, and he's asleep only so that he can wake up and thus make explicit his entry (or rather reentry) into the circumstances of the novel. Stiva's awakening on the first page of *Anna Karenina* is emblematic of the experience of reading a nineteenth-century novel, and the project we have seen so dearly associated with Tolstoy: to use the dream-life to fold us into a shared perception of the waking one. And so on the first page we open our eyes as if out of a long sleep and find everyone else has been up and about for many hours. We are suddenly and completely engulfed in plans for marriage or divorce, the uproar of servants and masters, ambitions for social advancement and financial gain, furnishings and journeys and debts. And Stiva's dream turns immediately into a social project, even if only recounted to himself in doubled form before the mirror.

How strange, then, for Proust's novel to start in the bedroom – and not as the sunlight filters through the windows or as a lover is just arriving, but rather in the very moment when consciousness is about to be obliterated, and, even more important, when the narrator is about to

be cut off by his closing eyelids from all companionship, to enter that state of being when the obligations of family and friends and society ladies in their salons are all temporarily suspended. (The editor Marc Humblot rejected the manuscript saying, "I cannot understand how monsieur could spend thirty pages describing how he tosses and turns in his bed before falling asleep.")[319] If such a move has antecedents, they come not from the novel but from the medieval dream-vision, or perhaps even something earlier and more distant. Proust's novel thus explicitly announces it will plunge into the dream world – indeed, as we will see, it makes the equation between the dream-world and the novel-world the most radically direct of any of the novels we've seen so far. In the other novels we've treated, there has been a certain unwillingness to admit that the novel is a dream, or replaces the dream – the dream has posed serious problems of alienation, inaccessibility, madness. In Proust, these are no longer posed as problems. Dreams take on in his work a strange new relationship to social life. His vast novel unfurls in an unparalleled acknowledgement of its own constructed and self-referential nature; it exults in a frame and vocabulary of solipsism, as all reality filters through the flamboyantly distinctive mind of the narrator. The new challenge Proust raises is how to find a way into creating a social life, with its attendant ethical questions, from the matter of a 3,000-page visit to the private dream-theater of a man who spent the latter half of his life in bed.

Dream-Genesis and a New Way of Beginning the Novel

Proust's novel make a clear move in its opening pages away from the outside world to the phenomenal one, from one of physical forms to mutable, metamorphic ones:

[319] Louis de Robert, *Comment débuta Marcel Proust* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 13. The English translation is mine.

> Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure. Parfois, à peine ma bougie éteinte, mes yeux se fermaient si vite que je n'avais pas le temps de me dire : 'je m'endors.' Et, une demi-heure après, la pensée qu'il était temps de chercher le sommeil m'éveillait ; je voulais poser le volume que je croyais avoir encore dans les mains et souffler ma lumière ; je n'avais pas cessé en dormant de faire des réflexions sur ce que je venais de lire, mais ces réflexions avaient pris un tour un peu particulier ; il me semblait que j'étais moi-même ce dont parlait l'ouvrage : une église, un quatuor, la rivalité de François Ier et de Charles Quint. Cette croyance survivait pendant quelques secondes à mon réveil ; elle ne choquait pas ma raison mais pesait comme des écailles sur mes yeux et les empêchait de se rendre compte que le bougeoir n'était plus allumé. (I:3)
>
> For a long time, I went to bed early. Sometimes, when I had to put out my candle, my eyes would close so quickly that I had not even time to say to myself: "I'm falling asleep." And half an hour later the thought that it was time to go to sleep would awaken me; I would make as if to put away the book which I imagined was still in my hands, and to blow out the light; I had gone on thinking, while I was asleep, about what I had just been reading, but these thoughts had taken a rather peculiar turn; it seemed to me that I myself was the immediate subject of my book: a church, a quartet, the rivalry between François I and Charles V. This impression would persist for some moments after I awoke; it did not offend my reason, but lay like scales upon my eyes and prevented them from registering the fact that the candle was no longer burning.[320] (I:3)

Falling asleep severs the narrator's connection to the waking world, and transposes him onto a plane governed by a set of foreign ontological rules, the ontological rules of dreaming. No longer does one merely perceive objects, or think them; one *becomes* the church, the string quartet, the rivalry. The three objects are presented in a crescendo of the difficult-to-imagine-yourself-in, each more conceptually confounding than the last. We can picture with relative ease what it might be like to be a church: the body its walls, the mouth its door, the eyes rose windows with stained-glass irises. We might also be able to imagine what it's like to be a string quartet, though it depends on how we understand that word – as a group of players, as a set of instruments, as a printed score, or as a series of musical notes, for example those from Beethoven's beautiful opus 132. So what has the narrator become? Four people bobbing and bowing in evening dress? An

[320]All French citations are taken from the most recent Pléiade edition, Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (henceforth in the footnotes as *RTP*), Jean-Yves Tadié, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1987). All English citations are taken from Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage, 1982) with occasional modifications by me for the sake of clarity or emphasis.

elegant spatter of semiquavers recumbent on ledger lines? Or is he a richly textured four-part sonic rising and falling, his existence re-corporealized as a sequence of sound waves? But the string quartet is not the end of our problems, for what do we make of being a rivalry (not two people in a rivalry, but the rivalry itself), a state of existence nearly impossible to conceptualize? How much does a rivalry weigh? What does it look like? Can it think? Perhaps it rises into the air like a hot-air balloon about to explode from the tension of its own self-importance.

By the end of this sequence the narrator has become a physical embodiment of an abstraction, and he's done so with exceptional ease. In the Proustian imaginarium, turning into a rivalry doesn't require pain or anxiety: to become an abstraction might be a catastrophe in Kafka or a polemic in Marx, but here it's simply one more back-flip amid the acrobatics of nocturnal thought. Reification and ideation – those opposite inanimations bracketing animate life – are naturally fluid parts of existence. It is emblematic of the ontological ease of the dream, in which anything can become anything. We are seemingly very far from the social humiliation of Tolstoy or Pushkin, and yet we see the same mechanisms at play, now a gentle and multifarious rocking back and forth between the animate and the inanimate. Sweetly, generously, the narrator says that none of this "offends" his reason. When he wakes for a moment, he says, these experiences hang "like scales" on his eyes: in the dream-state, perception and imagination are tied together, inseparable and inescapable. And perhaps most importantly, the entrance into the dream-state is marked by a certain agency, the successor to Anna Karenina's ability to fall into hallucination or pull back from it while on the train: "the subject of my book would separate itself from me, leaving me free to apply myself to it or not."

The audacity of the scene is augmented by the central presence of the act of reading. On the first page of one of the longest and most demanding reading experiences in the western

canon, the author seems to suggest that we should have done with reading and move straight through to hallucination. For this opening passage is nothing short of a lesson in the reading of *In Search of Lost Time*. Or rather: a lesson in the dreaming of it, for which you must forego normal reading altogether. To enter into this book, Proust announces, you must be able to become it, to study it in your sleep, move over its pages with the single-mindedness of a somnambulist, wear it like a mask or cloak, have it soak through and re-form you. The complex play of characterological self-distancing with which Tolstoy builds his characters is omitted. But also absent is the ecstatic loss of control associated with Septimus. Now the dream has made self and world continuous, but it has not scared us away with suspicions of delusion. How this happens is one of Proust's greatest technical achievements.

The opening of Proust's vast novel might be considered a sequence of overtures nested within one another. "Combray," his title for the first two hundred pages, contains a comprehensive distillation of all the novel's main themes – the appreciation of beauty, the desire to make art, the conniptions of jealousy, the resignation to illness, the fascination with homosexuality, the continuous reappraisal of the character of others, the epic pursuit of time lost and found. But the untitled introductory section of "Combray" – a short preliminary chapter of fifty pages containing many of the most famous scenes in the novel, including the dream opening, the encounter with the magic lantern, the fateful good-night kiss, and, at the end, the discovery of involuntary memory in the *petite madeleine* – is a smaller overture, a more condensed presentation of the same themes which will be elaborated over the following two hundred pages (the rest of "Combray"), and then again over the following four hundred (*Swann's Way*), and again over the following three thousand (*In Search of Lost Time*). But at the beginning of this smaller overture there is yet a smaller prelude, so condensed and pure as to be almost the

untrammeled essence of the work, dissolved into (as Captain Ahab would say) "one small, compendious vertebra."[321] And this opening section, which spans about nine pages, consists solely of a dream and sleep sequence, in which the many declensions of consciousness in the narrator's nighttime world are given free play to alternate with the occasional disorientations born from waking in the darkness.

Many students of this novel, eager to reach the more familiar ground of the goodnight kiss or the *petite madeleine*, pass over this sequence in silence. But that's a grave error, because this little meditation on the sleeping mind has a complex logic and presents a complete ontological mode – one which, we will see, is crucial for understanding the entirety of this unparalleled novel and its author's twinned visions of consciousness and art. Proust presents a model of the dream at once very old and very new: one in which the liminal aliveness of spiritual force is embraced with fervor and joy, and a private, exceptionally earthly mysticism creates a new kind of communion for the society inside the self. We will see that Proust absorbs the social nature of the dream and, without running away, without mere atavism, tries to make it over into a habitus of modern life.

The Qualities of the Proustian Dream

Proust embraces the ontology of the dream-world, defining the terms of his own dream-physics, sketching out the properties of the dream-cosmos on a level that far exceeds even Woolf's magnificent solitary traveller. In this phenomenological approach Proust shows his departure from Freud and the linguistic tradition: Not, what does it say, and how does it speak? Here, on the contrary, the reality of dream is paramount. What does it look like? How does it

[321] Melville, 514.

feel? What is the nature of dream-experience? Meaning is to be found explicitly in the domain not of dream symbolism but in the realm of dream-feeling and dream-touch, dream-motion and dream-looking. With Proust we can begin to hazard a vocabulary of phenomenological dream-immersion of similar complexity to the linguistic vocabulary of dream-analysis.[322] We will see here put to literary use many of the practices we explored as anthropological phenomena in the first part of the dissertation.

The first and most important feature of Proustian dream-experience, which he is at pains to underline in his work, is *thinking-as-world*, thinking in three dimensions. To think a thought in the dream-state, as we saw long ago in Part I of this dissertation, is not to express it in language; it is not even to render it as a picture or a symbol; it is to become the thing, to realize it as a full, three-dimensional object, existing on its own spatiotemporal plane. We must presume that the church which the narrator becomes rests upon a ground and under a sky, that the rivalry is ready to float through space (perhaps rivalries, especially those between kings, loom overhead like zeppelins; perhaps, on the other hand, they skulk in the darkness).

Proust makes the transition from the thinking-as-language-of-waking to the thinking-as-world-of-dreaming exceptionally literal. What begins in the waking world as signs on a page (a book about a rivalry) transforms, at the threshold of sleep, into an animate being, or rather a

[322] The question of Proust's biographical relationship to Freud is hazy, though there is of course a long and fruitful tradition of psychoanalytic scholarship on Proust. So far as I know, the only direct proof of contact with Freud's theories comes from a note in the journal of the Abbé Mugnier, who writes on April 23rd, 1917, "Dîné à l'hôtel Ritz où la princesse Soutzo m'avait réuni à la comtesse Adhéaume de Chevigné, à Morand, à Cocteau, à Marcel Proust, à la marquise de Ludres. La princesse me reparla d'un juif, docteur à Vienne, Freud qui a une théorie particulière: rêve, liberation des conflits." But in fact, as Anne Henry and others note, if anything Proust was immersed in the more naturalist and empirical dream-school of Maury and Hervey de Saint-Denys (about more later). These writers allowed him a springboard toward a more directly sensorial understanding of dream-experience, as I hope to show over these pages. See Luc Fraisse, *Le Processus de Création chez Marcel Proust* (Paris: José Corti, 1988), 249-251. Malcolm Bowie makes the compelling case that the most important point of intersection between Freud and Proust is in fact the idea of transference rather than specifics of dream-meaning or interpretation. Indeed, the theory of transference seems to be powerfully connected to the kind of subjective projection we will discuss in this chapter. Malcolm Bowie, "Proust and Psychoanalysis," *Selected Essays of Malcolm Bowie*, vol. I, Alison Fich, ed. (London: LEGENDA, 2013) 21-31.

three-dimensional manifestation of the animate being of the narrator. It is important here to recall once again Ludwig Binswanger's idea that waking is *Leben als Geschichte*, life as history or story, while dreaming is *Leben als Funktion*, life as function, or process.[323] What he seems to be suggesting is that in waking life our experience is structured narratively: as we move through the world we register each event as part of a larger arc of experience, or several arcs, each with its own beginning and end (birth and death, sunrise and sunset, convocation and commencement, being hired and being fired). When we dream, in contrast, we live life in a non-narrative structure, one in which action and existence coincide, so that we find ourselves pursued or loved or aroused without having to enclose these sensations within a larger framework. Instead, each individual experience immediately provides its own framework, its own structure of justification; the dream rearranges itself around each new stimulus. This difference is only underlined by the fact that when we try to carry a dream over from sleep into waking life we have no choice but to narrativize it, to tell it as a story; otherwise it would be incomprehensible. It is a testament to how poorly dreams fit our narrative structure of waking life (something that Tolstoy understood before Proust) that listening to them proves, in the modern world at least, to be so dull.

A second dream quality, closely related to this one, follows on its heels. This is the fact that in dreaming, the perceived world and the perceiving subject are shackled together. By this I mean that they seem to move as one – to see something is also to be something – and this, though perhaps it may sound strange, is in fact so self-evident as to be almost banal: everything that we see in a dream is a part of the dreamer; the objects as well as the subject in a dream are made up of a single person's mental tissue.

[323] Binswanger, 135.

How much closer to the perceiver a dream is than reality is something Proust announces only a few paragraphs into his novel, in the first introduction of the love theme in this dream overture:

> Quelquefois, comme Ève naquit d'une côte d'Adam, une femme naissait pendant mon sommeil d'une fausse position de ma cuisse. Formée du plaisir que j'étais sur le point de goûter, je m'imaginais que c'était elle qui me l'offrait. Mon corps qui sentait dans le sien ma propre chaleur voulait s'y rejoindre, je m'éveillais. Le reste des humains m'apparaissait comme bien lointain auprès de cette femme que j'avais quittée, il y avait quelques moments à peine ; ma joue était chaude encore de son baiser, mon corps courbaturé par le poids de sa taille. (I:4-5)
>
> Sometimes, as Eve was created from a rib of Adam, a woman would be born during my sleep from some strain in the position of my thighs. Conceived from the pleasure I was on the point of consummating, she it was, I imagined, who offered me the pleasure. My body, conscious that its own warmth was permeating hers, would strive to become one with her, and I would awake. The rest of humanity seemed very remote in comparison with this woman whose company I had left but a moment ago; my cheek was still warm from her kiss, my body ached beneath the weight of hers. (I:4-5)

In the dream-state, subject and object are inseparable: in fact, they generate each other in a continuous cycle. This is again what Bert O. States, in *Dreaming and Storytelling*, calls the "single-mindedness" of dreams, or, as we have seen with Allan Rechtschaffen, the "nonimaginative" quality of dreaming.[324] By this States and Rechtschaffen mean that the dream-world is extremely limited in counterfactuals. Very often what we think in a dream becomes our reality (though, it's worth saying, not always). Our thoughts rarely stray far from the matter at hand; if they do stray from the matter at hand, then that also becomes the matter at hand. Another way of saying this: of all the states we can inhabit in a dream – fear, arousal, shock, frustration, anger, pleasure, nostalgia – it's impossible to be bored. You might also say that it's impossible to be distracted, except that if we are distracted, then the world realigns itself to look like the very thing that was distracting us from our surroundings.

[324] States, 17-18.

The vocabulary of boredom – one of the great enemies in Proust's novel – beckons to the language of its opposite: attention. Another formulation for this second attribute of the Proustian dream is *complete and radical attention*. There is no looking away in a dream, for everywhere you look, the dream is still there. Furthermore, dream- attention looks, in a certain sense, exactly like waking distraction. For when we are awake, our minds might pass through a long flowing train of thoughts independent of the goings-on in the physical world around us. We might for all intents and purposes forget where we are in order to pursue thoughts about the need to do the laundry and call Mother and read those medieval poems to the Virgin Mother and the time we lost our own virginity and wondering where that first lover is now and thinking, I hope he (or she) is happy but secretly thinking, in a chasm below the reach of language, I hope he (or she) is miserable. The sum of these inklings, which are the common matter of the state of being we aptly call daydreaming, is defined in contrast to whatever continuous and fixed experience is going on outside the body, in the physical world. If you were to say "Pay attention!" to a person riding this train of thoughts, you would not mean pay more attention to your musings on medieval poetry and sexual initiation but, rather, focus on whatever it is in front of you: a concert, a lecture, a business meeting, saying "I do" when the priest tells you to.

In a dream, on the other hand, to pay attention is to wander in just this way over the landscape of cognition, to follow the progress of thoughts as they gradually lead the dreamer over an (often literal) path. When we wake this progress seems to have been disjointed, but that's precisely because during sleep it's perfectly coherent, heedless of the restrictions imposed by plausibility or logic. The leaps of thought – maybe incoherent but still seamless, unbroken, in the oneiric state – become the structuring mechanism for the perceptual reality of the dream, taking us from place to place, person to person, adventure to adventure. Walter Benjamin, following on

the observations of Max Unold, saw that the seeming boringness of Proust's stories was in fact the "the bridge to the dream." Telling such banal stories – 'Imagine, dear reader, yesterday I was dunking a cookie in my tea when it occurred to me that as a child I had spent some time in the country' – precisely allows for the foregrounding of a dream-state where all the matter of existence is a full and nonnegotiable part of our perceptual field.[325]

This careful analysis of dream-attention is perhaps Proust's single greatest contribution to the theory of the dream, and makes his work a unique contribution to the corpus of dream-knowledge that cultures around the world have been accumulating for millennia. It is apparent even in tiny dreams, like this one of Swann's which takes place a train station:

> Un jour, il rêva qu'il partait pour un an; penché à la portière du wagon vers un jeune homme qui sur le quai lui disait adieu en pleurant, Swann cherchait à le convaincre de partir avec lui. Le train s'ébranlant, l'anxiété le réveilla, il se rappela qu'il ne partait pas, qu'il verrait Odette ce soir-là, le lendemain et presque chaque jour. (I:348)
>
> One night he dreamed that he was going away for a year; leaning from the window of the train towards a young man on the platform who wept as he bade him farewell, he was trying to persuade this young man to come away also. The train began to move, he awoke in alarm, and then remembered that he was not going away, that he would see Odette that evening, and the next day and almost every day. (I:385)

The dream engenders a complex reaction in Swann, inspiring an unusual train of doubts that undermine the dream itself, even as they make use of material from it:

> Mais il compta…qu'il sacrifiait ses travaux, ses plaisirs, ses amis, finalement toute sa vie à l'attente quotidienne d'un rendez-vous qui ne pouvait rien lui apporter d'heureux, et il se demanda s'il ne se trompait pas, si ce qui avait favorisé sa liaison et en avait empêché la rupture n'avait pas desservi sa destinée, si l'événement désirable, ce n'aurait pas été celui dont il se réjouissait tant qu'il n'eût eu lieu qu'en rêve : son départ ; il se dit qu'on ne connaît pas son Malheur, qu'on n'est jamais si heureux qu'on croit. (I:348-349)
>
> But he reflected…that he would sacrifice his work, his pleasures, his friends, in fact the whole of his life to the daily expectation of a meeting which, if it occurred, could bring him no happiness; and he asked himself whether he was not mistaken, whether the circumstances that had favoured his liaison and had prevented its final rupture had not done a disservice to his career, whether the outcome to be desired might not have been

[325] Walter Benjamin, "The Image of Proust," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 204.

> that as to which he rejoiced that it had happened only in a dream – his own departure; and he said to himself that people did not know when they were unhappy, that one is never as happy as one thinks. (I:385)

Proust's entire way of contemplating the dream is unusual here, at least for his time and place. The question Swann addresses in this passage is not, as one might have imagined, did I interpret my dream incorrectly or, as a Freudian might ask, did I hide something about the dream from myself? He knows what his dream means (it is playing out the scenario of him leaving Odette) but he remains disturbed by it nevertheless. Nor is it even: did my dream mislead or misguide me? – as we might expect if Swann were a rationalist skeptical about the value of unconscious thoughts. These are all questions that *presuppose a passive relationship between individual and dream*; they participate in one way or another in what we've been calling the snow-globe theory of dreaming.

This unassuming passage in Proust, however, alters the terms of engagement away from passivity. It is concerned with how Swann himself *acted* in and after the dream – whether or not he assigned the right emotional and personal significance to the images being presented to him, whether or not he should have been happy or sad, frightened at the prospect of losing Odette, or excited at the opportunity to escape from this socially disastrous and emotionally consuming relationship. Thus, we might formulate this unspoken question as: did I *behave* properly within my dream? And, furthermore, can I justify that behavior to myself afterward? Neither the dream nor its meaning actually changes during this moment of self-interrogation: it is not because Swann misremembered his dream, or somehow misunderstood its message that he is thrown into doubt about it. Rather, it's because the dream itself exists bracketed by self-consciousness which sees itself as at once distinct from the intense direct attention and immersion of the dream-state, but has license to comment upon it. Swann wonders, crucially, "whether the outcome to be

desired might not have been that as to which he rejoiced that it had happened only in a dream – his own departure." Proust gives us a vision of a dream that has a chose-your-own-adventure quality, a sense that a whole sequence of possible motions can be entertained. T.S. Eliot writes of a similar phenomenon in John Donne's suggestive poetical conceits:

> Donne, instead of pursuing the meaning of the idea, letting it flow into the usual sequence of thought, *arrests* it, in order to extract every possible ounce of the emotion suspended in it. To such ideas of Donne's, there is a certain opacity of feeling; they are not simple significances and directions. In thus arresting the idea Donne often succeeds in bringing to light curious aspects and connections which would not otherwise be visible; he infuses, as it were, the dose of bismuth which makes the position of the intestine apparent on the X-ray screen.[326]

Swann's little dream is likewise an arrested idea of sorts, a brief episode which, when contemplated, explodes into a kaleidoscope of possible motivations, consequences, and causes. The Proustian dream state itself is a kind of "arrest" – like the conceit of a metaphysical poem, the dream reorganizes all of the dreamer's cognitive faculties around its own reality, and thereby expands and enriches them. For Donne, this might be the kaleidoscope of possibilities surrounding an imagined episode in his beloved's childhood, which he might interpret in a dozen different ways. For Swann, the "conceit" is the little narrative at the train station, which becomes the starting point for a remarkable series of varied personal, emotional, and philosophical reflections. In either case, the arrested idea discloses its meaning expansively; the deeper the dreamer engages the dream, the more all-embracing its content becomes. On this premise, some of the most powerful moments in Freud's career are also built: the dream's intensity yields a huge multiplicity once it is exposed to self-consciousness in waking therapy.[327] But in Proust the

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[326] T.S. Eliot, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, Ronald Schuchard, ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), 86.
[327] The involutions and radiations of the Wolfman's famous dream, for example, begin with the Wolfman's observation that the wolves looked straight at him – "it seemed as though they had riveted their whole attention upon me" (186). It goes without saying that this line betrays that the Wolfman's own attention is unbroken on the wolves. Sigmund Freud, "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," *Three Case Histories*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Collier, 1993), 186.

guiding question is: what do we do with what we learn when we return into the dream-state? As we'll see in greater detail, the question for him is not what can the dream teach us about our psyche, but what can our self-awareness do to better program and design the parameters of the dream?

The fluid and metamorphic nature of dream-attention is beautifully described in still greater detail in a passage from *Sodom and Gomorrah*, added to the novel in 1921–22, when Proust, ill and addicted to sleeping medication, was approaching death. He died in November 1922: sleep and dreams were among the first things to materialize into Proust's book; they were also among the last.

> J'entrais dans le sommeil, lequel est comme un second appartement que nous aurions et où, délaissant le nôtre, nous serions allé dormir. Il a des sonneries à lui, et nous y sommes quelque fois violemment réveillés par un bruit de timbre, parfaitement entendu de nos oreilles, quand pourtant personne n'a sonné. Il a ses domestiques, ses visiteurs particulières qui viennent nous chercher pour sortir, de sorte que nous sommes prêts à presque immédiate transmigration dans l'autre appartement, celui de la veille, que la chambre est vide, que personne n'est venu. La race qui l'habite, comme celle des premiers humains, est androgyne. Un homme y apparaît au bout d'un instant sous l'aspect d'une femme. Les choses y ont une aptitude à devenir des hommes, les hommes des amis et des ennemis. (III:370)
>
> I entered the realm of sleep, which is like a second dwelling into which we move for that one person. It has noises of its own and we are sometimes violently awakened by the sound of bells, perfectly heard by our ears, although nobody has rung. It has its servants, its special visitors who call to take us out, so that we are ready to get up when we are compelled to realize, by our almost immediate transmigration into the other dwelling, our waking one, that the room is empty, that nobody has called. The race that inhabits it, like that of our first human ancestors, is androgynous. A man in it appears a moment later in the form of a woman. Things in it show a tendency to turn into men, men into friends and enemies. (II: 1013)

Dream-attention is complete and yet also discursive. We engage deeply with the dream-state, but in doing so we don't narrow it down or render it more precise. Instead, the thing we are dreaming evolves, mutates, expands, embraces its opposite and all variations thereupon. A kind of psychological uncertainty principle is invoked; to lavish your attention on a dream-object is to

engender its alteration, elaboration, in some cases total transformation. This is true even of external stimuli: if we hear a sound or smell a perfume while asleep, it acquires a profound and sophisticated existence within the mind, made the origin point for a whole reality, given a weight it would never possess in waking life. In *The Guermantes Way* Proust will call it "this particular state of attention that enfolds our slumbers, acts upon them, modifies them, brings them into line with this or that series of past impressions."

A third Proustian dream quality is made manifest in the passage above. The dream-state establishes a magnificent continuity across time, and especially across the interruptions of consciousness – the immediate ''transmigration'' into the waking world does not rid us entirely of the dream-state, for the dream lingers beyond its own borders, so much so that Proust favors the vocabulary of reincarnation to describe waking; he feels that dreams carry over as if from previous lives. (The neuroscientist Allan Hobson writes that the shift between wake-state and dream-state is rarely seamless, and that the one can easily spill into the other.)[328]

Not only can the dream continue past itself, it can restore parts of waking life that have long been lost. Again from the opening of the novel:

> Ou bien en dormant j'avais rejoint sans effort un âge à jamais révolu de ma vie primitive, retrouvé telle de mes terreurs enfantines comme celle que mon grand-oncle me tirât par mes boucles et qu'avait dissipée le jour – date pour moi d'une ère nouvelle – où on les avait coupées. J'avais oublié cet événement pendant mon sommeil, j'en retrouvais le souvenir aussitôt que j'avais réussi à m'éveiller pour échapper aux mains de mon grand-oncle, mais par mesure de précaution j'entourais complètement ma tête de mon oreiller avant de retourner dans le monde des rêves. (I:4)
>
> Or else while sleeping I had drifted back to an earlier stage in my life, now forever outgrown, and had come under the thrall of one of my childish terrors, such as that old terror of my great-uncle's pulling my curls which was eventually dispelled on the day –

[328] "Dreamlike experiences occur on arousal from sleep and may be extensions of dream forms into waking. Thus a sleeper may either see formed visual images set within the real bedroom…and/or be unable to move despite intense efforts to do so…When both experiences occur together, the feeling of dread associated with each is multiplied. These arousal experiences are clearly compounded of both waking-state and dream-state features, and occur because the brain cannot instantaneously switch from one state to the other." Hobson, *The Dreaming Brain,* 8.

> the dawn of a new era to me – when they were finally cropped from my head. I had forgotten that event during my sleep, but I remembered it again immediately as I had succeeded in waking myself up to escape my great-uncle's fingers, and as a measure of precaution I would bury the whole of my head in the pillow before returning to the world of dreams. (I:4)

What was forgotten is recalled; what was destroyed by the passage of time is restored; intervening facts, until now taken for granted, are obliterated. In the dream-state, the curls live on forever, even across the fact of their having been shorn, and their existence once again resumes when the narrator sinks back into dreams, hiding them in the pillow.

Proustian dreaming, in other words, effects a remarkable process of continuity across interruption, so different from waking life, in which the interruptions of memory are the source of constant melancholy for the narrator. In dreams the experience of time is made continuous rather than fragmentary; each moment is gifted with its own complete history. This is rapidly obliterated by the act of waking, but what is recalled upon waking is the plenitude of that continuity, so vast as to have seemed an entire life. Hence, when being the rivalry between François and Charles becomes unintelligible to the re-awoken narrator, he says, again using the language of reincarnation, it remained "as the thoughts of a former existence must be to a reincarnate spirit" (*comme après la mémtepsychose les pensées d'une existence antérieure*) (I:3). Waking is the separation of self and world, the return of self-consciousness and the attendant danger of inattention – it is the end of the magnificent continuity. (Elsewhere Proust will remind his readers that waking has its own continuity, the gift of resuming after each night of sleep, but we pay a high price for this resumption.) In Proust's novel, dreaming is the first site for the recovery of the fullness of time, and waking is the first template for the consciousness of its loss.

To dream, then, is to live three things, all interconnected: to have thoughts shaped like a world; to be in a state of non-negotiable attention to that world; and to perceive in that world a

remarkable continuity across interruption, a continuous and self-organizing equilibrium. Dreaming also stands in contrast to the onrush of waking, in which these three things are obliterated (at least for now).

> quand je m'évaillais au milieu de la nuit, comme j'ignorais où je me trouvais, je me savais même pas au premier instant qui j'étais ; j'avais seulement dans sa simplicité première, le sentiment de l'existence comme il peut frémir au fond d'un animal ; j'étais plus dénué que l'homme des cavernes (I:5)
>
> when I awoke in the middle of the night, not knowing where I was, I could not even be sure at first who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and shiver in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute than the cave-dweller (I:5)

The dream is a plenitude hovering over a complete absence; it is a state of existence in which a being can be anything in the world; as a necessary corollary, that being risks losing him- or herself as soon as that world disappears.

These three qualities – thinking as world, non-negotiable attention, and continuity across interruption – produce, together, a fourth quality, what might be termed the cosmic expansiveness of the dream, its mimesis of infinite time and space. To dream is to exist in a spatial and temporal matrix of unencumbered extension. Though he admired Bergson, Proust vehemently disliked *Le rêve*, in which Bergson had argued that the continuous and even flow of human time, its durée, included the dream.[329] Proust thought that dreaming, that other life, that metempsychotic adventure, had its own temporal rules, and that these were capricious and godlike. Spinoza said that God is infinite extension in the infinite modes of being; that he is the universe itself. The unending multiplicity of dreaming is Spinozist in structure even if the

[329] Proust had a conversation with the philosopher in September, 1920 on the subject. A particular point of contention was that Bergson believed that time passed at the same rate for the sleeping mind as for the waking one (an illustration of his principle of *la durée*), much to Proust's dismay. Also, it is important to note from a purely biographical point of view that Proust at this time had a great deal of trouble sleeping himself, and was often thinking about the relationship between sleep and his illness; he was also becoming increasingly addicted to sleep medication. See Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust*, trans. Euan Cameron (New York: Viking, 2000) 731-2.

dreamer is sometimes restricted within its unrestricted boundaries.[330] In sleep the mind builds a universe of incomprehensible size and dimension, and even though consciousness can seem but a small part of it, actually the self has been expressed all the way out to the farthest corners of existence. In a dream you can seem to live forever, survive death or die many times, bring loved ones back from the dead, travel to the stars and back.

> J'ai toujours dit – et expérimenté – que le plus puissant des hypnotiques est le sommeil. Après avoir dormi profondément deux heures, s'être battu avec tant de géants, et avoir noué pour toujours tant d'amitiés, il est bien plus difficile de s'éveiller qu'après avoir pris plusieurs grammes de véronal (III:373)
>
> I have always said – and proved by experience – that the most powerful soporific is sleep itself. After having slept profoundly for two hours, having fought with so many giants, and formed so many lifelong friendships, it is far more difficult to awake than after taking several grammes of veronal (II:1016)

Elsewhere:

> On s'éveille, on voit quatre heures à sa montre, ce n'est que quatre heures du matin, mais nous croyons que toute la journée s'est écoulée, tant ce sommeil de quelques minutes et que nous n'avions pas cherché nous a paru descendu du ciel, en vertu de quelque droit divin, énorme et plein comme le globe d'or d'un empereur (II:384)
>
> We wake up, look at our watch and see 'four o'clock'; it is only four o'clock in the morning, but we imagine that the whole day has gone by, so vividly does this unsolicited nap of a few minutes appear to have come down to us from heaven, by virtue of some divine right, huge and solid as an Emperor's orb of gold (II:83)

Not only does this expansiveness dilate outward; it also moves backward. Dreaming allows us to reclaim our earliest memories and, in some cases, to touch something deeper, the biological memory of the species, the deep awareness of our status as organisms in the parade of life. Charles Swann has a dream featuring Napoleon III in which one of the characters turns out to be a copy of himself, a double. In this moment he enjoys, the narrator says, "such a creative

[330] In the Spinozist universe, the Creator and Creation are one and the same, in that it is God's inherent nature to express and re-express himself infinitely and eternally in all of the infinite possible permutations of existence. "From the necessity of the divine nature, there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes." Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (New York: Penguin, 1996), 12.

power that he was able to reproduce himself by a simple act of division, like certain lower organisms" (I:413).[331] The comparison makes explicit the primordial, even Edenic quality of dreaming. Though it is full of simulacra of the complexities of waking life, it seems to lift into them an atavistic energy, the pure self-containment of the earliest stages of existence, before consciousness, before sexual reproduction, before even death as we know it. In dreaming Proust represents to himself a version of his complex contemporaneous world shot through with the naked vitality of primal existence. When the narrator wakes in the middle of the night and says he has lost all of his personhood except for the animal shiver of being, he is saying something about the effect of dream-consciousness, which is to bring that animal shiver to the fore, to point the way back toward the nonreflective experience of being alive.

"The power of the memory is prodigious, my God," writes St. Augustine. "It is a vast, immeasurable sanctuary. Who can plumb its depths? And yet it is a faculty of my soul. Although it is part of my nature, I cannot understand all that I am. This means, then, that the mind is too narrow to contain itself entirely. But where is that part of it which it does not itself contain? Is it somewhere outside itself and not within it? How, then, can it be part of it, if it is not contained in it?"[332] Proust's first answer (twenty pages before the *petite madeleine*) to Augustine's still-astonishing query is that the vastness of the mind is to be found not in memory but in dream: here is where the domain of memory is observed in all its plenitude, and even surpassed. For in our dreams we live our lives again, and live a thousand lives we've never seen before. The perfective tense of the opening sentence, that enigmatic "je me suis couché," is perhaps here

[331] For the political valence of this dream of the deposed emperor, see Michael Sprinker, who, believes that the dream is "a fable about the political structures and history of the Third Republic." In fact, he uses this little dream to argue that the *Recherche* itself is a novel that "narrates the evolution of social structures during the Third Republic," which seems at once accurate and quite a bit too modest for the real political ambitions of this novel. Michael Sprinker, *History and Ideology in Proust* (Cambridge UP, 1994), 66-84.
[332] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin, 1961), 216.

explained: though going to sleep is a habitual action, each journey into the night-world is singular, for it liberates itself from temporally structured modes of being.

The Dream and Time

Dreams come thick and fast throughout *In Search of Lost Time*. Not only is the opening a consummate description of the transition from wake-state to dream-state; not only are the dream passages of *Sodom and Gomorrah* one of the last additions to the novel. There are dreams described in nearly every volume – in some places, a description of sleep and dreaming appears practically every tenth page, sometimes as only a few lines, sometimes as a sprawling paragraph. Most belong to the narrator, but two belong to Swann. In *The Captive*, Marcel makes a magnificent description of Albertine asleep, the inaccessibility of her dream-life serving as a powerful sign for the complete inaccessibility of her interior.

Dreams also play an explicit role in Proust's metaphysics. In the final volume, *Time Regained*, he writes:

> Il n'y avait plus guère que dans mes rêves, en dormant, qu'un lieu s'étendait devant moi fait de la pure matière entièrement distincte des choses communes qu'on voit, qu'on touche, et qui avait été la leur quand je me les représentais. (IV:455)
>
> It was scarcely ever except in my dreams, while I was asleep, that a place could lie spread before me wrought in that pure matter which is entirely distinct from the matter of the common things that we see and touch but of which, when I had imagined these common things without ever having seen them, they too had seemed to me to be composed (III:910)

Dreaming, he tells us, is the last bastion of enchantment in a disenchanted world, the place where a person can have an originary relation – like Adam to his newly named creation – with a world that is already created. Dreaming is the place where teacups and salons and Venetian paintings are fully restored to a state of innocent wonder, to the splendor with which the innocent mind

endows them. Dreaming (and, it should be added, sleep) forces us to encounter objects afresh, without any of the comforts or bromides of our intellectual and cognitive prejudices. So it is that in the opening sequence, having just woken from a dream and found himself but a denuded animal shiver, the narrator has license to speculate:

> Peut-être l'immobilité des choses autour de nous leur est-elle imposée par notre certitude que ce sont elles et non pas d'autres, par l'immobilité de notre pensée en face d'elles. Toujours est-il que, quand je me réveillais ainsi, mon esprit s'agitant pour chercher, sans y réussir, à savoir où j'étais, tout tournait autour de moi dans l'obscurité, les choses, les pays, les années. (I:6)
>
> Perhaps the immobility of the things that surround us is forced upon them by our conviction that they are themselves and not anything else, by the immobility of our conception of them. For it always happened that when I awoke like this, and my mind struggled in an unsuccessful attempt to discover where I was, everything revolved round me through the darkness: things, places, years. (I:6)

Dreaming is for Proust what Tahiti was for Gauguin, Walden for Thoreau: the possibility of the rebirth of the world, a shaking up of all preconceptions, a chance to reassemble the mosaic from scratch. For Proust this comes with a clear moral injunction. You cannot run from the world you were born into in order to find another one. You cannot give up the duchess's teacups and the Balbec trains for palm trees and bean rows. But you can learn, from your dreams, how to see them as if they were the primitive world, as if they had no weight of history upon them:

> La seule chose un peu triste dans cette chambre d'Eulalie était qu'on y entendait le soir, à cause de la proximité du viaduc, les hululements des trains. Mais comme je savais que ces beuglements émanaient de machines réglées, ils ne m'épouvantaient pas comme auraient pu faire, à une époque de la préhistoire, les cris poussés par un mammouth voisin dans sa promenade libre désordonée. (IV:459)
>
> The only thing a little sad about sleeping in Eulalie's room was that, because of the proximity of the viaduct, you heard at night the bellowings of the trains. But as I knew these were bellowings produced by machines under human control, they did not terrify me, as in a prehistoric age, I might have been terrified by the ululations of a neighbouring mammoth taking a free and uncoordinated stroll. (III:915)

The power of dream-thinking is to make the mammoth inhere in the train; to carry dream-thinking into waking life is to safely enjoy the emotional intensity of imagining a mammoth without actually having to run from a mammoth.

In the midst of the key philosophical meditation which takes place as the narrator sits in the library of the Guermantes in the final volume, Proust tells us that dreams seem to be, though they are not quite, "*un des modes pour retrouver le Temps perdu"* – surely one of the only times that the title of the entire work is so explicitly referenced. And here he means both the lost time of life, and the lost time of the world, the whole vast cycle of existence:

> Eh bien, c'était peut-être aussi par le jeu formidable qu'ils font avec le Temps que les Rêves m'avaient fasciné. N'avais-je pas vu souvent en une nuit, en une minute d'une nuit, des temps bien lointains, relégués à ces distances énormes où nous ne pouvons presque plus rien distinguer des sentiments que nous y éprouvions, fondre à toute vitesse sur nous, nous aveuglant de leur clarté, comme s'ils avaient été des avions géants au lieu des pâles étoiles que nous croyions, nous faire ravoir tout ce qu'ils avaient contenu pour nous, nous donner l'émotion, le choc, la clarté de leur voisinage immédiat, qui ont repris une fois qu'on est réveillé la distance qu'ils avaient miraculeusement franchie, jusqu'à nous faire croire, à tort d'ailleurs, qu'ils étaient un des modes pour retrouver le Temps perdu? (IV:490)

> And it was perhaps also because of the extraordinary effects which they achieve with Time that dreams had fascinated me. Have we not often seen in a single night, in a single minute of a night, remote periods, relegated to those enormous distances at which we can no longer distinguish anything of the sentiments which we felt in them, come rushing upon us with almost the speed of light as though they were giant aeroplanes instead of the pale stars which we had supposed them to be, blinding us with their brilliance and bringing back to our vision all that they had once contained for us, giving us the emotion, the shock, the brilliance of their immediate proximity, only, once we are awake, to resume their position on the far side of the gulf which they had miraculously traversed, so that we are tempted to believe –wrongly, however – that they are one of the modes of rediscovering Lost Time? (III:950)

Dreams are not coded transmissions from the unconscious; they do not reveal something lurking underneath. Instead, they are messages from a distant star in time, its light reaching us not vaguely but gloriously, with a full, reality-dominating, attention-arresting luminosity. If Proust says that they only make us believe, and wrongly, that they can regain lost time, this is because

in waking we lose them, and because in fact no time lost can ever truly be recaptured. Dreams – and involuntary memory, which also comes forth upon a person unbidden – are as close as we can get.

The Dream and Will

In fact, Proust was certain that dreams could give us a sense of existence beyond time, independent of its constraints, for they touched so closely the oblivion of dreamless sleep:

> Le temps qui s'écoule pour le dormeur, durant ces sommeils-là, est absolument différent du temps dans lequel s'accomplit la vie de l'homme réveillé. Tantôt son cours est beaucoup plus rapide, un quart d'heure semble une journée ; quelquefois beaucoup plus long, on croit n'avoir fait qu'un léger somme, on a dormi tout le jour. Alors, sur le char du sommeil, on descend dans des profondeurs où le souvenir ne peut plus le rejoindre et en deçà desquelles l'esprit a été obligé de rebrousser chemin (III:370)
>
> The time that elapses for the sleeper, during these spells of slumber, is absolutely different from the time in which the life of the waking man is passed. Sometimes its course is far more rapid – a quarter of an hour seems a day – at other times far longer – we think we have taken only a short nap, when we have slept through the day. Then, in the chariot of sleep, we descend into depths in which memory can no longer keep up with it, and in which the mind, approaching the brink of those depths, is obliged to retrace its steps. (II:1013)

There is, in other words, a distinct form of metaphysical movement within sleep, a downward motion aboard the chariot, into a place where memory and self are rendered useless. Our dreams are the material through which we pass, scattered and strange combinations of memory that hover right at the border of complete forgetting; they are always one layer above this nothing into which we descend and then return, making our way back into the fullness of consciousness. The universe of dream is anchored to a temporal and spatial nothingness; our life at night tends toward its state of totally indescribable existence in sleep. *What does it mean to be a rivalry?* is the question just prior to, *what does it mean to be an animal shiver?* which is itself prior to the really difficult question: *what does it mean to be alive without any awareness, as in deep sleep*?

Proust's suggestion in this passage is that, whether we know it or not, our awareness actively travels toward this nothingness – or, at least, comes right up to its edge – every time we drop into sleep.

"*L'attelage du sommeil, semblable à celui du soleil, va d'un pas si égal, dans une atmosphère où ne peut plus l'arrêter aucune résistance*" (III:370) – "The horses of sleep, like those of the sun, move at so steady a pace, in an atmosphere in which there is no longer any resistance" (II:1013) that only the most forceful waking sensations can pull us out of it, the narrator continues. These images are among the most metaphyiscally powerful in the *Recherche*, for they attempt to give form to utter formlessness, to present a vocabulary of images in order to describe the state of pure nothingness which we encounter in sleep, to show us the far side of the exercise of spiritual force. It suggests that if sleep is fundamentally, as Tolstoy would have it, a journey toward non-perception (a neuroscientist might say a movement through the different sleep phases), then dreaming – the road on which the chariot travels – must be defined as the *closest state of perception to non-perception*. By nature of its existence in the darkened reaches of sleep, and by nature of its purely hallucinatory, insubstantial quality, a dream is an image always keeping emptiness at bay, a something that exists only on the threshold of a great nothing. The horses of sleep float through an endless ether, gliding silently and effortlessly as one flies through a dream,[333] but in this ether they are hyper-sensitive to the stimulation of images, fantasies, pressures.

[333] One of the brilliant aspects of this analogy is its phenomenological closeness to dreaming – i.e. the gliding of the horses through space is the kind of experience one might have in a dream. Allan Hobson has demonstrated that it is, at least in part, the intense stimulation of the motor cortex that leads to elegant, fluid trajectories, characterized by leaping and flying, in dreams. Hobson, *Dreaming Brain,* 249. See also the work of Proust's contemporary, the scientist Henri Beaunis (1830-1921), who was one of the first researchers to observe (in his own dreams) how much more movement there was in dreams than in waking life, and how often it could be characterized as falling, gliding, or leaping elegantly through space. Hobson, *Dreaming Brain*, 74.

> il faut quelque petit caillou aérolithique étranger à nous (dardé de l'azur par quel Inconnu?) pour…le faire, d'une brusque courbe, revenir vers le réel, brûler les étapes, traverser les régions voisines de la vie. (III:370-371)
>
> it requires some little aerolith extraneous to ourselves (hurled from the azure by what Unknown?) to strike our regular sleep…and to make it swing sharply round, return towards reality, travel without pause, traverse the regions bordering on life. (I:1013)

Proust presents sleeping, that most paradigmatic of passive, motionless activities, as a heroic journey – one that is at once mythical and also modern, for it makes use of myth in order to contemplate inescapable emptiness. Whereas it's almost impossible in the context of waking life to understand how much of our world picture is produced from the nothing of our own minds, in sleep – or in reflecting about sleep – it's clear. Our world must always be a world-picture rather than a world itself, but in dream, the mind is capable of seizing its own pure perception, of tracing out the limits of the world-picture built through the integration and synthesis of the sensations we internalize. The Proustian sleeper travels down to the unformed matrix of experience, to the moment where, leaving all perception behind, he can look back and see that perception is in fact creation, streaks of color on a blank canvas – and then, a moment later, he slips into the black, and the memory of the event is left at the threshold.

Dreams grow thicker in Proust's mind as his own body succumbs to force-unto-death. One of his latest notebooks, for example, contains many sketches in which dreaming is used to chart a pathway towards annihilation for the writer Bergotte, whose death is one of the major events of the later parts of the *Recherche*.[334] One of these sketches is integrated into the novel, as the last episode from Bergotte's life that we hear of before the scene of his death is described:

> Affolé par une souffrance de toutes les minutes, à laquelle s'ajoutait l'insomnie coupée de brefs cauchemars, Bergotte ne fit plus venir de médecin et essaya avec succès, mais avec excès, de différents narcotiques…On n'absorbe le produit nouveau, d'une composition toute différente, qu'avec la délicieuse attente de l'inconnu. Le cœur bat comme à un premier rendez-vous. Vers quel genres ignorés de sommeil, de rêves, le

[334] *RTP*, III, Note 4 to pg. 370.

> nouveau venu va-t-il nous conduire ? Il est maintenant en nous, il a la direction de notre pensée. De quelle façon allons-nous nous endormir, et une fois que nous le serons par quels chemins étranges, sur quelles cimes, dans quel gouffre inexploré le maître tout puissant nous conduira-t-il ? Quel groupement nouveau de sensations allons-nous connaître dans ce voyage ? Nous mènera-t-il au malaise ? À la béatitude ? À la mort ? (III:691)
>
> Maddened by uninterrupted pain, to which was added insomnia broken only by brief spells of nightmare, Bergotte called in no more doctors and tried with success, but to excess, different narcotics…When one absorbs a new drug, entirely different in composition, it is always with a delicious expectancy of the unknown. One's heart beats as at a first assignation. To what unknown forms of sleep, of dreams, is the newcomer going to lead one? It is inside one now, it is in control of one's thoughts. In what way is one going to fall asleep? And, once asleep, by what strange paths, up to what peaks, into what unfathomed gulfs will this all-powerful master lead one? What new constellation of sensations will we learn of during this voyage? Will it lead us to malaise, to beatitude, to death? (III:184)

Unconscious feeling and conscious thought come very close to touching. The thrill of reaching ascending degrees of nothingness (malaise, world-denying beatitude, and finally death) is attained through the expression of the journey through images (pathways, mountains, chasms) furnished by nocturnal fantasy. As the dreamer travels the full radius of his personhood, the dream collapses any distinction between that radius and the world beyond it.

Dream is made up of a sensorial intensity that hovers very close to the border of oblivion: in describing the chariot's trajectory or Bergotte's journey, Proust actually re-enacts the experience of a dream, in which nothingness is translated (or almost translated) into perceivable images, and then rendered into language itself. Dream-thoughts are halfway between language and the total absence of representation; they live in a middle space in which perception hovers slightly below the intellect's capacity to explain and name it. Freud writes that, in dream, "the fabric of thinking is resolved into its raw material."[335] The neuroscientist Mark Solms glosses that normal dreams are often characterized by "abstract thinking being converted into concrete perception" – a phenomenon which he labels "backward projection," in light of its movement

[335] Freud, quoted in Mark Solms, *The Neuropsychology of Dreams* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997), 200.

from sophisticated, abstract cognitive function towards an evolutionarily more primitive mode of thinking, one that is purely perceptual rather than abstract.[336] But in Proust, this backward projection is only half of the process; a mirror act of forward projection occurs between the nothingness of sleep, that is, the nothingness that is the body at rest in a state without consciousness, and the images of dream. Inexpressible emptiness is expressed, or almost expressed, in the experience of descending in the chariot. This nothingness is not, however, merely the unconscious expression of desires, surging up to find a form in dream images – for these desires, too, would have to be a form of awareness, however primitive. This is Proust's contribution to our sketch of what we have been calling emergent aliveness or spiritual force: he tries to point us to the very horizon at which biological being emerges into cognition.

Proustian dreams, then, are the spaces in which perceptual experience comes closest to describing its own limits, and to touching – directly behind those limits – the fundamental nothingness (as it appears to us) of the world beyond our sensory perception. They allow us a new vocabulary in which to think of Weil's spiritual force and Freud's death-drive: as depictions of the border that perception straddles between aliveness and inert matter, a delineation of the line between the mere existence of things and the knowing of them.

The paradox of unconscious self-awareness in Proustian sleep parallels Schopenhauer's interrogation of the unformed energy (Will) underneath our structures of perception (Representation) – except that Proust makes an important inversion. Schopenhauer argues that our capacity for representation of all kinds – sensory, abstract, imaginative – ultimately reduces itself to a "very complicated *physiological* occurrence in an animal's brain, whose result is the

[336] Solms, 195.

consciousness of a *picture* or *image* at that very spot,"[337] a picture or image which is essentially *like* a dream-state:

> This condition, with which the existence of the world is irrevocably encumbered, marks it with the stamp of *ideality*, in spite of all *empirical* reality, and consequently with the stamp of the mere *phenomenon*. Thus the world must be recognized, from one aspect at least, as akin to a dream, indeed as capable of being put in the same class with a dream. For the same brain-function that conjures up during sleep a perfectly objective, perceptible, and indeed palpable world must have just as large a share in the presentation of the objective world of wakefulness.[338]

Proust will re-work this analogy so as to claim that dream is not only an analog to reality, but actually the fullest expression of a certain intensity possible within it.

Schopenhauer – whom Proust read deeply, though he sometimes pretended he hadn't[339] – can serve as a guide here. The vital nothingness that lurks underneath our perception is to be embraced, not feared, he says. "For the infinite *a parte post* without me cannot be any more fearful than the infinity *a parte ante* without me, since the two are not distinguished by anything except by the intervention of an ephemeral life-dream."[340] Proust, meanwhile, takes this equanimity a step further: for him, an actual dream flanked on either side by the nothingness of sleep is the surest way to contemplate, like Bergotte, our "ephemeral life-dream" – and the vastness its ephemeral state necessarily exposes as a kind of photo-negative. Proust, we might say, in Schopenhauer's vocabulary, conceives of the dream as the place where Will and Representation touch each other most closely, the one drawing its energy from the co-presence of the other. Proust tempers Schopenhauer's pessimism by implying that being so close to the

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[337] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), Vol. II, 191.
[338] Schopenhauer, Vol. II, 4.
[339] Anne Henry tells us that Proust is a profoundly Schopenhauerian writer. He returned to *The World as Will and Representation* a number of times during his life, and his thorough knowledge of the work impressed his friends. While under the influence of Bergson, though, Proust often treated Schopenhauer with a certain "*désinvolture,*" maybe because of how fashionable it was to read Schopenhauer in intellectual circles at that moment, and how outwardly disdainful Proust often was of things fashionable. Anne Henry, "Proust du côté de chez Schopenhauer," Anne Henry, ed., *Schopenhauer et la création littéraire* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989), 151.
[340] Schopenhauer, Vol. II, 467.

Will even in consciousness quickens consciousness, gives it a sense of purpose, that sense of pursuing and feeling the emergence of aliveness that comes with the hunt, with the run through an unfamiliar forest.

Here the question of volition or agency is bound up with spiritual force. It is not by accident that Schopenhauer calls being in of itself "Will," as it is, for him, the basic energy that drives the actions of any conscious species. "The fundamental error of philosophers," he writes,

> is that they make thinking the essential and primary element of the so-called soul, in other words, of man's inner or spiritual life, always putting it first, but regard willing as a mere product of thinking, and as something secondary, additional and, subsequent. *But if willing merely resulted from knowing, how could the animals, even the lowest of them, manifest a will that is often so indomitable and vehement, in spite of such extremely limited knowledge*?[341]

Proustian sensation precedes and shapes perception – the flicker of the animal is the primary element of the self – and only afterwards does thought, on the rope-ladders of memory and habit, build the world as we know it. The work of a dreamer – and, perhaps by extension, the work of an artist – is to look as directly into this flicker as possible, by which is meant, of course, to let the flicker itself determine the structure and sequence of the perceptual experiences in the world, allowing the attention to follow naturally behind. It is in this sense that dream attention is a kind of bond, or contract, between dreamer and dream-world: the dreamer, carrying vestiges of representational consciousness, surrenders them and allows them to be re-shaped by the rhythms of his bodily existence. In this attention to the animal shiver, in this descent in the chariot of sleep, new images are formed (or re-formed) that are not regulated by the higher-order, habit-forming intellect.

This description of attentiveness does not merely correspond to the dreaming mind in Proust, however; it also has much to do with his vision of the waking will. Will for Proust is

[341] Schopenhauer, Vol. II, 206. My italics.

something that exists below intelligence and sensibility, and lifts sensation into them, like "the persevering and unalterable servant of our successive personalities:"

> Pendant qu'au moment où va se réaliser un voyage désiré, l'intelligence et la sensibilité commencent à se demander s'il vaut vraiment la peine d'être entrepris, la volonté qui sait que ces maîtres oisifs recommenceraient immédiatement à trouver merveilleux ce voyage si celui-ci ne pouvait avoir lieu, la volonté les laisse disserter devant la gare, multiplier les hésitations ; mais elle s'occupe de prendre les billets et de nous mettre en wagon pour l'heure du départ. (II:225)
>
> While at the moment when we are about to start on a long-planned and eagerly awaited journey, our intelligence and our sensibility begin to ask themselves whether it is really worth the trouble, the will, knowing that those lazy masters would at once begin to consider that journey the most wonderful experience if it became impossible for us to undertake it, leaves them arguing outside the station, vying with each other in their hesitations; but it busies itself with buying the tickets and putting us into the carriage before the train starts. (I: 930)

The will is not merely the servant of the desires, nor is it just an inexorable force. Instead, the will is the mind's capacity to guide us toward the perception of aliveness, the force that pulls us toward experiences before self-reflection reaches them. To have agency is to be able to respond directly and without mediation to the arrival of the energy of being, to the newfound perception of aliveness. In the social world the aliveness of others is already taken for granted, and so its emergence into the field of perception goes unnoticed. To reclaim it in waking life requires not a withdrawal from the world built by others, but an infusion of dream-consciousness into it. As we'll see, what we are accustomed to call agency is not this but rather another phenomenon, important and powerful, but distinct from Proustian will: self-consciousness.

How to Dream While Awake and How to Share This Gift

I have said that there are many more dreams in this novel than most readers remember. Still, they are dwarfed by the thousands of pages on which no dream appears. But in fact it's in the waking world that the real importance of the Proustian dream is to be found. For Proust's

dream sequences are above all templates for the reading of the novel, sites of instruction and remonstration in which the reader is taught how to approach this staggering and unusual work.

At the end of the opening dream sequence, Proust moves directly into another famous set-piece, the detailed description of the magic lantern projections playing on the walls of his bedroom in the late afternoon, "long before the time when I should have to go to bed and lie there, unsleeping." The invocation of the hour of restless half-dreams is absolutely intentional, for suddenly the wicked Golo, the lovely Geneviève de Brabant, and their enchanted kingdom are projected oneirically by the magic lantern onto the walls of the room. The narrator is enthralled and upset, for his neurasthenia has only just been calmed by the reassuring feeling that at least he is in his bedroom, comfortable, in familiar surroundings. Now the entire space has been transformed into a fairy tale, and a rupture opens in his thoughts, pushing them toward the dream:

> Si on bougeait la lanterne, je distinguais le cheval de Golo qui continuait à s'avancer sur les rideaux de la fenêtre, se bombant de leurs plis, descendant dans leurs fentes. Le corps de Golo lui-même, d'une essence aussi surnaturelle que celui de sa monture, s'arrangeait de tout obstacle matériel, de tout objet gênant qu'il rencontrait en le prenant comme ossature et en se le rendant intérieur, fût-ce le bouton de la porte sur lequel s'adaptait aussitôt et surnageait invinciblement sa robe rouge ou sa figure pâle toujours aussi noble et aussi mélancolique, mais qui laissait paraître aucun trouble de cette transvertébration. (I:10)
>
> If the lantern were moved I could still distinguish Golo's horse advancing across the window-curtains, swelling out with their curves and diving into their folds. The body of Golo himself, being of the same supernatural substance as his steed's, overcame every material obstacle – everything that seemed to bar his way – by taking it as an ossature and embodying it in himself: even the doorhandle, for instance, over which, adapting itself at once, would float irresistibly his red cloak or his pale face, which never lost its nobility or its melancholy, never betrayed the least concern at this transvertebration. (I:10)

Just as the narrator has earlier become the string quartet and rivalry; just as the dream-thinking has rearranged and scrambled all of the things in his home; just as the dream-curls continue

through time and space even though they've been cut; so Golo creates a continuous and uninterrupted unity of time and space. He absorbs the world into himself, slowly, inevitably annexing every surface to his kingdom, becoming doorknobs and window curtains. He is the world, and the world is him. By an old definition this is the very nature of the epic mode in literature, where the world and those who inhabit it are in harmony with one another, where deeds are commensurate with the men and women who act them out. This is what Lukács means when he claims that the epic world "is wide and yet it is like a home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the stars; the world and the self, the light and the fire, are sharply distinct, yet they never become permanent strangers to one another, for fire is the soul of all light and all fire clothes itself in light."[342] Lukács might be speaking, with unintended literalness, about Golo himself: an emanation of light projected by fire, absorbing the wide world and regally treating it like his home.

The magic lantern is the transitional instrument between sleep and waking, the figuration by which the qualities of dream-life come to be projected onto the reality we all share in common. For René Girard, this scene is the transforming power of Combray itself, that primordial Eden constantly being recalled and re-projected.[343] For Elaine Scarry, it is the site for pedagogical imagining, where Proust teaches us to create the stable walls of his novelistic world.[344] Both critics point us to the moment when the dream-structure of the novel is moved from its natural habitat in the sleeping mind and projected onto waking reality. It becomes possible to engage the dream-mode, to lay it over the normal mode of perception, so that the two experiences unfurl at once. The narrator lives in two simultaneous realities: the room at Combray

[342] Lukács, 29.
[343] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965), 193.
[344] Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (Princeton UP, 2001), 10-12.

with all of its stuffy bourgeois furniture, and the kingdom of Brabant with all of its romance layered directly on top. Importantly, the one does not occlude the other: instead they coexist, the dream absorbing the curtains and door handles of waking perception into itself, much as the raw material of perceptual memory – the images we see every day – are given a new guise, revealed yet renamed, in dreams.

It is highly probable that Proust came to think of the dream as a malleable instrument of the imagination by reading Léon Hervey de Saint-Denys, society aristocrat, professor of Chinese at the Collège de France, first western translator of the Tang Dynasty poets, and heroic dreamer. While still an adolescent Hervey began a detailed dream journal, supplementing his entries with little watercolor paintings (as he was a marquis, one presumes his mornings were in general leisurely, translations of Chinese poetry notwithstanding). The journal, by his own report, would eventually comprise twenty-two volumes and contain a record of some 1,946 nights of dreaming. So fierce was his attention and care that he gradually became what we would now call a lucid dreamer – someone capable of regularly becoming aware that he is dreaming and even controlling his dreams. At night he would carry out empirical dream experiments. In the lucid state he would ask himself research questions such as, What does a leaf feel like in a dream? Is it more or less vivid than a leaf in real life? Where does an image come from in a dream? What are all of the possible ways in which it can combine with other images? What do my dreams look like when I'm on hashish? What do they look like when I'm hungry? When I sleep during the day?

Though Hervey de Saint-Denys died in 1892, when Proust was only twenty-two, it is very likely the younger dreamer knew of Hervey's treatise *Dreams and How to Guide Them* (*Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger*). Madame Hervey, the marquis's widow (and illegitimate

daughter of the last reigning prince of Parma), was a socialite whom Proust befriended at a party given by Robert de Montesquiou, the model for Charlus, in 1894.[345] Even more startling, Hervey himself is mentioned by name in the novel: "How it all comes back to me, Mémé," says the Duke of Guermantes to his brother Charlus, "and the old Chinese vase Hervey de Saint-Denys brought back for you. You used to threaten us that you would go and spend your life in China, you were so enamoured of that country" (II:744).

Hervey de Saint-Denys is an emissary from both the Far East and the far reaches of the nocturnal brain. Their extent is illustrated by this phantasma from his book:

> I could not begin to characterize the fantastical world, or rather, the chaos in which I believed myself to be that night. An unknown force rapidly carried me across spaces peopled with enormous things – things almost impossible to name, which flew through the void with me. It seemed to me that they were small planets in space, and yet they had the bodies of monstrous animals. I feared that, at any instant, I would crash into one of them as they flew toward me; but then, instead, I found myself penetrating through them as if they were mere shadows, without suffering even the smallest shock, without any sensation beyond a momentary sense of obscurity, during which time I imagined myself passing through the interior of these strange meteorites.[346]

This world is beholden to the same principles of thinking as being, of immersion and absorption, so cherished by Proust (who, incidentally, also wrote down his dreams and even sometimes sketched them).[347] On another night Hervey dreamt of a cat that, once dipped in a magical solution, was rendered translucent. Astonished, he watched the invisible outline of the cat delicately swim and dance within the solution, every one of its internal organs visible to the

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[345] Philip Kolb, "A Lost Article by Proust," *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Feb., 1938), 108.
[346] Anonymous [Léon Hervey de Saint-Denys], *Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger ; Observations pratiques* (Paris : Amyot, 1867), 325. The translations of Hervey are my own. An English translation made in 1982 by N. Fry in an edition prepared by Morton Schatzmann exists, but it is drastically abridged and, by its own admission, does away with much of Hervey's elaborate language – one of the very things that is most interesting about this book to a reader of Proust.
[347] Claude Gandelman, "The Artist as 'Traumarbeiter': On Sketches of Dreams by Marcel Proust," *Yale French Studies*, No. 84, Boundaries: On Writing & Drawing (1994), 124. The sketch of the dream is in draft copy book number 16645 of the "Fond Proust" at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Anne Henry explicitly draws a parallel between Proust and Hervey on this account: "comme Hervey de Saint-Denys qui dès l'âge de treize ans, dessinait ce qu'il avait rêvé, Proust, devenu un romancier expérimenté, note dans ses Cahiers ses propres rêves." Anne Henry, *Marcel Proust: Théories pour une esthétique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1981), 356.

naked eye. He then watched a translucent mouse being devoured and digested "in the transparent stomach of his ferocious enemy."[348]

In Hervey's book, the dream-state is regularly likened to the projections of a magic lantern; the reader is constantly exhorted to pay more attention to dream-life; dream-life is framed not just as a mode of being but as a tool for extending the scope of experience, for deep immersion in the past and in the wonders of the imagination. These lessons it seems Proust thoroughly learned. In fact, Proust's narrator, like Hervey, carries out his own dream experiments, creating a sequence of artificial dreams like grafted flowers:

> En faisant varier l'heure, l'endroit où on s'endort, en provoquant le sommeil d'une manière artificielle, ou au contraire en revenant pour un jour au sommeil naturel…on arrive à obtenir des variétés de sommeil mille fois plus nombreuses que, jardinier, on n'obtiendrait de variétés d'œillets ou de roses. (III:631)
>
> By varying the hour and the place in which we go to sleep, by wooing sleep in an artificial manner, or on the contrary by returning for a day to natural sleep . . . we succeed in producing a thousand times as many varieties of sleep as a gardener could produce of carnations or roses. (III:119-120).

Still more importantly, Proust carries the lessons of Hervey's dream agency into waking life: if the magic lantern can transfer the dream onto the surfaces of the world, then the human imagination can do the same. If you can project Golo anywhere, you can induce a lucid dream at any time; you can be Hervey de Saint-Denys with your eyes open. Thus the Proustian eyeballs take on two tasks simultaneously. They take in the world around them and, at the same time, project a dream-world outward onto its surfaces.

Let us consider in this vein the famous underwater fantasy at the opera in *The Guermantes Way*. The narrator hears a person who he thinks is the Prince of Saxony asking to sit in his *baignoire*, a box that abuts the orchestra. But the word also means a bathtub, and this

[348] Hervey de Saint-Denys, 322.

aquatic pun inspires in the narrator's imagination a huge fantasy in which the opera house is transformed into an underwater grotto, glittering with pearls and lit by bioluminescent fish. The imaginary kingdom begs a technical question: How does one fit this deep-sea Versailles into the Palais Garnier, already so full of its own splendors, already so richly evoked in the narrator's descriptions? Proust proceeds quickly and quite brilliantly: first he invokes the magic lantern, which he tries to use to project his dream onto the sup- posed prince (as if to warn us, *This is going to be a Golo situation*). Then he starts to describe the walls as humid and reptilian from their association with the word *baignoire*. Then, a moment later, it seems as though he's lost interest; the narrator has walked over to his seat and is trying to remember a line from Phèdre, but he can't quite get the syllables to scan. Then he realizes he's made the line too long, he recovers the right words, and the excess syllables suddenly "floated off with the ease and suppleness of a bubble of air that rises to burst on the surface of the water" (*qu'il avait de trop se dégagea avec autant d'aisance et de souplesse qu'une bulle d'air qui vient crever à la surface de l'eau*) (II:33, II:338). We are ambushed by the fact that the entire time we've been moving with the narrator through the opera house, we've also been swimming in seawater, and the little bubbles have alerted us to its invisible presence all around us. Proust is rightly celebrated for the sophistication and precision of his metaphors. But here the metaphors are only a means to an end: that the syllables are like bubbles floating to the surface, that the opera house wall is like a grotto – these are instruments in a process of imaginary world-creation, in the fabrication of a dream. Proust introduces at once two vocabularies: the limit of the imaginably vast (the grotto) and the limit of the imaginably small (the delicate bubble of air). Soon everything in between will be caught as if in a net. The high-society types assembled for the performance turn into a bewildering array of sea creatures. There are mermaids and tritons, monsters of the deep, and a

fat marquis who, with his labored breathing, looks like a fish about to lay an egg. The Duchess of Guermantes and her cousin the princess, enthroned in their box, are diaphanous sea goddesses.[349] This world made from metaphors has cut itself free from its original objects of comparison. For Gérard Genette this scene is a triumph of metonymy:

> et la façon dont il s'étendent de proche en proche à un nombre croissant d'objets (déesses des eaux, tritons barbus, galet poli, algue lisse, cloison d'aquarium, etc.) finissent par donner au lecteur l'illusion d'une continuité, et donc d'une proximité, entre comparant et comparé, là où il n'y a que multiplication de leurs points d'analogie et consistance d'un texte qui semble se justifier (se confirmer) par sa prolifération même.[350]

But let us say that metonymy is put to a specific, epic purpose: that of world-creation, the generation of a cosmic schema superimposed over the shared reality of the novel. It's not merely the case that, considered in isolation, a marquis resembles a fish or a chandelier a coral fan; nor is it just that fish leads to fan leads to algae. It is rather that two realities are unfolding simultaneously: the world of the opera house and the world of the grotto. The narrator has slipped into a waking dream in which all things in the opera house are re-placed and re-made. The relationship of the two worlds outranks and governs any individual comparison between aspects of the two, or even metonymic movement within each world.[351]

In this scene Proust manages to depict the complete world his imagination has erected

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[349] In *Proustian Space*, Georges Poulet tells us that landscape and setting function as frames of meaning for individuals throughout the *Recherche*: "Jamais, en effet, chez Proust, un lieu n'est décrit, sans qu'au premier plan ne se profile telle ou telle figure, pas plus que jamais, chez lui, ne surgit une figure, qu'elle ne trouve un cadre tout prêt à l'insérer à la supporter." We can borrow some of his vocabulary here: the episodes of this novel always erect, before anything, a framing mechanism for the realities that they call into being. And often, once the fantasy has been established, all that is needed to bring it back into the text is to invoke with a brief gesture that frame, as when the narrator brings the kingdom of the Nereids rushing back, even at the moment when it seems to have been forever lost. Georges Poulet, *L'espace proustien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 35.

[350] Gérard Genette, "Métonymie chez Proust," *Figures III* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 54.

[351] The actual setting of the imaginary universe, incidentally, is less important than its structure. This is best illustrated by the fact that the very same process of infinite implication occurs in one of Proust's earlier drafts of the opera scene, except that the setting is *underground* rather than underwater. In one sentence, we are given a subterranean grotto and the glimmer of a tiny gem within it: "Du fond de ces réservoirs de ténèbres dont quelques-uns semblaient vides, <leurs> habitants étant restés dans les profondeurs, brusquement – comme le rayon d'une pierre précieuse quand on se place dans un certain angle difficile à retrouver – le scintillement de deux yeux célèbres croisaient notre regard du feu rapide et horizontal qu'ils jetaient dans la nuit." *RTP*, II: 1082.

around him without ever losing sight of the other world, which enters his mind through perception. The world we all share and the world created in private are simultaneously accessible to the reader. It is an invitation: *Join me in the realm of the nereids!* But it's a coy kind of invitation, different from the invitation to go to Narnia or to Middle Earth or other fantasy lands. Because it always says, with a wink: *I know it's just in my head, I can still see the gas lamps and velvet seats, but still, come and share it, be in here too, in this cranium as wide and deep as the ocean itself, until the border between the two starts to blur at the edges*. Many of the bravura scenes of imagining in this novel are shaped on this template. An imaginary world is built directly on top of the perceived one, and it is free at any moment to disengage itself from its referent and become a self-sustaining plane of existence. When the narrator first perceives the little band of girls at the boardwalk in Balbec, he begins to imagine them as a comet flying through space. And soon, there are two places at once: the boardwalk with its denizens, and an astral empire, with planets and telescopes and distant fragments of stardust. These induced dream-states and their cosmic unfurling at the furthest and nearest limits of reality are another way of shedding light on the remarkable proliferation of astral imagery in Proust, which provides one template for turning a seemingly unordered waking universe into a dream universe of complete coherence. As Malcolm Bowie observes in his tribute to the Proustian sky, *Proust Among the Stars*, "At one moment, the stars are a pure scattering of luminous points, and turn the narrator into a scatterbrain. At the next moment, they are constellations, gigantic intimations of structure."[352]

These acts of world creation, with their sudden implication of the infinite and infinitesimal, provide an alternative to the theory in the critical discourse which attributes a

[352] Malcolm Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998), 320.

philosophical primacy to metaphor in Proust. Here again Genette is in the vanguard, with his claim that metaphor functions as a method of extracting the "vision of essences" from reality by transforming objects through spontaneous, out-of-time comparisons that nevertheless succeed in capturing the essence (by "the miracle of analogy") of the object in question.[353] Here, though, the essential is not *in* the object itself, but rather in the generation of the subjective world state – a whole momentary cosmology, what Northrop Frye calls thinking "at the circumference of reality" – that enables the object to be endowed, in the moment, with meaning.

The truly revolutionary structure of Proust's novel, only beginning to be fully visible a century after its writing in an era on the cusp of virtual reality, is its creation of multiple universes which unfurl simultaneously. The novel presents multiple planes of representation directly on top of one another, such that each page is equal to two, or three, or maybe even seven pages at once. What appears to be *merely* a three-thousand-page novel is in fact several three-thousand-page works hovering, like highly realized ghosts, on top of their textual cousin. Not only is there a physical plane of this novel – described in such exhaustive and exhausting detail, in cinematic renderings of Combray and Paris and Balbec down to the last hawthorn flower and mackintosh coat. Not only are there a series of overlapping cultural, social and professional planes, Deleuze's "worlds of signs which are organized in circles and intersect at certain points, for the signs are specific and constitute the substance of one world or another," the diplomatic codes of Norpois, the strategic vocabulary of Saint-Loup, the medical language of Cottard.[354] There are also expansive dream-planes called in and out by the narrator's subjectivity, literally thousands of images (and sounds, and smells, and sensations) the narrator invokes as cohesive constellations which do not ever appear in front of his physical person (if a literary character can

[353] Gérard Genette, "Proust Palimpsest," *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 203-204.
[354] Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: George Braziller, 1972), 5.

be said to have a physical person) and are never seen by his physical eyes. These images comprise a parade of mermaids, deceased princesses, bubbles, reindeer chewing on lichen, tropical insects seducing a flower, statues come to life, trumpet fanfares, the scent of nonexistent roses, names made into objects, and objects made into abstractions – some borrowed from the language of other characters, from books, from long-ago perceptions, combined and recombined into new and fugitive cosmic arrangements. To make a film of Proust's novel that merely takes place in a meticulously realized *Belle Époque* France would be to miss most of the novel, which unfurls at a level above what can be seen with the eye and heard with the ears, though it is just as present, in many cases even more present, in the mind of the reader.[355]

Once one of these imaginary worlds has been established, it never fully disappears. It hovers in the wings, waiting to rush in on the reader's imagination in all of its plenitude. When, for example, the narrator casts his eye over high society many years after his visit to the aquatic opera, he vividly invokes the grotto dream, even at a moment when its real-world referents have been punctured by disillusionment. Seeing once again the tired old Duchess of Guermantes, he reflects that she "was already nothing more in my eyes than a very ordinary woman…who had occasionally invited me, not to descend into the submarine kingdom of the Nereids, but to spend an evening with her in her cousin's box" (III:1061). This is one of the most remarkable instances of a dreamlike continuity over interruption in the novel: even as one of the primary instigators of the fantasy is reduced to an ordinary woman, the fantasy itself manages effortlessly to reassert itself. The narrator immediately summons up the far borders of his universe ("*le royaume sous-marin des Néréides*"), as if to bring rushing in to the reader everything between them. At the same time, he asserts how free-floating this world is: once launched into existence, the kingdom

[355]A trap which Raúl Ruiz's film *Le temps retrouvé* (1999) valiantly tries not to fall into.

of the Nereids needs no actual Nereid to continue its imaginary production. It swims around the margins novel, ready to be summoned back at any moment. The Proustian will is that force in the self that sees the dream rushing forward and rushes up to meet it; Proustian self-consciousness, diametrically opposite from will, is what arises when the dream has receded or before the dream has arrived, the voice wondering whether the dream is forever dead, or never existed at all.

Dreaming for the Future

The use of the dream to construct imaginary worlds within the realm of the novel amid the intrusions of a skeptical self-consciousness is Proust's culminating variation on the relation of dream to representation within the history of the novel. We have seen a first hint of this when Tolstoy plays at who is seeing which muzhik: the way the reader can see, within Anna's dream-vision, the muzhik with the missing button. The shared dream of Anna and Vronksy almost becomes a distinct ontological plane of the novel, a reality that the two of them inhabit, smaller than the reality of the novel as a whole, but bigger than any individual's interiority. (Or perhaps, we might say, the failure to share the dream means that this act of world co-creation remains still hypothetical within the parameters of the novel). We see this process again when the muzhik reappears without ontological qualifiers in the moment of Anna's death, slipping from her mind to the shared waking reality of writer and reader.[356]

[356] Proust, in his brief but adoring essay on Tolstoy, writes, "Chaque trait, dit d'observation, est simplement le revêtement, la preuve, l'exemple d'une loi dégagé par le romancier, loi rationnelle ou irrationnelle. Et l'impression de puissance et de vie vient précisément de ce que ce n'est pas observé, mais que chaque geste, chaque parole, chaque action n'étant que la signification d'une loi, on se sent mouvoir au sein d'une multitude de lois." Marcel Proust, "Tolstoi," *Contre Sainte-Beuve, suivi de Nouveaux Mélanges* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 421. This is an extremely Proustian reading of Tolstoy, but it sheds light on the process of dream-creation we are discussing here: each imagined dream-world rushing into the novel with its new and sometimes inscrutable cosmic dream-laws was to be like a discrete epic, so that each slip into the dream was a potential *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina* hovering in around the narrator's physical person, waiting to be projected out onto all of reality. And indeed, Proust sees Tolstoy's dream-worlds as also waiting offstage to come rushing periodically back in their full plenitude: "Les

We have seen the same process worked out with unsustainable intensity in Woolf. To project outward a dream is to be drowned in it; there has to be a retreat from Septimus into the more conventional narrativizations of Peter at the expense of the dream. In other words, the novel has oscillated between feeling that dream-sharing fails because either it cannot be carried into waking life, or because, when it is, it cannot be detached from it.

With Proust comes a new form of dream-awareness, a state continuously moving in and out of the engaged reality of the dream. The mysterious process articulated on the first page of the novel comes to be a guiding idea for the whole project: at the tip into the dream, "the subject of my book would separate itself from me, leaving me free to apply myself to it or not." Proust advocates the loss of self within the ecstasy of attention that characterizes the dream – but not without an escape-hatch. Many critics have championed the idea that Proust's novel advocates a leap into eternity through the window of memory – and in the philosophical pronouncements of the narrator, this account finds a great deal of supporting evidence. Martin Hägglund, following in the footsteps of Deleuze, among others, has recently opened up the possibility that eternity is not the only object of longing in the *Recherche*, that rather, being in mortal time is itself a structuring principle for artistic and ontological desire within the work.[357] The dream, however, allows us to trace a middle path between these two overly stark alternatives, and explore a Dreamtime ontology of the kind we saw in chapter one. Proust allows for repeated access to a world that feels timeless precisely because of its lack of self-awareness, its total immersion in the non-negotiable, narrative-resisting attention of a dream. But he does not encourage anyone to dive off into that world forever; we are not to become Septimus, we are not to turn bicameral – but we are to find ways to leap back and forth. This helps explain the unique periodicity of the

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étoiles, le ciel que remarque comme un point fixe Lévine, sont bien un peu les memes que le comète vu par Pierre, que le grand ciel blue du prince André." Proust, "Tolstoi," 421.

[357] Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012), 28.

Proustian anecdote, in which ecstatic transports stretch for what seem like an eternity, engaging dream attention and seemingly using it to unfurl forever and ever a discursive deepening of our relationship to the things we perceive. Then, when it seems that this dream may simply last forever, there is a sudden withdrawal into a puncturing, satirical self-consciousness – a sharp, deflating lurch awake. In a brilliant instance from "Combray," the narrator allows us to enter a Septimus-like ecstasy at the sensuousness of asparagus, the stippled colors of their translucent tops, the exquisite and fairytale smell of one's urine after eating them, and so on and so forth intermittently in a classic instance of world-creation over many pages. And then comes a sudden, brief re-description of the dream, this time in an idiom of caustic, post-lapsarian hyper-self-consciousness. It turns out that this generative source of the whole world is actually a strategic weapon in Françoise's war for dominance in the kitchen: "if we had been fed on asparagus day after day throughout that summer, it was because their smell gave the poor kitchen-maid who had to prepare them such violent attacks of asthma that she was finally obliged to leave my aunt's service" (I:135).

René Girard tells us that the "worlds of Proust" constitute a powerful political commentary; we should not be deceived by the novel's apparent disdain for public life outside of high society. The novel begins with a shared dream: "Combray's unity is primarily spiritual rather than physical," Girard says, "Combray is the vision shared by all the members of the family."[358] It is a world of dream-sharing, where the template for the communicating of inner life has been so perfectly calibrated by its high priestess Tante Léonie that all the members of the community can transmit their imaginative life to one another – at least what of it fits within the mutually agreed-upon boundaries of the world (and the narrator's vision of paradise is one in which there is no difference between the public imaginative life and the private one). But being a

[358] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 193.

shared dream, Combray does not permit any reflection on its own ontological status: it is unquestioning. When it is revealed that Swann is a figure in high society, directly contradicting the role he plays in the narrator's family, the new knowledge is first dismissed and then, when no longer dismissable, reintegrated into the logic of the ongoing dream. Thus the narrator's great-aunt, unable to comprehend Swann being in the same circle as Madame de Villeparisis, must instead start thinking less of Madame de Villeparisis.

"Combray shies away from dangerous truths as a healthy organism refuses to digest something which would harm it," Girard continues. It is the naïve dream-sharing world, concerned with building a harmonious structure without any of the dangers of meta-reflection. Hence the mythopoesis of "Combray:" "The images used to describe Combray, are generally borrowed from the primitive religions, from the Old Testament, from medieval Christianity. The atmosphere is that of young societies in which epic literature flourishes, faith is naïve and vigorous, and foreigners are always 'barbarians' but are never hated."[359] Such benign dream-worlds are not to last in Proust. For when they are replaced by the salon of the Verdurins and other adult communities, the sacred imagery shifts to "the Inquisition and the witch-hunts." Proust saw that immersion in the unblinking being-in-the-world of dream-experience *was* the feeling of eternity, *was* the feeling of time unbound by narrative, free from *Leben als Geschichte*. But he also perceived that such immersion came with blinders, and that these blinders could easily be the instruments of nefarious political manipulation. The hatred that dominates the Verdurins is the structuring mechanism for the enfeebled dream-world they project onto their surroundings, and once within it, there is no escape, or seeing of its motivating forces for what they are.

[359] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel,* 199.

To permit periodic withdrawal from the dream without closing off all doors to it – this was Proust's solution to this problem, and his political philosophy. Dreams are the preeminent model for the full extension of subjectivity, for subjectivity as a presence that disseminates out into the entire world without perceiving any intervening distance. Proust says as much when he writes that dreams taught him that "only an erroneous and crude perception puts everything into the object, while in fact everything is in the mind" (II:950). But this realization, though sobering, cannot be an invitation to solipsism. On the contrary, it is the avenue into a back-door utopianism: Proust contends that we are divided because we make the error of believing that we inhabit a single reality, the acceptance of which leads to ignorance and slavishness, the contesting of which generates the torment of jealousy and the denial of snobbism. We cannot accept that in fact our common existence is constituted by an infinite number of overlapping dreams, to be passed into and out of all the length of our lives, to be bridged by salutary moments of waking self-awareness. If we could admit that we all dream, if we could reserve self-consciousness for the discussion of the parameters of the dreams that we consent to enter, then we might be able, one day, to invite one another into our dreams, to lay our magic lantern projections directly on top of one another, fighting no longer over whether Golo exists but about where we'd like to see him gallop. When we are in the dream, we should not cheat ourselves of its ecstatic power and keep any sense of individuated otherness. But we should make certain that individuation brackets the dream at its entrance and exit.

In keeping with his era, Proust thought that the main conduit for the sharing of dreams was art. Which is perhaps why he put the fullest statement of our obligations to dreaming, the Proustian manifesto for dreaming and living simultaneously, in the mouth of the painter Elstir, the most admirable artist in the novel:

> Mais non, me répondit-il, quand un esprit est porté au rêve, il ne faut pas l'en tenir écarté, le lui rationner. Tant que vous détournerez votre esprit de ses rêves, il ne les connaîtra pas ; vous serez le jouet de mille apparences parce que vous n'en aurez pas compris la nature. Si un peu de rêve est dangereux, ce qui en guérit, ce n'est pas moins de rêve, mais plus de rêve, mais tout le rêve. Il importe qu'on connaisse entièrement ses rêves pour n'en plus souffrir ; il y a une certaine séparation du rêve et de la vie qu'il est si souvent utile de faire que je me demande si on ne devrait pas à tout hasard la pratiquer préventivement, comme certains chirurgiens prétendent qu'il faudrait, pour éviter la possibilité d'une appendicite future, enlever l'appendice chez tous les enfants. (II:199)
>
> When a mind has a tendency toward dreams, it's a mistake to shield it from them, to ration them. So long as you divert your mind from its dreams, it will not know them for what they are; you will be the victim of all sorts of appearances because you will not have grasped their true nature. If a little dreaming is dangerous, the cure for it is not to dream less but to dream more, to dream all the time. One must have a thorough understanding of one's dreams if one is not to be troubled by them; there is a way of separating one's dreams from one's life which so often produces good results that I wonder whether one oughtn't to try it just in case, simply as a preventative, as certain surgeons suggest that, to avoid the risk of appendicitis later on, we ought all to have our appendixes taken out when we're children. (I:901-902)

The artist must live in two modes at once: awake and in dream, each filling to the brim experience, separate and yet paradoxically cohabitating the same space, in a Dreamtime that is Eden but also fully shot-through with the self-reflection of the present, Eden that is now and not earlier.

In its concern for memory, Proust's great novel points backward. Not only backward in the narrator's own life, but also back to a long European tradition of privileging the role of memory in literature, beginning, in its modern form, with Rousseau and stretching back, perhaps, to Augustine. But in its concern with dreaming, Proust's great novel points elsewhere, either toward an idea of consciousness and a model of living that, as we have seen, may have antecedents only in non-western societies like the Aborigines of Australia or the Ongees of the Andamans, or toward some point in the not-so-distant future. And by this I mean that perhaps Proust allows us to see dream-representation and dream-perception no longer as merely elements

within the aesthetics of the novel and the modern ideology of art, but rather as a broader statement about the kinds of processes and technologies needed to mediate the relationship between the self and others. Proust is the prophet of a new Dreamtime; to live without it will generate misery and alienation, but living in it cannot be a fulltime endeavor, lest we become unwitting signatories to beliefs and actions we have not properly vetted. The danger of the future, suggests this reading of Proust, is that the technologies for waking immersion in the dream will one day far outstrip those made available by the novel, but they will in all probability develop ahead of the necessary forms of self-consciousness permitting reflection upon them. Proust transmits a warning – a signal sounding ever so faintly from behind the thousand gauze curtains of his prose – that the methods by which we can exercise our consent in entering and exiting the dreams of the future must be developed alongside them, lest we never know who has authored our dreams, and to what end.

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