

Pierre Mabile

# On the Dream Stage

During the dream when visions are the most improbable, I do not notice any emotion in myself different from that which accompanies my daily existence. I was hardly surprised last night to make jump rope a heavy maharajah clad in gold, descended for this exercise from a ceremonial procession of sacred elephants. The alternatives of boredom, hope, passion and terrors are identical during the day and in the oneiric experience. Furthermore, I can say that the most delightful moments, the rarest feelings of pleasant disorientation were experienced during the day. This impossibility of achieving an exceptional degree of pleasure in dreams is undoubtedly personal. On reflection, I have no regrets. I like it, and it reassures me to see the permanence of my being. It seems to me highly desirable that real life, whatever the mediocrity in which it struggles today, should still be filled with the maximum attraction.

\* \* \*

If from an emotional point of view the dream has no special advantage for me when it takes place, on the other hand, the memory of my dreams and the stories of those of others are very important to me. Am I tempted as a faithful disciple of psychoanalysis to question the nocturnal development of images in order to perceive the direction and content of the unconscious? This concern, after being very keen, tends to become secondary.

Thanks to the readings and thanks to the insightful help of friends, a certain knowledge of my inner landscape was acquired. I do not pretend that it is total. However, the main complexes, levers of my passionate dynamism, have been fairly well inventoried. By their exposure to consciousness, these tendencies have not been eliminated but rather affirmed. I do not want to suppress them, however embarrassing they may

Victor Brauner, *Untitled*, 1931

be. Being less worried about following the deep currents of my being, my interest turns to examining the images themselves. Why are some of them retained while others do not reappear? Why does the mind use them to express emotion and confusion? Why do they combine or overlap in a certain way?

Toyen, *Potato Theater*, 1941

It is answered by the voice of Freud that the "cliché-souvenir" has a personal symbolic value.

Some objects have been given a special meaning because of the emotion felt when they first met, either because the emotion was linked to their perception, or because they were associated as witnesses to a sentimental shock. The setting retains the power to evoke a tragedy that has taken place there, it remains strangely moving even after we have repressed the memory of that tragedy. By this statement, Freud extends the conceptions of the associationists; he joins the recent works on acquired conditional reflexes, which are artificially imposed sensory connections. There is no doubt that the psychological edifice is made up of associations of images; that each image has a particular symbolic value for the individual is also certain. However, the problem is not exhausted. By comparing dreams and deliriums of different people, we note a kind of collective repertory. Language, social life, oral communications, written or painted, are at the same time an explanation and a result of this common content. But beyond these languages and habits, the testimony of peoples distant in time and space proves that the symbolic meaning of objects has remained very stable. This constancy dominates our entire species.

Therefore, we have the right to ask ourselves whether the association of images operates according to the randomness of individual experiences, or whether it is due to some necessity inherent in the content of the images themselves.

We know that the elements of matter have a valence system that directs their combinations and makes certain compounds possible, while others are not. Our representations, functions of objects, arrange in a similar way their union according to their inner properties.

In the ordinary experience of life, the picture of reality is distorted by the concern for action.

Practical intelligence, this root-cutter established for efficiency and

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# An Oneiric Library (IV)

(...)

The train approaches the end of the line. It enters a long and narrow corridor whose floors are meticulously waxed and whose high walls are made of a beautiful yellow and shiny wood. On the right, the tracks overlook a city, while on the left there is a series of large stalls built in the same way as the corridor, separated from each other only by a partition and lined from top to bottom by library shelves filled with countless volumes. At each stall the train stops and all the travelers come down to look for a book, a single one, which they do not find. This operation must be of the first importance to judge by the feverish activity of my travel companions. I search myself, without really knowing what I am supposed to find.

(...)

At one of these stops, I am led into the restrooms, where I find some packages wrapped in cellophane and seemingly uninteresting. However, I consult the people around me before throwing them away and that serves me well because S. points out to me that these packages contain drawings. And indeed I am amazed to discover a wide variety of drawings done by me at different times in my life, as well as a book inscribed by Paul Éluard, all things that I had lost a few days before. I absolutely cannot manage to remember the title of the book, in all respects similar to a children's grammar, which I persist in calling "Immortal Disease," despite Éluard's objections.

Dream of Max Morise in *La Révolution surréaliste*, nr. 4, July 15, 1925

We are in Paris and getting ready to leave for Prague. Before we go I would like to browse the bouquinistes. Toyen tells me to find her a book to pass the time with on the train. When I come to the embankment I realize that the bookstalls are no longer in their usual places and have been set up instead along the edges of the city's bridges.

The bridges also aren't in their usual places, and there are more of them. Eventually I find several familiar booksellers. One of them has a number of books on the ground. "New purchases," he tells me. I rummage through the books until I find three of peculiar size: long and thin.\* They



Jindřich Štyrský, *The Gift*, oil on canvas, 1937

are from the 18th century and filled with exquisite colored engravings depicting tropical plants, palms, and trees. I buy them and quickly walk away before the bouquiniste reconsiders. To my mind, I've cheated him. I'm also mindful not to miss my train. Toyen is at the station by now. But I cannot help going to Notre-Dame to see a well-known bookseller from whom I've made some stellar purchases in the past. I stop by his stall and pull out an old leather-bound volume at random. When I look at it, I see a crumpled ear on the front cover, and when I take the book from its row, the ear straightens out. I steal a glance at the bookseller sitting behind me. In front of him is a stool with a laver of water. He removes one eared book after another from the shelves, dusting off the ears and giving them a good washing, after which he dries them with a clean towel. ... The ears flower...

\*around 15x35 cm [Štyrský's note from 1941]

Jindřich Štyrský, dream of 1937

I dreamt I owned a voluminous, illustrated, luxury edition of a book on surrealism, and the dream really consisted in the exact description of one of the illustrations. It depicted a large hall. The rear of its side wall on the left—far from the observer—was occupied by a clumsy fresco that I instantly recognized as a 'German Hunting Scene.' Green as in Trübner predominated\*. Its subject was a giant aurochs which had reared up on



Wilhelm Trübner, *A view of Frauenchiemsee*, oil on canvas, 1891

his hind legs and seemed to be dancing. But the entire length of the wall was filled with a series of objects that were precisely aligned. Next to the picture was a stuffed aurochs, roughly the size of the one in the picture, and likewise standing on its hind legs. Then, a living aurochs in the same pose, still very large, but somewhat smaller. The same pose was adopted also by a succession of animals, first, two not entirely distinct brown animals, presumably bears, then another two smaller, live aurochs, and lastly, two ordinary cattle. The entire ensemble seemed to be under the command of a child, a very graceful girl dressed in a very short grey silk dress and long grey silk stockings. This child led the parade much like a conductor. There was a signature at the bottom of the painting: Claude Debussy. (I had this dream while I was writing the long essay on Stravinsky for the *Philosophy of Modern Music*.)

\*Presumably the painter Wilhelm Trübner (1851-1917), known for his somewhat grandiose scenes of landscapes and buildings in a realist or impressionist style.

Theodor W. Adorno, dream of February 18, 1948, Los Angeles  
(in Theodor W. Adorno, *Dream Notes*, Cambridge, 2007).

I held a copy of the printed version of [Walter] Benjamin's *Arcades Project* in my hands, though it was not clear whether he had completed it after all or whether I had reconstructed it myself from the drafts. I looked through it lovingly. One title read: 'Part Two' or 'Chapter Two.' Beneath it stood the motto:

'What tramcar would be so impertinent  
as to maintain that it only moved for the  
sake of the crunching of the sand?

– Robert August Lange, 1839

Theodor W. Adorno, dream of September 18, 1962, Frankfurt  
(in Theodor W. Adorno, *Dream Notes*, Cambridge, 2007).

Last night I dreamed that Miguel Corrales had compiled a very long, chronological and complete list of all books of poems ever published by surrealists.

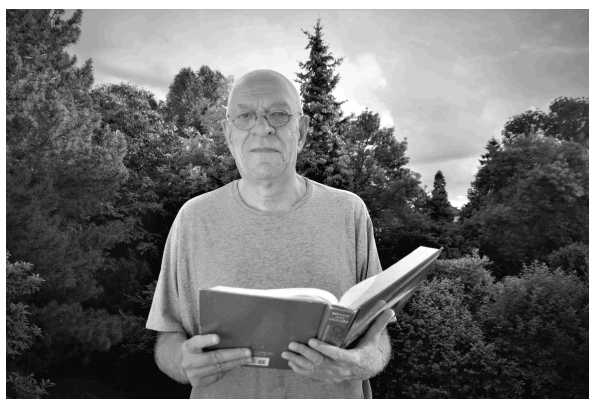
Bruno Jacobs, dream of December 4, 2017

In the bookstore of a big department store, advised by a very smiling salesclerk, I buy a book of stories from a contemporary Israeli writer, Bahra, Kafka (written like this, with a coma in between, as I don't know if the author is called Bahra Kafka or Kafka Bahra, not being able to determine which is the name and which is the surname), in a German-Hebrew bilingual edition, with some illustration on the cover.

That same night, but in another dream, hours later, this book appears again: I enter the locker room of a swimming pool and pick it up from a locker, wrapped and stuffed in a yellow plastic bag.

Jesús García Rodríguez, dream of December 12, 2017

Dan Stanciu was holding a big open book; he was looking in it and was dissatisfied with a word that was "too short." I suggested to him: "Lengthen it on iron!" Dan smiled to me approvingly.



Mitzura Salgian, dream of May 2, 2018 (Photo Alix Vrana)

While talking with a guy from a publishing house, he tells me how pleased he is by the collaboration with the author of a book called *The Suicide*, which is not a volume of fiction but a psychological study. Unlike most authors, he did not have any exaggerated demands as to how the book should look like. He wanted only one thing (and his wish was granted because it was reasonable enough); namely, that the text of the bio placed under his photograph on the back cover of the book would feature his "air conditioning number."

Dan Stanciu, dream of June 24, 2018

Dialectical object: I dreamt I was reading a book on surrealism. Eventually I flipped to a page on some kind of obscure marxist dialectical concept. The Stockholm Surrealist Group had created an object illustrating this concept, which was pictured below the text. It was made of white porcelain, and showed an old 70s car (Grand Prix?) with a massive circular loudspeaker on top, dwarfing the rest of the vehicle. Underneath was some sort of Swedish-esque gibberish writing with little

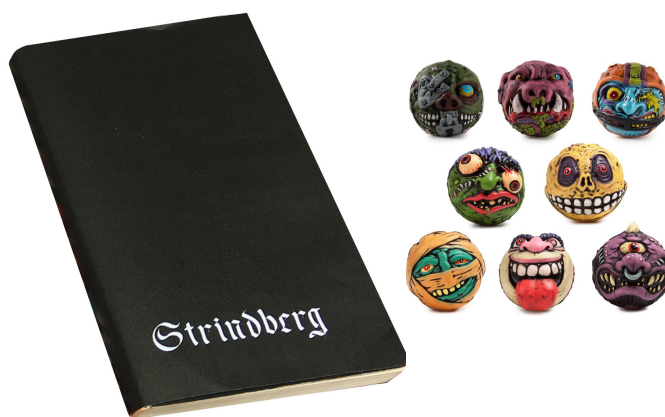
dots above most of the letters. It reminded me of one of those roadside souvenir trinkets you might pick up in Florida, a porcelain gator with "Welcome to Florida" written underneath or something...

Steven Cline, dream of July 7, 2018

I open my wallet looking for a ticket. Inside my wallet there is a book. The cover, in an acher tone, is identical to that of the books issued by the Losada Publishers of Buenos Aires from the 50s to the 70s. It shows a color image of Porky Pig (the book's author) and the book's title: *Cool*. Below it, in small letters, the subtitle: *Indestructible*.

Jesús García Rodríguez, dream of September 22, 2018

I am in bookstore. I find a big black book and ask the owner what it is and how much. He explains that it is a volume from the complete works of Strindberg. In this one there are a lot of illustrations of weird little plastic heads in grotesque expressions, and decorative hair, very mask-like, set up on display. He explains that in the old days these were used as promotional items in the lobby outside of early films. Strindberg would steal them from the lobby and collect them late in his life, to combat his depression. The owner says he loves this volume very much and always subconsciously places it below other books so no one will buy it. I see a sticker indicating it is priced at \$38, which seems expensive...



Jason Abdelhadi, Dream of November 13, 2018

I am in the books section of a large department store, of the Fnac type. I leaf through an unbound book of square format—rather a chapbook of blank sheets of paper folded in half. On one of the pages, in quite large letters and as a title of what seems to be a section of the publication, I read: **poemas llegando [poems arriving]**.



Javier Gálvez, dream of November 14, 2018

– Barrett Apprentissage  
– L'Après Gedichte

Book titles, Dan Stanciu, dream of December 25, 2018

(continued from page 1)

economy, organizes objects for a convenient approach. As our technical possibilities change, so does representation.

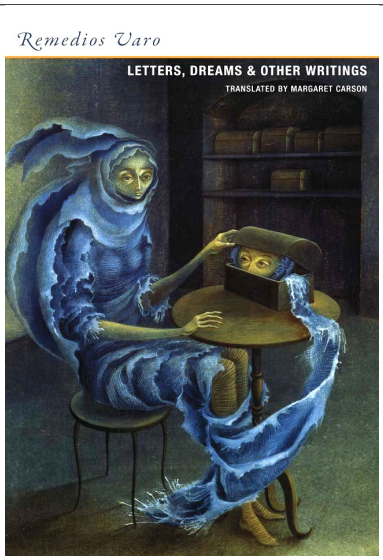
In the dream, psychic work is not gratuitous, we know it: André Breton brightly exposed that in his *Communicating Vessels*. However, the obstacle of pragmatic logic being removed and striving towards a coveted material result being null, we enjoy a relative freedom, a freedom given to our person, and a freedom allowed to the images themselves. This state is not strictly limited to nightlife—daydreaming or withdrawal into the imagination realize it during certain hours. We are then obliging spectators and no longer intransigent masters with inquisitorial control. In those moments, the objects reflect their personality. The importance of dreams resides, for me, in this double virtue: to illuminate our true inner reality and also to reveal new aspects of a larger external reality.

In the unusual encounter of images, for example, that of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissection table, a scene that one can very

well hold for dreamlike, the emotion comes less from the possible reduction to the interplay of the male and female sex, but rather from the fact that we suddenly notice that not everything has been said about that sewing machine and that umbrella. We realize that we were freeing ourselves from everyday images a bit too quickly. Those objects relegated to domestic serfdom when situated in new relationships testify to their almost complete mystery. The very peaceful concepts that ensure the tranquility of homes, and the positivist rational order are immediately shaken. They burst as insufficient under the pressure of a reality that ceases to be sheltered in our categories. This revolutionary action causes a leap towards knowledge. In the dream, the image approaches an infinitely wider symbolic value, less narrowly human, therefore more true and more permanent. Leaving intelligent abstraction, we approach the concrete as closely as possible. In the same way, in a social upheaval man approaches his true nature by breaking his daily obstacles.

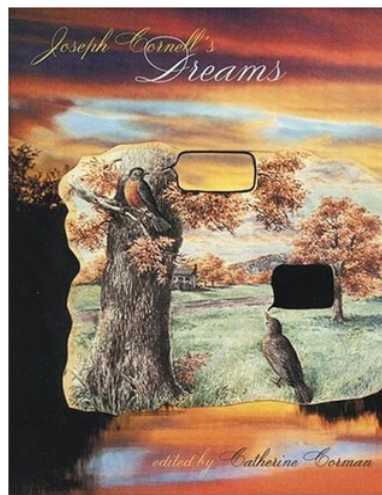
(From *Cahiers GLM*, #7, "The Dream Trajectory," March 1938, pp. 80-83)

## (O) N I E I R I I (C) I E (C) H I (O) I E (S)



A book comprising Remedios Varo's writings, notably a series of dream accounts, was published in November of last year.

"This volume brings together the painter's collected writings and includes an unpublished interview, letters to friends and acquaintances (as well as to people unknown), dream accounts, notes for unrealized projects, a project for a theater piece, whimsical recipes for controlled dreaming, exercises in surrealist automatic writing and prose poem commentaries on her paintings."



Joseph Cornell is well known for the oneiric quality of his art. Many have tried, often in vain, to put into words the strange power of his boxes—toy-like constructions whose playfulness and humor are anchored in a profound melancholy and loneliness. "Slot machines of visions," said Octavio Paz. Catherine Cornman has combed through the voluminous diaries that Cornell kept throughout his life, in search of the artist's own dreams. What she found are brief flashes of images, and short, enigmatic narratives of illumination—the verbal equivalent of Cornell's boxes. This volume is indispensable to those interested in Cornell, as it contains previously unpublished writings.



"Octopus: Making Contact," a documentary that premiered on PBS on October 2, 2019, centers on Scheel, a marine biologist and professor at Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage, and Heidi, the octopus he's raised. Heidi is shown to change her color multiple times during her sleep. The video is even more fascinating thanks to the amusing narration from marine biologist David Scheel, who tries to guess what the octopus was dreaming about based on her changes in color.

In the documentary, Heidi demonstrates the ability to solve puzzles, use tools and escape through small spaces. She also seems to behave like a family pet, as she learns to recognize faces, shows excitement when humans come near her tank and exhibits an inclination to play with Scheel's teenage daughter, Laurel. (September 24, 2019)

<https://ph.news.yahoo.com/sleeping-octopus-changes-colors-dreaming-pbs-222546461.html>

*Dreams have as much influence as actions.*

– Stéphane Mallarmé

*In dreams begins responsibility.*

– William Butler Yeats

*Men are the dreams of a shadow.*

– Pindar

*Why does the eye see a thing more clearly in dreams than the imagination when awake?*

– Leonardo da Vinci

*Dream is a pragmatic way.*

– Aldous Huxley

*Dreams must be heeded and accepted.*

– Paracelsus

*Dream is not an escape. Our night thoughts—even the most bizarre—come out of the same crucible as our day thoughts. We cannot expect to shake off in sleep the desires, fears, or mere turn of mind that shape every phase of our existence.*

*Dream is not a revelation. If a dream affords the dreamer some light on himself, it is not the person with closed eyes who makes the discovery but the person with open eyes, lucid enough to fit thoughts together.*

*Dream—a scintillating mirage surrounded by shadows—is essentially poetry.*

– Michel Leiris