

Dolfi Trost

THE DEEP MEANING OF A DREAM

WE DREAM; whatever the content of the day before, the transformation of all diurnal events invariably takes place during the night, and oneiric compensation dominates sleep like a perception.

However, there will be no question here of this reverse effect of the dream which shows that during states of exception, such as sleep, vision becomes independent of sight. For I think of the nocturnal dream as it would appear to us if it were not followed, the next morning, by a luminous day, but by a black and immense night, which, continuing our sleeping mental state, would oblige us to pursue the sleep visions apart from the hope of a reassuring awakening.

I had a dream, a dream of love: a series of scenes with a familiar amorous dramatization, in which moved, as always, certain women or fragments of their lives, known or unknown, that also surround me in the waking state¹. A dream just like the others, of which it is useless to specify in detail that the customary symbolization of desire was more or less represented. But the symbolic content of this nocturnal interpretation of waking life matters little here.

Towards the end, a few seconds before I woke up, my dream took on a *tragic* turn.

It is on this final part of the images, which are just as common to other dreamers as they are to me, that I would like to insist.

At a certain moment that occurred suddenly, my dream lost its anecdotal, vivacious, and condensed character: it turned into a terrible last scene and dissolved into it. It was after turning around in this way (for unknown reasons, in no way justified by the previous dramatization) that it became, at its highest point, tragic. While there, it suggested the possibility of keeping the dreamer forever immersed in the irreversible darkness that had formed it².

When we have such dreams, in this last scene that automatically provokes awakening because of its intrinsic violence, we always find ourselves confronted by a millennium-old problem. And this problem is then directly addressed to us

without our being able to escape it, short of waking up. The awakening is then felt as a relief, but only because of the change in the situation and in no way because we have answered the terrible question posed by the dream.

This last scene—the nightmare—cannot be reduced to the interpretation of *déjà vu*, to the mechanisms of unconscious compensation, or to any other rational explanation, perhaps true in a sense, but devoid of any interest in the intrinsic meaning of the dream³.

Arriving at this point, where the dramatization had led me through the adventures that form the basis of all dreams, I found myself (inwardly) in the street and headed for my house. For those who are tempted to verify dream images with daytime life, I will add out of scruples of scientific accuracy that the street and the house that appeared in them looked very similar to what they are in waking reality. Likewise, the earlier part of the adventures was a mixture (condensation,

displacement, combination, fluidization or coagulation) of people and objects recognizable by memory.

Having arrived in front of my house, I stopped on the sidewalk opposite to ask myself if, given the late hour (I realized it), a visit to my friends was still appropriate.

In my dream, it was dark and I was asking myself this question just as precisely as in the waking state. Reflecting, I looked up, the sky was serene, the stars twinkled.

If certain parts of the dream can easily be recognized as having rather belonged to the various aspects of the reality seen, we are able to infer that the other parts, which we do not recognize in our memory, have also once been perceived⁴. It is difficult to admit that such visual fragments of our dreams have a completely different source from the other fragments felt, during their very unfolding, as part of the same whole. There is no reason to believe that the unknown parts of our dreams are pure inventions of our brain, and it is much more likely

(Continued on page 4.)



Dolfi Trost (1916-1966)

MERET OPPENHEIM

DREAM ACCOUNTS (II)

AFTER 1940 – BEFORE 1950

I don't know anymore when I had this dream. I walked on a stony path up a mountain (it was San Salvatore). I saw my friend Irene Zurkinden standing in light green bushes back lit by the sun. Even her eyelashes and hair (which are naturally blond) had a green shine.

I said: "I am the secret of the vegetation."

*

BETWEEN 1942 AND 1950 (ABOUT)

I am trying to talk my (deceased) grandmother into going with me to the "Kunsthalle" (a restaurant in Basel where I sometimes meet with my colleagues). She refuses because she is dead already.

I say: "But it doesn't matter, nobody can see you, you are transparent." She answers: "Yes, but it is not the same".

Another time I dreamt that my mother and I went to same restaurant "Kunsthalle" and that in the lobby we rubbed some sort of cream on us. This made us transparent and caused us to be able to see ghosts. The giant room was filled with ghosts from the top to the bottom. They were stacked horizontally on top of each other.

*

BETWEEN 1942 AND 1950

I am sitting in a small open vehicle with my grandmother and my mother. It is made of artificial stone. Similar to the type used for tombstones. We were riding on a track that traveled in a spiral up a cone-shaped mountain. Progress is very slow. I get off to pick flowers ("I still have some time").

*

1949

I am in a gothic dome. I am standing in front of a tall statue of a saint carved out of wood. He is holding an hourglass in his hand. While I am looking at him, he turns the hourglass.

(The dream happened shortly before or after my 36th birthday. Half of life?)

[Re. 1949 dream

During the winter, January 1985, I am in Rome for three weeks. On January 7, I go to the Church of St. Peter and observe closely the interior. The Mausoleum of Alexander VII by G.L. Bernini



Dream, 1937

is fantastic. The base is made of black marble (sometimes containing snow white venes, but the impression is black). There is a passage in the middle, about 1.50 m long, which leads to a door that is also surrounded by black marble. Above this basis lies a giant shroud made from red Sicilian jasper in a giant wrinkle display. From below the shroud is lifted by a skeleton with wings, an angel of death that is. His legs hover above the right side of the entrance door, thus, he appears to have entered through that door. The skeleton (it appears to me) is made from gold-plated bronze. His right arm is lifted high up and holds a hourglass. He keeps his head hidden under a fold in the shroud; one has to stand to his right in order to see it.

Hourglass: Symbol of the limited (organic) human lifetime.]

*

(BETWEEN 1953 AND 1954)

1. I am in a snowy landscape. A white hare comes around a small hill. I try to catch it. However, it escapes me and disappears into a hole in the snow.

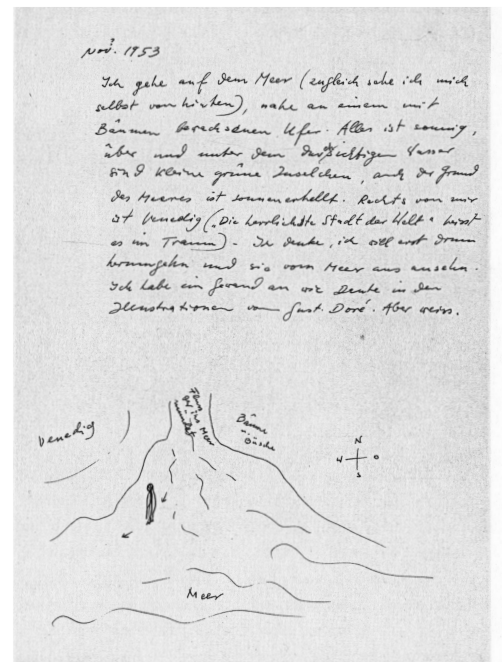
(Interpretation = Hare = fertility. Even though I could not catch it, I was close to it.) Throughout all those years snowy landscapes were always in my dreams.

2. I am at the beach. Steep boulders rise behind me. I find eggs everywhere. Also, a large basket is present, filled fully with eggs. (Eggs = Symbol for productivity).

*

Nov. (?) 1953

I am walking on the sea (simultaneously I can see myself from behind) near a shore grown with trees.



Nov? 1953

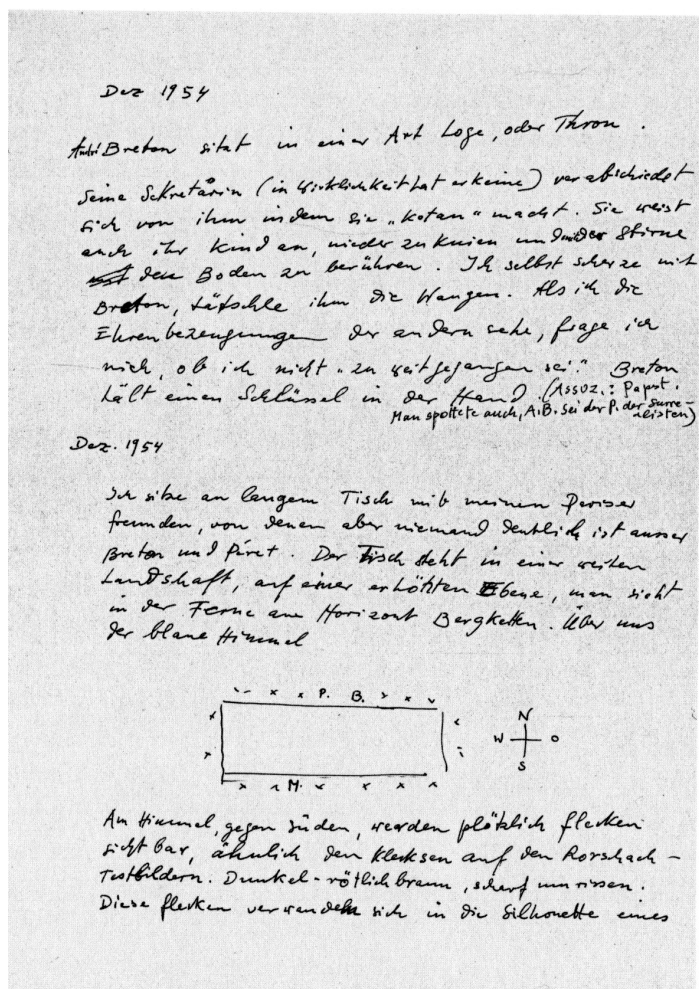
Everything is sunny; above and below the transparent water are small, green islands, even the bottom of the sea is sunlit. To the right of me is Venice ("The most magnificent city of the world" as the dream tells it) – I think that first I want to walk around it and watch it from the sea. I am wearing a dress like Dante in the illustrations from Gustave Doré. But white.

DEC. 1954

André Breton is sitting in a kind of a theater box or throne. His secretary (in reality, he does not have one) says goodbye to him by making a "kowtow". Also, she tells her child to kneel and touch the floor with its forehead. Myself, I am joking with Breton, caressing his cheek. When I see the gestures of respect by the others, I ask myself, whether I "went too far". Breton holds a key in his hand.

(Assoc.: Pope. People joke that A. B. is the Pope of the surrealists.)

*



December, 1954

DEC. 1954

I am sitting at a long table with my Parisian friends, none of whom is in focus other than Breton and Péret. The table stands in a wide-open scenery on an elevated plateau and a mountain range is visible far on the horizon. Above us the blue sky (sketch).

On the sky to the south, suddenly spots become visible, like blots on the Rorschach test pictures. Dark red-brown, sharply defined. The spots change into the silhouette of an upside down railroad wagon. Everyone stares fascinated at the sky. Then a vision starts which, starting from the West, expands over the whole sky from

the South, to the East and North. It is an allegory of the war. The white feather clouds shape themselves into armies, war cars, cannons, ruins, burning cities, battle fields, trains with wounded. Death with its scythe also passes by.

Then, in the West, appears a lion. Ocher yellow, a stylist heraldic lion. He moves on the same level and in the same direction as the war picture previously. It seems like he is being pushed along, he himself does not move. But he looks at us friendly and slaps his tail. The war pictures are becoming more and more blurry. In the East, one can see a group of "Asians" disappear whose appearances and clothes remind one of porcelain figures of the 18th century. We "all know what this vision means".

(In reality, I don't know what this dream means.)

*

THREE SMALL PROPHETIC DREAMS:

1. (1954) I am getting a lot of letters. Among others, three fire red envelopes and a telegram from A. The latter in a very small format, like mail from a doll. (In reality, I am impatiently waiting for a response. The envelopes were of the same red color as the envelope of the book that A gave me. My interpretation: Three red letters—three days—has been confirmed. After three days he called me.)

[Was a small love story.]

2. I am dreaming that I am standing at the window in our apartment on the Kramgasse in Bern. I have a small clay sphere (Glugger, Marmel) in my hand and throw it down to the alley. It rolls to the middle of it, before the "Simson Fountain." When I go shopping on the same morning and return (in reality, actually), in front of the threshold of the door lies a small metal ball. (Sketch).

3. (1948) Before we moved to Bern, thus still in Basel, I dreamed that I was in a new apartment, and in front of it, a small round fountain. In reality, a small, round fountain was in front of the apartment that Wolfgang found later in Bern. But that apartment faced South, not North like the apartment in my dream.

[TWO MORE SMALL "PROPHETIC" DREAMS:]

I was standing next to a stream of blood. White birds were flying over it or sat on the "water" (the next morning I had my period).

We are at war. I walk down a street. When I turn at the corner of a house, three men stand in front of me, each pointing a pistol at me. An ambulance drives by, with baby blue and white stripes, and a small red cross.

When I wake up in the morning, I notice that I have my period. I walk to the bathroom to fetch some cotton and see: The package has baby blue and white stripes, with a small red cross.) [3 men with pistols = 3 days]

(To be continued.)

that the dream undergoes a progressive “decantation,” where the recent data of memory slowly give way to equally verifiable perceptions, but coming from a more distant past.

As it advances, the dream frees itself from memory to go towards revelation. This is what is so worrying in all dreams.

★

While I was still debating inwardly whether to go home or make the planned visit, I looked up and saw, directly above me, the moon. It was then that a terrible fear seized me, transforming the final part of my dream into a nightmare, which woke me up.

I saw the usual moon, as form and color (or as a color sensation), but it was both further away and larger. Very close to it, two small satellites revolved around each other like double stars. It was the sight of these two satellites, which *I knew* were foreign to the usual sky, which frightened me so much.

I awoke with a start; around me the room was lit by daylight. There was therefore no correspondence (as sometimes happens) between the darkness that reigned in my dream and the surrounding light. Accustomed to “interpreting” my dreams in some way or another, I closed my eyes as long as possible to keep the memory of this terrible scene intact⁵.

I have already said elsewhere, insisting enough, according to the positivist method, that dream fear differs qualitatively from daytime fear, which is of a more or less rational origin. This dream fear has a different quality, beside its special intensity, because of its inexpressibly maddening character, the mixed degrees of anxiety and clairvoyance and frightening tacit omens⁶.

I have also repeatedly asserted that oneiric anxiety does not seem to derive from known biological functions in diurnal life; above all, it is not a question of an animal fear for the safeguard of physical life and bodily integrity, or of an instinctive fear like when seeing ghosts.

The highly anxious fear in the dream is rather an acute form of melancholy and strangeness, pushed to the climax by a superrational, archaic, atypical danger⁷.

One would seek in vain in the inverse relations of the conscious and the unconscious for the meaning of these *states of mind* provoked by dreams. After having exhausted the more or less positive resources which, belonging to our times, always enter a little into our way of seeing, we must surrender to the eccentric idea, according to which any dreamed image is *objective*.

First of all, the dream image exists. What could the *self* do against it, if awakening did not inevitably follow? Nothing,



Trost, Sans titre (1945) (“Pour Zola”, a.k.a Ghérasim Luca). Ancienne coll. G. Luca. Galerie Artemper, Paris

because during sleep this image exists as a diurnal perception⁸. Interpretation aside, the dream image is somewhere in the objective world. It exists as a “fact.”

At a certain level of existence, this image becomes irreducible, as the Romantics, and particularly Novalis, predicted. This irreducibility is of an unknown nature, but we feel that it comes from a deeper place.

The terror that I describe in my dream appears, at some point, in all human dreams. It therefore has the value of a typical dream, but in the sense that it is repeated, in different personal forms, by all dreamers. And this nocturnal terror, provoked by the bewildering celestial spectacle that I have related, is found as a great principle in the life of modern people.

There is *cosmological* data.

Human beings can be left alone in the dark.

There is a terrible incompatibility between inanimate matter and living matter.

The world is big and cold and empty and dark.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ The dream is a “motor madness,” transported into the inner domain of representations. The dreamlike scene is continually in turmoil and any dream without the madness of movement (hyperkinesis) turns into a nightmare, and therefore comes to an end. The transformation of the movement into oneiric *catatonia*, preluded by an agonizing period, is then felt as a progressive petrification of the inner scene. The dream, in complete sleep, is above all movement within the image.

² Thought becomes cinematographic, the feeling of nature arises, the sadness of autumn lets out its clamor.

³ Schizophrenic dialogue:

“There is something, but tell me what it is?”

“I don’t know, but there is something.”

⁴ Autoscopy (inner sight without the aid of the eye), like certain telepathic visions or representations, leads victoriously towards the true physics of vision, by overcoming optical imposition.

⁵ I felt one fine day that a thought suddenly imposed itself on me; and this thought subsequently seemed obvious to me: Miss *N* is the probable cause of these truly appalling events that I have had to undergo during these last years. All this had imposed itself on me in an unexpected and natural way, and I found its influence in all that had happened to me. The fixating power of this hypothesis was soon surrounded by certain secondary theoretical constructions. I understood why my life had evolved in a certain direction during these last years.

⁶ This same young lady complains in her speeches and in her letters of “feeling nostalgic for herself.”

⁷ One can linger indefinitely on the corroding pressure of mirrors and photographs.

It invariably leads to an anesthesia of the will and consequent exhaustion, which are very well described in certain romance novels.

Everyone sees in this corroding action one of the fundamental qualities of the personality, healthy or morbid. Given this test, there is no possible difference between the various states of mind caused by the variations of life.

This action can be traced down to the most remote antiquity.

⁸ Young Miss *N* was trying to induce a sexual action in me telepathically, without personal contact; for this purpose she walked at dawn in the garden, rubbing a rose against her breast.

(To be continued.)