

Mark DuCharme

from *Alchemical Nod*

II.

Writing's an
Experiment
 In a state
Of mind. Sleep, too,

Which curls up next to you, devouring
Awareness like cell phones
Only much more provocatively. When I wake,

I am merely alive, but when I
Sleep, I'm transient
Between states sublim-
inally. Like a passenger
Across an ocean the Surrealists
Might have devised, but never wandered

I drift
& Flicker
Between drowsy
Matador, blank spectator
& Cinematic character
In an agitated, impossible relay.

Is dreaming archeology?
But I was talking about sleep,
How I would luxuriate in her
Embrace. (Unlike a lover's,

It doesn't enliven or quicken
The pulse.) With the strain of clods
Smashing in, as sometimes neighbors
Arrive loudly at mad hours
Unconducive to thought's transiency. In sleep,
One often travels

To the ends
Of thought,
Or where one's thought might go, or where
One never thought
To— & the process
Is like floating on a deep
But enervating river.
Proust thought

To begin an impossibly long
Novel with an almost impossible digression
On sleep. Joyce instead fleshed thought's
Rushes, which sleep encompasses &
Diverts, when it wants to.

O Sleep, you are an invigorating train
Of listlessness. You are the ghostliness which humans
Suspect, probably wrongly,
Follows them like shades
Around a grand hotel
Which You, Sleep, later will appropriate
Toward your own wicked ends.

Sleep, the grand inquisitor—
The hungry visitor,
Who cannot be
Denied.

You can try waking up Sleep
You can try counting 'sheep'
You can try dream journals or other "sleepy" forms
But you cannot deny Sleep's sovereignty,
Her crushing willfulness,
 Aborting wakeful hours.

Bow down to Sleep. Court her
In her vast, suberotic finery

But don't ever underestimate her
Lest you be thrown down, canceled
 Like all the Sirens' foolish prey!

REAL PEOPLE & BUILDINGS
(*Being Canto XI of Alchemical Nod*)

Mirrors are implied in dreams.
Do they possess occult properties?
Have you seen Maya

Deren's great
Film *Meshes of*
The Afternoon? In it

There are shots of a black-
hooded figure whose face
is a mirror. Become pillars

Of night where the sun blares
Down
& Folds up. Doubting my mind,

Or what's repeated
In coffeeshops. A state
Of unstatedness. Fall

Asleep, you freak!
The window is listening
To dialects & birdcries

Torn from the History of Possibly
Savaged Knowledge, or some such
Imaginary tome.

Is this poem a dream
Invocation or transcription? What
Is the 'it' that we mean

When we say,
'It' had begun
To rain? Aren't there

Enough 'it's' floating about
Unsupported
By their biggest astonishers?

If you are astonished
By any where or
Thing, be kind. Be kind anyway

Or become now imprinted
With the look of night's sorrow.
Is anyone now

Awake or ready
For a state of ravished
Grace? The Surrealists

Were interested in the dream
State or its cognate
Manifested in writing,

Whereas Freud was only
Interested in interpreting
Dreams, thrusting them

Into the light of the rational
So their wild irrationality
Could be held

At bay. André Breton's novel *Nadja*
(Which might
More accurately be called a 'hybrid'

Work, were it first
Published today)
Seems like an almost perfect

Dream. Breton veers
From what might be fact
Or fiction (vision?), including ref-

erences to & photographs of
Real people & buildings
Of his time, his Paris, & every

Thing he knew or thought therein.
All that is probably lost now. Await
Your own oblivion, dear reader,

Listener, circumambulator
Or scribbler— cleave fast
To whatever truth or

Falsehood
Helps you, tearful/fearful,
Enter into good dark's sorrow

XIII.

I'm slightly distracted
By the weird
Old guy at next
Table, who seems
To have brought
His own jar of
Peanut butter
To the coffee shop
To eat his muffin (this
Isn't
Even
A dream)

§

The expression
'Wakeful
Logic' doesn't
Ring as true as
'Dream
Logic'

§

If this is like some past
Semesters, I may yet have an ac-
ademic anxiety dream.

Here are some possible
(Classic?) themes:

1. I oversleep, or otherwise miss
My first class
2. I am naked in a room
Full of students
3. My class is observed by the college
President, who fires me
On the spot
4. Our pay is cut by one thousand

Percent

5. My chair tells me
I can only have evening classes
At the opposite end of the state
6. Due to misreading the assignment,
All the students turn in thirty-page
Papers, instead of three-page ones, & I
Only have two days
To grade them
7. Rush Limbaugh is appointed Chair
Of the Department of English &
Communication
8. I am given a new textbook
Which is endless & hopelessly
Garbled, & told
I must teach every
Chapter

§

These are all funny “anxieties” – yet
The thing perhaps I fear
Most is that the capacity
To swim deeply into words
(C.f. Nicholas Carr)
Itself will disappear

§

“Perhaps
I dream
Too much alone.”

§

Time’s swiftness smites me
When I dream of loves lost
& Death’s other useless varieties

XVIII

Invent a swift ecology of dreams
Thrust sleep into the neon
Of your breath when stalking noon
Or delight in the misprision
Of sentences' thrusting
Thirsting for dawn's early thrushes' drunken
 Vocables

§

In the café of not-sleeping
I spy a man walking round,
Forties probably, in grey
Plaid blazer
Yellow shorts & bright
Red tennis shoes.
Oblivious, quite, to his ridiculous
Appearance, the man must be dreaming
Though the sun has seeped into trees'
Leaves, & afternoon conducts itself lazily
Amid the indolent world

§

When we are driven like the night away
& Wake into the traffic
To inhabit the page, its possible motions
Its iterations of drifted space
Encompassing the sky as the horizon winds down
& Words amass & dance like shocked gulls
Like sad old highways in wilted neon

Like screens (not of the cinema) which everyone stares at
Awaiting new arrivals a prior history of sunlight
As the leaves are being blown away but I want them to stay
With their gaudy colors & insistence
On birth-in-death hilarity & sex & all that's daylight
When the night flies away flies toward us & we're all fleeing
Fleet of birth & words' slipperiness the means
To sway in rampant colors profligate
Adrift until light ends

§

Blue refills blinkered
Animate means
There is enough time in the day to do what you need
Which includes voting futilely against the scariest
Candidates
~~If you dream them, will they become real?~~

How do you enter into language?
Can one be bored with one's own mind?
In the place where we all frantically are leaving
Having left / Bereft

The sun is sending us good wishes
The moon is brokenly swimming
Can a sleep poem enliven?
Poems agitate, that we attend to them
They are part of the physical world
The landscape of the body & the breath

§

Getting & giving
Flaunted amber samples
Life heat minus minimal animus—
Jung clearly was wrong

About whom one dreams

§

That last line's best left mysterious
One often, entering or leaving
A half-asleep
State, half dreams falling
From a great height
While singing in fright:

*If you were a ghost
Would you swim the deep
Before you go to sleep*

*Or luxuriate in the quaver
Of Albert Ayler's tenor
Which wakes you*

*From your destinies your
Dream states & mad
Desires?*

Can the wind get any higher?
Does thinking drive us mad?
Do our desires frustrate the leaves,
Who've spent
Their lives but not their colors
In heaps upon the ground?

Become thick with leaves in the ceaseless
Wander— where dreams veer
& Materialize in the manifold
 Eyes of lost lovers, under skies
 Wanton with rebirth

Empurple the visible
 With the wealth of flowers' eyes
Become open to leaping
Scratch the stigmata off of dreamers' bones