

Psychoanalysis and the Interpretation of Lucid Dreams

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The belief that obscure dreams have meaning, that they can be understood in spite of their seeming incoherence, is shared by most cultures: the importance attributed to the interpretation of dreams comes up several times in such sacred texts as the Bible and Talmud, where it is warned that an uninterpreted dream is like an unopened letter. However, even if such a point of view may justify the interpretation of obscure dreams, it does not provide a basis for a *systematic* interpretive approach. Roger Caillois considered the will to interpretation “one of the noblest flaws of the human spirit,” defining it as “this passion to find meaning in what has none, and thus to derive meaning from the meaningless.”¹ And it is surely the human spirit’s inherent need for intelligibility that underlies the desire to account for the existence of dreams, whether as a divine message or a symptom of neurosis. The act of interpretation consists of giving meaning to something that, at first glance, appears to have none; and this is done not arbitrarily but by discerning a meaning – with the help of methods created for this purpose – that is believed to be implicitly contained in the dream. Thus to interpret a dream we must explain it in relation to the context in which it takes its meaning. For Freud “the interpretation of a dream” requires specifying its “sense” and then replacing it with something that can fit within the chain of our psychic actions.²

However, the need for intelligibility does not in itself justify the systematic application of this approach. For one, some dreams are beyond interpretation, either because the immediate content of the dream reveals its meaning, or because the question of meaning seems irrelevant to the dream at hand. Nevertheless, interpreta-

tion is sometimes still used as the fundamental principle; so much so that an ambiguous meaning is ascribed to a dream that in fact appears to be perfectly clear. Yet the same individual who systematically seeks a *hidden* meaning in his or her dreams does not apply the same standard to events in daily life. Although the bus that takes him or her to work in dream is filled with a meaning that must be uncovered, the same does not apply to the real bus that is ridden to the same destination each morning. For such an individual, the events of waking life occur outside the dream realm, where the demand for a hidden meaning is essential. The interpretive passion therefore is a result of some additional factor.

This factor is probably related to the "indirect" nature of an ordinary dream. Usually a dreamer does not experience his or her dream as a dream until the moment of awakening, when the dream is already a memory. Waking consciousness then tries to integrate into itself this element *that is outside of its consciousness*, something whose creation it did not participate in. The need to understand is thus an expression of the waking consciousness's attitude to that which escapes its *immediate* grasp. In other words, either the subject has conscious knowledge of events that concern him, which in itself is sufficient to attribute to them a degree of being independent of the subject's psychic life (which is the case of events in waking life), or there is no direct access to them and the only way for the subject to integrate these events is by giving them meaning, irrespective of the context of this meaning. The pursuit of intelligibility depends less on a demand for rationality than on the need for coherency of consciousness, a need that stimulates the conscious mind to interpret dreams that would not otherwise attract its attention.

This attitude is fundamental to psychoanalysis: the idea of dream interpretation only has meaning for it if waking life is the only domain in which dreams can have meaning: "all dreams are psychic products that have meaning and can be entirely incorporated into the chain of *waking* mental activity."³ Such an approach, it can be argued, excludes a certain number of conceivable interpretations that do not themselves violate the principal of interpretation as such. Why, for example, can the dream not be its own realm of meaning (as is permitted for the waking state, when it comes to the

interpretation of waking psychic phenomena that are not immediately intelligible)? In other words: why can we not seek the meaning of unintelligible elements of the dream state from within the totality of dream life instead of from waking psychic life?

This question gains even greater relevance when so-called "lucid" dreams – dreams in which the dreamer knows, *in the course of the dream*, that he or she is dreaming – are taken into account, since in this case the "indirect" nature that waking consciousness finds so irritating is absent. In lucid dreaming dream events present themselves to the dreamer in the same as they do in waking life, and the dreamer reacts in the same way: his first reaction is not to interpret what is happening but to *live* it, that is to say, to react to the given circumstances.⁴ This does not mean, however, that this type of dream can not be interpreted; rather it means that in the lucid dream the relation, established by waking consciousness, between dream and waking consciousness is reversed. (This reversal can take extreme forms, such as when the dreamer tries to interpret waking life from within the dream. For example, one of our subjects interpreted, while dreaming, an event that had occurred in waking life: the oven had broken. In his dream he recalled that "oven" in English means "four"⁵ and that four persons were living together in a cramped apartment, which was the cause of a psychological breakdown in waking life.) Thus, based on the degree to which the dreamer has conscious access to the lucid dream (and through this access is connected to both the totality of his life and to daily events), to what extent can the dream still be the object of an interpretation, whether during the dream or after waking? Moreover, if interpretation is possible, are the usual methods of dream interpretation still applicable here?

These methods depend on the function we assign to interpretation. Does interpretation arise in order to give the dream form or to overcome the gap between waking consciousness and dream? In the former case the dream in itself is taken to be an incomplete phenomenon, one that merely reflects other elements which inspire the search for the real meaning latent in the obvious content. In the latter case the dream hides nothing; rather it directly expresses, in its own language, what it has to express: interpretation here is taken to be an act of *translation* from one language to

another instead of being the reconstitution of a kind of puzzle. However, in both cases it is difficult to account for lucid dreaming on the basis of either method of interpretation. For example, Freud's method seems unable to treat anything that is not a *representable* element: "attention must be focused not on the dream as a totality but on the individual elements of its content. Generally speaking, when I ask an inexperienced patient, 'What does this dream make you think of?' he is unable to fix upon anything in his psychic field of vision. On the other hand, if I first dissect the dream for him, he is able to express, for each fragment, a series of ideas that can be called the hidden thoughts (*arrière-pensées*) for this part of the dream."⁶ Does not the focusing of attention on "the individual elements of its [the dream's] content" exclude by definition lucid dreaming (that is to say, being aware of dreaming), since lucid dreaming is *not*, strictly speaking, a content?

The presence of lucidity can not be ignored within the interpretive framework. From the point of view of those who assign a latent meaning to dreams this form of consciousness is necessarily interpretable. If lucid dreaming were instead to be understood as a mere exception or epiphenomenon these researchers would run the risk of putting their entire interpretive method in question, transforming what were considered obvious assumptions into indefensible postulates. Thus, in order to justify an interpretation of dreams that binds the dream to the waking state, they are compelled to conclude that the waking state's field of meaning *encompasses* that of the dream. To leave any element whatsoever outside this field would be to deviate from this *a priori* of absolute inclusion. By definition lucidity must therefore be amenable to interpretation, although the relationship that unites the two remains to be determined.

Is the solution to this problem to be found in the context of interpretation, and more precisely in the field of psychoanalysis? No psychoanalytic school has made a systematic study of lucid dreaming, probably because the phenomenon has not been productive for any extant interpretive scheme and has therefore been deemed uninteresting. What we have from Freud is not a concrete study of lucid dreaming as such but scattered comments on various aspects of consciousness that come up in the course of his

analysis of dreams. The primary forms of this consciousness are lucidity (knowing that one is dreaming), pre-lucidity (wondering within a dream if one is dreaming), and false-awakening (a dream in which the dreamer dreams that he awakes).

Lucid Dreaming

Apparently Freud believed that lucid dreaming was the result of the realization of a pre-conscious wish, that is to say the wish to continue sleeping, which is an important desire because it “reinforces unconscious wishes”⁷ and implies that “*during all the time that we are sleeping we are just as certain that we are dreaming as we are certain that we are sleeping.*”⁸ Paradoxically, however, most of the time the dreamer has no awareness of this awareness, because it only arises when the sleeper is threatened with waking. Freud does concede that “there are some people who are apparently endowed with the conscious faculty of guiding their dream life,”⁹ although he believes it to be an exception which can be explained in terms of a different wish: “Hervé de Saint-Denis [...] declared that he had gained such power over his dreams that he could speed their course at will, turn them in any direction he pleased. It seems that in him *the wish to sleep had given way to another pre-conscious wish: to observe his dreams and amuse himself at it.*”¹⁰

Nevertheless, the interpretation of lucidity as the realization of a wish can not be sustained because it can not be generally applied. Although it is true that in many cases lucidity is consciously desired by the subject, there are other cases in which the dreamer does not wish for it, and still others in which *during the dream* the lucid dreamer *ceases* to desire it (“I’m always a little disappointed when I realize that I’m dreaming. Even if it was a disagreeable dream, or if after reflection upon waking I see that there was nothing of interest in it, I still find it difficult to conquer the power of the dream and get down to work. Often I leave the experimenting aside and try to continue dreaming”¹¹). There are also cases in which lucid dreaming fails to arise in spite of a sustained effort (Myers made more than three thousand unsuccessful attempts¹²). The particular wishes mentioned by Freud (to continue sleeping or

to amuse oneself with dreams) do not necessarily provide a basis for explaining either the panic experienced by lucid dreamers who are unable to wake themselves¹³ (and who would not be disturbed if they were unaware that they were dreaming) nor for the lucidity that arises in order to help the dreamer not to continue but rather to flee a dream. The explanation of lucidity as wish-fulfillment is therefore, if not inadequate, then at least incomplete.

There remains at least one way to “save interpretation.” The surge of lucidity in the lucid dream is reminiscent of the *becoming conscious* of experienced in waking consciousness: symbolically lucidity may point to a better understanding of a situation. If this is the case, then the *degrees* of lucidity – as proposed by Faraday in her hierarchy – should furnish an example of the phenomenon:

The next step is the “ordinary” lucid dream in which we become aware that we are dreaming but do not experience the expansion of consciousness that characterizes a high lucid dream. Such ordinary lucidity is normally only partial in that we know we have power to change the dream, yet often decide to use it only within absurd limits of thinking, which again is a reflection of the waking state. For example, one of our students who was coming to the resolution of a sexual conflict reported that when she became sexually aroused in a lucid dream, she started searching for a mate and found herself in a downtown brothel – instead of conjuring up her hero in a desert tent, or whatever! On another occasion, she found a mate but could find nowhere to be with him – and it never occurred to her to *make* a place. These dreams show that she was not yet in control of her own energies, but her latest dream – which was her first experience of high lucidity – indicated the approach of a resolution.

In the dream, she was informed that she could choose either to have intercourse in public with a fantastic dream lover and be strangled by him afterward, or never to have sex again. Her growing desire for a life lived to the full rather than a living dead life led her to choose the former, and as she was being led into the arena she suddenly became lucid. Instead of waking herself up or changing the scene, she decided to trick them all and go along with the game; and as she laughed to herself at how she would get up and walk away at the end, the environment expanded, the colors deepened, and she was high.¹⁴

The interpretation of the dream situation in this series of dreams depends on the dreamer’s degree of lucidity. Even if the dreamer is sufficiently lucid to be aware of the dream-nature of her problem, the low intensity of her dream consciousness does not allow her to resolve it completely; this can be interpreted as an effective but incomplete realization of her situation (“These dreams show that

she was not yet in control of her energies"). But when she becomes completely lucid she is able immediately to resolve her problem; and this can be interpreted as a total realization of which she was really searching for. From this point of view lucidity can be seen as a supplementary element, allowing us to verify the meaning of a given dream situation and the extent to which this meaning accords with the dreamer's actions. Conversely, in the case where the dream content is obscure, the degree of lucidity would allow us to measure the amount of understanding that the subject has of his or her problems. In a sense it could serve as a kind of barometer to gauge the evolution of a subject in regard to a specific situation.

Unfortunately, this approach creates a problem for the general interpretability of dreams as such. Would not the adoption of such a hierarchy imply that full awareness of dreaming is beyond all interpretation? Thus what Faraday calls "the ordinary lucid dream" perfectly corresponds – according to the definition that she gives of it – to a vague awareness of being in a dream, while a "high lucid dream" is closer to real lucidity: "I believe that a high lucid dream indicates the winning of a battle over the top dog, probably the final battle of one particular conflict area, whereas the earlier stages of pre-lucidity and ordinary lucidity indicate steps on the way to liberation."¹⁵

The "high lucid dream" does seem to indicate the final stage of dream interpretation, beyond which it is both useless and irrelevant to go. It can thus be said that although lucidity is helpful for dream interpretation, it can not be reduced to it. This assertion also implies that although some dreams can be understood without interpretation, there is no reason to seek meaning for *every* dream. As one Jungian analyst has written: "Most schools of psychotherapy follow the Freudian line of analysis, in which dreams are interpreted as an expression of the content of the unconscious, usually in the form of a problem that the dreamer must solve. Yet many lucid dreams are not at all problematic: rather they seem to emerge from a different category and a different mental realm. Thus although the lucid dream can play an important role in helping the dreamer cope with personality problems, it is clearly not its only function."¹⁶

On the other hand, even when the dreamer is fully lucid, the meaning of the dream may remain elusive; either the interpreta-

tion must begin upon awakening or has already taken place in the course of the dream.¹⁷ The numerous examples of dreams that are simultaneously lucid and confusing testifies to the inadequacy of definitions of lucid dreaming based on a sudden realization of the meaning of a dream situation. Thus, even when it is associated with a dream content (the *what* that one realizes in the dream), this lucidity remains separate. Having reached this conclusion concerning full lucidity, we can now inquire into whether the other forms of lucidity are equally resistant to interpretation.

Prelucid Dreaming

These forms of lucidity have tended to be more tractable to interpretation than pure lucidity because preclucidity is necessarily tied to the dream content, which is the usual subject of psychoanalytic interpretation. More precisely, these preclucid forms are either part of a dream event that alone allows us to identify them, or else the preclucidity comprises the event itself. Although the concrete dream event in which the consciousness of lucidity emerges is in principle interpretable, does it allow us at the same to account for the state of consciousness that it reveals? Two hypotheses must be considered: either the interpretation of a dream event occasions an interpretation of its level of consciousness, or else this consciousness is produced as a kind of residue. Even if preclucid dreams and false awakenings occur only occasionally in the latter way, clear limits to systematic interpretation of preclucid dreaming are already set.

Prelucidity is always based on a precise dream event: the dreamer, in the course of a dream, wonders about the nature of his or her dream and is unable to resolve whether it is a dream or not. This attitude of hesitation or indecision about the nature of the dream often itself provides a catalyst for the dream's interpretation:

Even the most exacting inquiries fail to establish the reality of preclucid dreams. Once, while having one of these dreams, I thought I had woken up. I turned on the lamp by the side of my bed. Looking at my night table I noticed the red color of the lampshade and the light shining on the table's leather spread: everything seemed real to me. Nevertheless, feeling some doubt, I stretched out my arm and banged on the table. It seemed totally

solid to me. Since I could *feel* it (concretely), I deduced that my experience was real. My dream then continued along normally. When I woke from the dream its meaning jumped out at me. Earlier I had been wondering about the sincerity of the feelings that a certain friend of mine claimed to have for me: "It *must* be true because I could *feel* it."¹⁸

Here prelucidity has clear symbolic import. However, it should be pointed out that this meaning may only be present because the prelucidity does not lead to lucidity itself. When prelucidity leads to lucidity, it is often *not* interpreted:

I dream that I see myself sleeping alone in my bed. Feeling a strange consciousness take hold of me I vaguely wonder whether I'm dreaming or awake. I am aware of my arms and hands, I can feel an unusual and pleasant energy passing through them. Wanting to determine whether I'm dreaming or not I softly rub my thumb against my other fingers. A delicate and refined electric current, starting at my fingers and going all the way up my body, suddenly begins to flow. The sensation is so unusual that I realize I'm dreaming. Delighted to be lucid I begin to explore the feelings in my hands, my arms, face, and chest. I feel in my body a sweet, delicate pleasure.¹⁹

The first part of this dream is typically prelucid: the dreamer wonders whether he is dreaming and tests the situation in order to find out. However, the only aspect of the dream interpreted by Kelzer, the dreamer, is its prelucidity. Indeed when it comes to discussing the beginning of the experience all he does is *describe* it and draw conclusions of a rather general nature:

This dream has another interesting aspect. In it I passed through three stages; from an ordinary dream to prelucidity and finally to full lucidity. When I 'felt' the approach of a strange state of consciousness, 'vaguely wondering' whether I was awake or asleep, I entered the state of prelucidity. I learned from this dream that in prelucidity the dreamer is full of questions about his condition: he wonders, ponders, tries to figure out, and feels doubts about his state. Perhaps he wonders, 'am I dreaming?', or else he tells himself clearly, 'no, this can't be a dream.' In either case the dreamer has asked a central question that cannot be answered because the dreamer has not yet reached the necessary level of consciousness. In the case where the dreamer is able to overcome this moment of confusion, of doubt and/or simple supposition, he reaches a state of total mental clarity ("I am certain that I'm dreaming") and enters a state of full lucidity. This dream, along with others that came later, taught me that there exist different degrees of lucidity. I have come to believe that the last stage is the one in which the dreamer *possesses, in that moment, the absolute certainty that he is dreaming*. I have chosen to define any state of mind that falls outside this conviction as prelucid. Also, I have noted that not all prelucid dreams lead to total lucidity. However these dreams are no less stimulating and valuable for it, since they offer us signposts from which we can better gauge our progress on the road to total lucidity.²⁰

These general conclusions show that Kelzer did not consider it necessary to connect pre-lucidity to the actual context of the dream *even when the dream seemed to allow for it*. The same holds true for the following excerpt from a lucid dream:

Since I am lucid I decide to write a poem. Suddenly, from the depths of my being, the following verses surge forth:

My God, you who created Man,
You who knew, from the beginning
All that he would have to suffer and endure,
You have nevertheless

I hear someone knock at the door. My wife, Charlene, goes to answer it. When the door opens I see a man whose face is as dark and hairy as an animal's. Yet he is dressed neatly, in a blue suit, like a business man. Standing by the door he snarls, mutters gutturally and incomprehensibly, in a deep, hoarse voice. It is his tone that expresses the importance of what he is trying to say. Although I can't understand his words I perceive his urgency and the hear the beastliness in his voice. The voice becomes so loud that it distracts me and I begin to feel myself losing my lucid consciousness. He continues to groan in that rude and guttural manner. Suddenly I awake. Realizing that I've just had a lucid dream I am full of excitement.²¹

Given the nature of this description, one might have expected the author to seek some general theme in the dream; for example, that the confusion of pre-lucidity is embodied in the figure of a man who combines aspects of civilization and animality in a single being (the incomprehensible animal dressed as a business man). But in fact he does no such thing. A practicing Jungian therapist, Kelzer feels no such compulsion. For this dreamer at least, it would seem that pre-lucidity is itself not a dream event that requires a search for meaning.

It could, however, be suggested that although Kelzer has "left out" this aspect of the dream he has done so not because it is uninterpretable but because he thought it relatively uninteresting in this case. If this is true, then a dream whose *theme* is pre-lucidity should not escape interpretation. Kelzer in fact offers us exactly this kind of dream which he entitles "Am I dreaming or not?":

I am dreaming and am vaguely aware that I may be dreaming. I feel myself stretched out on my bed, on my stomach. My son Erik comes running into my room, yelling, "Daddy ... Daddy ... " and he shakes me. I decide to remain immobile in order not to disturb the state in which I find myself. Soon after, Erik leaves the room. His voice and the sensation of his having touched me seemed so real that I think to myself that it must be real [...]

The scene changes. I see a beautiful rural landscape in springtime. It seems to me that some time has passed and I tell myself that I must have begun to dream again. I see an extraordinarily beautiful red flower and know immediately that I'm dreaming. I begin to feel the usual flow of refined energy coursing through my chest and rising to my head. I tell myself: this flower is so beautiful that I am surely lucid. I am totally convinced of it [...]

Once more I hear Erik enter my room running. He taps my arm softly and says: "Daddy, it's time to get up." He tries to wake me but, like the first time, I decide to remain immobile. He soon leaves the room. Now I don't know whether or not I'm dreaming. I try to find out by blinking my eyes. The physical sensation in my eyes is very strong, very realistic, and finally I conclude that I am not dreaming. It disappoints me.

But the scene changes again. [...] I say to myself: "I am an advertising executive with a high salary, therefore I am certain that I'm dreaming." I feel very comfortable being an advertising executive, although I know perfectly well that it is not my profession. Realizing that in fact this kind of work doesn't interest me at all I confidently conclude that this must be a dream.²²

Upon awakening Kelzer realizes that the entire experience was only a dream and ascertains that his son Erik did not enter his room while he was sleeping. He then comments on the dream in terms of what it reveals about the functioning of his consciousness. But how does he interpret the dream itself? He does not interpret it at all. In his opinion there is nothing to interpret: "I had no desire either to analyze this lucid dream nor to make some kind of therapeutic use of it. I had the feeling – one that is often associated with this kind of dream – that the event was self-contained, almost like a work of art. The feeling of dealing with a totality, with something complete and finished, is one of the features that distinguishes lucid dreams – or at least many of them – from ordinary dreams."²³

While for an outside observer the prelucid dream suggests several possible interpretive hypotheses, no such suggestion arises in the mind of the dreamer himself. Rather the dreamer has the clear feeling that these phenomena are of a different order than those that require meaning.

False Wakening

Will the same be true of false wakening, in which the sensation of being conscious constitutes the dream event itself? In a structural sense false wakening and the prelucid dream present different

models, since preclarity *must* lead to one outcome or another. The entire dream can not be taken up with the question of whether or not one is dreaming; the question is either answered or forgotten. On the other hand, false wakening, in which one dreams that one awakens, can be accompanied either by lucidity, preclarity, or no lucidity at all. In this sense the basis for the interpretation of the dream is not strictly the act of becoming conscious but of its representation (usually caused by a change of dream and thus by a shift of scene). In the case of false wakening there is both the transition to a new dream setting and the memory of the dream setting that preceded it.

By their very nature dreams of false wakening seem to fall into the category of wish-fulfillment dreams, in this case the wish to continue sleeping. This type of dream is well documented and Freud gives several examples:

When I was young I often had this kind of dream. As someone accustomed to working late into the night I found it difficult to get up in the morning. So I would dream that I was out of bed and standing by the wash-stand. After a time I could not avoid the realization that I had not yet gotten up; but at least I had gained a bit of sleep. One of my young colleagues, who also liked to sleep, had a particularly amusing form of this lethargy dream. Living near the hospital where he worked he had given strict orders to his landlady to waken him each morning; however she found it quite difficult to do so. One morning, when he was sleeping especially soundly, she shouted, "Monsieur Pepi, get up, you've got to go to the hospital." At that the dreamer dreamed that he was in the hospital, lying in bed with a chart hanging over his head on which he could read: Pepi H., Medical Student, Twenty-two years old. In the dream he said to himself: "Since I'm already in the hospital I don't need to go there." He turned over and continued to sleep. He had thus frankly admitted to himself the purpose of his dream.²⁴

These "lethargy dreams" are not exactly equivalent to false awakenings; rather they are dreams of falling back to sleep. Freud and Pepi waken with the intention of getting up; they fall back to sleep using the idea of getting up as a theme for their dream. The dream of false wakening is of a different order: here the wakening takes place within a *single* dream in which one part simulates a wakening in relation to a preceding part that is now considered to be a dream. Nevertheless, the wish for sleep can be inferred in the following cases, which are similar to those mentioned by Freud.

I'm in the country, it's the olden days, probably the Middle Ages. At the intersection of two roads I see a cross. It is erected on a pyramid-shaped

pedestal. Pulling up the cross along with the pedestal, I carry them off. I feel somewhat nauseous because I know that there's a dead body inside the pedestal. I go back home. Here I realize that the cross is made of soft leather and the pedestal is a simple black cardboard box like the kind chocolates are packaged in. The box is empty. Now I feel the need to go to the bathroom but remember that I'm on my bed, sleeping. (Lucidity) I'm still holding the leather cross but now I must get up. I turn the light on. However, instead of a lamp, what lights up are a row of violets growing out of my quilt (in reality the violets are on the balcony). Rising in the half-dark I'm somewhat surprised because I can see a faint luminescence seemingly emanating from the rug that is hanging above my bed. At this moment I say to myself: "I'm not up, I'm still dreaming," and I wake up for real.

The lucidity itself allows us to account for this dream of false waking as an expression of the wish to continue sleeping. False waking often arises as a way of resolving conflicting desires; for example, while still wanting to sleep the dreamer also wants to waken in order to write down a lucid dream he considers important. The false waking thus reconciles the two conflicting desires.

False waking can also be the solution to problems that arise not under normal dream conditions but only during lucidity. For example, when a lucid dream leads to a conclusion that seems logical to the dreamer, the dreamer expects to waken while at the same time he may wish to continue the lucid dream. False waking thus allows the dreamer both to continue sleeping and satisfy his logical expectation. This is probably why false awakenings are so frequent during prolonged lucid dreaming and also why lucidity tends to recur during false waking.

Lucid dream: I am floating above my bed in my room. It is difficult for me to get away from it. I imagine that I am sending astral matter toward the window. In fact I am pulling patches of glue from the wall, creating a kind of envelope that seems to weigh me down. I open the window to fly away. It's dark out. In the distance I discern two white explosions that perforate the night. Is morning coming? In front of me I see a white shadow that is nothing less than myself. Although I send him off I would like to be in his place and conscious. But I cannot rejoin myself. I am above my bed and I waken.

False waking: I am in bed in my room with my girlfriend. I hear my mother and sister. They are in the hall talking. Suddenly, and for no reason, my father is angry. But he is in his office, whose open door looks out onto my room from the left wall (neither the door nor office exist in waking reality). Seeing my girlfriend who has just arisen, he calls out happily to her.

I go out into the hall. At its end I find my mother. She is in the living room (where the bathroom should be). It is a vast chamber that reminds me of the living room in the apartment of my (deceased) grandfather. [...] I think:

usually I leave my girlfriend at her house (sudden realization): so this is a dream. I inform my mother of this fact.

Lucid dream: I tell my mother that this is a dream but she doesn't seem too excited about it. It's none of her business. [...]

The first, lucid part of this dream leads to a logical conclusion. Since the dream begins with the dreamer floating above his bed, the return to the bed seems to indicate the end of the dream. The dreamer's desire to continue the dream is reflected here in his unsuccessful attempt to replace himself with his own image. The false waking allows the dreamer simultaneously to continue dreaming, to respect the logic of the preceding sequence and, somewhat later, to become lucid once more.

In all these cases the interpretation of false waking as an expression of the wish to sleep is convincing, since it both accounts for the form of the false waking and of the state of consciousness – somewhat different from that encountered in ordinary dreaming – that this form presupposes. Nevertheless, although this interpretation is satisfactory in regard to the cases at hand, it can not be made a general rule because it does not account for the majority of false awakenings. Indeed the idea that a hidden wish to continue sleeping is the source of false waking only makes sense in cases where the dreamer must struggle against a force – whether outside or inside the dream – that seeks to wake him. Yet there are many cases of false awakenings in which this condition is not met:

At the beginning of the night I had a very realistic dream of false waking [...] I'm half awake and full of an irrational fear that "there's something in the apartment." For a second there's a gray backpack at my feet but it quickly disappears. I fall back to sleep for a moment but then suddenly waken because someone is sleeping on top of the chest on the other side of the room. Trying without success to turn on the lights I then stand up and say, "R ... , is that you?" He answers me in despair: "Yes, I've destroyed everything." Hearing these words I suddenly awaken, this time for real. I continue shaking for several minutes after waking.

This false waking, which occurred at *the beginning of the night*, cannot be said to satisfy a desire to continue sleeping, since nothing has impeded it. Moreover, and for the same reason, we cannot see it as an escape mechanism from a disagreeable dream that would have otherwise wakened the sleeper. On the contrary, it is the dis-

agreeable dream *itself* that causes him to waken. Nor can it be said, and again for the same reason, that this false waking is part of a dream logic that, at its conclusion, would have wakened him. Thus this dream, and the majority of false waking dreams, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by the Freudian approach. Instead, in this kind of dream, false waking simply indicates the presence of a special state of consciousness, independent of any interpretation.

The applicability of the foregoing comment is not limited to the particular example of false waking described above. In regard to lucid dreaming we often do not so much observe the wish to continue sleeping as its opposite, this time internal to the dream in the sense that it is produced by the dreamer himself, either by his trying to waken (in order to write down his dream or to escape a nightmare) or by his *expecting* to waken (because of the course of the dream situation itself, which can lead to waking). Moreover, not all dreams that result in false waking can be interpreted within this framework. There are numerous examples of lucid dreaming in which false waking is a logical conclusion but is not provoked by any expectation of waking:

I'm going to England. I take the bus, hoping to recognize the station where I have to get off. It's day. A helmeted, blond-haired English bobby gets on the bus. Immediately I take out my orange card. At first he doesn't look at it. Then he glances at it but doesn't seem to realize that it's for use in France. He must think it's normal. Suddenly the bus is nearing the terminal. This is not where I want to be, I recognize nothing, I'm far from my destination. I confide my troubles to two ladies who tell me that the bus station is just behind me. I get off several stops before the end of the line. It is pitch-black out. I see a group of buses behind a metal grating. I pass through a dark doorway and find myself in darkness. Still advancing I begin to climb stairs. Suddenly I reach a door that leads inside a church or cathedral. I climb some steps.

Lucid dream: Standing in an upper story of the church I prepare to leap into the void in order to prove that I'm not afraid. I want to fly normally. I jump and begin to fall into the void. Soon I begin to rise like an air-filled ball would rise to the water's surface. Looking around me I see the statue of an angel inlaid in the church wall. If I look closely I can clearly make out the details of the statue, for example the stone toes; but I prefer an overall view. Someone is next to me. Seeing C. I tell him to jump also. He does so but is transformed into a white-haired man and is crushed as he hits the ground. [...] I look at my hands because that's what Carlos Castaneda did. Then I raise my hands and cover my eyes. Everything turns black. I lower them, then raise and cover my eyes again. Back and forth until I finally open my eyes.

[False waking]: I think I'm awake. The church is still there. I can feel my parents near-by. There is a lady standing in the middle of the church.

She is standing next to statue of herself as she looked when a young and beautiful woman. She talks to us about the past: on feast-days people didn't have to buy angels that revolve around candles and all the other stuff; there were specially-designated family members who took care of it. Somewhat apart from the statue I can see, placed on top of a cabinet, a rather round head sporting a strange hair-do and hat.

[...] While sleeping I must have written something down because next to my bed I find a fairly accurate sketch of the inside of the church.

The false wakening in this dream is not the logical conclusion to a series of dream sequences; instead it is the disappearance of lucidity that causes the dreamer's false wakening. And this is exactly how the dreamer understands the situation, even though the scene does not change. This false wakening can thus not be explained in terms of a wish for sleep: rather it is an expression of a qualitative change of consciousness. Moreover, in some cases the false wakening is lucid from the very beginning; that is, the dreamer dreams he is awake even while knowing that he is still dreaming. In such cases it is hard to see how false wakening could be interpreted as a way of prolonging the dreamer's sleep since the dreamer is not duped by the false wakening.

Generally speaking, dreamers are no more likely to interpret false awakenings than lucidity. This is because they associate both false awakenings and lucidity more with structures of consciousness and dream than with wishes or repressed psychic elements. For these dreamers false wakening is not a systematic part of what needs to be interpreted. This in turn sheds important light on the foundation of the Freudian hypothesis concerning false wakening. Dreams of false wakening depend less on the wish for sleep than on the quality of the sleep itself. Having studied numerous cases of false wakening, we have come to the conclusion that, just as hypnological dreams differ essentially from normal dreams because of the different states of consciousness which produce them, dreams of false-wakening depend on a state of consciousness *inside of sleep itself*, the nature of whose relationship to waking consciousness remains to be elucidated. Thus the fundamental distinction between dreams of false wakening and those described by Freud becomes fully visible; in Freud's examples – which are not, strictly speaking, false awakenings at all – the dreamer does not dream that he is awake but carries out the activities he was supposed to fulfill

had he been awake. In the final analysis both the attitude of the dreamers and the structure of their dreams lead to the conclusion that preclarity and false wakening need not necessarily be part of an interpretive framework; rather they must be taken as indicators of the quality or degree of consciousness of the dreamer. Although part of the dream's content, preclarity and false wakening are not fundamentally dream representations and can not be interpreted independent of considerations of consciousness.

* * *

As a general rule it can be said that the type of consciousness present in lucid dreams (or in dreams similar to them) does not necessarily require interpretation, even though the content of such a dream may ultimately be amenable to it. Thus interpretation cannot account, *in a systematic way*, for the various forms of lucid dreaming. Does this mean that in some cases the principle of interpretation ceases to be valid or rather that interpretation must be understood differently? Some researchers have plainly come to the conclusion that interpretation has only limited applicability to lucid dreaming and that a different function must be attributed to it than to ordinary dreaming: "As a psychotherapist [...] I am convinced that the professionals in my field will have to face, among all the other questions that lucid dreaming poses, an important challenge: they will have to go beyond the traditional point of view, which focuses on psychological problems, and admit that, for the patient, the usefulness of the lucid dream is probably to be found on another level."²⁵ In spite of its cogency, such a point of view fails to call into question the overall validity of the interpretation of "ordinary" dreams – it is satisfied with seeing lucid dreaming as a special kind of dream requiring a special approach. Yet one could wonder whether this aspect of lucid dreaming does not require us to reconsider the general validity of the current systematization of the ordinary dream itself. The lucid dream, after all, *is* a dream, which on the one hand is marked by the fact that the dreaming dreamer often realizes, *without it having any effect on the unfolding of the dream events themselves*, that he is dreaming; and on the other hand that there is nothing in the electrographic data to distinguish between ordinary and lucid dreams. This calling

into question of the systematic validity of interpretation in regard to lucid dreaming thus calls into question the validity of interpretation of non-lucid dreams and will perhaps shed new light on what can be called "forced interpretation."²⁶

Notes

1. Roger Caillouis, *L'Incertitude qui vient des rêves*, Paris, 1983, pp. 18–19.
2. Sigmund Freud, *L'Interprétation des Rêves*, Paris, 1980, p. 90.
3. Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 11. Emphasis by the author of the present article.
4. In what follows the lucid dreams that are quoted without explicit reference are taken from materials found in Christian Bouchet, *Le Rêve lucide, Description et analyse du phénomène à partir d'expériences de rêves lucides spontanées ou préparées. Essai d'interprétation: mise en évidence des implications théoriques des procédés et techniques mis en oeuvre*. Thèse doctorat d'État non publiée, Université de Paris IV, Paris, 1994.
5. That is, the French word for oven is "four". (translator's note.)
6. Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
7. Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 485–486.
8. Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 485–486. Emphasis by Freud.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.* Emphasis by the present author.
11. George Gillespie, "Problems related to experimentation while dreaming lucidly," *Lucidity Letter*, vol. 3, nos. 2 & 3, 1984: 1–2.
12. Frederic W.H. Myers, "Automatic Writings-3", *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research* 4, part II, 1887, pp. 241–242. Quoted by S. Laberge, *Le Rêve lucide. Le pouvoir de l'éveil et de la conscience dans vos rêves*. Ile Saint-Denis, 1991, p. 42.
13. On this point see Bouchet, *op. cit.*, pp. 205–206 and 296–297.
14. Ann Faraday, *The Dream Game*, New York, 1976, p. 339.
15. *Ibid.* p. 340.
16. Kenneth Kelzer, *The Sun and the Shadow, My experiment with Lucid Dreaming*, Virginia Beach, 1987, p. 31.
17. See, for example, what Descartes did in the last of his famous dreams of the night of November 10–11 1619, *Olympiques, dans les Œuvres philosophiques*, vol. I, Paris, 1988, pp. 52–63.
18. Patricia Garfield, *La créativité onirique*, Paris, 1983, pp. 139–140. Emphasis by the author.
19. Kenneth Kelzer, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 24, Emphasis by the author.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
22. "Am I Dreaming or Not?", *Ibid.*, p. 29.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
24. Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 115–116.
25. Kenneth Kelzer, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
26. For examples of dream interpretations that analysts force on their patients, see Ann Faraday, *op. cit.*