

# A Forest of Owls: Reflections on healing dreams and their attendant, and rewarding, lexicons

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*Summary.* You may read, within my journey, of a resonant landscape in *your* dreams – perhaps intimations unheeded, messages waiting to be deciphered, signs worthy of your exploration, and curiosity. It is my experience that our inner and outer worlds share a common vein or seam, and that the two are luminously interwoven. Within, there is a hidden life that offers a rich resource for understanding, realignment and healing; within, the history in our bodies has a voice. Our dreams have the ability, and capacity, to forge a reconciliation with, and forgiveness of, the past – so that we can move forward into a more vibrant, graceful, and potent present, and future.

They come in the night, and sometimes during the day – wisps of images, or strong bounding visuals. They whisper, or they don't, when their terror draws sounds from us we would never vocalize in our waking hours. They inspire, motivate, release, haunt, tease, perplex, and sometimes – they follow us into the light, their ragged edges tugging at our sleeves and nipping at our heels.

They bring back people we miss, people we know, or don't know, or will know; and people we thought we had vanished to the far reaches of the mind and the heart's galaxies. They make us fly, or slog so heavily through a terrain that our progress is like maple syrup dripping from trees. Sometimes they bring us in contact with the animal kingdom. Sometimes they introduce us to characters so hideous that we squirm under their gaze and hope we do not remember their visage when we open our eyes. And sometimes they imbue us with such feelings of light and magic that we fight *not* to open our eyes, but when we do, to make sure that we take from the land we have just exited something of their essence to carry in our pocket.

These are our dreams. These are also the dreams of our Planet, our ancestors, and the great stream of life from which we have emerged, and, they are the record of our evolution, the weavings of a dimension *inside* that cannot be claimed by a photograph, yet prompt us to capture their essence in our lives, our culture, our arts.

Lately, I've noticed a change in my dreamscape. Prior to last year, I rarely remembered dreams early in the night. Now, sometimes after only a few hours, I see their characters, like fledgling actors in a play rehearsal, and I'm privy to their initial fumbblings. And *like* fledglings, awkward with lines and staging, these dreams look different. They're not from the usual vocabulary and dream parsing, and, I've discovered, they're usually harrowing; some have caused me to turn away or stop the dream. Have I glimpsed something too early in metamorphosis to understand? Have I tripped

over a subtle patterning, a new snowflake design? Have I wandered into Dr. Frankenstein's Laboratory while the parts are still being assembled? Have I stumbled into a mystery?

I've noticed something else about this new crop of dreams, the ones early in the night, and the later ones: some have a strong physical, intense touch or sensation that goes on for a long time. I don't know what it means, but I have an hypothesis: in our world that moves with increasing speed, and much too fast sometimes – [I sense that my brain wants back its Zen space, my quiet garden's meditative wavelengths] – perhaps these sensations are trying to recapture something lost, or about to be. Even though I've practiced meditation since the early 1970's, I sometimes find that my sometimes shortened attention span wants nothing of it. So what if I limit my time on technology? Will that recapture my Zen wavelength? Will my dreams then reveal deeper mysteries?

I have a second hypothesis: as I am recording these dreams in an astrological calendar, I'm aware of some of the planets' positions and meanings; however, as we are in the midst of some game-changing planetary shifts and once in a lifetime planetary pairings, it's difficult to assess the eye of the hurricane when you're in the eye. I will leave that assessment for another time, or to interested dream researchers. But I do wonder, and entertain the thought, that some of the ground shifting energies of the planets may be finding their way into our dreams.

For the present, I focus on the first hypothesis, and began to shift my involvement with technology:

My mobile resides in the bathroom so a) I'm protected from its radiation; and b) I have to make an effort to get to it. [I do have a landline.] The mobile is always turned off so my peace of mind is intact and not subjected to annoying sounds with a [usually] false sense of urgency. I use my mobile to query the web or check email or telephone messages to see if something *needs* my attention. And, I rarely take it with me when I leave the house, unless I'm traveling a distance. As to my computer, I use a timer. When the timer rings, I finish the task, and log off. My technologies are only tools and I refuse to be attached to their umbilicals.

I wonder if younger generations are losing their imagination because technologies are doing their imaginings for them.\* I wonder if our younger, more innocent dreaming selves don't want to lose the components which encompass *all of its senses*. I wonder – *are* some of our senses going over to the other side and becoming lost in our technologies?

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Submitted for publication: February 2020

Accepted for publication: September 2020

DOI: The DOI is assigned to this article.

[\*Technology has its place and *its* imagination and not all imaginations are being co-opted by it, but – I worry about the amount of time we spend plugged into our technology and not plugged into our souls.]

### 1976

A thread which began to weave itself into dreams when I started to write them down in 1976 was the presence of animals. At the end of the year, I would re-read my dreams and notate and tally – patterns – what was repeating itself? How many times did certain animals appear? Or certain images? Were there premonitions? Anything else stand out?

I immersed myself in animal lexicons. When I had a dream that included an animal, in the astrology calendar where I recorded my dreams, I included words about that animal's energy or medicine – to teach myself, and, to tune into *what* the animal was communicating. And the animals have never been wrong.

There are many examples but a pivotal one happened last year when I had a dream about a forest of Owls so densely packed that I could not count them. [I've never had a dream like this with so many of the same creature in it.] When I read the lexicons about Owl – I began to grasp its “healing and tuning medicine” and why it had appeared. I began to make adjustments in my life where I was not giving credence to my intuition, not trusting myself. I started with what were, to me, the small things, which turned out to be not so small.

Examples: I obsessively check and double check. Have I turned off the water? Have I locked the doors? When I became aware of how much energy this rechecking was draining from me, Owl focused my attention: I checked a faucet once. Slowly placed my hand under it. Was it dripping? No? Hold that. Remember that. Check the door. Hold that memory of checking. As I did this, I noticed that every time I gazed, in my mind's eye upon the forest of Owls, they had begun to thin – confirmation that that muscle of trust was strengthening.

My upbringing was such that I did not always trust what I saw, felt, perceived. I too readily and quickly gave people the benefit of the doubt, not wanting to believe they were up to what I painfully realized later they were up to. Not wanting to believe the truth, as I saw it, the first time. I could see people's blind corners, and upon reflection, realized that I always could, that I had keen insights. But this was a threat in the family I was born, bred, and buttered in. So my seeing went underground where I could keep it safe until it was time to dig it up. And dig it up I had to. It has taken years, and the excavation is not complete. Will it ever be? But this dream of Owls was a pivotal axis upon which I could securely ground and center myself.

It then occurred to me that there was a third hypothesis for the change in my dreamscape, and it was: what happens when your truth, your knowing, your intuition is silenced for most of your life?

In the 1990's, when I began to explore deep tissue body work, the trauma that had been residing in my body, in *soma* memory, was beginning to release; memories and feelings were beginning to awaken. My body often shook and became cold as the layers were accessed and began to release. Like a dam that has held back too long the force of the water pressing against it, the body has the same capacity.

I realized that the same was true about what began to be released when I began to reclaim my knowing, my truth,

my perceptions, my intuition – as I began to tell more of the truth of who I am, rather than who I was raised to be, who others wanted me to be. When a forest of Owls appeared to tell me that there was much work to be done in reclamation, that if I wanted my knowing, my truth, my perceptions, my intuition back – in full force – then I would have to work to thin that forest of Owls. That each one represented an experience where I had not spoken fully what I knew.

Perhaps the shift in my dreamscape – the now remembering of early in the night dreams or shapes of dreams to come or that were releasing or about to be released, the sensations that rang through my sleeping body sometimes like a great structural shaking – is akin to the body work I experienced, but now, through the avenue of a pivotal dream. And the shift in the dream scape is the upheaval of all that *it* held back and is now releasing. And the shift in the dreamscape is also the roiled emotions of knowing that whenever I told the truth or spoke what I saw, I was wacked, threatened, or punished. So memory of the repercussions is also in *soma* memory.

For me, this releasing holds more than a modicum of truth for there are dreams now that I don't bother to write down because I know they are the detritus of what is breaking up, and breaking down. I know it because I know it. I can read the dreamscape as a jumble of images and sometimes nonsense, and I know not to record it because as soon as I try to remember it, it disappears like a magician's sleight of hand. I know to record what stays, and what asks to be written down. And I trust this.

Maybe this is my life's work. Maybe the Owls in the forest will become one Owl that sits on my shoulder. But for now, there are still many Owls in my forest. Their healing reverberates through layers and armor, rippling out into my ocean of mistrust. Yet it's also true that the old energies [of mistrust] will always try to pull you back, and they will scream and kick and buffet what confidence you thought you had built, recovered, restructured – this is to be expected. But I have found that when I persevere, knowing there will be “tests” – I succeed. It's a natural rhythm – change and then that change is questioned and challenged by what has worked [apparently, though inadequately] up until then.

In Greek mythology, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, had a companion Owl that sat on her shoulder to reveal unseen truths. So not only is it an animal lexicon but a mythology that dwells deep in the human psyche, a dwelling that our ancestors and the great pool of humanity that preceded us, intuited.

That said, to each their own: for me, it's animals; for you it might be the presence of plants, trees, or geographies et al. I believe we all come in hardwired to living lexicons that have the ability to inform, teach, inspire, heal, and evolve us.

The animals, for me, shift in their appearance. Sometimes an animal will repeat itself two nights in a row, and sometimes more than once in one night of dreams. I have a record of animals that have appeared only once; or animals that repeat at intervals of time. I have a veritable animal kingdom of wise counselors who seek to fine tune, warn, support, teach, and help, and – to connect me with animals that have not made their presence known in dreams, but rather in the three-dimensional world. My horizons expand, and I learn to read and listen to the tunings of *that* three-dimensional world of Spiders, for example, who are uncanny in their appearance with an insight or the confirmation of a decision,

an answer to a problem, and sometimes an epiphany. I've learned to trust when Spider shows up. And it has shown up in some magnificently grand ways.

And so it was after the dream of the forest of Owls that I arrived at a place where, for the first time, I was deeply grateful for my dreams: one morning, I sat up in bed and realized the wealth of this space in the night when I close my eyes, and suddenly – I felt grateful. It was a feeling unmistakable, palpable, limned with joy, and enough to want to write about it.

I have also noticed a curious sidebar – in dreams, I have now developed a sense of humor. With aching slowness, I have been developing one in my three-dimensional life but to see it traverse space into my night is heartening. Perhaps it's a function of age, or wisdom, in learning not to take oneself so seriously. And in that voice that could never speak up before – that voice is finding its voice in humor. I smile because in dreams where my humorous commentary is part of the dream it *makes me smile*. Perhaps that is the deeper, healing medicine – one's own sense of humor.

I will leave you to discover the meaning of what appears in your night and dayscapes – be it two or four legged, wild or domestic, finned, scaled, winged or otherwise. Your lexicons, your glossaries, your vocabularies, your dictionaries – they *will* find you. Enjoy the discovery.

Our dreams are rich, laden and replete with symbols, maps, blueprints, and signposts. When you avail yourself of them, the three-dimensional world, as well, opens *its* vistas, expands your horizons, and reveals a Universe of meaning.

For the presence of all, in whatever dimension they appear, I am grateful that they are there, and here.