



Dreams and the Writer: A Sleepy Ramble

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DO WRITERS EVER actually wake up? And what would happen if they did? I pause and look up, look around the room, at the windows and so on — no, I am almost definitely still asleep, to look up is not to wake up, I am carrying on my work as dream-scribe, that is to say, generator and noter-down of the sleep-talk of my knocked-out mind.

So not actually asleep then, but as it were employed by sleep — as sleep is employed by dreams.

Is a word a dream trying to wake up?

Yes, words are a re-ordering of dream, an attempt to drag down the super-conscious into the good old conscious, where theatres are and publishing happens. But too much world-order and the dream-power is lost. Then I have to stop, and dip back down into sleep. ‘Gently dip, but not too deep.’ No, don’t actually fall asleep at the desk, that won’t work. You might wake to find the page covered with words, or you might not.

The other night I woke having composed a poem whose last line I could remember. I ‘padded’ downstairs, like the writer continually nagged awake by ‘a nuance,’ and wrote it down:

And they walked on, into the other world

Dream-poems are not really dreams though, just the dream-scribe failing



to down tools when he has ‘dipped too deep’ and is actually asleep. Or perhaps that’s too harsh. Maybe dreams are happy to be words.

I love falling asleep. I think it’s a creative act, not falling at all but diving. Of course the feet have to be warm, we ‘enter into sleep feet first,’ so strictly it’s jumping in; but it’s an act, that’s my point, and similar to the act of imagination. And what kind of an act is that?

And why do we want to sleep? We don’t normally like to cut ourselves off from everything we know and love, and I for one was extremely nervous about general anaesthetic, reckoning it would put me at the mercy of — malicious spirits.

Well I suppose we are taught to sleep by the ones who teach us to speak. Or maybe it’s a womb-gift. In that case, why do we wake up?

I think waking up is *not* a creative act, or any kind of act, more like a nasty accident. Almost always for me it feels catastrophic — anyway at first. And the creative act is to persuade myself that it’s alright. In fact, come to think of it, what persuades me it’s alright is almost always that I have got something I have got to write. Now, presumably, that is a dream-gift; so in fact what’s happening is, dream kindly helps me through the trauma of waking up, by handing me on into the dream-work of writing, into which I jump, feet first, quick as I possibly can. Do writers ever completely wake up?