

Figurative Dream Analysis and U.S. Traveling Identities

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Abstract Many psychologists and anthropologists argue that dreams depict people's sense of self. Here I offer a method of interpreting dream collections that regards major dream figures as alluding to cultural self-models—"figurative analysis." In figurative analysis, an ethnographer reviews a dream collection for figures that are salient, ambiguous, and of major significance in the culture. Ambiguity, I argue, indicates that a figure and concomitant self-model are in a moment of historical transformation and also that they are likely to be undergoing cultural work in the dreams of group members. In turn, group members' dreams reveal a range of orientations to these self-models and their vicissitudes in the psychology and lives of individuals. In fall 2004 and spring 2005, I collected over 300 dream accounts in an undergraduate university class in the United States. Cars emerged as a major figure, one characterized by ambiguity and configuring a "traveling" self-model. Through the investigation of the car self-model and related traveling identities in dreams, I illustrate figurative analysis. [dreams, analytical methods, self, United States, traveling]

Many psychologists and anthropologists think dreams depict and develop people's sense of self (Damasio 1994, 1999; Fairbairn 1952; Hollan 2003, 2005; Kohut 1971; Noy 1969, 1979). Hollan (2003, 2005) argues that dreams offer us the "nightly news" of the self, updating its relations to internal and external worlds. I want to go further: dreams and their accounts not only update an individual's sense of self but also depict and develop cultural models of self. A cultural model consists of shared interrelated schemas that fit together to represent something larger (D'Andrade 1995). Culturally shared schemas about what it

means to be a person—that is, about identity—fit together into “cultural self-models.”¹ Here I use *self* as a domain term that encompasses all aspects of personhood and subjectivity.

Previously, I (1995, 1998, 2002b) have explored cultural self-models in discourse. What I am proposing here is, first, that we also hold shared self-models in figurative form—that is, through figures associated in cultural experience with these models. Here by *figure* I refer to images (e.g., a car), along with affiliated themes (such as “traveling”), which may have symbolic significance in the culture. Second, when such figures occur in the manifest content of dreams, they continue to represent self-models. Third, dreams’ depiction/development of self-models is clearest in dream collections. Dream collections, figuratively understood, offer the “nightly news” of culture—potentially revealing how ranges of people subjectively experience a model. And, fourth, by capturing this range of experience, dream collections disclose the dynamic tensions inherent in a current self-model and its directions of change.

Anthropologists have long collected dreams but commonly prefer either to document dream beliefs and practices or to adopt a person-centered approach in which they draw larger cultural implications from analyzing the corpus of dreams by a single individual or a small number of individuals.² In recent decades, they have been reluctant to explore how cultural psychology is reflected by dream collections sampled across a group. In the field of psychology, however, Hall and Van de Castle’s (1966) content analysis measures comparative emotional and behavioral features of groups through dream collections. Hall and Van de Castle were inspired by Eggan’s (1952) call to consider the manifest content of dreams.

In content analysis, the analyst scores a set of dreams on 19 preestablished scales—16 empirical scales and three theoretical scales, the latter borrowed from psychoanalysis. The assumption is that these scales correspond to universal variables. Anticipating selective correlations between groups and the variations they observed in dream content, Hall and Van de Castle (1966) took the frequency of a dream element to indicate the extent of an individual’s preoccupation with related material in waking life and collected data on “types” of individuals based on factors such as age, gender, and culture. Van de Castle (1983) was also interested in the symbolic nature of dream content and conducted a major study of dreams with animal figures. The form of analysis I propose here—“figurative analysis”—also looks at recurrent figures but enlists an anthropological approach.

Cultural anthropologists since Geertz have favored letting analytic categories emerge from ethnographic data, although Geertz (1984) himself believed that certain categories such as “person” have comparative validity. A figurative analysis focuses on the manifest content of dreams but allows significant elements to emerge from a set of dream accounts collected in an ethnographic context rather than preceding it. The presumption here is that dream analysis needs to begin with culturally specific interpretive frameworks. An ethnographer records dreams in the process of investigating and participating in a culture, reviewing the resulting collection for major figures. Figures are major if (1) they occur in a significant percentage of the dreams in the collection; (2) they are salient in diverse cultural material—popular entertainment, commerce, and so forth; and (3) culture members treat the objects or characters to which these dream figures refer in waking life as psychologically meaningful—as targets of emotions, desires, and needs.

Working from the hypothesis that dreams depict/develop self-models, a researcher using figurative analysis asks whether an emergent figure is used ambiguously by subjects and, if so, how it may participate in an ambiguous self-model in the culture—one with contradictory features. Taking ambiguity as a sign that a shared self-model is in historical process, figurative analysis directs the researcher to further interrogate the dream figure at issue and the model it arguably represents. For insights, one draws on larger studies of the dreamers’ culture and its history, along with oral and written literatures, mythology, song, and other popular texts in which the dream figure and closely related figures appear.

All the dreams within a collection in which an emergent figure plays a major role compose a relevant subset. One reviews this subset to detect affiliated themes. Numerous studies indicate that recurrent dream themes illustrate cultural schemas (Ewing 2003; Hollan 2003; Mageo 2002a, 2003:3–42; Shulman and Stroumsa 1999; Stephen 2003). In figurative analysis, the researcher goes further, asking how the subset’s themes specifically illustrate schemas relevant to the self-model under investigation. Last, one zooms in on individual dreams that feature these themes, nesting a person-centered approach within a broader analysis of other dreams. Working with dreamers to interpret this material, the researcher explores how these dreams transform the figure that defines the set along with the affiliated themes discovered in subset analysis. These transformations open a window on identity construction within a specific cultural-historical world.

As in Foucault's (1988, 1990) analysis of discourse, people experience shared models as having a formative power. But self-models are by nature partial, highlighting some aspects of experience in preference to others. They also code power relations that may be disadvantageous to the subject. Such features spawn urges to reform self-models. Dream accounts, I argue, are a "royal road" to a "cultural unconscious": there one hears the fractious dialogues among discrepant voices that always surround a cultural model. Recurrent dream figures and themes portray a cultural self-model in process. In any dream collection, there will be several major figures, just as there are always a number of salient self-models in a culture. Used repeatedly on a collection, figurative analysis forms intersecting subsets, each of which points to the transformations of a self-model within a social group.

Car Tropes

When I began leafing through my collection of U.S. undergraduate dream accounts, cars emerged as a major figure. The frequency of cars in U.S. dreams is no surprise. Cars are necessary to U.S. lifeways, and advertisements attest they are objects of emotions, needs, and desires. Based on his psychoanalytic work in Los Angeles, Hollan says the car is also a "highly salient symbol of the self in North American culture." Cars are "used by people to express their status aspirations, their sense of fashion, their sexuality, their wish for freedom, mobility, and autonomy, and so on. The identification between self and auto is promoted by huge advertising budgets, and is reinforced day in and day out by the amount of time most North Americans spend in their cars" (Hollan 2003:70). It is no surprise, then, that a collection of dream accounts from students in the United States includes cars as a significant figure. This figure, moreover, should cast light on the current state of one important self-model and its affiliated schemas, along with young people's reactions to this model.

The car is a key dream symbol in the United States because the United States is a "traveling culture," to invoke Clifford's (1992:101–103) famous essay and analysis of modern cultures as characterized by sites traversed. Surely traveling cultures must correspond to kinds of subjectivities and to certain shared self-models. Self as a mode of transit? Undoubtedly there is a diverse array of traveling cultures and self-models that go with them—from nomadic cultures to diasporic ones.

In the United States, even Oedipal motifs appear in terms of transits; “my way or the highway” is one cliché that fathers use with wayward sons. We ride down on Route 61, Dylan’s metaphor for modernity, and get our kicks on Route 66. Since their invention, cars have been our most prized mode of travel: “See the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet,” as Dina Shore put it. We all have them—all genders, all classes—and when we grow too old to drive, how painful the sense of impairment and loss!

The car is all about agency and freedom of action. In the United States, getting that first driver’s license is a more real “coming of age” than menarche is for young women—that hidden passage marked neither by ritual, by discourse, nor, for many, by any visible change in sexual status or behavior. But a car—that truly means new freedoms and new financial responsibilities, a new station! The importance of this rite of passage makes historical sense. Since the European Enlightenment, people have seen the self as moving beyond birth status and birth context. This is the legacy captured in Eastman Johnson’s famous 1868 painting, *The Boyhood of Lincoln*, in which young Abraham teaches himself to read by firelight. Today the car is one important symbol of this movement beyond context. Hollan speculates on car symbolism for North American identities:

Perhaps the notion that life and people should run smoothly and without interruption; that when life and people do breakdown, they should be repairable; that life is a journey involving constant movement and progress, and that one is in trouble if one is stopped too long by the side of the road; that big, strong, fast, powerful cars are better than small, weak, slow, breakdown cars; that it’s better to be the driver of a car than a passive passenger; that it’s better to own a car than not; that one’s car is one’s castle and its boundaries are sacred. [2003:70]

The phrase “one’s car is one’s castle” derives from a classic U.S. adage: “A man’s home is his castle,” meaning that home is a small kingdom where the man is lord. Today, rather than being kings on a diminutive scale, North American men are members of a domestic democracy where women and to a lesser extent children agitate for an equal say. While home is no longer exclusively a man’s “castle,” his car still may be. This male identification is merchandized nightly in ubiquitous commercials for increasingly larger and more expensive cars that most often feature men in the role of proud owners and drivers. What does this gendered relation to cars signify about current U.S. self-models? To raise an old question in a new guise: if men’s identity/identifications with the car and what it represents—autonomy, agency, mobility, power, movement, progress—are normative in the

United States, where does this leave women? What do the male roots of this self-model mean about women's transits and their citizenship in a traveling culture?

Here Allison's (2001) work on toys offers a point of departure. Allison argues that toy manufacturers—via movies, video games, and action figures—merchandise subjectivity along Fordist lines of marketing strategies and assembly-line efficiency. What is autonomy in a Fordist world? Is it a choice among consumer items, à la Baudrillard (1988), where a system of objects directs desire via an over-riding hedonistic ethic—"Fulfill yourself" by buying the latest product?

Toys, Allison believes, are about more than simple hedonism: they are fetishes in the psychoanalytic sense. The fetish is a stand-in, as in the famous "Fort/Da game" (Freud 1922). Whenever his mother went out, Freud's little nephew cast and then reeled in a spool of thread as he chanted "Fort" (gone) and then "Da" (here). The game assuaged the child's anxiety about loss through ritualistic mastery of his mother's transits, her absence/presence. The fetish stand-in, Allison reminds us, acquires additional meanings at the Oedipus crisis. Fetishes also assuage the shock boys feel at the discovery that when it comes to gender there are haves and have-nots and at their inference that, if have-nots exist, they could lose their penises. Fetishes do so by standing in for the lost penis, which boys imagine women once had. Thus, the fetish represents boys' ambivalence about gender difference through a stand-in that asserts male gender.

Allison traces the development of toys/fetishes and their affiliated stories from Superman in the 1950s to the cyborg heroes in the 1990s, which originated in Japan and became popular among U.S. kids. With Superman, "phallicism came in and on his body, but with cyborg heroes it is displaced onto removable or detachable things—robots, belts, wands, guns. ... Today's heroes have powers that reach beyond the body and materialize into tools or machines that could and are operated by more than just men—women and bugs" (Allison 2001:87–88). Why do girls want to play with toys that assert male gender? Feminist psychoanalysts have long seen phallic symbolism in sociopolitical terms, positing that men's privileges are first represented by bodily difference. Adult toys, too, may be fetishes through which both sexes try to ritualistically master the anxious politics of gendered bodies. Is the car then a Lacanian phallus—a detachable symbol of masculine identity and privilege that men can lose and women can appropriate? As the Beach Boys' song goes, "She'll have

fun, fun, fun,” what people do with toys in the United States, “‘til her daddy takes her T-bird away.”

Car Dreams

We have hit on an ambiguity in a self-model that one might call “gendered yet ungendered”: the car self-model, despite its phallic nature, has slipped its moorings in biological gender. Again, ambiguity in a self-model signifies that it is in historical process. My data offer what I am tempted to call a regional report about contemporary transformations of the car self-model. But how does one speak of regions in a traveling culture—as sites on a pilgrimage as Clifford asks at the conclusion to his essay? Clifford writes:

I hang onto “travel” as a term of cultural comparison, precisely because of its historical taintedness, its association with gendered, racial bodies, class privilege, specific means of conveyance, beaten paths, agents, frontiers ... and the like. I prefer it to more apparently neutral, and “theoretical,” terms, such as “displacement,” which can make the drawing of equivalences across different historical experiences too easy. ... And I prefer it to terms such as “nomadism,” often generalized without apparent resistance from non-Western experience. ... “Pilgrimage” ... includes a broad range of Western and non-Western experience and is less class and gender-biased than “travel.” [1992:110]

U.S. universities are visitations on career paths; students from an aleatory range of locations try to make communities and enduring friendships there. I collected dream accounts fall semester 2004 and spring 2005 in two classes on culture and the self at Washington State University (WSU). At that time, the WSU undergraduate population consisted of approximately fifteen thousand students from Washington counties, approximately fifteen hundred students from other states mostly in the West, a few people from U.S. territories, several hundred from other countries predominately in Asia, and a roughly equal number of males and females.

Crapanzano (2003) stresses that dream accounts always occur in cultural context—a context that shapes their nature and relation to the experience of the dream. Besides being a university class in the northwestern United States, the context of these accounts is the culture of what Giddens (1991) calls “high modernity.” In high modernity, the self becomes a reflexive project “which consists in the

sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives” (Giddens 1991:4–5). These narratives, Giddens believes, have an anxious character that derives from the global magnitude of threat that permeates modern life. In my classes, undergraduates seemed intensely interested in using the anxious proto-narratives of dreams to reflect on themselves. As their professor, I presided over this identity project, although work on dreams was largely self-directed. In class, I offered students a number of interpretative methods (Freudian, Jungian, and several I devised), each method condensed into “steps” and demonstrated with a dream of my own and those of several volunteers. The students were to analyze a dream with a chosen method and write a paper on their findings. I seldom proffered suggestions for interpretation outside of this context, although readings and lectures often involved dreams and their analysis by anthropologists. I had not yet hit on figurative analysis as a way of understanding dreams.

Thirty-five students chose to participate, 18 men and 17 women. They contributed 300 dream accounts: 193 from men and 107 from women. Some dreams were the subject of term papers; some dreams students merely recorded in journals. Cars, trucks, or vans were major dream figures in 47 dreams: by this I mean that the pivotal dream events revolved around an auto, action in and through an auto, or something significant happening to an auto. The vast majority involved “a car” per se: trucks and vans were far less common. Nine males contributed 18 car dreams, and 12 females, 29: cars were a more persistent dream symbol for these women than for the men, even though cars sometimes symbolized men. One woman, for example, dreamed of a vintage truck that belonged to, and she believed stood for, a former boyfriend. I begin with a thematic analysis of this material.

Car Themes

Who is driving is an issue in male dreams. One dreamer’s girlfriend, for example, asks to drive; he says, “No,” gets out of the car, and walks away. When a woman drives in male dreams, she may do so badly and/or need rescuing. In one, a young man rescues a young woman driver whose car catches fire after an accident. She gets mad, tells him to “mind his own business,” and that “she could get herself out of the car.” In another male dream, the dreamer unsuccessfully tries to rescue a female pursued by two murderers in a car. A female dreamer, in contrast, successfully overcomes great obstacles to rescue a baby. Indeed, there are only three successful heroism dreams in my car dream set; all are female dreams starring the dreamer.

Males, however, have supercar dreams, whereas females do not. One young male drives a car that travels 500 miles per hour only to wake up within the dream and discover he was in a coma. In two supercar dreams, the car is a spaceship. One dreamer drives his Jetta past stars and meteors. Another dreamer's car is a "star fighter, the spaceship that Darth Vader flew." The car has a "wings button" and glides "down over the sea of cars."

Two crashes occur in male dreams and six in female dreams. A male dreamer runs, then soars through the air; bicycles speed below and begin to crash into cars. In one female dream, a "cop," who is later replaced by a boyfriend, watches the dreamer almost have an accident. Two female dreamers witness accidents—a boyfriend's mother in one case and two male friends in another. In a lucid dream, one female wrecks her car for fun. Her brother, who is riding along, complains he is hurt; she assures him it is only a dream.

Who drives is not usually an issue in female dreams, unless a mother figure drives or the dreamer is attempting to escape the scene of a crime. In many women's car dream accounts the driver's identity is unclear: the dreamer simply says, "We were driving," meaning that two people were traveling together. In "we drove" dreams, the dreamer controls the car only with difficulty. A "difficult control" theme sometimes appears in male dreams, but then the car belongs to a woman, an overbearing woman is the dreamer's interlocutor, or the car is a spaceship. In women's dreams, control may be a larger issue expressed through carlike symbols. One dream begins with car travel, for example, but later the dreamer accidentally causes her girlfriend's skateboard to "crash."

Car control problems are often associated with a "compromised car" theme. In one male's dream, a female teacher wraps the dreamer's car in Saran Wrap as an April Fool's joke. A woman dreamer noted:

The car I am driving isn't my car at all. Everything is made of wood, and it starts to fall apart. I try to drive it carefully back to work and barely make it. I then start to frantically search for my car, but it is nowhere to be found. I think to myself that maybe Chuck [her boyfriend] has it, and I start to go inside. I then get the feeling to look over my shoulder, and I see Chuck there, with my car and a yellow balloon.

This male's borrowing of the dreamer's car is troubling, but she discovers the trouble is illusory—even a happy surprise. In a male dream, the dreamer loses

his car; he too becomes frantic, then angry, and rolls down a hill as a ball. None of my male dreamers steal cars in dreams, but one is the victim of a theft. In one woman's dream, the dreamer and her friend steal a car, but then it turns out only the friend has stolen it. In another, a woman steals a car along with a friend who is driving but who keeps getting depressed and slowing down. The dreamer takes the wheel, but the car will not go.

In male dream accounts, cars are associated with aggression: they may transport murderers, be weapons, or be symbolically replaced by weapons. Male dreamers tend to identify with cars: a dreamer referred to the speed the car goes, for example, as the "speed I am going." This phraseology did not occur in female dream accounts. Males did not see their conscious personality as symbolized by a car, but one did act the role of the car in "dream play" (an analytic method described below). In another analysis, a woman chose to role-play the road.

Car Self-Models

If the car is a trope for the self as free, mobile, and autonomous—a figurative model with lots of affiliated schemas alluded to by dream themes—in my data, this trope signifies different problems for the two genders. Male identity is troubled by female autonomy, as represented by women driving, holding authority roles such as teacher, not needing or wanting rescuing, and so forth. This trouble seems to undermine male dreamers' sense of themselves as heroic; heroic identity seems more assumable for women. Yet male dreamers retained the auto accessories of heroism, supercars, which females did not dream about.

Women dreamers were more willing to appropriate autonomy through car theft and to feel guilt and fear about appropriation, but they were also more willing to accept autonomy loss in the form of car loss. This accepting attitude together with the phraseology "we drove" indicates porous boundaries rather than "sacred" boundaries, as Hollan suggests. I doubt that these women confine this phraseology to dream accounts. I am reminded here of my fieldwork in Samoa. After a drive there, a passenger politely remarks, "Thanks for driving" and the driver responds, "Thanks for your support," as if driving were a joint enterprise.

In riposte to theorists such as Gilligan (1982), who distinguishes moral orientations between males and females in the United States, Kondo points out that Western women are still "solidly within a linguistic and historical legacy of individualism" (1990:33–34); this is no doubt true. What I see in car dreams is

not what Markus and Kitayama (1991) would call a “sociocentric self” based on an identification with group concerns but, rather, a “personal” self based on an identification with intimacy. To clarify, I turn to some ideas about the self in Western European history.

Levy (1973, 1974) argues that the Industrial Revolution precipitated the migratory employment pattern that characterizes capitalism, breaking down many stable agricultural communities. Values that had once resided within the community needed internalization. Foucault (1988, 1990) sees evangelical religious practices as achieving this effect. Evangelicals preached that original sin sullies people’s souls. People were good, therefore, only through constant introspective vigilance (Davidoff and Hall 1987:88). The attention thus directed illumined and differentiated internal space, creating a psychic valise in which people came to port their values. I call this the “suitcase self.” There are two dimensions to this self, one that Westerners tend to associate with the public world and one, with the private world.

Individuals during the Industrial Revolution and after learned to define themselves and their interests in counterdistinction to others rather than in relation to a larger group. Freud calls this form of self the “ego.” This historical period also occasioned the development of the dimension of self that Benjamin (1988) calls “intersubjectivity”—a sense of self that grows out of mutual recognition between two people. Intersubjectivity is evident in the flurry of intimate letter writing among bourgeois women retiring to the domestic sphere during the Victorian period (Davidoff and Hall 1987).

Contemporary U.S. child rearing lays a basis for these two forms of self. While many mothers can no longer afford and some do not want years at home with an infant, in public imagination early life is often pictured as all about mother/child intimacy. This ideal has provided a research focus, for example, in studies of attachment (Ahnert et al. 2004; Ainsworths 1973; Cassidy and Shaver 1999). Winnicott (1967) documents facial interchanges between Western mothers and babes that precede verbal communication. This intimate communication first develops through the face-to-face position in which Western mothers hold babies; as babies learn to speak, mothers treat them as interlocutors in a meaningful dialogue—a tête-à-tête (Ochs 1982). In Samoa, Ochs points out, caretakers hold the child facing outward toward the group; parents do not attend to its early verbalizations or treat them as meaningful. Children simply imitate

the speech patterns of elders (Ochs 1982:93). Two people gazing into one another's eyes, as Western mothers and babies and Western lovers do, I suggest, is a trope for the intersubjective self.

If an intersubjective pattern of relating helps to develop our form of self in the United States, Chodorow's (1974, 1978) work implies that, inasmuch as a woman is a primary caretaker, this is truer for girls than for boys. Chodorow argues that girls tend to construct their gender identity through identification with a person intimately known, the mother. Because males are often distant figures, boys tend to construct theirs by defining themselves against their mothers. An oppositional self-definition lays the groundwork for ego identity—a definition of self in distinction to others. At this junction, Chodorow believes, boys also tend to reject what the mother represents to them, one-to-one intimacy, in preference for competitive peer relations. Inasmuch as girls construct their gender identity through an unbroken identification with their mothers, they have less reason to reject intersubjectivity as a basis for identity. Tannen (2001), in her video recording of early childhood interactions in the United States, shows little girls embracing one another, gazing into one another's eyes, and telling one another they are alike, whereas boys sit uncomfortably with chairs parallel, gazing off into space as they talk. My male and female dreamers' differing descriptions of cars traveling, specifying or not specifying the driver, speaks to a continuity of gender subcultures congruent with those forms of self that Chodorow and Benjamin posit. These forms reflect different versions of the car self-model. There is an "ego" version of this model that dreamers configure as one driver and which features individual autonomy; there is another, "intersubjective" version in which more than one person "drives" and which features an inclusive model of autonomy. This statement may seem contradictory. What I am arguing is that in the intersubjective version of the car self-model, people see themselves as individuals who flow easily in and out of oneness with another. Even when boundaries expand to include another, this larger entity can act "autonomously" on a basis of volitions, desires, and needs that participants perceive as alike. In other words, the two people together act independently of others.

How significant gender differences are among individuals has long been controversial (Hyde 2005; Tavris 1992). When a majority of people from each sex share a common experience, however, that experience is likely to become subculturally salient: that is, the basis for norms and socialization praxis. Children enter a

gender subculture when they begin to play with peers. This subculture may educate them in its standards and reshape their identities, whatever their family experiences have been. Even granting this is the case, anyone can appropriate a model. Thus, while the preponderance of women in my sample described driving as a shared activity, not all did. I am not saying that either the ego or the intersubjective version of the car self-model is a biological or a social destiny. Rather, men and women are likely to think about and experiment with available self-models in daily life and in dreams as well.

The data suggest that there is a “bug” in the intersubjective version of the car self-model: when “the wheel” is shared or one cannot take it without guilt, the exercise of control is difficult. This bug may result from a tendency toward boundary confusion rooted in U.S. mother–daughter experience. Chodorow (1974, 1978) argues that nuclear families in which child care is largely a maternal responsibility often generate boundary confusion between mothers and daughters. My female students’ dreams suggest that this confusion may be so problematic that it prohibits their use of the intersubjective self-model. Whereas mother figures never drive in my male students’ car dreams, they drive in two women’s dreams. In one, a boyfriend’s mother drives wildly, wrecking the car and causing many accidents. In the other, the dreamer rides in the passenger seat, and her brother sits in the back. Neither of these dream accounts uses the inclusive reference to “driving” prevalent in female dream accounts. In the latter dream, the dreamer believed that her mother’s driving represented the maternal pressure she then felt to marry soon and to marry someone money-oriented like her father.

A Dream Pilgrimage

I now zoom in on an individual dream account and analysis that develop several car themes mentioned above. I call this dreamer Ann. She was Caucasian, 23 years old, and in her senior year. I did not help her to interpret the dream presented here and saw her results only in a final paper after the semester was over:

I dreamt that I was in my ex-boyfriend, Arne’s, Camaro. My good friend, Sheila, was also there and we were headed out on the start of a road trip. ... Our car was at a complete stop on a road with heavy, bumper to bumper traffic. Suddenly the ground began to shake beneath us, and the flat road ... dramatically dropped downward. The nose of our car now looked down a steep hill. ... Our car seemed ... almost vertical to the road. Somehow, though, our car was managing to hold onto the road.

Our windows were rolled up, but I could hear screaming all around us. Terrified, I turned to look out the back window. Other cars on the road were beginning to lose their grip and were hurling down toward us ... as if ... falling off a cliff. On the side of the roadway, in a patch of grass, was a baby carriage lying on its side. Next to the carriage lay a baby, possibly a one-year-old. I panicked and began screaming, "Oh my God! There's a baby! There's a baby!" Before Arne or Sheila could turn to look, a minivan came crashing down, hitting the baby and the carriage. I began to bawl, uncontrollably, and covered my face with my hands. The van, taking the baby, came to a crashing halt nearly 200 yards below us, where the road had evened itself out.

Now our Camaro is parked in a store lot. Arne stayed in the car, and Sheila waited outside with me. We both stared up at the cliff, which used to be our road. I told her, "I have to go up there, and tell someone about the baby. Someone has to bring some help." I started to climb the road, as if I were a rock climber. The road was no longer made of concrete, but ... of cold, dead flesh. My hands and feet clung to it, and it would rip and tear as I climbed. I reached another man on this wall of flesh and I told him about the baby, and that we needed a rescue team. He told me there were too many people hurt, and a rescue team couldn't be sent down for one baby.

I returned to Sheila, and the two of us decided to make our way down to the van, to see if there was anything we could do. We reached the van safely, and I opened the back two doors to find a woman. ... She was lying on her back, dressed in a Quaker's outfit. To me she looked like a pilgrim. She had bright red hair and freckles. There was blood coming into her eyes from her forehead, but her eyes were wide open, staring at me. It was very gory, and frightening.

I asked her, "Where is the baby?" She responded very softly, "She's right here." Crawling toward me, from the front of the van, came a toddler, possibly a three-year-old. She crawled right into my arms. I snatched her out of the van, holding her tight to my chest. I placed her down on the ground, and knelt to look into her eyes. She was the most beautiful child I had ever seen. Her skin was porcelain and her hair was bright white. For many seconds we just stared at each other, silently. The woman in the van got out and said in panic, "Where's my baby?" I yelled, "She's right over here!" I picked up the toddler and handed her to the woman. I then awoke.

Instead of specifying the driver, Ann says, "we were headed": her reference is inclusive of three people—herself, Arne, and Sheila—and evokes the intersubjective self-model discussed previously. As the car belongs to Arne, one presumes he is driving, but Ann does not conceive the situation in terms of his agency: he is silent

and passive throughout—a bystander whom Ann, later analyzing the dream, saw as a “hole.” Ann decided to use a projective technique I (2001) devised called dream play to interpret this dream. The dreamer first chooses several dream figures to role-play and then guesses what unexpressed feelings and unrealized abilities in her conscious personality and culture the dream represents. My shorthand for these personal and cultural absences is “hole.” “When trying to guess what the holes ... the missing parts of the dream were,” Ann wrote, “Arne’s help was missing, as well as the cause of the road shaking, and a rescue team.”

If the dream is a “road trip,” it begins with motionless cars. For class, Ann read the paper by Hollan, cited earlier, in which he analyzes three car dreams from a depressed male psychoanalytic client, Steve, which illustrate a “sense of being stalled and damaged” (2003:71). Did reading Hollan’s essay, which portrays cars as a symbol for self, bring cars into students’ dreams? Less than one-sixth dreamed of cars. Given the prevalence of cars in young people’s daily lives, one would expect cars to be common dream figures for them. It does not seem, therefore, that their reading had a strong influence on their dream content. Ann’s dream, like Steve’s, begins with motionless cars, but she was not depressed. Ann’s dream cars are motionless because of a traffic jam, evoking scenes from modern city life—freeways, crowded downtown streets, and so on. Soon her boyfriend’s Camaro “is parked in a store lot.” The traffic-jammed cars depict a problem that the parked car reiterates: the intersubjective car self-model does not get Ann where she wants to go; it is no vehicle of progress for her.

In car dreams, dreamers often refer to cars as if they are agents; following Haraway (1991), one might call them cyborgs. In Ann’s earthquake scene, her car has a “nose” and “looked down a steep hill,” like cars in cartoons that have headlights for eyes. Ann’s car also hangs onto the road, just as she does in the climbing scene, suggesting an initial identification between Ann and the car. Over the course of the dream and dream play, however, she explores the problems with this identification.

For Ann, the road is animated too. While it appears dead as she rips and tears her way upward, it has been a violent actor up to this point, first shaking, then angling down, and then evening itself out, and it is made of “flesh.” Ann’s road, I suggest, poses a traveling identity that is feminine rather than masculine. Female ecstasies in Sri Lanka describe themselves in trance as “shaking below” (the waist), and Obeyesekere (1981) sees this bodily reaction as female orgasm. Inasmuch as the dream earthquake has orgiastic implications (as Hemingway [1940] puts it, “the

ground moved”), one might regard this as a coming-of-age dream. This view is coincident with Ann’s own: she wrote that one “hole” the dream represents is fear of letting “go of my youth” and making “the transition into adulthood, true independence. I must make this transition on my own and for myself.” Fear and bravery are the emotional poles of this dream: it begins with terror, but Ann is brave/independent throughout. Ann also believed the dream represented a hole in mainstream American culture in the United States, specifically a

confusion about when exactly to let go of our youthful ways. In our culture there is no ceremony marking adulthood, no specific age, or dramatic celebration. Eighteen does not necessarily make every teenage boy a man, or a young girl a woman. We are left to wander, and wonder, what exactly it is that makes us an adult. I know that I have reached a point in my life where I want very badly to feel like a grown up; my culture expects this of me at 23. But I do not feel any different than I did four years ago. Many of us may not be ready at 18 to be “grown up” and independent, but our world tells us we should be, which for me has led to anxiety, fear, and some guilt.

The dream offers a coming-of-age sequence: an orgasm, then a baby, and later an archetypal mother figure accompanied by a toddler. It also recapitulates growing up. Witnessing the accident by the side of the road, Ann’s boundaries quickly expand to include the endangered baby. When the minivan hits it, Ann begins to “bawl.” *Bawl* is a U.S. term for infantile crying, identifying Ann and the baby—an identification that develops when the three year old crawls immediately into her arms and gazes into her eyes. I suggested that one-to-one gazing is a trope for the Western intersubjective self-model. Ann’s modifier, “uncontrollably,” explicitly conjoins bawling (her identification with the baby) to control problems, evident in other women’s car dreams. A control issue is implied in Ann’s car “managing to hold onto the road,” while other cars are “beginning to lose their grip ... as if ... falling off a cliff.” “Losing one’s grip” is a colloquial expression for the loss of control. The intersubjective version of the car self-model seems to leave one unprotected—as the baby on the patch of grass is unsheltered and exposed. In the ego version of this model, the subject defines himself in opposition to others, policing boundaries, and self-defense is more likely to be effective.

If the dream is about intersubjectivity, symbolized by Ann’s spontaneous bond with the unprotected infant, it also evokes adventure: it is a visual pun on the “cliff-hanger,” a U.S. term for a thrilling adventure movie. Ann remarked that “even now when I read it, the dream plays like a movie in my mind.” Thrillers

are an important genre in U.S. movies, possibly because late modernity, as Giddens argues, is a high-risk environment in which “reappropriation and empowerment intertwine with expropriation and loss,” generating “programs of actualization and mastery,” where dread in the form of “being overwhelmed by anxiety” threatens “our coherent sense of self” (1991:7, 37). In thrillers, the audience vicariously confronts risks and dread, symbolized by mortal threats to a hero and related others, threats that the hero converts into a program of mastery. Cliff climbing evokes another classic U.S. scenario—the success story in which one climbs “to the top.”

This dream thriller begins with Ann and Sheila standing outside staring at the cliff together, connoting an intersubjective self-model, but Ann tells Sheila, “I have to go up there,” not “We have to go.” Ann is reluctant to assume that status of heroine/rescuer, saying, “Someone has to bring some help.” Here the hero is singular, individual, but unidentified; this “someone” is an absent identity that Ann is unready to assume. Then Ann emerges from the duo to undertake the challenge represented by the cliff—crawling up cold dead flesh. This climb is a parturition sequence. Ann’s hands and feet cling to the wall as if she and the wall are one flesh from which she must rip and tear herself away. Not only does this parturition, I believe, signal an identity revolution, but it also indicates Ann’s remedy for the boundary confusion inherent in the intersubjective self-model. After her climb, Ann again unites with Sheila to go down and rescue the baby, but her agency is in no way stalled or impaired.

The man Ann meets climbing the wall of flesh abjures responsibility for rescuing the baby, telling her that he cannot send a rescue team. This man, of course, is helping others; but his values are collective, whereas Ann’s are interpersonal. The gender other, I suggest, to a degree always represents “the Other”; the opposite of intersubjectivity is not egocentrism (which is its counterpart) but sociocentrism, a collective orientation—in this case, triage. This man also underlines that Ann alone is on the line.

Dream Playing

When demonstrating dream play in class, I staged dialogues between individual dreamers and their dream figures. Ann acted out and dialogued with her dream figures on her own, not before an audience: her role-playing was purely imaginal.³ She first chose to play the three year old; although “a toddler,” she named this

character “Baby.” This name, I think, refers back to the mother/infant dyad, a U.S. symbol for intersubjectivity:

- BABY: I am 3 years old. I have white skin and white hair. I am a beautiful child, angelic looking.
- ME [ANN]: Are you all right?
- B: Of course I am. I knew you’d come for me.
- M: Who are you?
- B: I am you. Don’t you recognize me?
- M: I thought I’d lost you.
- B: No. I’m not hurt, not one scratch on me.
- M: Who is that woman?
- B: She takes care of me.
- M: I love you, and I was so scared!
- B: You saved us, there is nothing more you can do.

If Ann’s dream is a mode of, in her words, “wonder[ing] what exactly it is that makes us an adult,” she begins regressively by identifying with Baby. Here regression is a *recherché*, an effort to remember/recapture an earlier self, which the dream portrays as threatened by the car self-model: it is cars “hurling down toward us” that appear to crush Baby before a womblike vehicle (the minivan) snatches her. Ann fears that assuming an adult identity, which emphasizes independence, has injured this “angelic” self—the self first surrendered in trust to the mother/child relationship (“I knew you’d come for us”). Inasmuch as the mother–child gaze represents this intersubjective self-model, it is remarkable that the woman mothering Baby has bloody eyes—eyes that “were wide open, staring at me.” This injury, presumably, comes from the crash, reiterating the threat posed by hurling cars.

In the dream, Ann too acts like a mother after the Western model, holding Baby to her chest and then kneeling down and gazing into her eyes. If this dream is about claiming an adult identity, is it a mother identity? As if seeking an answer to this implicit question, Ann next chose to play the mothering woman, naming her “Woman”:

- WOMAN: I am in my 30’s. I have bright red hair and lots of freckles on my face. I am dressed like a Quaker, wearing only black and white. There is blood running down my face from my forehead.

- ME [ANN]: Is this your baby?
 W: I am responsible for her.
 M: Why are you dressed like that?
 W: Because I walk with God.
 M: I wasn't expecting to find you here.
 W: Why?
 M: She seemed so alone.
 W: Do I make you angry?
 M: No, but I am sad.
 W: It is ok to love her. I'm sure that she loves you too.
 M: I just wanted to keep her.
 W: She's not your responsibility.

"Woman" concatenates opposites. On the one hand, Woman is a spiritual traveling figure: Ann said she "looked like a pilgrim." While Clifford likes "pilgrimage" as a metaphor for traveling cultures, he is uncomfortable with this term because "its 'second' [spiritual] meanings tend to predominate" (1992:110). This dreamer is very comfortable with these meanings: she appoints a properly American image of spiritualism, the Quaker, to be her pilgrim who "walks with God." On the other hand, Woman is not one of those puritanical pilgrims with their *Scarlet Letter* models of femininity. Her red freckles and hair imply passion, and "quake" puns on the earthquake with which the dream opened, an event that, psychoanalytically considered, suggests orgasm. The term *Quaker* is descriptive of bodily quaking: it derives from its founder's admonition to "tremble at the word of the Lord" (Morris 1979:1067).

The Quaker's bleeding is a terrifying event in this dream that Ann finds "very gory, and frightening." For women, sexual coming-of-age is concomitant with bleeding—menses and defloration—both of which intimate porous boundaries like the intersubjective self-model. In Ann's Quaker image, blood is displaced from lower to upper. From a psychoanalytic perspective, an upward displacement of sexual symbolism is classic. Decapitation, for example, may signify castration, or a big nose, a big penis. Blood, in fact, fastens Woman's two apparently opposed meanings, spiritualism versus sexuality. "She was bleeding from her forehead," Ann wrote, "like Jesus on the cross." While "Woman" appears to need saving, she is actually a female version of the Savior. In Ann's words, Woman

acted as a comfort for me, letting me know it is ok to love ... who I used to be ... telling me that God is also watching over me, taking care of what I cannot. ... I like the idea of a higher power, a protector, and sometimes I forget how important this really is to me. ... Since our culture so greatly encourages independence, then it is no wonder why individuals my age may feel lost and scared when we cannot live up to our culture's ideals.

A seminal dream researcher in anthropology, Eggan (1952:478–479), holds that dreams illumine “disharmony between the cultural ideal” and what people actually experience. True to form, Ann’s dream illumines a disharmony between the independence idealized in the car self-model and scary feelings of abandonment and inadequacy. These feelings are predictable in a world where everyone is supposed to “stand on their own two feet,” as Americans say, particularly for those who have based their identity on intersubjectivity rather than the ego. Ann’s dreamwork—by which I mean projective/analytic work on dreams—moves to resolve this disharmony by transferring protection (a traditionally male function) to God and to another realm. One might see this transference as a defense, but in psychoanalysis defenses help a person remain unconscious of anxiety; Ann’s dreamwork helps her become clearer about it.

Ann’s anxiety, moreover, is not just her own: it is a reaction to a shared self-model and thus a problem with meanings. The dream is a world of meaning, trafficking in signs rather than things; imaginative work there is “real” work in that it strives to amend problematic meanings by changing the models that create them. Ann begins to evolve a new way of conceiving the self-model that engendered her anxiety: she transforms a stalled car into a fecund van harboring a baby and a powerful mother figure, the duo symbolic of intersubjectivity. Ann carried this imaginative work forward in dream play, transferring her anxious desire for protection from actual men like her boyfriend to a flexible symbolic concept, God. Ann is thus a symbolic agent—an actor in the realm of cultural signs—and a good one.

Let me review and elucidate this view of Ann’s dream report and dreamwork thus far. Ann’s dream initially represents an intersubjective self-model through a car that three friends drive on a “road trip.” The identity accent changes through a shift in agency symbolized by a shift in animation: while the car is motionless, the road shakes violently. We already saw that my female students’ car dreams feature control or guilt problems, and that they dreamed more often of crashes than male students did. These difficulties suggest a lack of compatibility between the

car self-model and intersubjectivity. In Ann's dream, lack of car control leaves a baby and a mother figure exposed to a crash. This sequence inspires Ann to emerge from her intersubjective identity and assume the role of an adventurer who overcomes a great obstacle (a wall of cold dead flesh) to rescue another.

Baby confirms Ann's identity as a hero, telling her, "You saved us"; this plural again evokes the intersubjective mother/child relation, which Ann fears she endangered by growing up. As she put it, "I have reached an important part of my life where change is inevitable, but I am afraid to lose ... relationships as I now know them." Baby assures Ann, "I'm not hurt, not one scratch on me." Establishing that what she values in the past is safe, Ann began exploring her identity as a savior-hero through Woman. Whereas Baby and what she signifies are unaffected by the hurling cars, Woman, the dream's personification of mothering, is harmed. It makes narrative sense, then, that through this identification Ann decides (at least for the present) against a mother identity: Woman tells Ann that Baby is "not your responsibility."

Next, Ann developed another aspect of Woman—the pilgrim—or, more precisely, the pilgrimage. She decided to play a character she called "Road":

- ROAD: I am a highway. I am made of black concrete with yellow lines. There is something below that is making me shake violently.
- ME[ANN]: Please stop! You're scaring me.
- R: This will only last a minute.
- M: But you're hurting everyone.
- R: You are fine! You should feel happy, lucky even.
- M: I feel only panic and horror.
- R: Soon this will all be over, and you will again be happy.

Cars are the most obvious figure for U.S. traveling identities—as in the science fiction joke where cars are the earth's most prominent inhabitants, and outer space beings, observing global life, think all would be well if the cars were not ridden with those awful parasites! But roads are a venerable figure for traveling identities as well. At the opening of this article, discussing cars, I inevitably also invoked U.S. road metaphors—Route 61, Route 66, "my way or the highway," and so on. As an example of the road self-model, I turn to a favorite children's traveling movie, *The Wizard of Oz* (Langley et al. 1988).

The heroine, Dorothy, begins her adventure inside a tornado, passively riding her house through the air like a wildly out-of-control plane, crashing upon and killing a witch. In over-the-rainbow land, there are no mechanized means of transit, but there is a yellow road. Dorothy furthers her journey by “following” this road (as Glenda the good witch and the munchkins urge her to do), rather than by acting autonomously in the sense of “being her own boss,” to invoke another U.S. colloquialism. Her intersubjective form of autonomy is inclusive from beginning to end: Dorothy becomes the core member of a traveling party, reminding me of a contemporary song by Heidi Muller, “Good Road”:

It's a calling, a strange compulsion
That makes us leave our homes and take music on the road. ...
Good roads, good roads, wishing you a good road
May you find your comfort in friends along the way. [1989]

This song also associates “the road” with following—“a calling” or “a compulsion.” The road has long been a major figure in U.S. popular music because, akin to the car, it offers freedom—an escape from the intractable problems of real social contexts. Does it also suggest a traveling self-model compatible with intersubjectivity? Just as there are two features to the suitcase self—the ego and intersubjectivity—there appear to be two figures that convey it in dreams: the car and the roadway.

Like Dorothy, Ann's first reaction to transport is panic, but after dream play Ann wrote, “The road lets me know that I should be excited for change. ... Transition is difficult for me, but I do know that I'll soon be comfortable and find happiness in my new adventures.” Through this dreamwork Ann realized that “fear is not failure and ... my subconscious [is] cheering on my own independence. Being scared of the future doesn't mean it still won't happen.”

Ann's dream account and dreamwork anticipate the transition to postcollege life, practicing for it like play practices for adulthood—miming its threats and dangers. As Jung (1972), Wallace (1952), and Basso (1987) hold, this dream is prospective, supporting the forward movement of Ann's personality and the forward movement of her culture. Independence in the sense of moving beyond the limiting worlds of home and known relationships into an uncertain future often seems at odds with protecting one's capacity for love, trust, and intimacy. This incipient antipathy is the underside of the car self-model and is a

problem that women in the United States—embarking on their own roads yet feeling, as Dorothy says, clicking together her ruby slippers, “There’s no place like home”—face daily and, evidently, nightly as well.⁴

Ann’s dream play throughout seems allegorical: it has a *Pilgrim’s Progress* (Bunyan n.d.) quality because she is encountering cultural problems within her personal dream. Dream play is useful in the last phase of figurative analysis (zooming in on individual dreams) because it solicits the person’s *waking mind* to discover relations between dream images and consciously held norms, rules, and conventions. I do not say *conscious mind* here because in dream play people enlist what Stephen (1989, 1995) calls the autonomous imagination, drawing on ideas of which they are not fully conscious: they cannot tell you about them in the abstract beforehand. Of course, dream play mediates between personal experience represented in the dream and social reality at a different point than the dream itself. And by whatever means people account for their dreams, something is lost in translation. So, many dreamers make similar translations until “figurative culture” bends and morphs under impact.

Figurative Culture

By “figurative culture,” I refer to a wealth of shared images and their careers in public and private imaginings. It is not coincidental that both Clifford and Ann try out the pilgrim/pilgrimage as a model for travel: they are borrowing on the same cultural common. Images in culture, like words in a language, offer a shared array of models and schemas for making sense of experience, which members draw on and personalize, rendering them back enriched and changed. This process takes place along a range of locations, but dreams offer a special window on how people as subjects use circulating figures to continually reconstitute their sense of self and figurative culture along with it.

Freud (1961) sees the ego as aimed at solving problems in reality. Dreams, I have argued here, solve problems in meaning by acting on shared figures. In other words, the car self-model is supposed to mean independent movement and progress, but to Ann and many other dreamers it does not have this unequivocal significance. Her dream as well as her account and dreamwork show this discrepancy and act to shift figurative representations to accommodate Ann’s actual experience. This view resonates with Stephen’s (1995, 2003:102, 117, 122) that dreams represent an affective memory system that works through

new sensory data by sorting them into and helping to transform emotion schemas (cf. Ewing 2003; Mageo 2002a, 2003:23–42).

Dreams, dream accounts, and dreamwork like Ann's in this sense do "the work of culture." This phrase, of course, comes from Obeyesekere (1981, 1990), but cultural work, in his view, occurs through the evolution of "personal symbols," not through dream symbols. When individuals express private experience with public symbols, those symbols become personal. As an example, Obeyesekere presents the Sri Lankan ecstasies mentioned earlier. Their schizophrenogenic personal histories induce visions in which a god gives them matted locks. In Sri Lankan religious traditions, matted locks are a public symbol, which Sri Lankans generally see as signs of divine patronage and spiritual power. By articulating their private traumas with a cultural common of religious images, these women forge personal symbols, which gradually move them beyond painful affect and provide a path back into the social world: they become paid religious specialists. In contrast, Obeyesekere argues, dream symbols are simply products of "deep motivation"—those compulsions that psychoanalysts attribute to early family relations and see as "biologically based" even if "culturally influenced" (1981:80).

In light of the foregoing figurative analysis, I question this distinction. Early family relations effect an internalization not only of quasi-universal family dynamics but also, in Vygotsky's (1978:57) terms, of the culturally and historically specific social relations in which children develop. The contemporary culture of boys growing up in the United States, for example, is likely to favor ego development, while that of girls' usually favors intersubjectivity. People use the car as a symbol for self-models that these early relations foster, but Ann's dream discloses more than these relations and concomitant models: it illuminates her reactions to these models. Cultural models, together with our reactions to them, constitute deep motivations—motivations that render the self as a changing system entangled with others in shifting contexts, rather than merely with the verities and vicissitudes of its own biology. This interplay is the "motivation" behind Ann's dreams and dreamwork.

Many see the conscious ego alone as having motives—reasons and aims for action. Theorists since Jung, however, have viewed the self as characterized by subself systems with identities of their own, identities that people may not recognize (Hollan 2000). Thus, Ann said to Baby, "Who are you?" and Baby

responded, “I am you. Don’t you recognize me?” Though marginal or repressed in conscious life, in dreams these identities personify people’s feelings about culturally dominant self-models. Ann’s dream graphically depicts her feelings that the kind of independence the car self-model configures is out of control, injurious, and incompatible with intersubjectivity. These other identities, which I call counteridentities (in Ann’s dream: the baby, the woman, and the road), seek expression in and thus “motivate” dreams. These “deep,” in the sense of unrecognized, motivations generate culture by impelling people like Ann to reenvision their worlds. This reenvisioning occurs in dreams and continues in attempts to understand them.

Why, then, should we use dreams, and specifically figurative analysis, to understand culture? Would not a survey of conscious attitudes toward gender, for example, work as well? In a meta-analysis of gender studies, Hyde (2005:588–590) found that people’s self-reports strongly reflect gender norms. Only in situations of complete anonymity, what researchers call “deindividuated” situations, did they report violating social expectations in significant numbers. In ethnographic research, too, people are ready to tell an anthropologist about their norms and about how they personally embody them—granting that norms are a moving target apt to change between generations. But people are extremely reluctant to disclose thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that diverge from the norms they have internalized. Dreams in which the manifest content is out of line with cultural mores may suffer the same fate: people are reluctant to report them (Spiro 2003). In most dreams, however, like those of my car dream set, personal issues with social expectations are rendered symbolically in what Eggan (1952:477–478) calls “a safely cryptic manner,” which allows people to disclose feelings they would not ordinarily be willing to admit to others or even to themselves. Dreams can give a unique perspective on cultural self-models because there is an “I know not of what I speak” quality to these communications that permits people to explore anxiety-provoking topics like gendered identities under the cloak of obscurity. I do not mean that dreams or their accounts disguise latent dream thoughts, as in the Freudian model. Rather, as in Barthes’s (1977:54) analysis of the filmic image, people sense that there is an “obtuse” meaning. This obtuse quality provides cover even while it “compels an interrogative reading.” This interrogative reading, exemplified in Ann’s dream play, does more than investigate a mystery; it reconfigures a model.

How does figurative analysis supplement a person-centered approach that focuses on the personal life and history of the dreamer? Take, for example, Hollan's (2003, 2005) "selfscape" approach to dreaming. A "selfscape" dream is especially vivid and easy to recall; it depicts the individual's current state of body, personality, and relations with others. Hollan (2003:68–69) reports an intriguing dream of a Toraja elder he collected in the early 1980s in which planes approach and a bomb hits the elder who later stands up unhurt. The elder dreamed this as a young adult and said it foreshadowed the time when his parents and first wife died. At their funerals, he sacrificed many buffalo and feared financial ruin; the dream, he believed, forecast his triumph over these circumstances. Hollan persuasively argues that this elder felt his ritual obligations to be as destructive as aerial bombardment; the dream reflects the high price Toraja generally pay for their investment in family and social networks.

In a case such as this, figurative analysis might have added an understanding of dreams' relation to changing self-models. At the time the researcher collected this dream, he would also collect dreams throughout the village, determining if planes were salient dream figures and if planes as a symbol had contradictory features for Toraja. Making a subset of plane dreams, he would look for affiliated themes—possibly aerial bombardment, foreigners visiting, or relatives departing and returning. Examining plane dreams and their affiliated themes, when interpreted in relation to major cultural events such as World War II (was this elder living at that time?), transnationalism, and the encroachment of modernity, could give a fuller sense of how this elder's struggles with his own identity were part of reconfiguring models for being Toraja. Planes may represent a foreign self-model for Toraja but, if this elder was representative, one that they had begun thinking about and indigenizing in dreams, probably relating it to older forms of travel. As Clifford (1992) remarks, people the world over have histories of travel and, I would add, figures that evoke the shifting sense of self that derives from these histories.⁵

Ann's dream qualifies as a selfscape dream. She described it as extraordinarily vivid and wrote that, days later, "I was still able to replay its entire content in my head." Selfscape dreams may be useful in the last phase of figurative analysis because their images are strikingly clear and well formulated. In a figurative analysis, however, one collects all available dreams because shared figures within a collection will show a breath of fluctuation. All dreams in my car dream set, for

example, present variations in the car self-model that are telling in themselves and which provide a context for understanding individual dreams like Ann's.

Words and the meanings that attend on them, Strauss and Quinn hold, must be relatively stable to get us "through the day" (1997:5): if words had no stable significance, we could not communicate. But what do we need to get us through the night—through that time when, as in Freud's (1956) theory of dreams, our discontents with "civilization" surface and disturb us? We need a constant flow of reconfiguring self-models that accommodate personal and historical experiences incongruent with current models; we think in the images of dreams to arrive at them. Reconfigured models bleed back from imaginal into discursive forms over generational time without disrupting (too badly) the flow of social communication.

Retracing our road, my intent has been to illustrate a figurative method of analyzing dream collections and individual dreams within them—one that is distinctly anthropological, in that it revolves around culturally emergent figures rather than preestablished categories. Cars are a prominent figure in my dream collection—a self-model that is symbolically phallic, free and autonomous, Fordist, a cyborg, and fetishistic—a model that, despite its gendered talismans, occurred more frequently in female than in male dreams. In my study, this self-model posed different problems for the two sexes. In male dreams, cars were an unreliable source of self-worth: although males had supercars, they were not heroes in car dreams; cars often represented aggression unchecked by moral principles. Females associated cars with control and boundary problems but also with a developing sense of self-worth.

What is most surprising from a "nightly news" perspective is that dreaming is out in front of the market and popular entertainment. Eggan (1952:478–479) believes that there is "a distinct lag" between people's consciously held beliefs and their actual historical circumstances, a lag that dreams bridge. This is certainly the case in car dreams. Commercially men seem as identified with cars as ever. The values associated with cars—movement, progress, being big, strong, fast, powerful—are still constitutive of male movie heroism. But my data suggest that the psychological ground beneath these images may be subtly eroding. Ann's dream shows, moreover, how one young woman experienced car self-models and how, out of this experience, she reenvisioned herself and participated in the re-creation of U.S. traveling identities.

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Notes

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1. I see the self as constituted by acts of identification with internal elements of experience, with persons, groups, and representations in the cultural world (Mageo 1998:3–36; Mageo and Knauff 2002), and as fluctuating between contexts (Hall 1996). People organize and give cultural meanings to these identifications through shared self-models.

2. For examples, see Lohmann 2003; Mageo 2003; Stewart 2004.

3. For a comparison of Jung’s (1976) active imagination, Perls’s (1971) gestalt therapy, and Rogers’s (1951) client-centered therapy, see Mageo 2001.

4. Both *The Wizard of Oz* and “Good Roads” depict opposed urges toward “home” and “the road.” “Homes/houses” are another prominent figure in my dream collection. Homes might be apartments and have a variety of rooms that often appeared separately. In varying forms and ratios, images of dwelling and of traveling are probably important figures in many cultures that depict models for being a person. Other common figures in my collection include TVs, planes, forests, pets, guns, and of course numerous types of people such as boyfriends, girlfriends, parents, siblings, friends, and spouses.

5. Lohmann (2003) takes traveling to be a uniting theme in Pacific Islands dreaming.

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