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Good Morning, Africa! (Dreams and Identity in Morocco)

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Good Morning, Africa!

Chantal James

Abstract:

This is an exploration of identity using dreams in the Moroccan context. I formally spoke to around twenty-five Moroccans for my research and spoke briefly or casually about the subject of dreams with many more, almost everyone I became friendly with. I give no personal information about the people who spoke to me without their consent, and I give all credit where it's due, I hope. I set out from Rabat on the 10:30 train to Marrakesh, to spend my three weeks there.

I kept a copy of *Dreams*, a collected works of Jung, by my side. I kept copious notes in a few journals. I wrote down my own dreams. I drew doodles of hideous monsters. I wrote stories. I became a master of the game of spades. I met some people I'll never forget, and some people I'll always love. I fell in love with the city of Marrakesh something like a thousand times.

I thought long and hard about the nature of dreaming. I thought long and hard about the nature of truth. I thought long and hard about my own nature, and the nature of Morocco as far as I could see it.

And this is what happened.

GOOD MORNING, AFRICA!
(DREAMS AND IDENTITY IN MOROCCO)
by Chantal James

SIT Study Abroad Morocco, Fall 2005
The Center for Cross-Cultural Learning, Rabat
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I.

Foreword

"All this may be true or not, but only God knows."

I came to Marrakesh, city of dreams, city of magic, as a foreigner. This is a story about a city and what it revealed to me; but also, a story about a city and how it changed me. This is a story about the magical, wild kingdom where the city is found, and how I learned to begin seeing it for what it was, beyond my romantic fantasies.

But more: it's a story about reality, intangible. About: the relation of dream to waking life; about the positioning of the dream as a limbo-world between the living and the dying.

I cannot remove myself from this story, and leave my data suspended, ego-less. I cannot assume, as do certain Western traditions of scholarship that I inherit, that reality is objective, that we can come to a whole idea of truth only by measuring the world outside of the individual, neglecting the vast realms of subjective reality within us all. For this is also a story about the subjective and the objective, and which of the two realities is realer. It is the story about the personal world of the dream, and its unique relation to the objective reality we all share.

It is the story of the dream and the individual's journey through it. It is the story of the ego's navigation through two worlds: the world of his private reality and the world of social reality.

It's the story of an American black girl and her interaction with the social realities of a North African culture. It's an exploration of her own identity in the context of Moroccan dreams, as much as it is an exploration of the identities of Moroccans, through their dreams and through their opinions about the significance of dreaming.

Good morning, Morocco, and tell me what you dreamt of last night, and tell me who I am in the face of your new day.

II.

Questions of Identity: Mine and Morocco's

What is the relationship of the identity to the dream? This is the core and primary dilemma from which all else here descends. Within it are a number of other initial questions, such as, "what is identity?". My answer to that one is very basic: identity is what a thing is.

But this narrative is not destined to be so abstract as all that. It is not necessarily the exploration of identity itself, but of some very specific identities: my own American identity and the Moroccan identity. It is an exploration of the interaction between those two identities, and of the relation of the Moroccan one to the world of dreaming.

So here's another question: "What is meant by this idea of the "Moroccan identity"?" There are two distinct answers: there is the idea of the unified national identity, the whole composed of every living Moroccan, in combination with all of the history of Morocco as a political and cultural entity. And then there is the idea of the Moroccan individual: the way that the individual views himself in the context of his culture and the way that his culture views him in turn. This distinction between the collective and the individual is the first step in the effort to discuss identity in the context of dreams.

What does Morocco identify itself to be, as a whole? And who do individual Moroccans think they are? Although it is necessary for me to ask these questions, they are so large in scope, and my perspective so limited, that I can only begin to answer briefly. Morocco is itself on the cusp of so many identities: it is a state founded by Arabs more than a thousand years ago, whose primary religion is Islam, and it stands in a position of stark opposition to the world of Christianity, less than 13 km across the water. It is an African country on the edge of Europe. It is an ancient civilization on the cusp of the modern age. Because Morocco is at the brink of so many identities, I think that the subject of identity has unique relevance here. And who do Moroccans think they are? My research has been limited to Moroccans who live in cities, and to Moroccans who consider themselves Muslim. There are as many answers to that one as there are Moroccans, and I, an outsider here before I am anything else, can only timidly attempt to provide a few. That will come later.

In order to study identity in a foreign culture I must also come to terms with my own identity within it, with my own peculiar orientation to and relationship with Morocco. Who am I, here? An outsider, a foreigner. An American—but one with a very peculiar kind of identity within America. I am a black American; I'm an American whose ancestors have been in America for hundreds of years, thousands in some cases. Most of my ancestors are of an imprecise West African origin, but some were American Indians, and a few were white. I am a member of the community of African Americans, with its strange position as a racial and emotional and psychological reservoir within America, and its complicated orientation towards America's self identity. I think the function of the black American has always been to counter America's image of itself, to allow America to define itself as good and holy and white, to allow America to see itself the way it wanted to be seen. The black American is the anti-American.

So, although I know that the relationship of America to Morocco is like the one of colonizer to colonized—that America to Morocco is a cultural giant, an economic superpower—and though I know that as an American in Morocco that is part of my identity, I also know that there is far more to my identity here than that. Here, I am a half-breed, an African American in Africa, colonizer and colonized at once. So it is not my place to approach my research as a colonizer, to seek to reconcile the knowledge of a foreign system with some kind of assumed objective body of knowledge, which is, in reality, only the body of knowledge of one culture, the West. I must acknowledge the limits of objectivity. I must give a certain amount of validity to the subjective perspective. It is only by approaching the study of dreams with a degree of subjectivity that I can hope to get an accurate idea of the dream's peculiar position, between the worlds of subjective and objective reality. It is only by moving, myself, between the objective and the subjective, that I can come to know that each is valid, that each is true. I have a half-breed's perspective, and I must take part in both worlds.

Perhaps the best I can do is to know that this knowledge I gain, through the process of observing and interacting with this culture that does not belong to me, is to integrate it into my own personal body of knowledge. To make it belong to me. To acknowledge that I filter it through myself, and cannot help but to do so. My personality and my identity cannot be objectively separated from this work. If

I am to study identity here, I must also take note of the implications of my own identity, the imprint my own identity leaves on the world that is before me to observe. In the end, the observer cannot be separated from her observations.

III.

To Define the Word Dream

The word “dream” has a multiple linguistic implication in each of the three languages that were available for my use in interacting with Moroccans. The English word dream, the French *rêve*, and the Arabic *ablen* all share something deeper than their surface definitions. For when we speak of dreaming, in any of the three tongues, we may mean one of two things. A dream is either: a) an experience the self has while the body sleeps, during which recognizable parts of the waking experience are simulated and reassembled, or b) a desire, a personal wish for the future. Although I am primarily concerned with definition a, definition b holds a clue to the nature of dreams in its own way.

For one thing, the fact that language tacitly acknowledges a connection between those experiences we have when our bodies are asleep and between the things that we deeply desire while awake, is an inherent and inevitable precursor to the theories of Freud, according to whom every dream (a) is a wish (b) fulfilled. According to Freud definition a equals definition b. They are one and the same.

I suspect that our Austrian friend was not the first to come up with this idea, and my main evidence for that assertion is this linguistic link. One young woman I spoke with expressed the view that we dream about things we wish we could have in real life, but that we can't have. She had never heard of Freud. She gave the example of a recurring dream of hers. She often dreamed, she said, that she and an ex-boyfriend were still together, and she took this dream as a result of the fact that she still wanted to be with him. Incidentally, when a friend of hers briefly entered the room where we were talking, I asked her, almost jokingly, "Do you have any dreams?" "Yes," she said, and laughed: "I want to be a rich woman."

I relate this anecdote only to illustrate further the natural link between the two aspects of the word dream. This second definition--dream as desire--is particularly pertinent when we begin to talk of identity in the context of dreams, particularly national identity. For when we begin to speak of the "Moroccan identity" as being collective and national, it can become slightly difficult to talk about the

individual, personal dream. True, there are common individual dreams, particularly when a cultural system of dream interpretation recognizes certain themes. But to find enough people with the same dream in a nation of 30 million would be exhausting. It can be more relevant to talk about dreams as desire when exploring collective cultural identity.

I come from a country where the dream as desire is a huge part of national identity. We speak of "The American Dream" with a fervor that has perhaps become hopelessly cliché in its repetition. The American Dream, the American desire, is to make of one's self exactly what one wants to be, regardless of the circumstances of one's birth. It is a desire rooted very deeply in the concept of individuality, in the validity—perhaps even the sanctity—of the individual. And, because it often has to do with the quest for personal wealth, it can be a desire rooted very deeply in capitalism.

So is there a Moroccan Dream? The question was posed to me during a conversation once, as something that I should seek to answer with my project. In an age where thousands of Africans, Moroccan and otherwise, risk their lives to cross the Strait of Gibraltar into Europe¹, it is a very good question indeed. I think the answer may be that Morocco does not provide the proper context for such a dream, and that this dream people risk their lives chasing is the Dream of the West—the ideal of the West, the West as it presents itself and as it hopes to be, a land where the individual forges his own identity and is richly rewarded for it. A land where it is enough to be an individual, where one is not burdened by the oppressive weight of history, and where every motion forward does not require "negotiation with the past," as one helpful informant put it.

For in order to understand dreaming in Morocco, and in order to understand the dreamer; we must first have a clear picture of what personal identity means here, and of what value is placed on the individual. Morocco is not America, whose history is built and has always been built on the effacement of what was before. In America the child is taught to go forth and be better than his parents, bigger than his parents, to wipe the slate clean and remake himself. There is an attitude of repulsion towards the past. The history of thousands of years of human wisdom on our continent was erased with one bold swoop, or several, when England decided to make her colonies there. In

¹ I owe Said Graiouid for this one.

such a climate, it is no wonder that the individual's desires are given paramount importance. The individual is the agent of the future, the agent of the present, against a past which grows smaller and smaller behind him as he watches his distance from it grow.

Not so in Morocco, whose history as a unified political entity dates to the year 788 AD². Since then, every move forward, every progression and advance, has been made with the careful attempt not to disturb what was there before, to preserve the ideals and the monuments of the ancestors. What do the dreams of the individual mean in the midst of such a powerful collective force, the force of unity under history and under religion? What do the desires of a woman mean in the face of convention and history and religion which view her very body as dangerous, her mind still more so?

No, there is no Moroccan Dream, or if there is it is not the American one. I do not think that the situation of either country is better than the other; I could not say, as an African-American of good conscience, that I feel that the historical emphasis on enterprise and individuality in America is particularly healthy, benevolent, or compassionate. But to compare the two outlooks on individuality can be very useful, and it helps to clarify exactly which definition of the dream is more pertinent, is more relevant to the question of identity in Morocco.

In a world where one's material reality is very much dictated by circumstances far beyond individual control, in a world where the body may be stifled by poverty, the desires of the present crippled by history, the immaterial and the metaphysical gain a very special importance. It is for this reason that the dreams that are to be spoken of here are of the first definition—the images that come upon us when we sleep, the worlds to which the spirit escapes when the body rests, where it can be unburdened and unshackled and may live out all that it hopes for itself.

² See a Wikipedia.org article titled “The History of Morocco”

IV.

On Conflicts of Identity Within the Dreams of Moroccans

My original idea for this paper was that it would use dreams to explore not just the Moroccan identity, but more specifically, conflicts within that identity. I hoped to explore the dream as a kind of battlefield for conflicts of identity. I think I have done so, but in a far different way than I would have imagined. For what follows is not necessarily an account of the clash between various Moroccan identities, but the clash between my world as I knew it in America—my own identity as an American—and the world as it is in Morocco. It is the clash between the identity of one American individual, and the powers accorded to the Moroccan individual, as he or she is identified here. Present within this work is a constant battle or tension. It is a weighing or a measuring: "this is the way the world once seemed to me", versus this new way of evaluating experience, these new values accorded to the role of the individual's identity and the powers of the supernatural. It is for that reason that I constantly refer to my identity as an American, and to facts of human experience as they are in America. I want it to be absolutely clear that I do not place a value on either identity. In America, as in Morocco, there are facts of the interpretation of existence and experience with which I utterly disagree. But in Morocco, as in America, everything that I feel, even utter opposition, is mixed with an immeasurable amount of love and a degree of respect. I say this because I want it to be understood that any claims I make about Morocco and its people come from a place of love, respect, and total fascination. And likewise, anything I say about my own country rises from my very conflicted relationship with it, which is sometimes tempestuous, sometimes frustrating, sometimes angry, but always, forever, and fiercely loving.

These conflicts and tensions—the tension between love and criticism, and the tension inherent in seeking to understand a culture to which you will always be an outsider, and the tension of comparison between two drastically different ways of looking at the world—have become far more interesting to me, and far more integral to my project, than the original conflicts I wanted to explore.

But to do my earlier vision some justice, and to make the end result a more harmonious whole, I'm going to stop to explore the relationship between conflicts within identity and dreams.

A Moroccan surfer friend in Rabat told me about a dream of his: he was at the beach with his surfboard and ready to surf, surrounded by his family and friends and almost everybody he'd ever known. The waves were high, and everyone on the shore told him not to go in, but he went in anyway. He rode the first two waves without any difficulty, but on the third he was thrown off his board and pulled underwater. He couldn't breathe under the ocean, but he could see, and he was sure that he would drown and die when a white hand reached under the water. He grasped it, and the second he took hold of it he realized that he could breathe, though he was still submerged. The hand pulled him up out of the water, where he saw that it belonged to Jesus Christ.

In his waking life at the time of this dream, my friend explained to me, a Christian friend of his had been pressing him very hard to convert from Islam to Christianity. My surfer friend saw the dream as a manifestation of this conflict within him, between seductive words of conviction and the world and religion that had birthed and nursed him. He said that, in the dream, though his family and friends could give him advice against taking a certain course, in the end even they couldn't save him. In his hour of desperation, the only one who could save him was Jesus. That voyage into the dark stormy ocean (a symbol for the waters of the unconscious, I think Jung would say) would have to be undertaken alone, he would have to leave everything he'd ever known behind, and at the other end only Jesus, this stranger, would be waiting for him.

I said, "So that means you don't want to convert to Christianity, right?" He said no. He loved his country, he loved his religion (the two, in Morocco, are very closely related). But he thought it was an interesting example of the interaction between waking life and the dream. I thought so too.

I also thought it was an interesting illustration of how a perennial conflict in the Moroccan identity made its appearance in a dream. It is the old conflict between the Moors and the Vandals of Spain, at least in my romantic imagination. It is the medieval conflict between Christianity and Islam, which continues to this day under different forms. It is the clash of worldviews, and it is the inevitability of

the choice between the two. The choice is Islam, the choice is Morocco—but how long, Moroccans must wonder, do they keep fighting, and how long can tradition hold out against the modern age, the age of Europe's brutal domination? I think that this has been a central question for Morocco since the last Moors from Grenada were expelled in 1492, ending for once and for all the Golden Age of a Moroccan empire that once stretched all the way from modern Senegal to northern Spain³. I think that Morocco has always done a remarkable job of resisting, holding on to its glory and its dignity and its autonomy, even throughout the age of colonization. But it is a constant conflict, now more than ever, of knowing what adaptations and compromises and evolutions to make in order to stay in step with the West without losing its own identity.

Another potential conflict of identity, illustrated by another dreamer: the tension between the rational and the chaos of the unconscious. In the West, this is quite a natural tension, and I had assumed that it would be the same here: the idea that truth is what comes out of rational, conscious thought and action, and that what is not rational is not truth, and that truth cannot be arrived at without the rational process. But here, a young man who told me that he considered himself to be a very rational and mathematical thinker in the next breath said that he deeply believed that dreams are a form of truth, and that they can be, in his words, "an extension of rationality." He gave the example of Thomas Edison, who, according to him, received inspiration for his inventions from his dreams. And he said that when in his own work as a computer programmer, he comes across a problem or a function that he can't solve, he will often decide to go to sleep. When he wakes he finds that the solution has been revealed to him in a dream.

In his case, the chaos of the unconscious is harnessed to serve a rational purpose. A potential conflict between two ways of identifying is settled, the conflict between two worlds resolved, using the dream as a mediator. It is through this function of the dream, and its contrast to the usual function of the dream in America's worldview, that the real story of conflict within dreams will emerge.

³ I cannot give an exact reference for the information in this sentence, as it is fairly broad and common knowledge, but a good resource on the subject is *The Golden Age of the Moors*, edited by Dr. Ivan Sertima and published by the Journal of African Civilizations in Fall 1992.

V.

The Dream and Living Islam

It is impossible to thoroughly discuss any topic in Morocco without mentioning the influence of its religion, and this is especially the case with a topic so metaphysical as dreaming. For Islam itself came out of a sort of dream; the Koran was revealed to the prophet Mohammed by the angel Gibreel in visions. Dream and vision play a prominent role in both the Koran itself and the religion it birthed--the Straight Path, the way of peace.

It may go without saying that I am not an Islamic scholar. Nor have I chosen to consult the written works of any Islamic scholars, except second-hand. I do not think that my work is worse for it. I want to present the information in this section as though it is word of mouth before it is dogmatic fact, because it was transmitted to me by word of mouth, and because I think that is often the way such information is transmitted in a culture. Islam lives and breathes not only in the Holy Koran and the works of holy scholars, but in the words and the actions of those who live each day in devotion to Allah, in their applications of the Koran to their lives, in their applications of their fathers' interpretations of the Koran to their lives, in the things they've heard from Fatima next door, in silly, forgivable misinterpretations of the Koran, in grave, unforgivable misinterpretations of the Koran, in the honest attempt to live justly and according to the laws of God. I heard conflicting and inconsistent points of view when I talked to people. And that in its own way is beautiful. That is what a religion looks like when it is alive, carried in the hearts of millions, some of whom are bitter enemies, some of whom love one another, most of whom will never meet or hear of each other, and whose experiences of life are as varied as their personalities.

I heard that you should never tell anyone your dreams, because they are private property. I heard that you can tell a good dream, but that if you tell anyone a bad dream you've had it will come true. I've heard that if you tell someone a good dream, it won't come true. I've heard that it doesn't matter at all which dreams you tell, that telling a dream has no impact on whether it will later be true.

A man I sat next to on a train, who carried a pocket-sized Koran with him, told me something like this, "If something exists, then it exists. If it doesn't exist, it doesn't exist. If you ask God something, he will give it, but dreams are not from God, and they are not real."⁴ In his view the dream world is illusory, often sent from Shaitan. But the owner of an art gallery in Marrakech said, "Allah gives us life and everything in it, so of course He gives us dreams."

"There is a difference," I was told by a retired professor, between a dream and a vision." A dream is often from Shaitan when it contains the fulfilment of a waking desire. Otherwise, it is likely to be without meaning, to be the redigested content of the day. A vision, on the other hand comes from Allah. It occurs in the twilight before sleep, and is not technically a dream. The best come between three and four o'clock in the morning, before the sunrise call to prayer, and they are more likely to come to the devoutly religious. The most optimal time of year for a vision is the springtime. It was repeated and confirmed for me over and over again: *If you see the face of the Prophet in a dream, it is truly him.* The devil cannot come to you disguised as Mohammed. It is also said that the dreams of children are most likely to be true, because children are so pure of heart.

Zaineb, the sister-in-law of a taxi driver, told me something that everyone I spoke with afterwards was able to confirm as in accordance with Islam. She said that there are three types of dreams: *hun*, which consist of your day, digested, and of your own wishes and desires for yourself; *aro'iyah*, which consists of a message Allah wants you to know; and *noubou'ah*, a premonition of the future, in which you have the distinct feeling that something will happen. She also said that when a dream recurs, it holds a very important message for you.

I was told by someone else about a prayer, the *Salat Al-istiskhar*. It is to be done when one embarks on an important project, such as a marriage or economic investment. After it is prayed, you are to go to sleep, for you have asked that God reveal to you whether your endeavour will help or harm you.

Several people mentioned to me that dreams are very present as a subject in the Koran itself. More than once, the story of Joseph and his coat of many colors was related to me. It's a story that is

⁴ Rough translation from the Arabic and French

paralleled in the Juedo-Christian bible, where Joseph's dream as a boy arouses jealousy in his brothers, who feign his death and sell him into slavery in Egypt. There his dreams will come in handy when he uses them to advise the Pharaoh about an eminent famine.

And I should discuss the concept of the *jinn*⁵ and its place in the Moroccan worldview. A *jinn* is a kind of spirit, somewhat like a ghost, which can belong to someone who has died or to something that has never had a human body. *Jinni* are not physical, but they can make their presence felt in the physical realm in small ways, such as by causing a flame to go out, or the lights in a room to flicker. Some are benevolent, but most of them are fairly mischievous, though relatively harmless. Despite their limited powers in the physical realm, *jinni* have great powers in the realm of dreams, where they can interact with the dreaming human being, and where they possess the ability to take almost any form they chose. This is where shaitan, the devil, may use *jinni* for his purposes.

One can come to quite a few conclusions about the general climate of shared metaphysical assumptions within Morocco, and several of these will be integral to my later arguments. Belief in the existence of the *jinni*, for example, presupposes something very important: that there is a kind of reality, of which dreams are a part, which is beyond, separate from, and parallel to, physical/material reality. Belief in the Salat Al-Istiskhar presupposes that the will may be projected into a dream. Another important idea: that dreams of the significant kind do not necessarily come from the latent individual personality, but are sent by forces beyond the individual. Keep all of these things in mind.

All of my conversations revealed that the dream has a specific and important role in the lives of Moroccans, and that dreaming is something which is often discussed among people, with great fascination, awe, and enthusiasm. This has to do in some part with the huge significance the dream is accorded within Islam. I could see that a great deal of passionate emotion rises when people attempt to reconcile their own experiences with dreaming, and their own opinions about it, with some sort of standard, "correct" definition.

⁵ My best informant about the *jinni* was a nice fellow named Mohammed Hammeda, who worked as an herbalist in Marrakesh, but this website has some additional information, with references to the Koran and the Sunnah: <http://muttaqun.com/jinn.html>.

VI.

Dream Symbolism

A primary step in decoding dreams has always been to notice certain symbols or motifs, and to assign them meaning. This is as true of the psychologies of Jung and Freud as it is of the mythologies of nearly every culture, living and dead.

And so what follows is a brief collected index of the meanings attributed to various dream symbols in a traditional Moroccan/Islamic system of interpretation. They were handed to me orally. I include this index not only because it's interesting, but because it will play a part in what comes afterward.

IF, IN A DREAM, YOU NOTICE THESE OBJECTS:

Melon: you'll get sick

An apricot or peach out of season: you'll be sick

Lentils, chickpeas, carrots, onions, eggs, or garlic: all bad omens, of a vague nature

Figs: you'll experience personal problems

Banana or strawberry: you'll get a lot of money

Rice: you'll get money, but not easily

Fish: money, or a baby

Rings: a baby or money is headed your way

Counterfeit money: someone will lie to you

Money: you'll learn something

White salt: money

Growing wheat: money

Grains of wheat spilled on the ground: you'll cry

A Fan: you'll get rid of a problem

A thief or pickpocket: someone in your family will die

Doors in the sky: the year will be good for rain

A dog or a serpent: someone close to you wishes to harm you

IF, IN A DREAM, THESE THINGS OCCUR:

You are fat: you'll get money

You are poor: you'll be rich

You are making juice: you'll get rich

The weather is rainy: you'll cry

You are crying: you'll be happy

You are doing your hair: you'll be happy, but only for a short time

You give someone money or something to drink: you will do a good deed

You are pregnant: there is a problem that weighs heavily on your consciousness

You give birth to the baby: a solution to your problem is eminent

You are breastfeeding: someone is draining you, of money or resources or emotional energy

Someone who has died in real life gives you something: something good will happen

Someone who has died takes you with them someplace: you'll die

You are eating chicken or meat: someone you know will die

You are putting on your shoes: you'll travel soon

You put on your shoes, but one falls off: a brother or a sister will die

A mosque topples: a very holy person will die

You or someone else dies: the one who died in the dream will have a long life

You die in a horrible and frightening or painful way: you will die poor

Your tooth falls out: someone in your family will die

You are praying: something good is headed your way

You have a daughter: vague good omen

You have a son: vague bad omen

Someone cuts you: you'll do something stupid



If a man dreams that he finds a treasure, it means that, in the waking world, his wife or girlfriend is pregnant. If he dreams that he is in a nice garden, it means he will find a wife soon.

If a woman has a dream about a tree, it means she'll find a husband soon. If it's an olive tree, he will be a good man. If it's an almond tree, he will be a strange man. A pomegranate tree: a strange man.

If a pregnant woman begins to dream about things which are very specifically masculine, it may mean that her child will be a boy. If she dreams of things with very obviously feminine connotations, which do not apply to her own waking life, it may mean that she'll give birth to a girl.

VII.

The Position of the Dream Between Realities

"After having given birth to a stillborn baby boy, I had a dream that he still lived, and that I was breastfeeding him. I woke to find my sheets wet with my own breastmilk."

"Before my husband became sick, I saw him in a dream. He told me that he was going to become sick soon, and he gave me a bag that had three golden bracelets in it."

"In a dream I had, a woman told me that a friend of mine would be rich, and in real life she later came into a lot of money."

"I once had a very disturbing dream. I called my sister to tell her about it, and to my amazement she said that she had had the exact same dream the night before. Later that day, our aunt died."

"When I was very young and had not yet married, I saw the man who would be my husband in a dream, before I had any idea of who he was. He appeared to me and told me that he was to be my husband. That later turned out to be true. Sometimes I'm afraid to have a dream, because they so often turn out to be true!"

These stories belong to living Moroccan women. They are not mine, but I borrow them, because in them is illustrated, most subtly and peculiarly, the intersection of the subjective reality of the dream with the objective reality of waking life. In them, the world of the dream—this private vision, a world open to the view of only one person—spills past its bounds, and into so-called "real life".

One of the first things I asked the people I talked to was whether or not, in their view, the world of dreams is as real as the world of waking life. Usually the answer was no; of course dream experience is not the same as "real", waking experience. They are not the same thing. They are two worlds.

So which is realer: the world of subjectivity, the private world, the world of the mind, and of dreams; or, the solid world that grips us when we wake, those facts which we all can agree on, because we can all see them before our own eyes? This is a question that has obsessed me for years. It is a question of the nature of reality, of the nature of truth itself. In the context of Moroccan dreams, there is only one answer to it: that both are real. Both the subjective and the objective can be said to be real, or

true. But their realities are distinct, and sometimes irreconcilable. Dreams and their aftermath, and dreams and their precursors, are an attempt to reconcile them. The dream is used to navigate, and to negotiate, between at least four pairs of separate realities, of which the pair "subjective and objective" is only one. Another is "the living and the dying", a third is "past and future", and another, of course, is "unconscious and conscious".

I will briefly return to an exploration of dream as desire; the desire of an individual and its role as the motivation behind his action in the objective world, and whether it can be said that there is a "Moroccan Dream", rooted in the idea that the identity of the individual is of primary significance. Remember that its counterpart, the American Dream, is not something whose existence is to be validated in the kind of dreams we have when we sleep. The American Dream is a Dream of action. It is fuelled by action and motion in waking, objective life. It is fuelled by the knowledge, or at least the belief, that one day it will not be a Dream. One day, it will be Real. The American Dream—which uses the definition of dream as desire, not as experience while the body sleeps—is a way of navigating between the subjective reality of desire, the personal, private reality which is desire, and objective reality, where one can enjoy things like material prosperity in the plain view of other people, and with the agreement on the part of other people that one's experience as "prosperous" is real. The dream is a go-between. It exists between these two worlds, one subjective, one objective. And it exists to carry the subjective into the objective, and make it "real", so to speak.

The idea of the American Dream is dangerous, of course, because it is not always a reality. It is not possible for everyone in America to become prosperous, regardless of his or her origins, and the reasons why it's not always possible, or why it doesn't always happen, are numerous and complicated; they have to do with several kinds of injustice that there isn't time to go into. But regardless of the fact that the American Dream may or not carry forth into objective reality, as a subjective reality it is very real, and the national belief that any man can make of himself whatever he likes keeps a lot of wheels turning.

What happens, though, when we take away that belief? What happens in a world where no one bothers to pretend that any desire can be made real? This is the world of objectivity in Morocco; it's a world, an objective world, where certain types of subjectivity, such as desire, are not given objective validity. A dream is a dream. A desire is a desire. The objective world lies very distinct from these. There are objective circumstances, in the face of which the individual's will is powerless. The Moroccan Islamic worldview can be one that does not afford an incredible amount of authority to the personal will, the will of the identity of the individual. Only Allah knows the future; an individual cannot assert with absolute certainty that his will or desire will come to fruition. The phrase *Enshallah*, or God willing, is a necessary appendix to almost any assertive claim about the future. My personal future is not about what *I* will, as it is in the individualistic West. It is a matter of the will of God. It was said to me by a very gracious informant that I should preface my paper on dreams with this statement, and I have: "All this may be true or not, but only God knows." This is reflective of a worldview in which the power to define truth, personal and otherwise, is granted not to the will of the individual, but to the will of the Divine.

And so the will, discouraged from action in the material world, turns inward. In Morocco, the kind of dreams that occur in sleep may serve the same function as the American Dream, a waking desire. They serve as the go-between between the subjectivity of desire and objective material reality. They serve to make the desire "real", the subjective objective. And they sometimes serve their function in ways that seem astounding or miraculous. Because, like the American Dream, a dream the dreamer has while awake, they can interfere with the waking world. In a very real way, they can allow the subjective desire to make its presence felt in objective reality. Though they are themselves aspects of the subconscious, dreams can do, in Morocco, what in America is done most often with the conscious will.

It should also come as no surprise that the stories at the beginning of this section are the stories of women. In particular, they are all the stories of women over the age of fifty, who came of age at a time when the prospects for a woman in the world, and in Morocco in particular, were quite different than they are now. The three women from whom those five accounts come have spent most of their

lives indoors, first as young girls, then as wives and mothers, and their physical contact with the world outside of the household was very limited. These are the stories of people whose desires could not always be manifest in the objective world through the work of the conscious will. And so these desires made themselves manifest in objectivity through other means. I can't purport to offer a mechanism as to precisely how it happens; yet it does.

The dream is not only a medium between subjective desire and the objective material world, but it is also used to gain a foothold in other worlds where the will of the living individual has no absolute authority. The dream in Morocco can be a medium between the world of the living and the world of the dying, for example. Remember the list of dream symbols? Negotiations or predictions about death figure as quite a prominent theme. Of more than fifty total symbols I was able to provide, about eight have to do with death and length of life. It may be true that in Morocco the individual will is granted limited control over the circumstances of life, but it would seem that the Moroccan's control over the fact of his inevitable death would be as limited as it is for any human being, anywhere in the world. It would seem this way, but it may not be entirely true.

In Morocco, there are means of interacting with death from the side of the living. There are ways of predicting one's own death and the deaths of others. There are ways of speaking with or seeing people who have already died. The dream can make all of these things possible.

It was said to me, for example, that when someone who has died appears in a dream, they always speak the truth. In my interactions with Moroccans, I heard numerous stories regarding someone who had died, and who later appeared in a dream. In one instance, a dead father used his daughter's dream to mediate a conflict between a brother and sister of hers who had not been on speaking terms for four years. In a dream the father told his daughter to ask her husband, the dead father's son-in-law, to step in and mediate, and he asked the dreamer to ask another brother, a meddler, to stay out of things. The conflict was resolved thus, in waking life. "The soul never dies," another woman said to me. Dreams can become a way to validate the continuity of the soul. The dead and the living can interact. Through a dream, such as the one I've just related, the dead can have a measurable impact

on the world of the living. Here again, the dream becomes the intersection of two very distinct kinds of reality, two realities between which there would otherwise be an insurmountable barrier.

In addition to this, there is the fact that dreams are a way to negotiate between the past, present, and future. The system of dream interpretation in Morocco is not simply intended to serve as a clue to what may be on the dreamer's mind, behind the dream. Each symbol in the index I provided earlier corresponds not to a state of the psyche, but to a state of the physical, objective world. They are intended, in a real way, to serve as a guide for the future, to provide a means for interacting with the future from the safety of the present—by avoiding a potential fate, by knowing what good things to expect, by knowing now who intends to harm you later. You can use a dream, this thing which rises out of the past of your personal perspective and experience, to guide your steps in the future, as with the Prayer of Al-Istiskhar. The dream, an alternate present to that of waking life, stands poised in this way as a gateway between past and future. It exists in a no-where land between the two, containing within it the seeds of both. It is another present, a subjective present to mirror the present moment in which one finds oneself upon waking into objective reality.

I want to return again to the perspective of my friend the computer programmer, who uses dreams to solve rational problems that cannot be solved consciously. The dream becomes a decipherable presentation of some of the vast and hidden reserves of the unconscious. It is a way in which the unconscious presents itself to the conscious mind, and as such it is a bridge between those two worlds as well, between the enigma of the unconscious and the clarity of conscious, waking experience.

The dream in Morocco stands astride the gap between the conscious and the unconscious, between the objective and the subjective, between the living and the dead, between the past and the future. It is a bridge between the irreconcilable, and it makes possible what is impossible otherwise. It does this because it exists within a worldview that takes for granted something that is rarely acknowledged where I come from: that there are real, valid worlds beyond the physical, beyond the objective, beyond the rational. And although the Moroccan outlook may err when it assumes that the

circumstances of the world are totally fixed by forces outside of us, and that there's nothing we can do about it, Morocco admits plainly something that America often denies: that there is a limit to the individual will. That the identity of the individual is not all-important, is not absolute, and that to have some power in this world, the world of this present objective moment, one must call on the worlds beyond this one, and on powers beyond one's very consciousness.

VIII.

Afterward: Good Morning, Africa

One weekend in Chefchouen, while this project had its existence only in my own thoughts, itself a kind of dream, a man called out to me as I passed him. He said, “Good morning, Africa!” and he was full of the joy of being alive and the joy of hollering at a woman. I yelled back to him—“Good morning, Africa!” And I was also full of a kind of joy, the joy of being new in this world, the joy of being in a new world.

Why was his greeting to me important? He might have been just another Moroccan man harassing another foreign woman. He called out to me because I was young, because I was a girl, and because it was obvious to him that I was not from Morocco.

But he called me Africa. And in that name that he gave me, he reflected back to me my own image, his image of my identity: a young black woman from another country. That is who I am in Morocco, and I can never forget it. Why should I? There is beauty in it.

The story of my time here in Morocco is nothing more than the reflexive, reflective account of my reactions to Morocco and Morocco’s reactions to me. Mirrors, double mirrors that face each other and repeat an image into infinity: flipped backwards, flipped forward, onward, forever. Twin realities.

To speak of the dream here is to begin to speak of twin realities. It is to begin to expand one’s view of the world. It is to begin to accept that things are always more complicated than they seem—because what does it mean, for something to seem? It means that it takes the form of a subjective reality. It implies that the thing takes part in multiple existences, in multiple realities. And, when no reality is valued over another, it implies that the thing takes part in multiple truths, and hence that there are a few kinds of truth.

Morocco knows what it is to take part in multiple identities. Morocco, which sits atop this continent as though it is on the very horizon of Africa (Good morning!). As though it knows exactly how to walk the horizon, how to walk the border, how to keep the balance between realities.

Good morning to worlds we cannot imagine, and to the worlds of the imagination, and to all the grief and love and hope of the solid world of the senses—all these, all this. All this may be true or not, but only God knows.

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