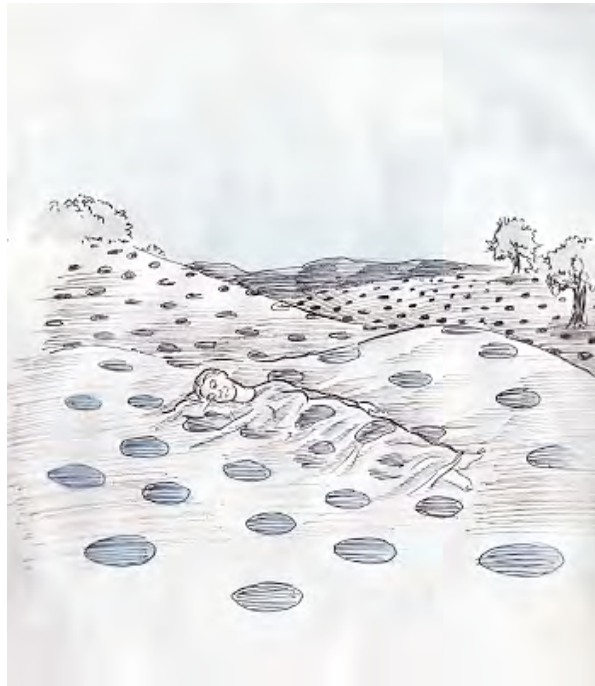


The landscape of our dreams

- foundations of dream geography

(Surrealism & Geography 3)



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The landscape of our dreams - foundations of dream geography

With no ambition to anticipate the (swedish-language) book about dream geography planned by the cormorant council, this is a collection of some of the points of departure. Being more or less strictly theoretical, it needs to be read in parallel with actual dream accounts such as those on the Cormorant Council blog.



THE CORMORANT COUNCIL Station for dream geography studies

The cormorant council was founded in november 2007 as a forum for collective dream research and exchange of dream experiences. Simply phrased: We tell each other dreams – and try to do it in a systematical way, and tagging them with headings. Furthermore a strong interest for theoretical questions is obvious, but among the members of the Cormorant Council there is hardly any strong unity regarding methodological assumptions, points of departures and delimitations. Perhaps we don't need any. Nevertheless, the Cormorant Council started its blog activity with a preliminary summary of what we mean by dream geography research.

By dream geography research we mean (for the moment):

a) geographic observations in dreams and dreaming.

More specifically observations concerning how places, events, experiences and relationships are distributed in sleeping dreaming, active imagination and wishful thinking.

It should be possible to also make geographical observations in the unconscious habits and conceptions; based on the activism of absentmindedness which makes us commit crucial dream geography mistakes like getting lost, confusing towns, etc.

The fundamental question becomes in what way dream geography differs from awake geography, both in a general sense (theory) and particularly regarding how we may by such an investigation enrich our ways of living, moving, observing the world around us and within us (biopolitics).

We do not gladly intend to find any definite answers to these questions. The cut we make between dream geography and awake geography will by necessity be polyphonic and anecdotal.

b) psychogeographic phenomenology in general

That is: what makes us perceive geography in a particular way and not another one, for example what maps show and what they don't show, and especially which desires and conceptions have been connected with or could be connected with certain places.

More exactly, the question arises which causal connections condition our activities, and where the crucial factors for such forming processes are to be found, and which possibilities and liberties are generated by making them conscious and manipulating them.

As a consequence, we will of course want to continuously develop and apply experimental methods that can make us perceive the constraints and possibilities of geography.

Cormorant Council

The Cormorant Council on Dream Geography Nature Geography

"Dream Geography Nature Geography" (*Drömgeografi naturgeografi*) is a poetic-scientific novel by Mattias Forshage published by Styx 2007. The back cover blurb describes it as:

"a kind of novel exploring how space is constructed in the imaginary universe, on one hand via the dream, and on the other hand via vigilance towards natural phenomena (flora, fauna, geomorphology, meteorology etc) comprising both a poetic complicity and scientific curiosity."

It is probably the first time that surrealism's and situationism's characteristically urban

theories about psychogeography and drifting are applied with some systematic keenness on the area of nature observations, where especially the flora, fauna and seasonal changes of swedish landscapes is in focus.

To celebrate this poetological event, the Cormorant Council was formed shortly thereafter.

"Dream Geography Nature Geography" is the mascot, phrase-book or runway of the Cormorant Council. With the permission of the author or not we will occasionally publish excerpts from the novel and follow some of the questions that are shaped or theorised there.

An invitation to participate in this research is here extended to each and everyone. Participation is primarily by seizing upon the spirit of dream geography; sharpening the attention towards one's own dream geography experience, taking notes, experimenting, communicating, involving others, modifying one's habits. Such slight disturbances of behavior and perception will presently seem sometimes (but far from always) trivial or pointless, but in the long run they have a potential of changing the structure of daily life radically. Material can be sent to <cormorant.council@gmail.com> or posted as commentaries.

Cormorant Council



Excerpts from Mattias Forshage: Dream Geography Nature Geography

Dreamtime is also conditioned by the spatial transitions into it. Breaking through the surface of the dream's thick lake, or sea, or iceblock, or cloud – it can be sharp as an icecrust or diffuse like foam. And this is reached from a secure or an insecure bedplace, opening up like a swimmingpool or a womb, yes why not this swimmingpool of blood as in the horror movies. Sometimes one is overwhelmed by the swell, sometimes one laborously climbs a ladder brought for the purpose. And there are intermediate stations and junctions standing with one leg in awake geography and one somewhere else.

* * *

What can be done to search for a peaceful place to set up a dream observatory? Like the mirrors of the fairytales, time machines, dimensional holes. A yellow and grey old hotel bed, or a bed smelling of moonlight with a woman half-asleep in an inner-city apartment, a comfortably shaking train bed, all quite conceivable. But the best would be a very small house, the inside and outside of which are not much related to each other. It really needs to be very modest. Like a tiny cottage resembling a construction workers' hut, temporarily put up at Tjärhovsplan square, where the traindrivers could go to have a cup of coffee or so. I had borrowed the key from a friend driving a local train, but it isn't good if I am discovered there. I just want to go there alone in the middle of night now and then. But the security guards catch me. They want to make me sign some confession, and they expect me to do it on a computer screen, it is horrible and absurd. Very upset I ask the guard, hasn't he once in life happened to find a place where he felt strangely at home without having seen the place before, as if it was somewhere he regularly returned in his dreams, but never managed to remember... Perhaps I'm overdoing it, but after a while it seems increasingly adequate, you always say more than you know.

* * *

Remember that so many of all these paths and stairways one embarks upon to investigate will contain knowledge that one fails for one reason or another to maintain access to: dream geography also encompasses the landscapes of oblivion and emptiness.

I am taking this burning lily from the space fields in my knee, and start peeling of the petals one by one to taste their bitter marrow. I am dismissing to the garbage heap the clarity of the ice landscapes, the burnedness of the desert landscapes, the intoxication of thought in running liquid, the sharp sweetness of the night sky. What remains is *to not really know*, perhaps a more haunting taste than any of the other, and I wake up.

* * *

In the meantime I am particularly interested in the basic questions of geography. How do we construct our image of place, of space as such, really, what coordinates are actually measuring our life-world, beyond the false solutions of rationalist blinds and authoritarian instrumentality. I want to attach particular weight to the role of dreams and biological observations; not the least as basis for chance phenomena, for poetry and political concerns, which will all turn back into the action and into the perception that creates the world between us.

The meaning of place

The act of interpretation is ever present, but to decipher the meaning of events and phenomena beyond one's habitual prejudices isn't done without effort. And on the contrary, the experience of meaning without interpretation: one doesn't know what it all is supposed to mean, but the undeniable sense of meaning cannot be escaped. The cormorant council extends its wings, some open their mouths. Oracle replies have been given, there is a meaning, and even the question has been posed. But what does the answer mean?

In de Chirico's squares a metaphysical emptiness stands open; the evening, geometry and the tall buildings allow the silence of the objects to act. We have meaning and we have an answer, but the questions cannot be posed. We cannot rationalise experience. Or can we?

We visit different places in the dream. Sometimes they appear as a backdrop for the dream events, but sometimes they stand out in themselves with an unusual force. Place itself is a dream object, and we can stand just as puzzled before its meaning as we do before everything else. A train station, the starry sky, and very often different bays and inlets.

These places we meet in the waking state. We call them atoposes, poetic places, spatial entropy. And when we meet them in the dream? To catalogue these phenomena, a little archive over the poetic places of the dream, where place itself carries meaning and demands its specific questions and methods.

Cormorant Council



Murray Groat

DREAM GEOGRAPHY

- spatiogenesis/ spatial phenomenology in dreams

Disposition of a talk summarising dream geography:

Dream geography

– What for:

1. Reciprocal illumination of individual, collective and general spatial phenomenology and dreamlife

From anecdotes over collective analytical response to storytelling and collective mythology

2. Once again prove waking life and abilities to be a limited special case of a more general logic and phenomenology

3. Once again see the poetry generating faculties at work while performing operations that many consider are merely random or meaningless or primarily either just symptomatic or auto-therapeutic

4. Puns, entertainment, pleasure, horror

5. Exciting unusual experiences, poetry

Space *is part of the dream* –

its configuration is part of the constitution of the dream,

and therefore the question of spatial phenomenology becomes the question of spatiogenesis, or of psychogeography

superordinate aspects:

- * Overall geometry and structure of the dreamscape
- * Spatial relations or dreamscape cartography
- * Means of recognition and orientation in the dreamscape
- * Active integrative learning from dream abilities, dream experiences and dream solutions

Some dreams are specifically *about place*.

But even those that aren't must make a *scene* for themselves *to play in*.

The same analysis methods can be employed in both cases.

It is easy to start with asking which are the semaphors,
the signs for recognition

Sometimes the dreamscape is an *allegoric space* or a *metaphor turned flesh*

It can also be a *structural fantasy* which is not immediately interpretable

However usually it employs *residues*,

and more often than not, *merges/condensates* and/or merely *suggests* several
biographical places of a similar psychic charge

But then occasionally it specifically produces the exotic and unseen as a wish-fulfillment
(truly novel *jamais vu* experiences, or with more or less ridiculous pedestrian semiotic
hints)

Empirical examples of geographical overlaying in dreams can in fact be very effective
mappings of one's spontaneous categories of place experience sorting

Immediate (vague or crystal clear) recognition is most common

Specific biographic memories or ambiances triggered are often important

Spontaneous or non-spontaneous categories of sorting place experiences may create
particular chains or clusters of layered places

Sometimes the semaphors are important elements of the specific dream (signposts,
spoken language, railway stations or airports or other infrastructural characteristics,
etc)

Of particular interest are the suggestions that are unproblematic, repeated or self-evident
in the dream, but arbitrary, absurd, far-fetched, unintelligible or just not immediately
available to the waking spatial sense, such as:

- * Particular dream observatories (places repeatedly visited in the dream but of unclear
status in waking life, or merely creating such a *deja vu* feeling)
- * Expressionist landscapes (particular places distinctively framing and emphasising
certain emotional states, wishes or problems)
- * Geobiographical staining (vivid recollection of certain forgotten sites, or certain
childhood perspectives - or other unexpected but distinct angles - on well-known
sites)
- * The *jamais vu* perspective on a well-known place (seeing a recognisable place as if it
was all new, strange or exotic)
- * Particular spatial associations in the dream (a repeated association between two
different places, or types of places, with no obvious relationship to the waking mind)

- * As a special case of the latter, spatial misachievements in the dream, such as losing the way, looking in the wrong place, mistaking one place for another, cartographic errors, etc
- * And, in the same spectrum, non-euclidean wish-fulfillments: solving practical problems by rearranging spatial relationships

Which brings us to movement between sites in the dream:

Physical perception of movement or "purely epistemic"

Novel ways of moving; flying, inventing new vehicles, new walks etc

Dream abilities to drive a car or other vehicles

Public transport in the dreamscape

Movement as structural exposition or as narrative, linear or circular (or expansive or chaotic etc), in the letter or allegorical

and as a special case of this; the dream itself as a place,
and the (usually hypnagogic rather than actual dreaming) sensations of spatially moving into, or out of, the dream

(the famous water surface of the dream, various tunnels, ladders, staircases etc)

More about dream experience and orientation:

What characterises a dangerous landscape or a landscape facilitating relaxation

What characterises a silent backdrop or a scene apparently laden with meaning

What roles are played by such categorisations and categories as wellknown/alien, domestic/abroad, urban/rural, indoors/outdoors, etc

What are the semaphors of diel cycles (dream time), annual cycles (dream phenology), weather (dream meteorology), skygazing (dream astronomy), animals (dream faunistics), plants (dream floristics) etc

More about general dream experience, the dream as a poetic state of mind:

Producing images, stories and suggestions, usually superior to fiction, often superior to waking life, sometimes superior to other modes of thinking

Specific suggestions in dreaming of means of self-experience (subjectivity, body experience, proprioception), of means of observation and orientation, and of means of mobility and the transformation of surroundings, of changing the relationship between the interior and the exterior, that can be learned and often picked out of the dream into other spheres of application

Methods:

1. Sharing dreams
2. Comparing dreams, finding patterns and coincidences between different dreams of one's own and between dreams of different dreamers
3. Investigating the dream world with enquiries, questions brought into the dream etc
4. Continue investigation into dream world by other means, through writing stories based in dreams, systematising spatial and mythological elements, making dream art, etc
5. Realising suggestions and following hints from dreams in waking life, bringing them into richer crossfertilisation
6. Learning epistemological, analytical and spiritual techniques to exploit dream experience in other spheres

7. Drawing conclusions about spatial phenomenology in general by analytical and other means, formulating answerable questions and devising crucial experiments

merdarius

DREAMSCAPES

Paradise and hell

How come we haven't got the idea of writing about nightmare landscapes? The spatial phenomenology of fear running loose?

My guess is that there is no common such thing. Nightmares are frightening because they have a frightening content, not because they make the effort of building up a landscape capable of inducing fear. It's that famous dissociation of emotion and manifest content that ol Freud was talking about. A nightmare will be nightmarish in a perfectly normal setting, while a frighteningly distorted landscape will seem perfectly normal to the dreamer. Thus, visions of hell, ghostly moors, haunted old castles, are – at least in my experiences – mostly cool and entertaining, while actual nightmares typically utilise trivial settings. Anybody have a contrary experience? Are there ways of communication between the standardised popular image of a nightmarish setting and the actual nightmare landscape?



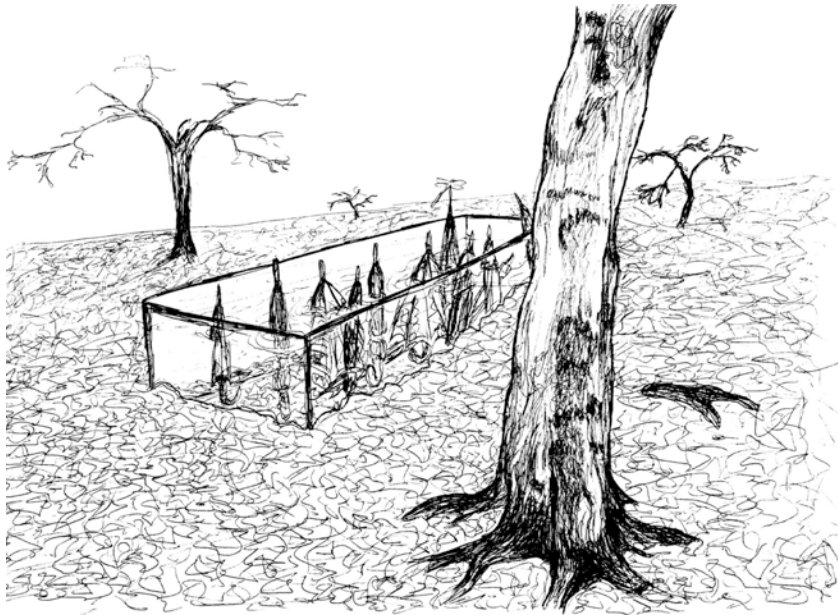
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The same question of course holds for paradisaical landscapes too (even though everybody from Milton on noted that it is much more expressive to imagine hell than heaven). Does anybody remember dream landscapes of euphoria and triumphant love? Is there any place in the dreamworld at all for such places as the christian cloud-landscape, or the blossoming summer meadow (nostalgic of ancient agricultural methods in temperate areas), or a more sensual lush green overflow type of landscape, or perhaps the classicist pastoral vision (mediterranean spring landscape) of rolling

shepherd's hills with scattered olive glades?

The correspondence between banal popular landscapes and actual dream landscapes is of course something addressed in the question of the surrealist flatlands. Maybe there are people who dream of endless barren flatlands with scattered juxtaposed, disproportionate, soft or vaguely organic objects, but probably as an introjected image from art then? The point with the "surrealist landscape", which we should credit Dalí and the guys with, is not that it would be an accurate dream landscapes, but that it is a very effective image inducing a particular immediate sense of estrangement, disorientation, curiosity and the uncanny and "surreal" – at least to the point where those images are so widely circulated that a sense of recognition of a particular *form language in art* finally manages to successfully compete with the immediate imaginational-emotional reaction (which is probably nevertheless at a later stage than the eager disenchantmentists proudly claim their imagination has been already chastised before such images). But, does anybody now remember having ever dreamt a "surrealist landscape"?

MF



MF



GENERAL ORIENTATION

Nature geography of dream geography

Maybe this is to push the connection with the title of the book a little, but the question is nevertheless interesting: how may animals, plants, weathers and natural habitats explain where one is in the dream? Is it a question only for biologists, geographers, meteorologists, mountaineers, birdwatchers, fortunetellers, witches and peasants, who are looking for signs anyway, or do they sneak into other's sense of orientation in the dream as well? What markers convince the dreamer of being in a certain part of the world? Or on an island? Or in a mountainous area? What markers convince the dreamer that it's spring or autumn, morning or evening?

CC



What is this place, really?

Places in dreams are not easily determined. Walking around in wellknown environments but with the vague feeling of actually being somewhere else. Or the other way around, completely alien landscapes still providing a solid conviction of being in one's home town. Between these two poles is a continuous scale of *Verdichtung* of places. It is as if a place is really two: its geographical manifestation, and the thought of what it represents. Often these two converge (usually when awake?), but when the separation occurs it gets interesting. How do we take our bearing in a place which we know is another one? What are the topologies, geographical textures and ambiances that allows a place to be something else than its manifestation? But let's not theorise too much. For now, let's just note this ambiguity in the determination of place and invite others to contribute their observations.

CC

Disorientation

We have been talking about how one's actual geographical orientation in dreams functions. Especially the "non-euclidian" aspects of dream geography, and the *Verdichtung* or multiple superimposition of place. But these are usually based on secondary analytic responses. What is the psychic operation we actually perform within the dream to know where we are? [At the Icecrawler there is a piece on "associative geography" which fits here ("Diary from a journey in my chamber", Icecrawler january 2010, also in "The place called place" pdf).]

However, in dreams, the determination of place can be considered part of constructing the very place in the dream, and so the geographical knowledge may come much more directly and be a part of the place itself. When it isn't, one keeps jerking with imagining superimposition of the various places which have provided buildingblocks, or mere mnemonic associations.

But there are single dreams where we actually ask ourselves "where am I" and invent on the spot a method of investigating this. This is one of the basic questions of the cormorant council. Please give us your examples.

CC



NN

The baseline for coordinates

Earlier here, we have been asking what kind of observations, what kind of parameters, one uses in order to deduce where one is in a dream. Of course very often the actual dream landscapes are created using scraps of several different locations from memory, and the actual spatial semaphors (signs signalling where one is) used might relate to just one of these, or several – or just additional signs added without being based in the biographical landscapes the dream landscape is built upon (an example: there is the devil so I must be in hell; or, there is a sign saying Mogadishu so I must be in Somalia). But often, these spatial semaphors can be secondary to the immediate knowledge of where one is, if the location is part of the explicit execution of the dream. This immediate knowledge might also contain a delimitation against places where it's not, and it may either coincide with, take sides among, or entirely contradict, what the spatial semaphors are saying. The little dream I'll be relating is just a small example of this more general observation based on a larger dreaming experience. And furthermore, it starts nicely with a spatial metaphor getting a material expression.

As the conclusion of a long dream of idiotic joking, self-aggrandising, and amorous complications, I'm feeling frustrated over the whole mess, and in order to be able to get an overview, I take my bulldog and start climbing the steep hills of the little town. The bulldog is huge, with a spike collar and an enormous mouth; it is Maldoror's bulldog. The inclination is just like a Norwegian city (Narvik or so), but the vegetation is nemoral and the buildings are English; anyway I don't need to interpret such signs because I know I am in Greenwich, the starting point of all coordinate systems.

MF

DREAM INDEXING

So I was going to tell you about what I have come to think about regarding metageographical dreaming,

but in that case it will be easy to improvise a more inclusive systematic structure to include it in as well. Since this is not an area where a hierarchical structure is particularly relevant, the categories will not be exhaustive or mutually exclusive.

1 dreams

1.1 non-geographical dreams

(dreams that don't obviously appear to take place somewhere)

1.2 geographical dreams

(dreams that take place somewhere obvious to the dreamer)

1.2.1 dreams that just take place somewhere

with or without

- a) strong biographical overdetermination in terms of place
- b) obvious Verdichtung – superimposition of several places
- c) manifest placenames

1.2.2 dreams that has an active geographical moment

- a) visiting new places
- b) getting vast overview, or the hang of the structure, or an intimate communion with a landscape
- c) utilising particular means of transportation
- d) involving a conscious reflection/interrogation of place: where am I, how do I recognise it (orientation)

d1. "Intuition-based" means of recognition (rational means in the classical sense):

illumination, immediate knowledge, direct perception

image-based analogy

structure-based analogy (allegory)

association surfing

memory matching

atmosphere savouring

interrogation of selected dreamguides

radical doubt

d2. "Systematic" means of recognition (reading semaphors) (empirical means in the classical sense):

gullible sign-reading (street-name signs, city limit signs, public transport signs)

map comparisons

reading fauna and flora

reading geomorphology, vegetation types, climate and weather

reading architecture and city planning patterns
recognising people, hearing which language is spoken
reading astronomical signs
reading technical devices (compass, barometer, GPS...)

1.3 metageographical dreams

- a) dreams about exploration of interesting places (dream expeditions)
- b) dreams about (simple) maps
- c) dreams of more complex spatial representation, such as:
 - c1. pure structural deliria, and dreams involving new geometrical properties
 - c2. dreams of transformation between maps and landscape (cf Niklas's recent experience with an atlas in "Sacred Geography Headwear" at the Cormorant Council),
 - c3. dreams of threedimensional, synaesthetical and unconventional maps (such as the one from "Drömgeografi naturgeografi" where "the landscape is represented by a cake, for which this fish soup is standing in")
- d) creative geographical dreams (what is called "architectural" in Hollywood now): dreams of actively constructing a landscape
- e) dreams with many manifest placenames (independent of place)
- f) dreams about geography lectures/films/seminars (which I had at least when studying geography at the university)

MF



But beware of the pelican council...