

Recurrence

I'm in a village, afraid, on a hill by an apartment complex, bored, and in a crowded loft with the girl of my dreams, all at once.

Her name is Charlotte. She's told me to meet her here. I am afraid because I feel as though I'm late for something big.

Three dreams, you could say. Three described as one. But, you might like to know, they are not one, and yet, they are not three, either. They are, you could say, recurring dreams, three recurring dreams or any number of dreams, you could say. Recurring dreams, and yet they are never the same, each time never simply recurring. Each recurring dream, really, a whole new dream, just as no two memories can ever be identical (if any two things can be in this world). There is no such thing as a recurring dream.

Everyone has fled but the Brave who must know and I who have only just begun to sense the mere possibility of my ignorance. The light rain and sun create illusions that turn fear to sadness and will be gone before I see Charlotte again. Desperately, I climb the muddy hill. I find and lose Charlotte in the crowded loft below, unable to outrun my ignorance of whatever it is the Brave hide from in defense.

There are ladders, ramps, steps of wood, sand. Charlotte finds my hand and leads me down by it to where they're crickets. Crickets compliment the thunder in the way that a bass guitar may be accompanied by a ukulele. Thunder, but the light rain is gone. Palm trees enveloping the downstairs patio. Charlotte putting a reassuring finger to my lips. The sound the wind makes is the sound palm trees make in the wind.

It's sunset, also our first true date. The Brave are silent, but their presence can be felt in the emptiness of the patio atop the hill beside the apartment complex overlooking the crowded loft. Charlotte turns from the sunset, squinting, her face a collage of what was never made clear to me by the millions of faces I've already seen somewhere. I hear drums, I smell

saltwater, but it's just the palms, the stairs, the wind, she says. They flow from the hilltop into the deserted village, stairs, the emptied party, the vacated loft.

One and infinity are one and the same. I repeat: there is no such thing as a recurring dream, though it may well be that in our dream state, our sense of *déjà vu* is heightened. Dreams, like memories, may remind us of other memories, or take place in a nearly identical setting with a nearly identical vantage point and nearly identical orientation of details remembered, but they may never simply, wholly recur. There is no such thing as a recurring dream. One and infinity are one and the same.

One and infinity are one and the same. Take one "dream"; now take "it" apart. Is each dream, as we define "it", recurrence or not (as we define it), even one dream? Or is "it" an infinite number of dreams? In the course of sleep, dreams bleed together, either infinitely or not at all, changing either by the smallest unit of time imaginable, or not at all. One dream or an infinite number. There is no such thing as a recurring dream. You might remember you could say that what we feel to be a recurring dream is more rationally our sense of *déjà vu*, sometimes somewhat heightened.

I ask her who she knows here, or who she knew here. Faces are carved in the trunks of the palms. The lot may be deserted. There is a car. There might be people.

Don't go, she says, and holds my elbow. Screams all the same from all apartment windows. One person is left, evidently, at least, back there, up there, implying infinity. I have to go, I say, running, retreating for where the staircase begins or ends, the foot of the staircase either way you look at it.

The car is empty. The screams persist, pulling, repelling. The more intense, the greater the inclination to save the screamer, the greater the risk, though no greater the hesitation, for the reaction time is immediate, more or less (immediacy being unfathomable), either way. Pulling, repelling. I decide on Charlotte. There is no going back. I am rotten. Three shadows emerge. Three shadows, all of which, all of whom, must be coming for us. Charlotte has hidden. Charlotte, the good girl I can't handle. Charlotte, the Brave.

The impossible task of fully comprehending a concept unfit for this world, concepts such as the fourth dimension or recurrence or the fifth dimension, is further complicated by the recurrence of “multiple”, the recurrence of more than one unit or dream, and by our inclination to classify, to discern, to relate to the finite.

Three recurring dreams, you could safely say (to more simply describe one infinite dream). Three recurring dreams: three elements of one continuous dream (one), or three discernible sets combined, each of an infinite number of dreams (or infinity). Four recurring dreams: one or infinity. Five recurring dreams: one or infinity. An infinite number of dreams: one or infinity. One and infinity. We eliminate the multiple.

One and infinity. Dreams bleed together. Since our dreams change by the smallest unit of time imaginable, and since we can always imagine an even smaller unit of time, we can say we dream an infinite number of dreams within any given timeframe. And yet we must accept the logic of those who call this infinite number of dreams we dream a single dream, elements of a single dream, one dream and one dream alone, those whose logic may be the same as those whose logic concludes the infinite, whose logic together concurs the conclusion that what you could say to be three recurring dreams is really one continuously developing dream developing in an infinite number of ways, either a single dream or an infinite number of dreams, however you choose to arrange the words of your definition, and that either way, recurrence never occurs.

The shadows coming for us have faces. Charlotte? The screams die out up there, as down here features emerge, tough, sullen features. Three men, tough and sullen. Three identical men wearing the same pathetic, terrifying expression. I brush back the bushes, desperately, my eyes searching, Charlotte, failing.

A whiff of the water, a woman's screams, stairs without paths made clearly by man, stairs leading to and from one level of land to another, stairs made of wood, clay. Charlotte? Charlotte here, hidden, or Charlotte there, hidden, a Brave, Charlotte a Brave. Three men here in plain sight I admit I fear tremendously.

Retreat. Retreat is all we've ever done, all we ever will do. Stairs of

sand. Fish and salt and sunscreen, cigarettes, Mexican beer, even. The woman is falling from her window now. Three men catch her and recede. The woman is no Charlotte. Four shadows, retreating on foot. But I am able to approach, driven in a lost friend's car. Her face, from a distance, a collage of all the faces I've never seen.

And yet this is not an original idea. You may have seen it before. It may feel like *déjà vu* for you, as in a dream. And that is because this idea is the Big Bang, either a single, spontaneous occurrence, or an infinite undertaking, its lone occurrence enduring forever, expanding.

This idea is the story of the Fall, either the single occurrence of our ostracism, or our continual fall from grace, our recession from the womb towards infinity in life and infinity in death, deeper and deeper into the depths of history forever.

It is the story of human history, of your history, my history, an infinite number of infinite histories we may call one, dismissing the possibility of infinity, acknowledging the extant number one in an infinite numbers of ways, each never to recur. There is no such thing as a recurring dream.

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From the river's floor, where I've fallen with the fallen woman, I think not about what's caused the accident, but rather struggle to remember Charlotte's last words and whatever it was she might have said after those last words said to me, in her life without me, up to this moment, these last ten years. Her face said everything, nothing, back then. But, drowning, naturally choosing my one life over death, I stop thinking about Charlotte. I rise to the surface. In the hospital I will awake having dreamt of duality, how the only numbers are one and infinity, those two numbers alone, and remind myself how there is no such thing as a recurring dream for the fourth or fifth time.