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Exploring the Realm of the Unconscious in Anna Kavan's *Sleep Has His House*

Hannah Van Hove

Abstract

Sleep Has His House, one of Anna Kavan's most radically experimental novels, appeared in Britain in 1948, in the wake of the Second World War. An objection levied at the novel upon its publication was that it bore no relationship to external 'reality'. However, this article argues that the novel's focus on the oneiric realm, contrary to what hostile contemporary reviews claimed, does not take place in isolation of larger society. Portraying modernist, surrealist and psychoanalytical influences, the novel is namely concerned with the representation of a nocturnal realm that emphasises the osmotic relationship between the external world and an individual's subjectivity. Focusing on the ways in which violent images of war infiltrate the dream world, this article suggests that *Sleep Has His House* can in fact be understood as reflecting and responding to the pressures of British war-torn society in the mid-twentieth century.

Keywords: Anna Kavan, *Sleep Has His House*, psychoanalysis, Ludwig Binswanger, Carl Jung, surrealism, modernism, Second World War, experimental literature

Introduction

Anna Kavan's *Sleep Has His House* appeared in Britain in 1948 after having first been published in the United States as *The House of Sleep* in 1947. Wartime publishing conditions had, according to Kavan, been unfavourable to experimental fiction and in 1943 she had written to her ex-lover Ian Hamilton, the pacifist playwright, that '[m]y sort of experimental writing is completely out under present conditions, so I may as well resign myself to the fact that as a writer I'm just liquidated until after the war – if not for ever' (Kavan 6 February 1943). As her criticism for *Horizon* between 1943 and 1946 makes clear, like many British Second World War authors, Kavan felt that literature must in some way respond to the world situation and she was convinced that uncertain and precarious times necessitated a form of writing that moved away from the realist mode. *Sleep Has His House*, Kavan's deepest fictional venture into the recesses of what she termed 'the subconscious',¹ epitomises this view and this article suggests that the novel can be understood as a response to what Kavan called 'the inchoate fluidity of a time when culture as previously known is almost certainly ending' (Kavan 1946a: 64). As she makes clear in her article 'Back to Victoria', it was only through 'new names and experimental forms' rather than the much more popular escapist flights into, what she termed, 'Victorian forms' that writing could be of any significance (Kavan 1946a: 65-6). Yet the immediate post-war climate did not signal a radical change in attitude in the publishing world and, in the same article, Kavan expressed disappointment and frustration at the lack of experimental work appearing once wartime paper restrictions had been lifted. The publication history of her own much more overtly experimental novel echoes this assessment; Jonathan Cape, the publisher who had brought out Kavan's earlier work, presumably refused *Sleep Has His House* and it was published in the UK by Cassell instead,

¹ Kavan uses the word 'subconscious' in ways which are more or less synonymous with the word 'unconscious', to refer to material repressed from, and not directly accessible to, the conscious mind, but capable of influencing emotions and behaviour.

a publishing house which frustrated Kavan enormously and whom she (partly) blamed for the subdued reception and commercial failure of the novel. As she wrote to her friend George Bullock in 1948:

The way Cassels [*sic*] have handled [*Sleep Has His House*] over here made failure practically certain in my opinion. An experimental book always needs a certain build-up [...]; not only book sellers but critics have to be given a lead; otherwise they feel confused and antagonised by something they can't fit into a convenient pigeonhole (Kavan 15 June 1948).

Indeed, whilst *Sleep Has His House* did enjoy a few favourable reviews in both the States and the UK, it was also subject to some scathing criticism. *John O' London's Weekly* thus disparagingly called the book a 'mass of verbiage [...] in which nothing happens, except the passing of the ball between day-dream and nightmare', concluding that 'a book full of such pretentious rubbish' should never have been published (Church 1948: 279). Diana Trilling, reviewing the American edition in *The Nation* in 1947, equally considered the novel completely without value, claiming that it 'carefully avoid[ed] reality' and that 'nothing makes it worth reading' (Trilling 1978: 218). The critical and commercial failure of her most radically experimental novel to date meant Kavan subsequently struggled in the post-war publishing climate, despite the relative success of her earlier short story collections *Asylum Piece* (1940) and *I am Lazarus* (1945); Doubleday, her American publisher, did not publish any of her later fiction until after her death and she had trouble finding another British publisher after she ended her relationship with Cassell. Though she would continue to publish fiction during the fifties and sixties, not much attention was paid to Kavan until the publication of her last novel *Ice* (1967), a year before she died, which garnered its author some brief late acclaim.²

² *Ice* won the *Science Fiction Book of the Year* award in 1967, thus enjoying relative success in the immediate aftermath of its publication. Brian Aldiss, responsible for nominating *Ice*, later admitted that he selected it 'less from any firm conviction that it was science fiction

Sleep Has His House, like most of Kavan's oeuvre, has remained critically neglected, with the noteworthy exceptions of Jane Garrity's article 'Nocturnal Transgressions in *The House of Sleep: Anna Kavan's Maternal Registers*' (1994), Geoff Ward's 'The Wibberlee Wobberlee Walk: Lowry, Hamilton, Kavan and the Addictions of 1940s Fiction' (2001) and a discussion of the novel in Sara Wasson's *Urban Gothic of the Second World War: Dark London* (2010). Garrity draws on the writings of Julia Kristeva and Nancy Chodorow to present a feminist psychoanalytical reading of the text, focusing on the ways in which it stages a critique of masculine cultural values; Ward's brief consideration of the novel draws attention to its detached style and suggests this contributes to a sardonic political critique of post-war Britain whilst Wasson's discussion centres around illustrating how the text renders wartime oppressions visible. This article aims to build on these studies by continuing to position *Sleep Has His House* within both the cultural and political climate of the times whilst further exploring the relationships between interiority and external reality that the novel mediates. Drawing on Kavan's critical writings for *Horizon*, as well as on archival material, it will explore the hybrid influences that informed Kavan's adoption of what she termed 'a night-time language' (Kavan 2002: 5), illustrating in what ways *Sleep Has His House* incorporates modernist, surrealist and psychoanalytical influences in order to represent the nocturnal and subconscious workings of the mind. In doing so, it argues that the novel's focus on the oneiric realm, contrary to what hostile contemporary reviews claimed, does not take place in isolation of larger society. Focusing specifically on the ways in which violent images of war infiltrate the dream world, this article suggests that *Sleep Has His House* can instead be understood as reflecting and responding to the pressures of British war-torn society in the mid-twentieth century.

[. . .] than to draw attention to a splendid piece of writing which might have been overlooked in the face of more noisy claimants for public attention' (Aldiss: xi).

The Literature of ‘Night-time Language’

As the foreword announces, *Sleep Has His House* ‘describes in the night-time language certain stages in the development of one individual human being’ (Kavan 2002: 5). It goes on to state that no interpretation is needed of this language that ‘we have all spoken in childhood and in our dreams’, but ‘for the sake of unity’ a short paragraph at the head of each section indicates the corresponding day situation (5). Kavan thus mirrors the polarities of night and day in the form of the novel, in these two different prose sections. The much shorter italicised ‘day sections’ are narrated in the first person and are primarily concerned with situating the protagonist. Sentences such as ‘the first place I remember’ (11), ‘[I]ater we crossed the sea to a colder country’ (19), ‘when my mother died’ (35), often employ subordinating conjunctions; they are written in the past tense and represent the chronological and causal world the reader is familiar with. Throughout these short daytime sections, a picture of the narrator is sketched as an isolated individual who struggles through a lonely childhood to form relationships with a mother who commits suicide whilst she is still a child, and a father who is mostly absent. It describes her gradual retreat from day-time reality into a night-time world: ‘*Because of my fear that the daytime world would become real, I had to establish reality in another place*’ (75).

The novel’s main sections written in the night-time language are in the present tense, in what is primarily a cinematic language concerned with describing various ‘dream scene[s]’ (20) or ‘dreamscape[s]’ (150) as they are called in the novel. Images and sounds occupy the majority of the descriptions and most of the characters who people the various dream scapes are ephemeral and appear interchangeable, except for three recurring figures: a mother who is simply called ‘A’, her daughter ‘B’ and a ‘Liaison Officer’. Whilst B is primarily described in the third person, as a character in the dreams, the reader infers that the first person narratorial voice of the first night-time section can be attributed to this same ‘B’. It equally

equates to that of the narrator in the day-time interludes: B is the protagonist of the day- and night-time sections, both subject and object of the dreams experienced.

The *Times Literary Supplement*, the only major British newspaper to review the novel when it first appeared, did so favourably and positioned the novel within a certain lineage by stating that '[w]riting as good as this is rare, and this book is a notable addition to the literature of the "night-time language"' (Wyndham 1948: 285). Indeed, by referring to a night-time language, *Sleep Has His House* situates itself within a distinctive modernist framework, the nocturnal language of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* providing an important precursor. Garrity has further pointed out parallels with Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, stating that both Barnes and Kavan, in their 'exploration of the interior landscape of the night [...] share an analogous disregard for the constraints of genre, creating dislocated narratives that present considerable obstacles to interpretation' (Garrity 1994: 255). Whilst Kavan is occasionally referenced within a modernist context, she has remained one of those experimental women writers who have largely 'slipped through the labels' to borrow Christine Brooke-Rose's phrasing, and an in-depth evaluation of her work in relation to modernism has not (yet) taken place (Brooke-Rose 1989: 67). As Garrity has pointed out, 'despite the critical attention feminist theorists have paid both to redefining the boundaries of modernism and to recuperating "lost" twentieth-century women writers, there remains a conspicuous neglect of British experimentalists, among them, Anna Kavan' (Garrity 1994: 253). By referring to her novel as an 'experimental' piece of work, Kavan herself was most probably looking backwards to her modernist predecessors; as Philip Toynbee's *Horizon* article 'Virginia Woolf: A Study of Three Experimental Novels' makes clear, the term 'experimental' (which he uses to refer to such figures as Proust, Gide, Kafka, Joyce and Woolf) was in the forties often synonymous with what was later to become understood as

‘modernist’ (Toynbee 1946). By illustrating the influence of Joyce on *Sleep Has His House*, it becomes clear there is good reason for further considering Kavan in relation to modernism.

Kavan’s critical writing evidences that she knew and respected Joyce’s work and the adoption of a night-time language in *Sleep Has His House* can be understood as a direct Joycean influence. In one of her reviews for *Horizon*, she mentions Joyce as a writer who speaks ‘the language of the subconscious’ and, according to Kavan, it is only when a writer is able to speak this language that ‘he can produce his best work’ (Kavan 1944: 359). In her foreword to *Sleep Has His House* Kavan makes clear that she shares Joyce’s idea, formulated in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver in 1926, that ‘a great part of every human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of wide awake language’, and she can be understood as therefore equally taking recourse to a night-time language which sabotages the ‘go-ahead plot’ of conventional realist novels (Joyce quoted in Bekker 1982: 187). Yet whilst *Finnegans Wake* staged an attack on what Joyce termed ‘cut and dry grammar’ (Bekker 1982: 187), subverting conventional syntax and language conventions, Kavan’s language in the night-time sections does not differ from that of the day-time sections in terms of grammar or syntax. Like the *Wake* however, the novel’s night-time sections nevertheless appear to necessitate a form of translation, inducing confusion on the part of the reader when first encountering the text due to the fact there is broadly speaking no causality in this nocturnal world; instead, the reader is simply presented with a succession of images and sounds which make up the various dream scenes.

On the title page of one of her unpublished stories ‘In the Night’, Kavan quotes the lines ‘*La nuit n’est pas comme le jour. Elle a beaucoup de souplesse*’ [‘The night is not like the day. It has a lot of suppleness’] from the poem ‘*La nuit des disparitions*’ [‘The Night of Disappearances’] by Henri Michaux (Kavan n. d.; Michaux 1945: 93). This recalls a statement Joyce is reported to have uttered in response to critics who declared *Finnegans*

Wake obscure: 'the action of my new work takes place chiefly at night. It's natural things should not be so clear at night, isn't it now' (Ellmann 1983: 590). Like Joyce then, Kavan took recourse to what she termed 'a dream medium' in order to portray a night-time world which privileged non-rational and subconscious thought (Kavan 1944: 359). Certain scenes might correspond to something in the day sections, but, contrary to the implication of Kavan's foreword, the main sections often resist straightforward correlation to the daytime interludes. Plot, chronology, and characterization are abandoned in favour of an exploration of the subconscious images and sounds that dominate the nocturnal realm. Kavan's 'night-time language' thereby mirrors the world of dreams by refusing the linearity of the everyday world, differentiating itself from the day-time language in that it encourages a different hermeneutic process; where we attempt to seek meaning by interpreting this night-time world through a reading practice focused on plot, characterization and coherence, we only find confusion.

This oneiric style led some contemporary critics such as Diana Trilling to claim that the novel adds nothing to 'our information about the world of consciousness' (Trilling 1978: 220). However, like the modernists who went before her, Kavan's following of the Woolfian injunction to 'look within' aimed to enlarge an understanding of human experience, rather than narrow it (Woolf 1986: 160). As Kavan writes in a review for *Horizon*, 'characters come fully alive only through the elucidation of subconscious tensions which determine the basic patterns of human behaviour' (Kavan 1944: 359). By focusing on the oneiric world of the individual, *Sleep Has His House* can thus be understood as exploring the influences of the subconscious that underlie human action.

Against 'A Closed Rationalism'

In her damning review of *Sleep Has His House*, Trilling takes issue in particular with the novel's privileging of 'non-reason' and 'non-rationality' (Trilling 1978: 219). As she makes clear: 'To me, insight necessarily proceeds from some kind of organized sense of actuality' (218) and what Trilling perceives as its lack of order and rationality renders the novel, in her eyes, not worth reading. Her review in fact portrays an attitude of alarm in identifying that *Sleep Has His House* appears to suggest there is value in exploring the realm of the irrational; here she identifies Kavan as speaking 'for an attitude that is now finding a frighteningly wide adherence along our advanced literary front' (220). Elaborating on this view, she writes:

As our popular writing more and more undertakes to subserve our grosser realities and mold itself into a power instrument, the higher literary art increasingly claims for itself the realm of shadows and dreams. In substitute for an increasingly grim reality we are offered the poetry of non-rationality (220).

Trilling's argument rests on the assumption that Kavan's focus on the world of dreams does not elucidate or engage with the world of consciousness in any way, thereby in effect constituting a form of escapism. Instead, Trilling appears to imply, a novel should reflect the fact that non-reason 'is and should be under the dominion of reason' (219).

Yet this attitude of according prime importance to rationality is precisely what Kavan was challenging with her novel. As her critical writing for *Horizon* makes clear, she interpreted the Second World War and the terrible destruction it wreaked as the apogee of 'a certain scientific precociousness' that had led humanity into 'a fearful crisis' (Kavan 1946a: 63). Rationality in British war-time society had been based on collectivist and utilitarian principles and, as a committed pacifist, Kavan took umbrage at this supposedly 'rational' way of thinking. In her extraordinary article 'The Case of Bill Williams' (in which she describes the problematic case of a rebellious fictional patient in a military psychiatric hospital), she sketches an incredibly damning picture of society:

What society wants is the number and not the man. What society wants is the machine-part which does the job (and that only) for which it's designed, and can be

immediately replaced by one of a million others when it wears out. Society wants wheels running smoothly together, not men taking hands with men. Society does not want a man to live with a live flower inside him but to harden like mineral and live the life of a wheel. Yes, above all, the un-mortal, collective, prefabricated mechanism of society abhors the incalculable, the unique individual element, the unharnessed creative element, the flower which is apt to burst into flame and turn life into a blazing poem instead of an engineer's workshop. That flower at all costs it is determined to cut down stone dead (Kavan 1944b: 97-8).

In Kavan's eyes, society has no time for the creative elements which make up an individual and her articles and correspondence during the 1940s illustrate her agreement with André Breton's claim that 'it is rationalism, a *closed rationalism* which is killing the world' (Ford: 271). In opposition to the 'closed rationalism' that Kavan perceived as ruling contemporary society, *Sleep Has His House*, following Joyce as well as Breton, favours the realm of the irrational and subconscious. Yet, as the multiple night-time images of the effects of nuclear warfare illustrate, the operations of 'rational civilization' continue to reverberate in the unconscious:

The very seat of reason itself quakes under the visual impact of this awful spectacle, hardly to be expressed in ordinary words. How can one describe even the background, that dark and whirling storm of fiery particles, blinding and burning and asphyxiating at the same time? It's a fog and yet it's a fire, intolerable heat combined with suffocating obscurity. Through this murky inferno, huge armour-plated monsters, blind and mad, are charging in all directions, demented, hideous, driven by their Gadarene frenzy to charge each other in indiscriminate fury, stampeded and possessed by maniacal fiends (Kavan 2002: 173).

Just like surrealism which, according to Breton in *Communicating Vessels*, 'tried nothing better than to cast a conduction wire between the far too distant worlds of waking and sleep, exterior and interior reality, reason and madness' (Breton 1990: 86), Kavan's novel is concerned with exploring the interrelationships between external and interior reality.

The influence of Surrealism on *Sleep Has His House* cannot be overstated and, as well as exhibiting modernist influences, it can equally be situated within a Surrealist framework. Archival material (including the quote by Michaux, a poet closely aligned with

Surrealism) suggests that Kavan had been following Surrealist developments from at least the early 1940s. Furthermore, in a letter to Hamilton in 1943 Kavan referred to her short story 'All Saints' as a 'very surrealist [sic] piece', evidencing that she had been experimenting with a Surrealist style of writing before she started work on *Sleep Has His House* (Kavan 27 May 1943). Her association with *Horizon* would have further made her aware of British debates surrounding the movement in the 1940s; the review published articles by, amongst others, Nicolas Calas, André Masson and Herbert Read, which engaged with the question of where Surrealism now stood. In her representations of dreams in *Sleep Has His House*, Kavan often takes recourse to surrealist imagery, most explicitly so in the sixteenth night-time section which had been previously published in *Horizon* in March 1946 as a stand-alone short story called 'The Professor' (Kavan 1946b); here a concrete world emerges with slivers of 'venomous green-raffia stage grass' (Kavan 2002: 152) in which automatons are 'identical, characterless', mere 'masks supported on spinal columns of spiral wire' (153). Reading like directions in a surrealist film script, the dream scene employs uncanny imagery throughout, disturbing in its juxtaposition of inanimate objects with animate actions. Hal Foster has argued that the crossing of the human and the nonhuman in much Surrealist art evokes the reconfiguring of the body as machine and as commodity and this is precisely what Kavan's 'manikins', dummies (both 'crucial images in the surrealist repertoire') and masked figures, equally evoke (Foster 1993: 126). Foster further suggests that these Surrealist images can be understood as 'a rhetorical *détournement* of the high capitalist order of things – of the projected totality of industrial production and consumption, of the becoming machine and/or commodity of both the human body and the object world' (127). Reading the uncanny imagery in Kavan's novel in light of his theory suggests that the grotesque figures that people some of her dreamscapes function to contest 'the modern cult of the machine – a cult variously promulgated not only in technophilic movements such as futurism, constructivism,

purism, and the middle Bauhaus, but also in the everyday ideologies of the Fordist state, whether capitalist, communist, or fascist' (Foster 1993: 136).

In the article 'Vulgarity and Impotence: Speculations on the Present State of the Arts' (1942), Herbert Read (an acquaintance of Kavan) had previously drawn attention to the political potential which goes hand in hand with surrealism's focus on the uncanny and the irrational when he wrote that he perceived the movement as carrying out 'a very essential activity' in its foregrounding of the unconscious, 'one which the closed system of rationalism has always striven to repress' (Read 1942: 275). Elaborating on this view, he presented what could be understood as a possible response to the attitude Trilling expresses in her review of Kavan's novel:

To pretend that the intimations of unconscious mental activity which we receive in dreams, and which find universal expression in religion, myth, folklore and ritual – to pretend that all these manifestations belong to the childhood of mankind and can be safely ignored by a rational civilization, is the supreme conceit of the human intellect (275).

Like Read, Kavan felt that it was precisely in these times in which 'rational' civilization had wreaked enormous havoc on the world that the unconscious needed to be explored further. This conviction was based on the belief that the unconscious *can* elucidate the world of consciousness and possibly even offer an explanation as to how, in the mid-twentieth century, humanity was facing what Kavan, employing H. G. Wells's term, called 'the twilight of mankind' (Kavan 1946a: 64).

The Dream as State of Existence

Kavan's night-time language in *Sleep Has His House*, as I have suggested, can be understood as equating to a language of the subconscious, which in turn might best be understood as language of the dream, privileging the non-sequential and non-rational realm of associative thought. Kavan was well acquainted with psychoanalytic theory, having worked for a brief

period at the Mill Hill Emergency Hospital in 1943 and, whilst there, spending all her spare time reading up on psychology (Kavan 23 June 1943). Her understanding of dreams and their representations in *Sleep Has His House* portray in particular the influences of the theories of Ludwig Binswanger and Carl Jung.

Binswanger was a psychiatrist who, inspired by Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), developed an existential psychoanalytical method he called *Daseinsanalyse* which was based upon Heidegger's analysis of human existence. Kavan was made aware of Binswanger through her doctor Karl Bluth, a close friend of Kavan's during the 1940s and an acquaintance of Binswanger. In March 1947 Kavan was first treated by Binswanger at his Bellevue sanatorium in Switzerland, around the time that she was correcting proofs for the American edition of *Sleep Has His House*. Kavan and Bluth would go on to co-write the novella *The Horse's Tale* (1949) together and they shared many intellectual influences, so it's highly likely that she would have heard about Binswanger's dream theory through Bluth before her first meeting with the Swiss existential psychoanalyst. In 'Dream and Existence', published in 1930 in German, Binswanger posits that the dream is a realm that is 'nothing other than a definite mode of the Being of man' (Binswanger and Foucault 1993: 85). As Martin Halliwell explains, 'Binswanger emphasizes the "manifest content of the dream" (the form of its expression and its remembered content) which he claims "has in modern times receded all too far into the background", in contrast to the "latent dream thoughts" which Freud believed could be uncovered through dream-work' (Halliwell 2016: 129). In this respect, Binswanger followed Jung's statement in 'The Practical Use of Dream-Analysis' that the dream was not, as Freud would have it, 'a mere façade concealing the true meaning' (Jung 1983: 177). Instead, both Binswanger and Jung were of the opinion that attention should be granted to '[t]he theme evinced in sleep' by our dreams, 'that is, the "content" of the drama' (Binswanger and Foucault 1993: 87). For both Binswanger and Jung, by attending

to the meaning of the symbols as experienced in the dream, we are able to situate them within the context of the individual's world (Halliwell 2016: 133). Following their theories, we can read certain dream passages described in the night-time sections in *Sleep Has His House* as imaginative recreations of the emotional crises or affective responses to an event B is working through: 'the dream-world is shown to be coextensive with the waking-world by providing a stage for the imaginative dramatization of unresolved psychic problems' (Halliwell 2016: 128). Applying such an understanding of dreams to Kavan's novel and taking account of the context of B's life which the daytime interludes sketch, the single most important event which B appears to be working through in her dreams is the lack of love granted to her by her mother and father, compounded in the suicide of her mother which is interpreted as the ultimate desertion.

However, as mentioned earlier, whilst the day-time interludes provide the context for these individual dream aspects, they often appear not to have any immediate relationship to other night-time events. In particular, at first glance it is not clear at all how the images of violence, soldiers and destruction, which feature frequently in the dream scapes, relate to B's day-time life. The proliferation of violent imagery in these night-time sections is particularly striking considering the fact there is no mention of war at all in the day-time passages. The only reference to wartime in these sections occurs in the fourteenth interlude, when the narrator states: 'In all the chaotic violence under the sun, I saw only more cause for distrust and withdrawal' (Kavan 2002: 125). Here the violence of the day-time world is presented as a further reason for withdrawal. Yet the way in which images of war consistently intrude into the dream world suggests both that B does not fully manage to escape the horrors played out in diurnal reality once war breaks out, and that violence and war have in fact always been present in B's night-time world. In order to elucidate this proliferation of violent war

imagery, it is necessary to turn more specifically to Jung's ideas on the collective unconscious.

The Collective Unconscious

Writing in *Horizon* in July 1945, Kavan makes clear that in her opinion the work of fiction writers should demonstrate 'by means of individual types the sociological and psychological structure of the collective scene' (Kavan 1945: 64). A year earlier, she had written that she considered it the writer's task to focus on the 'psychological reactions' of individuals to their environment in preference to 'the environment itself' (Kavan 1944: 359). The focus on the nocturnal world of dreams in *Sleep Has His House* can thus be understood both as further exploring the influence of the subconscious in order to better understand the psychology of an individual as well as representing the 'sociological and psychological structure' of British war-torn society.

The idea that the night world might allow for an opportunity to get closer to a form of collective humanity had previously been explored by Joyce and other modernists; *Finnegans Wake* has, for example, been read as expressing 'the repressed content of a collective human unconsciousness' (Parsons 2007: 123). Eugene Jolas, writing in 'Inquiry into the spirit and language of the night' (1938) in *transition*, had drawn attention to the influence of Romantic thought on the representation of night as '[t]he inner dynamis of cosmic time. Night as the ensemble of unconscious thinking — an emanation of the race and personal memory, as well as of transcendental revelation' (Jolas 2009: 176-7). As Jolas points out, this 'romantic conception of the night-mind' had found its prolongation and elaboration in Freud and Jung, in particular in Jung's idea of the 'collective unconscious' (176-7).

In Jung's schema, dreams consist both of elements relating to the personal 'conscious' life of the dreamer, as well as elements from the 'collective level' (Jung 1983: 18). Jung

conceived this collective unconscious ‘as the ancestral heritage of possibilities of representation’ which is ‘not individual but common to all men [...] and is the true basis of the individual psyche’ (Jung 1983: 67). Kavan most explicitly alludes to the idea of a Jungian collective unconscious when, in her review of Alex Comfort’s *The Power House* for *Horizon*, she lauds the representation of ‘the sadistic-masochistic trend’ in the novel which she perceived as representing ‘the subconscious expression of the contemporary group soul’ (Kavan 1944: 360). Following from both the Romanticists and Jungian thought, the night-world in *Sleep Has His House* can then also be understood as a realm which returns ‘our being [...] to the primitive state of indifferentiated structure’ in which ‘atavistic functions of life’, understood as ‘thoughts of the group soul, archetypes, memories and experiences which shape mankind’, come to the fore (Bluth 1945: 164).

Sleep Has His House, when looked at through this lens, presents an extremely pessimistic view of the group soul of mid-twentieth century Britain. Just as Jung had suggested that ‘the tide that rose in the unconscious after the first World War’ had been reflected in the individual dreams of his German patients, the presence of symbols in B’s dreams in *Sleep Has His House* which express ‘primitivity, violence, cruelty: in short, all the powers of darkness’ suggest they are reflective of an equally war-prone collective unconscious (Jung 2014: 3). One of many examples in the novel concerns the dream in the second night-time section. This starts off with references to drawings and stories alluded to in the preceding day-time interlude which described the narrator’s first memories in a warm country, cared for by a Japanese houseboy (Kavan 2002: 11). It moves from descriptions of images reminiscent of childlike drawings to a scene that brings to mind *The Tale of Genji* before ‘the picture starts to fade out’:

There is a general lowering of tone and tempo so that the figures of the courtiers seem less alive, their clothing less gay, their voices less melodious. [...] The unobserved and forgotten guards in the distance now suddenly assume drastic importance as they begin to converge on the centre. They wear bulky dark clothes and their faces are

obscured as by masks or helmets. Each is an incipient catastrophe, intensely ominous in his stiff hierarchic motions (16).

The dream which started off so colourfully, full of child-like wonder, turns into a nightmare dominated by these guards transformed into soldiers, 'their faces under their helmets formally, flatly, impersonally evil' (17). An 'ear-splitting engine-roar' dominates the scene, shattering into silence as 'the whirling formlessness bursts into a shower of leaflets which are catapulted in all directions' (17). The final image of the dream consists of 'a momentary glimpse' of the leaflets, 'sucked and eddying madly in the up-draught of a flaming jungle village, fired palm trees ablaze and streaming. Vacuum' (17). This nightmarish vision appears to reference the more than 5 million leaflets showered by the USA over 35 cities and towns in Japan, warning civilians of an impending attack, shortly before it dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. The word 'vacuum' which ends this dream scene, referring to a paradoxical space entirely empty of matter, can be aligned with the 'dead spot' that hampers the vision of the dreamer in one of the later night-time scenes:

The outer fields of its [the dreaming eye's] vision still remain fairly clear, but the centre, where attention would normally tend to focus, is occupied by a dead spot, a blur of no special colour or shape. Extending and underlying the pathological suggestion, the outlying images are all of a nature to accent the ideas of confusion, danger, violence, chaos, strife (126).

The 'pathological suggestion' is not fully formulated here — indeed, the night-time sections are not concerned with the analysis of images but simply with their description — but the implication is that war renders things unimaginable as well as unrepresentable. The visions that can be described range from 'colossal cosmic disturbances' to 'scenes moderating to terrestrial proportions, but still uniformly disastrous' before 'contracting again, approaching the fringe of the central blur' (126); around this fringe signs of the disintegration of a city after it has been hit by an atomic bomb can be made out, as the dreamer views:

[...] the presentation of the ultimate vaporizing preceded by its upflinging a strange and fancy mushroom in the sky. Also establishing, beyond human destructiveness, the appalling blankness and the intense oppositional indifference of the cosmos (126).

Storm Jameson, a fellow 1940s novelist, stated in 'The Novelist Today' in 1949 that 'an almost inhuman detachment' was required in order 'to forget that we are living in the darkness of the atomic age' (Jameson 1950: 71). The dream scenes in *Sleep Has His House* illustrate how, even in sleep, respite from that knowledge is not granted. Yet they also suggest that this tendency to annihilation is present within the individual from the moment they are born. As such, it is only through becoming aware of these darker sides of the unconscious that disaster can be averted.

By incorporating both individual as well as collective dream aspects, the night-time sections in *Sleep Has His House* bring into focus the workings of the subconscious of the individual. The mysterious figure of the Liaison Officer who often appears in different forms corresponds to the Jungian figure of the archetypal image of the wise man who, according to Jung, lies 'buried and dormant in man's unconscious' until he is 'awakened whenever the times are out of joint and a human society is committed to a serious error' (Jung 2001: 175). In this Jungian reading, his presence confirms that *Sleep Has His House* explores the life of an individual's unconsciousness in times of strife and suggests that B's unconsciousness is reflecting her need for guidance.

However, by the penultimate chapter of the novel it is clear that B's state of introversion into the night-time world has reached a point of no return. Reminiscent of Jung's discussion of patients with dementia praecox (which he would also refer to as 'schizophrenia') in *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, B's lack of adaptation to day-time reality has resulted in a permanent withdrawal from it. As Jung explains elsewhere: 'When the libido [defined in the Jungian sense as psychic energy or general interest] leaves the bright upper world, whether from the decision of the individual or from decreasing life force, then it sinks

back into its own depths, into the source from which it has gushed forth, and turns back to that point of cleavage, the umbilicus, through which it once entered into this body' (Jung 1991: 283-4). *Sleep Has His House* traces this state of introversion. Jung further points out that 'this is the dangerous moment, in which the decision takes place between annihilation and new life. If the libido remains arrested in the wonder kingdom of the inner world, then the man has become for the world above a phantom, then he is practically dead or desperately ill. But if the libido succeeds in tearing itself loose and pushing up into the world above, then a miracle appears' (Jung 1991: 284). B's entrance into a final shadow house in the last dream-time section, a place where 'there's very little difference inside between the night and the day' (Kavan 2002: 185), suggests that B has forsaken both the isolation of the day-time world and the nightmarish visions of the collective unconscious. Taking refuge in a final house of shadows, she has completely withdrawn from the external world and has herself become but a phantom.

In conclusion, *Sleep Has His House*, encompassing modernist, surrealist and psychoanalytical influences, can be understood as reflecting the Jungian idea that 'the psychopathology of the masses is rooted in the psychology of the individual' (Jung 2014: 1). The focus on the irrational and the subconscious at the heart of this work serves both to explore the workings of the human mind as well as offer up a mirror to society. As such, the radical experimentation of *Sleep Has His House* can be understood as possessing a profoundly political aim: to further an understanding of how humanity had caused the terrible events of the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, Kavan can be understood as one of those writers Randall Stevenson identified for whom the war itself provided an opportunity 'to find new forms to encompass the violence and strangeness of the times' (Stevenson 2004: 84).

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