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Dark Interpreter: Literary Uses of the Brocken Spectre from Coleridge to Pynchon

THINK OF A RAINBOW. You see, perhaps, a perfect radial arch with distinctive coloured bands running blue to red from its centre. Now think of the weather conditions in which you might see this bow. Do you recall inky, billowing rain clouds pierced by shafts of sunlight? Rainbows, in fact, occur whenever light is reflected and refracted by water. We can glimpse a rainbow in each droplet on a blade of glass, in the early morning dew upon a spider's web, in the spray thrown by a ship's plunging bow, and in the filmy jets of a garden sprinkler. In its cultural representation, the rainbow is often, although not always, a sign of hope, of compact, of better times ahead. In Genesis, God unfurls a rainbow after the flood waters recede as His covenant with all living things that He will wreak no more destruction upon this earth. In Shakespeare's *King John*, the bow is a symbol of perfection, where to "add another hue unto the rainbow" would be "wasteful and ridiculous excess." Wordsworth recollects its constantly uplifting qualities: "my heart leaps up when I behold/ A rainbow in the sky;/ So it was when my life began;/ So it is now that I am a man;/ So be it when I shall grow old." And in *The Wizard of Oz*, librettist Yip Harburg voices the hopes of the film's early audience of escaping the deprivations of Depression America for a more vivid, comforting, childlike world. "Somewhere over the rainbow," Dorothy sings, "Way up high, / There's a land that I heard of / Once in a lullaby."¹

¹ See Genesis 9.8–17; William Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1967) 97 (IV.2.13, 16); William Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold," in *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 246; and Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, with the assistance of Arthur Perlman, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?: Yip Harburg, Lyricist* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1993) 133.

Almost everyone has seen a rainbow. Until recently, few people had seen its related optical effect, the Brocken Spectre. The Spectre is an observer's shadow projected horizontally onto an opposing bank of fog or cloud. For the Spectre to occur, the sun must be on the same level as the projected figure. If it were higher the shadow would be cast downward onto the ground, and if it were lower the shadow would be cast upward and dispersed. The best place to see this Spectre is consequently on a mountain at either dawn or dusk, where the figure's high elevation with respect to clouds and the sun makes horizontal projection more likely. The shadow is sometimes roughly the same size as the projecting figure, but at other times appears inflated. In practice, the shadow is probably never thrown farther than thirty metres, but can appear colossal, because it is displayed in conditions where it is difficult to judge distance and perspective. The shadow can be unnerving, because of its size and the remote places in which it is observed, but two other factors also contribute to its ghostly, unsettling appearance. If the shadow is projected onto fog, then the fineness of the water droplets allows the shadow to penetrate the surface, and gives the image an eerie three-dimensional appearance. If the shadow is projected onto a bank of swirling cloud, then the umbra appears to move independently of its source. The most impressive manifestation of this Spectre is when it is accompanied by a glory. In this circumstance, sunlight is diffracted and backscattered around the figure (the cloud's droplets must be the right size). The result is either the whole shadow or just the head is surrounded by a set of concentric iridescent coloured rings (in reverse sequence to that of a primary rainbow). Apart from the strange beauty of a dark shadow at the centre of these glowing coloured arcs, there is also a peculiar singularity to this experience. If two figures stand upon a hillside or mountain, then under the right conditions they will both see two shadows. But each person will see a glory only around him or herself, because the diffraction which creates the surrounding arcs of colour can only be viewed from the anti-solar point, the point from which one's own shadow is cast.²

In this article, I survey literary representations of the Brocken Spectre from the early nineteenth century onwards. There are other modern stud-

² For modern scientific accounts of the Brocken Spectre, see R.A.R. Tricker, *Introduction to Meteorological Optics* (New York: American Elsevier, 1970); Robert Greenler, *Rainbows, Halos, and Glories* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980); and David K. Lynch and William Livingston, *Color and Light in Nature*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001). The physical optics of the Glory are explained in Howard C. Bryant and Nelson Jarmie, "The Glory," *Scientific American* 231 (1974): 60–71. Photographs of Broken Spectres can be viewed on the web at <<http://www.atoptics.co.uk>> and <<http://www.touchingthelight.co.uk>>.

ies which discuss this phenomenon either as part of their analysis of an individual literary text, or as part of a wider consideration of the cultural applications of meteorological optical effects.³ This essay, however, is the first to attempt to account for the full range of the Brocken Spectre's literary uses in English. The Spectre has been used as a means, among others, of evoking paranoia, of encapsulating a global political threat, of contrasting the nature of optical deceit with inspired revelation, and of reflecting whimsically upon the hubristic jottings of writers. Most literary references are brief: usually confined to a single simile or metaphor. The apparition is a less well-known and more complicated image (in terms of its constituent parts) than the rainbow. And this complexity occasionally obscures rather than clarifies the point the figure was supposed to make. The essay's central strand is an account of four significant engagements with the apparition: three from the Romantic period, and one from the Modern. These are Samuel Taylor Coleridge's enigmatic lyric "Constancy to an Ideal Object," James Hogg's Scottish gothic romance *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Thomas de Quincey's late autobiographical fragment "Suspiria de Profundis" and Thomas Pynchon's postmodern Menippean satire, *Gravity's Rainbow*. I argue that the Spectre in these works does not just provide a striking example for the purposes of momentary illumination, but operates metonymically within them, that is, the apparition exemplifies these works' forms and central themes.

The Spectre takes its name from the Brocken; the highest mountain (at 1142 metres) in the Harz range in Saxony-Anhalt, very close to the former border between East and West Germany. The mountain is dome-shaped, a granite mass which has thrust its way through the local slates and graywackes. Just beneath the summit there are granite outcrops with such names as the Devil's Pulpit (*Teufelskanzel*) and Witches' Altar (*Hexenaltar*), and further down, the slopes become densely forested. As the names of these outcrops suggest, the Brocken and the Harz region have a strong folkloric tradition. Goethe sets the witches' dance in *Faust* on the Brocken on *Walpurgisnacht* (the eve of May Day). Nineteenth-century German and English books of legends and fairy stories describe the Harz's landscape as being shaped by the stamp of a giant horse's hoof, of the devil raining rocks and demolish-

³ For accounts of the Brocken Spectre as part of wider discussions of the imaginative uses of meteorological effects, see C.J. Wright, "The 'Spectre' of Science: The Study of Optical Phenomena and the Romantic Imagination," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 186–200, and Marina Warner, "Spirit Visions: Faces in the Clouds, or Figuring the Invisible," *Raritan* 21 (2002): 264–301.

ing walls, of flowers springing up at midnight on the spot where a maiden inexplicably perished, and of a brutal huntsman riding through the forests until judgment day.⁴ Baedeker's travel guides from the early twentieth century assert that the Spectre was named after the Brocken, because it was first observed there.⁵ But the first documented sightings of this mountain shadow were not in Germany, but in South America. The French scientist, Pierre Bouguer, and his Spanish colleague, Antonio de Ulloa, saw man-sized shadows surrounded by glories on Pambamarca, one of the lower peaks of the Northern Ecuadorian Andes, in June 1736. They went to America on the same expedition to determine the length of the meridian at the equator. Bouguer was particularly taken by the beautiful haloes which enfolded the shadows, and records the quasi-religious reverie they inspired; these coloured arcs, he recalls, resulted in "a kind of apotheosis in each spectator."⁶

The earliest British scientific account of this phenomenon is by a Scottish doctor, Ebenezer McFait. He records seeing his shadow in 1753 surrounded by a glory when travelling north of Glasgow (he knows of Bouguer's experiences in South America).⁷ The earliest work to have explicitly associated the Spectre with the Brocken seems to have been Johann Esaias Silberschlag's geological-theological treatise, *Geogonie oder Erklärung der mosaïschen Erderschaffung nach physikalischen und mathematischen Grundlagen* (1780). But the most significant German description of Brocken Spectres, however, for English literary purposes is a piece by J. Lud. Jordan which includes a further account by M. Haue published in *Göttingisches Journal der Naturwissenschaften* (1798). Jordan and Haue provide most of the components for the Spectre's subsequent imaginative descriptions. There is a religious element to Jordan's narrative. He first sees a huge spectre on Whitsuntide, and intimates that the figure might have diabolic associations, initially glimpsing "a giant figure of a man as if on a great pedestal" as he

⁴ See, for example, *Legends of the Harz from the German* (London: Whitfield, Green & Son, 1866) and Toofie Lauder, *Legends and Tales of the Harz Mountains* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1881).

⁵ See, for example, Karl Baedeker, *Northern Germany Excluding the Rhineland: Handbook for Travellers*, 17th revised ed. (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1925) 306.

⁶ Pierre Bouguer, *La figure de la terre [...] Avec une relation abrégée de ce voyage, qui contient la description du pays dans lequel les opérations ont été faites* (Paris: Jombert, 1749) xlv (my translation). See also Antonio de Ulloa, *A Voyage to South America*, trans. John Adams, 2nd ed., 2 vols (London: Davis and Reymers, 1760) I, 462–63.

⁷ [Ebenezer McFait], "Some Phænomena Observable in Foggy Weather," in *Essays and Observations, Physical and Literary. Read Before a Society in Edinburgh, and Published by Them* (Edinburgh: Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, 1754) 197–99.

stands on the Devil's pulpit.⁸ Jordan stresses the changeable nature of the weather conditions, and the shadow's fleeting nature. Haue is also struck by the shadow's size, but takes a more experimental approach, explaining how he and a local innkeeper made a number of gestures and observing how these "colossal figures" imitated them.⁹

The Scottish scientist, David Brewster, provided the key popular scientific account of the Spectre for an Anglophone audience in this period in *Letters on Natural Magic Addressed to Sir Walter Scott Bart* (there were nine editions and reprints between 1832 and 1883). Brewster mentions Jordan, and provides a full summary of Haue's account. He can easily explain the natural causes of the Brocken Spectre, but the phenomenon however, does present Brewster with an interpretative difficulty, which has a bearing upon its literary usage. He states that his book's principal objectives are enlightenment and social emancipation. In previous ages, he argues, mankind was tyrannised by the dark conspiracies of sages and priests. But science has now brought these apparitions "within the circle of her dominion," and rendered impossible the subservience of earlier times.¹⁰ The Brocken Spectre should, then, be a perfect example of such a spellbinding apparition, being named after a mountain noted for its supernatural and pagan associations. Later in the century, the French meteorologist Camille Flammarion still felt able to claim that the Spectre was one of few naturally occurring optical phenomena to retain "part of their primitive importance, and are welcomed by the *savant* with as much interest as when they were attributed to divine agency."¹¹ The difficulty with this argument, however, as Brewster himself concedes, is that there is no empirical evidence that the Spectre *was* observed prior to its scientific investigation in the eighteenth century. What evidence there is suggests the opposite: that the Brocken Spectre, unlike the rainbow, is an essentially modern phenomenon, and its divine and supernatural attributes only became apparent at the same time as its scientific observation.¹² Most substantial literary examinations of the apparition draw directly upon both its rational and irrational aspects.

⁸ A translation of Jordan and Haue's accounts of the Brocken Spectre is given in *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 5 vols (in 9 parts), ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957–2002), I (1957) part 2, section 430.

⁹ C.J. Wright examines the sources and transmission of Jordan's article in English, including the effect of one mistranslated phrase in his "The 'Spectre' of Science," 196–97.

¹⁰ Sir David Brewster, *Letters on Natural Magic Addressed to Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (London: John Murray, 1832) 148.

¹¹ Camille Flammarion, *The Atmosphere*, ed. James Glaisher, trans. C.B. Pitman (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1873) 131.

¹² Bouguer believes he was the first person to recognise the phenomenon, and reports that

Coleridge provides the earliest significant literary account of this fleeting mountain shadow in his two-stanza "Constancy to an Ideal Object." The poem was not published until 1828, but probably composed in Malta sometime between 1804 and 1807. Coleridge learned about the Spectre on his visit to Germany in 1799. It is thought the anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach directed him to Jordan and Haue's accounts. (Coleridge made an almost verbatim transcription of them in his notebooks). He also attempted unsuccessfully to see Spectres in the Harz range with a group of English students in May that year. He was, however, already aware of the existence of mountain shadows and encircling glories, if not their Brocken designation, before he left England for Germany. He had read the previous year John Haygarth's English account of such apparitions. Writing in the *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* (1790), Haygarth describes how he saw his shadow and a glory in the Vale of Clwyd in February 1780. He remarks upon the glory's appearance, speculates upon its religious connotations, and suggests the phenomenon's significance is dependent upon the observer's social standing and state of mind. Haygarth was struck by the apparition's singular beauty, but his postillion "was alarmed to an uncommon degree" by his own iridescent shadow.¹³ Coleridge indicates in the poem's note that he was primarily thinking about this domestic Brocken Spectre for its closing image.

The stylistic variety and enigmatic content of "Constancy to an Ideal Object" has resulted in wide range of interpretations of the poem's central meaning and significance. The lyric was read variously in the second half of the twentieth century as an expression of late Coleridgean semi-dualism in which the regenerative power of the aesthetic has diminished to leave Man as an isolated spirit in Nature; as an affirmation of the human spirit in the face of the increasing prevalence of mechanistic thought in nineteenth-century England; as a more personal and concrete lament for the loss of a beloved woman; and as an exemplum of creative scepticism which successfully reconciles the conflicting senses of reality and nothingness in Coleridge's poetic vision.¹⁴ Whatever interpretative difficulties the poem

the indigenous Peruvian population had no knowledge of it. See Bouguer, xliii, xlv.

¹³ John Haygarth, "Description of a Glory," in *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*, 4 vols (London, Warrington: Cadell, 1790) III, 465.

¹⁴ See respectively James D. Boulger, *Coleridge as Religious Thinker* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1961) 208–10; Stephen Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth* (London: Cambridge UP, 1970) 22–29; J. Robert Barth, "Coleridge's Constancy to His Ideal Object," *The Wordsworth Circle* 14 (1983): 76–80, and Tilottama Rajan, *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980) 243–45.

presents, its central metaphysical premise seems clear: the directedness of one's thoughts toward the ideal is a constant of perception and reflection. Ideal thoughts are produced subjectively and then projected onto other people and external objects.

Coleridge, however, places such notions of idealism and directedness under lyrical pressure in the poem both by associating them with fraught personal circumstances and expressing them in a morbid and melodramatic register. He writes of "Fond THOUGHT" which will "breathe on *thee* with life-enkindling breath" until "Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death!"¹⁵ He summarises the intrinsic quality of the ideal object ("some *living* Love before my eyes there stood" (14)), and then directly addresses it: "I mourn to thee and say—'Ah! loveliest friend! / That this the meed of all my toils might be, / To have a home, an English home, and thee!'" (16–18). This looks like a conventional description of English domestic felicity when viewed from overseas. But placing this sentiment in inverted commas suggests ambivalence over its status; an ambivalence which is settled in the following line: "Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one" (19). "Thou" looks to be an address to the poet himself, rather than the perfected form of a spouse. "Vain repetition" is an acknowledgement that the vision of home as a place of peace, ease, and harmony is generated entirely from within. The form and content of this self-projection is then examined through the poem's closing image of the Spectre and its glory:

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
 The woodman winding westward up the glen
 At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
 The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
 Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
 An image with a glory round its head;
 The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
 Not knows, he *makes* the shade he pursues! (25–32)

The nothingness of the opening question suggests the absence of an objective correlative for both the mental image of the ideal object and the desire it engenders. The shadow's closing image and its surrounding arc convey the shimmering quality of idealised thought, and the doubled nature of the poet's perspective. This vivid image makes explicit the poem's central metaphysical point. But by doing so, it appears to invert the social

¹⁵ "Constancy to an Ideal Object," in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Poetical Works* 1 (in 2 parts), ed. J.C.C. Mays (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2001) part 2, 777–78, lines 7–10. Further references to the poem are to this edition.

dynamic of Haygarth's account. Haygarth's postillion was alarmed by the apparition; Coleridge's rustic is enamoured of it. Coleridge also curiously spins this figure's significance in a different direction in the poem's note (a late addition). He considers there the nature of genius, and suggests we regard genius as a blessing when it reveals the imaginative capabilities which lie within us, and as a threat when it exposes our own intellectual limitations. "The beholder," he writes, "either recognises [genius] as a projected form of his own Being, that moves before him with a Glory round its head, or recoils from it as a spectre."¹⁶ Yet the central function of the Spectre within the poem itself is an illustration of idealisation. The final point on the difference in comprehension of shadow and glory is not so much a drawing out of a social and intellectual distinction, as an examination of different levels of perception and response which occur within one person. The poem finally suggests, then, that your understanding of the causes of the ideal object will not stop you yearning for it. The glory's fair hues are not dispelled by the knowledge of how these images are produced, just as a grasp of the psychology of idealisation does not dissolve the emotional substance which such ideal thinking produces.

Like Coleridge's poem, James Hogg's best-known and most original novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), uses the Brocken Spectre for both psychological and aesthetic purposes. *The Private Memoirs* was not the first Scottish historical novel to make use of the Spectre. Walter Scott mentions it in the course of relating a supernatural tale from the Harz in *The Antiquary* (1818). For Scott, the dry causal description of the Spectre destroys the uncanny qualities of the supernatural apparition by reductively "ascribing it to optical deception."¹⁷ For Hogg, the opposite is true: the uncanny is a product of the conjunction of rational and supernatural accounts of this phenomenon. *The Private Memoirs* famously has two incompatible narrative strands. An unnamed nineteenth-century editor relates the history of two half-brothers from the turn of the previous century: the affable elder George Colwan and the fanatical younger Robert Wringhim. The Editor tells how the elder brother is murdered, and how the younger brother having inherited the family estate subsequently vanishes. The second narrative strand is Robert's memoir in which he describes his pious character, his hypocritical tendencies, his subservient relationship to the demonic Gil Martin, his apparent involvement in murders, including his brother's, and his final mental collapse. For some commentators the novel's

¹⁶ Coleridge, "Constancy" 778.

¹⁷ Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, ed. David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1995) 138.

principal achievement is its precise and subtle psychological examination of the central characters. The Spectre episode certainly contributes to the work's psychological dynamic, but it also eloquently demonstrates the text's discursive complexity: the ways in which its narrative places incompatible explanations of events next to one another, and explores how these converge and overlap.

The Spectre episode takes place on Arthur's Seat (the distinctive volcanic outcrop lying eastward of Edinburgh's Old Town). The editor describes how George, who has been badgered by his brother during a stay in Edinburgh, climbs the hill early one spring morning. George is sensitive to nature's minute beauties. He notices how early morning dew forms a fairy web on his hat, "composed of little spheres, so minute that no eye could discern any of them; yet they were shining in lovely millions."¹⁸ As George ascends further, he is struck motionless by "a bright halo in the cloud of haze, that rose in a semi-circle over his head like a pale rainbow" (29). He quickly realises that this marvellous aerial display is produced by sunlight being refracted by dense vapour. The Editor is aware of the episode's potential religious symbolism. He momentarily suggests that the glory serves as sanctification, as divine intimation of George's innate goodness. But having raised the possibility of a religious reading, he quickly retreats into Brewster-like rationalism, insisting "the better all the works of nature are understood, the more they will be ever admired" (29).

George enjoys a moment of solitary Romantic reverie, sitting on top of Salisbury Crags (the basalt rock face on the west side of Arthur's Seat). He reflects upon the pleasure of being there uninterrupted by any "appalling or obnoxious visitor" (30). But this semi-conscious recollection of his brother immediately conjures a terrifying spectre:

The face was the face of his brother, but dilated to twenty times the natural size. Its dark eyes gleamed on him through the mist, while every furrow of its hideous brow frowned deep as the ravines on the brow of the hill. George started, and his hair stood up in bristles as he gazed on this horrible monster. He saw every feature, and every line of the face, distinctly . . . Its eyes were fixed on him, in the same manner as those of some carnivorous animal fixed on its prey; and yet there was fear and trembling, in these unearthly features, as plainly depicted as murderous malice (30).

The shadow's sudden introduction dramatically inverts this episode's register. The beauty of minute dew droplets is replaced by the sublimity of

¹⁸ James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. P.D. Garside (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001) 29. All further references are to this edition.

this billowing demon, and Romantic reverie turns to Gothic terror. The apparition also initiates categorical confusion. In the earlier observation of the glory, spiritual wonderment was followed by a causative account of the phenomenon. But George cannot find a scientific explanation for this spectre and in his attempt to do so rational and supernatural thoughts become entangled. George proposes that the demon must have made a temporal spatial error when adopting his brother's form. He thinks it "had miscalculated dreadfully on the size, and presented itself thus to him in a blown-up, dilated frame of embodied air, exhaled from the caverns of death" (30).

Gothic terror, however, then turns into farce. The retreating George collides with the advancing Robert, and the brothers fight. Once disgruntled Robert departs, George (as with the reader and Editor) must consider possible explanations for what has just happened. George initially plumps for a supernatural explanation, believing he is "haunted by some evil genius in the shape of his brother, as well as by that dark and mysterious wretch himself" (33). Later, a friend of his father's, Adam Gordon, offers a rational one. He proposes that the apparition was the projected shadow of his brother approaching him, in other words a Brocken Spectre (although not named as such). Now, we can see that Hogg utilises in this episode a full range of the Brocken Spectre's aspects: its occurrence on a mountain at dawn, the glory's coloured arcs, the colossal scale of its billowing shadow, its religious and diabolical associations, and its rational explanation as an optical meteorological effect. The Spectre is psychologically revelatory. We later learn from Robert's memoir that the shadow's presentation of malice and fear is an accurate reflection of his state of mind as he stalks his brother. Yet the passage is also exemplary of the novel's capacity to place incompatible interpretative modes next to one another. A full understanding of the Spectre's significance requires that rational and supernatural explanations are grasped in the same moment, and the literary description and examination of the apparition allows both explanations equal weight and probability.

I suggested earlier that Hogg's novel explores points of convergence and unexpected overlaps in its apparently mutually contradictory narrative strands. As we see in this episode George applies from the Editor's perspective an appropriate inductive methodology when he reflects upon what took place, but draws the wrong conclusion in thinking himself haunted by an evil genius and his brother. Yet, George's view *does* correspond with what we subsequently learn from Robert's account, that Robert is persuaded to attempt fratricide by the diabolical Gil Martin, and that Martin does assume both Robert's and George's forms. The epistemological form of this literary narrative is then opposed to David Brewster's in *Natural Magic*. For

Brewster, science explains the fundamental meaning of an apparition now divorced from its superstitious, pagan associations. For Hogg, the Spectre's meaning lies in the interplay of the different discursive forms which are brought to bear upon it, in that momentary conjunction of different modes of being, and the patterns of constructive and destructive interference which they establish. But Brewster, interestingly, is the probable source for the scientific part of this discussion. Hogg knew Brewster (they lived in Edinburgh at the same time). In a short autobiographical piece, written for *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* in 1833, Hogg claimed to have witnessed the mountain phantom as a nineteen-year-old shepherd. Hogg recalls his terror, fascination, and final amusement at his giant shadow. He concludes with a scientific description of the phenomenon which seems to the common reader, like Hogg himself, to be as an impenetrable mystery as any supernatural explanation. He reports that Sir D. Brewster accounted for natural projections of this kind "by some law of dioptical refraction, which I did not understand."¹⁹

The Brocken Spectre, then, has a significant interpretive function in both Coleridge's poem and Hogg's novel. But its interpretative role remains implicit. Readers have to draw for themselves the connections between this phantom and the works' wider themes. In Thomas de Quincey's autobiographical "Suspiria de Profundis" (1845), the Spectre becomes an explicit means for interpreting his dreams. In the middle of a period of hack journalism, De Quincey suddenly returned to the visionary autobiographical mode of *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, the essay which launched his literary career twenty-three years earlier. Perhaps he was inspired to do so by reading James Gillman's *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1838), or perhaps he was responding to a recent spate of visionary dreaming caused by a reduction in his opium intake; or perhaps a mixture of both.²⁰ De Quincey intended "Suspiria de Profundis" (the title means *sighs from the deep*) as a sustained meditation on the shaping of the psyche by grief, on the enduring stamp of early childhood, and on opium as a psychological catalyst rather than the principal cause of visionary dreaming. "Suspiria de Profundis" was to be published in four parts in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, but only the first and a short piece of the second appeared. De Quincey always found it difficult to complete large-scale projects, and his cause was not helped

¹⁹ James Hogg, "Nature's Magic Lantern," *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* (28 September 1833): 274.

²⁰ See in particular Alethea Hayter's discussion of the origins of "Suspiria de Profundis," in her "De Quincey's Smashed Vision," *TLS* 9 (August 1985): 871-72.

in this instance by misunderstandings and disagreements with *Blackwood's* editors. Despite its incompleteness, De Quincey was still justified in claiming "Suspiria de Profundis" to be among his finest writing. It is now almost impossible not to see this work as a precursor to Freud's psychoanalytical writings on the importance of childhood experience, and of dreams as a means of exploring unconscious anxieties and desires. But the text has an exceptional rhetorical power in its own right, and its revelations of childhood experience and visionary dreaming cannot be easily distilled from the grand allusive style in which those ideas are expressed.

The central interpretative figure De Quincey employs to explain the mind's workings is a palimpsest. Toward the end of the first part of "Suspiria de Profundis," he describes how in the Middle Ages vellum rolls often had their manuscripts erased, so they could be reused. But just as the chemistry of the Middle Ages removed generations of writings, so the chemistry of the nineteenth century restored them, haphazardly throwing together images from different times and places. De Quincey directly compares the palimpsest with the human mind. "What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain?" he asks.²¹ But he thinks there *is* a significant difference between them. The sudden conjunction of different scripts on the vellum roll may be instructive, entertaining, or even absurd, but will always be accidental. "In our own heaven-created palimpsest," he writes, "the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain, there are not and cannot be such incoherencies" (175). Whatever the external accidental nature of events which shape a person's life, their mind invariably impresses a connective form upon them. The place in which fundamental experiences and oblique connections are revealed is our dreams. De Quincey concludes the essay's first part with three dream fugues. The first examines the nature of grief, the second describes the apparition of the Brocken, and the third recounts the destruction of the Caribbean town, Savannah-la-Mar. The account of the Brocken Spectre, however, is particularly important, because it has a similar diagnostic function within the narrative to the palimpsest. The palimpsest provides an illustration of how the mind produces significant experience by association of memory; the Brocken Spectre is both an account of a visionary dream, and an illustration of the self-revelatory capacity of such dreaming.

²¹ "Suspiria de Profundis: Being a Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium Eater," in *The Works of Thomas de Quincey*, vol. 15, ed. Frederick Burwick (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003) 175. All further references are to this edition.

In rhetorical terms, the dominant characteristic of "The Apparition of the Brocken" is its studied vagueness. This takes three main forms: firstly, there is a constant movement in narrative perspective, so that the figures being addressed changes, sometimes it is the reader, sometimes a figure in the dream, sometimes the Spectre, and sometimes De Quincey himself; and secondly, there is similar fluidity in the use of symbols, a given symbol's referent shifts and the symbols themselves merge; and thirdly, the figures which casts the Brocken Spectre keep changing. De Quincey begins with an injunction, perhaps to the reader, or to a figure within the dream narrative, or, even to himself: "Ascend with me on this dazzling Whitsunday the Brocken" (182). The reference to Whitsuntide immediately picks out the Christian context of Jordan's early account, and this develops into a meditation on Christian ceremony and pagan rites. Like Haue, De Quincey experiments with the Spectre, inviting his companion to make the sign of the cross to see if the apparition imitates him. The narrative perspective then shifts abruptly, so, it now appears that the apparition is directly instructed to pluck an anemone, a flower De Quincey sees as both a pagan and Christian symbol. "This lovely anemone," he writes, "that once glorified the worship of fear, has travelled back into thy fold; this altar, which once reeked with bloody rites to Cortho, has long been rebaptized into thy holy service" (183-84).

The Spectre momentarily vanishes, and De Quincey shifts the discussion from religious rites and ceremony to earthly passions, but the dynamic of barbarism and sanctification remains in the consideration of the next symbol. De Quincey contemplates the figure of Judaea weeping underneath a palm tree (he has in mind a coin commissioned by Emperor Vespasian to commemorate the Roman Conquest of Jerusalem in 70 BC). But the image becomes associated with the memory of a child, whom De Quincey briefly befriended as a young man, and who, in turn, has become an image of archetypal suffering. These images merge, and as they do, the Spectre reappears as an outward expression of both childhood affliction *and* adult grief. He writes: "immediately you see that the apparition of the Brocken veils *his* head, after the model of Judaea weeping under her palm-tree, . . . and that *he* also, in childhood, having suffered an affliction which was ineffable, wished by these mute symbols to breathe a sigh towards heaven in memory of that affliction" (184). The Spectre consequently is both a means of expressing the impress, the effect of these images upon De Quincey himself, and of revealing, albeit in allusive fashion, their symbolic status; it is the Spectre which makes clear to De Quincey and the reader (the collective "you" in this part of the narrative) the status of these images as mute symbols of suffering.

The Brocken Spectre's central role as an interpretative presence within the dream is now made explicit. De Quincey describes the apparition as "the dark symbolic mirror for reflecting to the daylight what else must be hidden for ever" (184). The figure is an instance and illustration of the Dark Interpreter, the self-interpretative principle of his dreams. As Mary Jacobus points out, the Brocken Spectre has now become "an estranged portion of self, like Shelly's Jupiter, or a Blakean Emanation."²² But that idea of a definable portion or a clear separation of self through this process of estrangement is complicated by the apparition's evasiveness. Like Jordan's Spectre, the Dark Interpreter "is disturbed by storms or by driving showers, so as to dissemble his real origin" (185). The Interpreter has a paradoxical nature: "anchored and stationary" in his dreams, but also like its "gloomy counterpart the shy Phantom of the Brocken" occasionally disappears altogether (185). The Spectre's ephemeral nature, and its capacity to move independently of the figure which cast it, suggests an interpretative presence which cannot be directly approached, or definitively described. De Quincey finishes by promising that the Dark Interpreter will subsequently reappear in his opium experience; and issues a warning that "he will not always be found sitting inside my dreams, but at times outside, and in open daylight" (185). But he does not reappear in this or any other writing. Maybe this was mainly because De Quincey never completed "Suspiria de Profundis." Yet, the confinement of both Brocken Spectre and the Dark Interpreter to this billowy dream world also seems apt. This figure's projection into daylight would suggest a movement toward a Freudian scientific interpretative perspective in which a dream's significant content can be rationally described, analysed, illuminated, and fixed. For De Quincey, the interpretative significance of the dream ultimately cannot be separated from its felt form, expressed through the Brocken Spectre's vaporous presence.

I have so far discussed three Romantic texts with sustained accounts of the Brocken Spectre. Its more common use from the nineteenth century onwards, however, has been as a single metaphor or simile to illustrate a particular impression or mental aspect. Tennyson uses the Spectre in *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1850) as a means of grave late Romantic projection: "My love has talk'd with rocks and trees; / He finds on misty mountain-ground / His own vast shadow glory-crown'd / He sees himself in all he sees."²³ For J.T. Trowbridge in "Guy Vernon: A Novelette in Verse" (1878)

²² Mary Jacobus, "Wordsworth and the Language of the Dream," *ELH* 46 (1979): 626.

²³ Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 114 (97.1-4).

the Spectre evokes Florinda Vernon's disturbed state of mind, her agitation and suspicion on learning of her husband's unexplained departure: "the fearful soul sees giant shapes that ape her; / As in the Brocken Spectre one discovers / One's own vast beckoning shade, that towers and hovers."²⁴ The figure is also used for historical and political purposes. Thomas Carlyle employs the Spectre in *The History of Friedrich II of Prussia* (1858–1862) to describe the pervasive threat George I felt he faced from his Catholic rival, the Old Pretender, James Francis Edward Stewart: "then there was the World-Spectre of the Pretender, stretching huge over Creation, like the Brocken-Spectre in hazy weather—against whom how protect yourself."²⁵ And Robert Buchanan draws upon the figure's German roots in "The Chant of the Rhine" (1871). Buchanan's poem is a commentary on the carnage of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, with his Spectre mournfully surveying the state of both nations.²⁶

Buchanan's use of the Spectre is typically sombre, but writers from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards also use the apparition for more comic purposes, almost as though they were trying to cast off the earnestness of its Romantic associations. In Dickens' *Little Dorrit* (1855–1857), fluttering, bird-like Flora Finchling recollects her childhood infatuation for Arthur Clenham. She recalls Flintwich's presence in the room as the Spectre, even though she cannot quite remember the apparition's name: "ere yet Mr F. appeared a misty shadow on the horizon paying attentions like the well-known spectre of some place in Germany beginning with a B."²⁷ Lewis Carroll in "Phantasmagoria" (1869) uses "A Brocken Spectre" as an intentionally weak pun in an investigative exchange: "'Inspector Kobold came to you' / The little ghost began: / Here I broke in—'Inspector who?'"²⁸ Tom Trollope (brother of Anthony) records seeing multiple Brocken Spectres while staying at the Staffel Hotel on the Rigi in 1877. He reports "a row of some dozen inmates of the hotel were standing at the edge of the precipice, engaged in making with arms and legs every possible telegraph-like antic

²⁴ J.T. Trowbridge, "Guy Vernon: A Novelette in Verse," in *A Masque of Poets*, No Name Series (Boston: Robert Brothers, 1878) 194.

²⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *History of Friedrich II of Prussia, Called Frederick the Great*, 8 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897) II, 5.

²⁶ See "The Chant of the Rhine," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Buchanan*, 2 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1901) I, 349b.

²⁷ Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, ed. Harvey Peter Sucksmith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979), 665.

²⁸ Lewis Carroll, "Phantasmagoria, in Seven Cantos," in *Phantasmagoria and other Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1869) 20. My italics.

.... The effect of the entire exhibition was interesting and at the same time ludicrous in the extreme."²⁹ And in Rudyard Kipling's poem "The Files" (1903), the Spectres become the inky manifestations of a writer's inflated ideas, "when Brocken-spectres made by, / Some one's breath on ink parade by, / Very earnest and tremendous, / Let not show of shows offend us."³⁰

In the twentieth century, the presence of the Spectre occasionally obscured rather than clarified the point the writer wished to make. Both George Bernard Shaw and the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid provide examples of such confused usage. In the preface to *Saint Joan* (1923), Shaw argues Joan's visions should not be judged by standards of objective evidence. We can all agree, he says, that when Joan says she sees Saint Margaret she does not see the real saint, but we should not then think her visions are the same as those phenomena which have obvious empirical causes. We should consequently not class her visions "with the vision of two moons seen by a drunken person, or with Brocken spectres, echoes, and the like."³¹ Shaw's examples, however, are as dissimilar from one another as they are collectively from Joan's aural and visual hallucinations. The faulty vision of the moon induced by an excess of alcohol is not the same as the soberly observed mountain shadow; and the effect of the mountain shadow upon the spectator is not the same as an echo upon the listener. And the Brocken Spectre, as we have seen, *can* possess a significant visionary component.

While Shaw mistakes the significance and associations of the Brocken Spectre, Hugh MacDiarmid confounds his own nationalist argument with the apparition in his "Lament for the Great Music" (1934). MacDiarmid reflects in this poem on the social and cultural condition of Scotland in the 1930s. He regards modern Scotland as a Celtic wasteland, and dismisses the majority of his compatriots as "these denationalised Scots [who] have killed the soul / Which is universally human."³² He imagines himself at one point standing on a Hebridean isle. "If I were on one of the islands on a sunny day / Reverse of the Brocken Spectre, every flash I saw / Of wing or wave, look of an eye, curve of lip, / swing of a kilt, would surely magnify itself / Into the land of light you inhabit."³³ The inverted Spectre is a striking,

²⁹ T. Adolphus Trollope, "The Spectre of the Brocken," *Notes and Queries*, 7th series (1888) 6, 510a.

³⁰ Rudyard Kipling, "The Files," in *The Complete Verse* (London: Kyle Cathie, 2002) 281.

³¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan: A Chronicle Play in Six Scenes and an Epilogue* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1924) 25.

³² "Lament for the Great Music," in *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Michael Grieve and William Russell Aitken, 2 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) I, 472.

³³ "Lament for the Great Music" 472.

but perplexing image. Its context suggests that the Celtic periphery offers a mode of independent Scottish existence, and this should be projected onto the rest of the country as an example of revitalised national experience. But the Spectre's inversion suggests two things which run counter to this thesis: firstly, the Celtic periphery, the supposed source of national light and inspiration, is inexplicably shrouded in darkness; and secondly, that the reversed Brocken Spectre would not "surely magnify itself" as MacDiarmid proposes, but would reduce the size of its projected image.

The Spectre is relatively rare in literary writing in the twentieth century, but can still be found at the century's end. It appears, for example, in John Gallas' long narrative poem, "Bush" (1999). Gallas relates the progress of a band of murderous panhandlers through nineteenth-century New-Zealand goldfields. When the gang traverses a ridge, their bedraggled figures become eerily illuminated: "their Brocken shapes slipped haloed through the slop. / They inched with pinprick purpose dark along / the black earth's crinkled face."³⁴ These Spectres effectively capture the gang's appearance, fitting well within Gallas' sparse impressionistic verse. These Brocken shapes, however, do not have much symbolic significance. The most important symbolic use of the Spectre in the later part of the last century occurs in Thomas Pynchon's third novel, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). Pynchon's novel is long, encyclopaedic, symbolically rich, and thematically and stylistically complex. It has been lauded as the key work of postmodernist fiction and the seminal expression of North-American counter culture. Tony Tanner thought it the most important novel since *Ulysses*.³⁵ *Gravity's Rainbow* makes two references to the Spectre: the first is an extended description of the phenomenon which takes place on the Brocken itself in the novel's middle section; and the second is a brief but significant appearance in its spectacular conclusion. As we shall see, the novel directly sets the Spectre as a Romantic symbol against twentieth-century experience, and ultimately uses the apparition, once again, as an instance of the dark interpreter.

Gravity's Rainbow is set at the end and just after the Second World War in Britain and continental Europe. Its plot is centrally concerned with V-2 rockets. The V-2 was an early ballistic missile developed by German engineers in the later stages of the war, and deployed by the Nazis principally as a weapon of terror against Antwerp and London (the V-2 was too inaccurate to have a tactical impact on the battlefield). The novel begins and ends with accounts of the flight of these missiles. Two of the novel's central characters

³⁴ John Gallas, "Bush" in his *Resistance is Futile* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1999) 35.

³⁵ See Tony Tanner, *Thomas Pynchon* (London: Methuen, 1982) 75.

effectively double one another. These are Lieutenant Tyrone Slothrop, an American army officer initially stationed in London and attached to a British intelligence unit, and Major Weissmann, codenamed Blicero (a traditional German nickname for death), an SS officer who commands a V-2 rocket battery in Holland. It is suggested, although never definitively established, that there is a correlation between the sites of Slothrop's amorous trysts in London, and the subsequent strikes of the V-2 rockets launched by Weissmann. Both characters embody the novel's fascination with sex and death. In a work which revels in chance encounter and outrageous coincidence, Slothrop and Weissmann never actually meet. But a substantial part of the narrative recounts Slothrop's grail-like quest for a unique version of the V-2 which Weissmann has in his possession, the one numbered 00000. While Slothrop is looking for this rocket in central Germany, he sees the Brocken Spectre in the company of a young apprentice witch, Geli Tripping.

By the time Slothrop sees the Spectre, he has been dispatched from London, spent two months at the recently liberated Hermann Goering Casino in Monte Carlo, and had his identity stolen in a honey-trap involving a Pavlovian conditioned octopus by the double agent Katje Borgesius (a former lover of Weissmann's, now working for British intelligence). He has assumed the identity of an English war correspondent, Ian Scuffling, travelled north in search of information about the V-2 through Nice and Zurich to Nordhausen, on the southern border of the Harz range, and formed an attachment with Geli. Slothrop and Geli climb the Brocken in the early morning of 28 May 1945 (twenty-three days after the end of the European War). Just before dawn they come across the "relics of the latest Black Sabbath."³⁶ The reference is to *Walpurgisnacht*. Slothrop and Geli inspect the "Kriegsbier empties, lace undergarments, spent rifle cartridges, Swastika-banners of ripped red Satin, tattooing-needles and splashes of blue Ink" (329) which litter the mountainside. The narrator describes the Brocken as "the very plexus of German evil" (329). The "plexus," meaning a complex interwoven network, has three significant referents here: firstly, it refers to the traditional associations of the mountain with witches and devil worship; secondly it refers to the Nazi presence on the mountain. From 1933, there had been annual gatherings of the Hitler Youth on *Walpurgisnacht*. The description of swastika banners and red tattooing needles combines Nazism with devil worship.³⁷ And thirdly, the plexus refers to a network

³⁶ Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (London: Vintage, 1995) 329. All further references are to this edition.

³⁷ Steven Weisenberger suggests that Pynchon's source for the diabolic and Nazi associations of the Brocken was a short anonymous photo piece: "Walpurgisnacht is Celebrated

of tunnels constructed by slave labour close to Nordhausen (and therefore beneath the Harz range), which were used for the storage and development of V-2 rockets.

The narrator describes how as dawn breaks Slothrop's and Geli's giant shadows are cast over the towns lying west of the mountain. Like Haue and De Quincey, Slothrop experiments to see if the shadow will follow his movements. But his gestures have more ominous overtones than either of the earlier accounts. The narrator describes Slothrop raising his arm: "his fingers are cities, his biceps is a province—of course he raises an arm. Isn't it expected of him? The arm-shadow trails rainbows behind as it moves reaching eastward for a grab at Göttingen. Not ordinary shadows either—*three-dimensional* ones, cast out on the German dawn, yes and the Titans *had* to live in these mountains or under them" (330). The rainbow trails are, of course, a glory surrounding his arm. And the "Titans" looks to be a reference both to the mythical giants whose imprints were supposed to have shaped this landscape, and to V-2s recently stored in the Harz's network of tunnels. But Slothrop's Spectre also appears to make a giant fascist salute as he raises his arm. We saw earlier that Thomas Carlyle used the Spectre for the historical purpose of evoking the Jacobite threat in the eighteenth century, and here it appears to symbolise the destructive shadow of Nazism cast over Europe in the middle part of the last century.

The Spectre, however, also has more personal associations. It is as though Slothrop momentarily projects the giant spectre of his double, Major Weissmann, with all the darkness and destructiveness that he embodies: death, fascism, sadism, V-2 rockets. As if to blank out this notion, Slothrop and Geli make love on the mountain top, enormous figures "dancing the floor of the whole visible sky" (330). The image of a giant fornicating couple looks like a piece of Rabelaisian carnality, a celebration of physical pleasure and a vigorous affirmation of life. Sexual reverie and Romantic lyricism then fuse as their spectra "wash red to indigo, tidal, immense, at all their edges" (331). Such physical and symbolic intensity cannot be sustained, and the Spectre episode finishes with shadows shrinking back to their owners, and their owners returning to more immediate concerns. Slothrop asks Geli if she has ever paid this kind of visit to the Brocken peak with her regular boyfriend, the Russian officer, Tchitcherine. Oh no, she replies, he would be "too busy for this" (331).

by GIs," in *Life Magazine* (28 May 1945): 122–24. See Weisenburger, *A Gravity's Rainbow Companion* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia Press, 1988) 168–69

By the time the Brocken Spectre reappears in the novel's finale, Slothrop has long vanished from the narrative, dissolving into the landscape of post-war Northern Europe. The central figure at the start of this final episode is Slothrop's double, Major Weissmann. The conclusion is complex: the episode takes place on 1 April 1945; it occurs half-way through the novel's time span, and therefore *before* Slothrop and Geli sees their shadows on the Brocken. Weissmann in an act of pagan sacrifice has entombed his catamite, a German soldier Gottfried, in the special V-2, number 00000 (the object of Slothrop's quest). This rocket is destined to land on a cinema. The episode has a factual basis: a V-2 hit the Rex Cinema in Antwerp in December 1944, killing 567 of its audience and staff. But in a bizarre prolepsis this missile will not strike Northern Europe during the war; it is headed toward The Orpheus Theatre in 1970, a cinema in Los Angeles, managed by a thinly disguised Richard Nixon. *Gravity's Rainbow's* closing satirical proposition that European fascism is falling upon modern America may be questionable, but the book still retains an impressive symbolic density to its end, as this V-2 inscribes one last great rainbow-like parabola. I began this essay by suggesting that the rainbow is often seen as a sign of hope, of compact, of better times ahead. But the bow also, of course, has its darker hues: Christ sits upon a rainbow throne in mediaeval depictions of Judgment Day, and Byron envisages the bow as "the Giant steed to be bestrode by Death, / As told in the Apocalypse."³⁸ As the V-2 nears the apex of its own destructive rainbow arc, it momentarily throws a familiar shadow: "the burnt-out tail-opening is swinging across the sun and through the blond hair of the victim here's a Brocken-Spectre, someone's, something's shadow projected from out here in the bright sun and darkening sky into the regions of gold, of whitening, of growing still as underwater as Gravity dips away" (759).

The Brocken Spectre in this passage is being used in a more modern sense than we have encountered so far: it is the shadow thrown by a high-flying object on the clouds beneath it. The shadow is consequently usually seen by pilots and passengers in aircraft. The actual observer of the Spectre in this instance is unclear: it might be seen by the entombed Gottfried, or from the narrator's perspective from outside the missile. The Spectre, however, explicitly introduces the idea of death into this episode. Immediately after the rocket casts this shadow, the narrator muses in cinematic terms on death as a fade to white, "what is this death but a whitening, a carrying of whiteness to ultrawhite" (759). It is as though the Spectre has once

³⁸ "Manfred: A Dramatic Poem," in *Byron*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, Oxford Authors (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 289, 11.2.7-8.

again assumed the role of the Dark Interpreter. And this Spectre, unlike De Quincey's, *is* projected outside, into the bright daylight. But it is not now an expression of the interpretative form and content of dreams; rather, it is an interpretative device to reveal the symbolic form of the bow itself: an airborne shadow which transforms the significance of the rainbow arch from God's covenant to Byron's apocalyptic steed. Pynchon often undercuts the profound with the absurd in his fiction, and both are present in this closing episode. The 00000 is launched on 1 April 1945, which was both Easter Sunday *and* April Fools Day. If the novel's final glimpse of a Brocken Spectre does not exactly replicate this movement between profundity and absurdity, then it does trace an analogous movement between the magical and the mundane. For that rare remote Brocken Spectre which inspired Coleridge's meditation on the nature of idealism, Hogg's examination of the interference of the rational and supernatural, and De Quincey's probing of a dark interpretative presence within his dreams has now become a much more familiar sight, seen every day by passengers on commercial flights—just another shadow of a plane, cast onto the clouds below.