I do not know if the following qualify precisely as dreams, since they occurred in the state between sleep and waking when one’s conscious mind is a spectator or auditor of the fantasia of the unconscious rather than a participant in it; but they are certainly over on the dream side, because there was no conscious control of their development, as there is in the making of a poem when one is possessed by the Daemon but awake. Since the visual and kinetic predominate in so many dreams, I thought it might be interesting to offer examples of totally verbal dreaming or semi-dreaming, which may be commoner among writers, people whose work is all words, than anyone seems to have noticed yet.

The first occurred about midnight in London in 1969; I was able to recall and write it down when I woke up in the morning.

O do you sail the sundering sea
’Twixt Mimminy and Wurge?
If so, buy a harpoon from me
To hunt the Primal Urge.

Harpoooner, stay thy bright harpoon!
O’ sailor, stay thy ship!
The Primal Urge obeys the Moon,
And gives us all the slip.

From Mimminy to Wurge, my dears,
From Wurge to Mimminy,
You’ll sail back and forth for years,
And years, and years. You’ll see.

I see the sea, you see the sea, we see the sea.
We see the sea.
We see the sea.
Big Ben Bong Bong
sea
see
C

Dreamworks, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 1980
0192-2890/80/0140-0156 $00.95 © 1980 Human Sciences Press
The whole thing simply floated into mind, as it were, word after word, and I enjoyed it very much, and let it repeat itself several times (which is probably why I could recall it in the morning). I find it interesting that it is one of the most basic English meters and rhyme patterns (4-3-4-3; abab) and that the language is rather Poetic—I wouldn’t use “Twixt,” or the second person singular, if I was in charge. But as I got sleepier the rhyme became repetition and the rhythm sort of died away into a simple beat, while any specious appearance of Meaning floated off into the inner ocean, rocking gently.

The second one occurred again about midnight when I was rather keyed up from writing all evening; its behavior was far more urgent, and I was under the impression that I was making a poem: I memorised it deliberately before falling asleep. Only when I got up in the morning and wrote it down did I realise that I had no idea what it meant, that there were some odd leaps in the syntax, and that in fact I had exerted no conscious control over the thing at all.

You cannot stay forever
on this side of the river
with darkness coming over
and salt has lost its savor.

Therefore they here foregather
another and another
not one is son or father
nor any is your brother.

Then from time’s quiver borrow
the river-spanning arrow
and let the bright track furrow
the shoreless night of sorrow.

I do not know if these are more closely related to “automatic writing” than to actual dreaming; but since I was in bed in the dark, not writing, they certainly felt like dreams. (I have never practiced automatic writing, nor had any desire to.) I wish, when awake and writing poems, I could achieve as effortless a pattern of inner rhyme as this one has.

URSULA K. LE GUIN