

# selected dreams



with a note on phrenology

ANNE BOYER





Selected  
**DREAMS**  
with a Note on Phrenology

by Anne Boyer

For all who appear in my dreams—

Selected  
DREAMS  
with a Personal Preface by

Written, designed and published  
in Des Moines, Iowa,  
in the last days of April, 2007,  
by Anne Boyer  
for the Dusie Collective

This a limited edition of 100

The power of foreseeing the future and of having vivid dreams is found in persons of inferior type, which implies that God does not send their dreams; but merely that all those whose physical temperament is, as it were, garrulous and excitable, see sights of all descriptions; for, inasmuch as they experience many movements of every kind, they just chance to have visions resembling objective facts, their luck in these matters being merely like that of persons who play at even and odd. For the principle which is expressed in the gambler's maxim—*If you make many throws your luck must change*—here also holds.

—Aristotle

## SELECTED DREAMS

Fairly clear the end of the world had come or the end of the world as we understood it had come or the end of the world of humans in a civilization had come and this end had come through some water-borne contagion or at least a backed-up broken-down water and sewage system.

Knowing all this, we went to a large clean building in the middle of a city for an ART SHOW. This building was a hotel or convention center and on the fifth floor or so a woman who may or may not have been Kiki Smith had organized the ART SHOW before it was clear that the world was at its end. Many people at the show were vacuous or self-absorbed or on drugs or whatever so that they did not know it was the end or did not pay the end much notice. Very pale, thin, and glamorous people who were part of the art installations strode in threes naked or half naked and the other half cloaked in fur. Even at the end of the world I was envious of their beauty and furs and paleness. And in one room, there showed an ART FILM. This film was about WHAT YOU COULD BUY to prove you had been at the ART SHOW.

At that time three backpackers entered the room with backpacks. These backpackers knew it was the end of the world: they had put all their things in backpacks and decided to take off, to travel, as it was the end of the world and staying put, i.e. STAYING AS NORMAL, would only mean the end. Other people noticed the backpackers and maybe started waking up to the seriousness of the event of the end of the world, and fearing a panic, my companions and I

decided to leave the ART SHOW and take an elevator to the top of the building.

We stepped in the elevator. I started to worry the sewage-contagion problem would damage the power grid. Would we be stuck on the elevator for all of time? Would we die on the elevator we took to escape the ART SHOW? My companions tried to calm me, to tell me "It is too early in the process for the power to go out," but I could smell the stink and contagion, and asked to what purpose is going to the roof of the building of the ART SHOW.

I said—*Shouldn't we be doing something other than going to the top of the building at the end of the world?*



Five of us and a cat floated on a little wooden boat in the dark on the ocean. We would feed the cat bits of expensive ham from a briefcase. Sometimes the cat, sleeping, would float a few feet in front of us, not at all wet, on the waves. Somehow we were secret, and were pulled to shore to a hospital, and we had to keep that we were the people on the boat secret, and at the same time watched the television news—

the news showed the people on the boat, said these people were drifting from point of light to point of light, crisscrossing the ocean (the globe).



My boyfriend the mayor said "You'll have to take out your own catheter then. Don't you think it would be easier to just go in for the surgery than to risk the pain of yanking all those tubes out?"

"But what if they mess up? It's *Brain Surgery* after all. Things could go wrong and then I wouldn't even have a brain with limited functionality. Isn't one flawed brain better than no brain at all? Since when have I trusted doctors? And just who is the man who is giving me part of his brain, anyways? Will I have his memories?"

My boyfriend the mayor shrugged. "You worry too much, dear."

"But what if I want to keep my brain intact only because my brain is messed up? Isn't that the problem with the brain in the first place, how it's limited by its own perception and evaluation of itself? How can a brain know if a brain is good?"



The poem had many numbers in it so I thought it was *Moby Dick*. Instead, it was the Bible.



Matt and Katy lived in a secret art school hidden in the depths of a large brown river. I was a spy. I appeared to be working for the repressive regime that searched for secret art schools, so my regime and I hauled the school up out of the river, and the building

was like a Gaudi, and those two stood on the balcony of the building though everyone was wet and smelled like river.

After, we went to a big bicycle place and discussed Andy's career as a music writer.



I was in Brooklyn, and Gina was at a bar. Andy and I decided to rent bikes and go on a bike ride across the Brooklyn Bridge. We talked about Kandinsky adding purple and Chagall adding blue and Presbyterians wanting to spank children.

Then we went back to the bar. Andy and Gina smoked cigarettes. The bartender took the cigarettes away and said "Andy and Gina, you must go out by the pool as punishment."

I had crime novels to read, so left, though I didn't want to because my ex-husband was waiting for me in the hotel room. I was dressed up in the costume of a businesswoman the whole time.



Outside THE SPRING SOUL FOOD KITCHEN DELUXE pretty women in spaghetti straps sipped water from stemware and the windows of the restaurant were painted gaily with tempera.

You and I had lost each other. I wanted to go back and fetch you from the underground mall. I would

make you eat at THE SPRING SOUL FOOD KITCHEN DELUXE with me, though it looked an awful lot like Arthur Bryant's, if Arthur Bryant had been a woman, and Arthur Bryant's weren't so shabby. I found you smelling votive candles, but you insisted that before we could go eat at THE SPRING SOUL FOOD KITCHEN DELUXE we must go pick up the suit I put on layaway.

The suit in question was red, with a boxy jacket and a short skirt, and I bought it at a plus-sized clothing shop. I was planning to have it tailored down to size.

As we entered the store there was a Full Professor of English holding onto my suit—my suit!—and raving on and on about its political ramifications.

“Outrageous and wrong! Why this? Why the Bush Administration? Why the lie?” I couldn't very well pick up the red suit in front of the Full Professor, given that its mere existence provoked such vigorous protests. I knew her. I couldn't risk her knowing that I had chosen the red suit.

I told you we must leave, and we got in one of those open-top mini-cars like the Shriners drive in parades. You were annoyed. “Where are you taking me? Why couldn't you just pick up the damn suit?”

“You don't understand!” I protested, and started to drive you to one of those loose-fitting organic cotton boutique clothing stores that would get me up like an elderly arts matron. I was going to go buy a sarong or a shawl.

“But the food!”

"Oh yes"—and now I'm so intoxicated by you I can't shut up—"THE SPRING SOUL FOOD KITCHEN DELUXE is like Arthur Bryant's if he had been a woman, and there are pretty girls in spaghetti straps sitting on the sidewalk. We can have greens! We can have catfish! It will be Kansas City in May. The peonies will be so gregarious we will have to ask them to turn off their perfume!"

We turned our little open-top Shriner car and drove the other way.



Juliana and Bill and Charles had four children when they lived on the island. Three of these children were adopted, one biological. Soon they decided it was politically wrong to have children, so they gave them away. First they were only going to give the adopted children away, but then they decided it was wrong to keep their biological child, too.

They tried to give their children to other poets, and other poets at first kept the children but soon decided they didn't want to keep the children too long. In the end, Juliana and Bill and Charles just left the children on the island and went back to the States.

I was concerned that I had never heard about these children, and concerned also for their well-being, but my concern with these poets and their abandoned children meant very little later in the dream when I was waiting on a seashore for an outdoor tanning bed and the ornate woman in line in front of me wanted to

know where she could find some long-toothed jackrabbits and some crack.



I was on a bus in a city familiar only in my dreams, and the bus driver wouldn't let me off, and I knew I would be deposited not in the center of the city, but on its cardboard edges, and the bus was also a Christian bookstore that I was browsing, and before I was on the bus, I was in my filthy home. In my filthy home mice behind pillow cushions revealed themselves to be puppies and two cats emanated out of piles and filth. But in the filthy home I sat at a large wooden table with criminals and revolutionaries, including an oversexed Finn who often blew in the ear of the man next to him. This was before the bus, before the pets, and we ate bread, and someone, murdered, also sat at the table, a badly done, slumped-over corpse.



My daughter and I were shopping in a warehouse district full of underwear stores. One store had many rooms like a house, and in each room were shiny Lycra and nylon underthings: cinchers and girdles and minimizing bras, some yellowing, collected in piles.

We left with our tour guide and on the sidewalk one block over, students were gathered wearing spirit gear and shouting. Then I could see—they were telling girls to leap from the third floor window of a building. One girl jumped: she wore jeans: she pedaled her feet

through the air. The crowd moved as if to try to catch the girl, but if they caught her, I couldn't see. They shouted for another.



I had committed a crime, and escaped with two others, old men, who had also committed crimes. We went off to a mall looking for a poetry conference and looking to elude the police. We found a bank of hundreds of leather sofas, and they were crowded, uncomfortably, around stone fireplaces, and no one was sitting on them (the lights were off). Also there were big windows, but they looked out on nothing—the blankness of parking lots—and even in the sky, the lights were off.

We were tired from all our crime-committing and almost sat down, but we read the sign for the bank of hundreds of leather couches: “HUNTER’S LOUNGE.” And the sign also said to be mindful of the needs of CEOs and other executives, also GLBT groups waiting to attend movies, and reminded us, in red letters, that the right to sit on a leather couch in the Hunter’s Lounge came with an exorbitant, but unspecified, fee.



I was in the city from my dreams with my mother and daughter. On the landing of our borrowed apartment, I studied the mosses and a large friendly dog. Then—a young man showed—he said he would show me more mosses. Then he was Scott, and Scott took me

walking around the city in the dark. We walked and walked all over the city and then into small rooms with stacks of books and then into brightly lit malls. We walked all night, and my phone rang, so I took out the battery to make it stop ringing, and we walked some more.

I needed to go back to my family. Scott couldn't tell me the way back to my family.

"West."

"I don't know west."

He told me just to walk some more, so I walked some more, on high glass bridges, and stopped at some chairs, and put all of my jewelry and hair clips and several My Little Ponies in two shoeboxes.

When I got back to my family I gave my mother these boxes. I told my mother I put all of my jewelry in these boxes because I belonged to no man, the men think they own you.

*The men think they own you.* My mother agreed. She gave me a large white T-shirt with the word "Grandma" written on it. I put this on, and we went to an opera with three acts.



Ted Berrigan was teaching upper-el students at my daughter's school. I kept meaning to track him down and tell him something, but too many experimental filmmakers were crowded in the halls.

◇

At an outdoor festival, in a tent, pairs of brothers were everywhere. Also, there was a large table full of shoes and boots thirty percent off, including these fabulous open-toed orange things made of bits of leather formed to resemble interlocked shells. Alice Notley was circulating with 280 letterpressed broadsides. And down a block or two, a baseball game, and a judge from my home town sat on a bleacher and wanted to know about the festival. After speaking with the judge, who thought a nearby BMW on monster truck wheels was mine, I walked back to the festival, but a woman stopped me who was very interested to know if this bird she saw was Woody Woodpecker. It was rather like a woodpecker, but much larger, perhaps the size of a small dog, with a rosy glowing stomach, cerulean head, and a beak long and thin and surgical. Not the least bit afraid of us, the bird flapped its large wings over to us to talk. I said, "I wish they would make pets of that. I mean—domesticate it."

◇

I was, perhaps, in Europe. A dark-haired lawyer told me my ex-husband's parents weren't really his parents, but that he had been adopted, and that he was protecting his birth mother, Abigail, who was a serial child molester, but somehow, through these proceedings, I could also bring this child molester to justice. This all had something to do with a program called V.I.T.A.

I was staying in a large old white house, in a room with French doors, and all of my colleagues from a university also stayed there, and they kept records of their drinking on posters in the kitchen. They were very proud of this drinking, and also the art which was similar to the sort of art frat boys might like if they liked art. The lawyer was visiting this house. Then she was leaving. Then all of my colleagues flooded down to where she stood, speaking of their drunken parties. At the same time, a poet who knows these colleagues, and with whom I've had my longest simmering feud, joined these colleagues, saw the lawyer and congratulated me on my victimhood.

I was so hurt that I went to a beach. I needed to climb a tall set of metal outdoor stairs to change my clothes. I had a stack of papers with me from the lawyer. I sat on the landing after the first flight of stairs. I was crippled with fear. I cried. My papers flew away. A large group of European children ascended the stairs, walking around me. I was terrified they would knock me off. I cowered. They commented. I cried some more.



A building overlooked a terrible wide concrete lake. In this place, many people, including many old friends and acquaintances, camped out in sleeping bags in a gymnasium on the top floor.

The building consisted of a series of follies: for example, one could see that somewhere there was a troupe of dancing girls, one could see signs that read "GIRLS," yet one could not successfully find the way

to the dancing girls given the architectural misdirection.

To reach the top floors of this building, one had to ascend on a series of complicated elevators. In one of the elevators was the wife of the building's owner, who was, like the owner, a performer, and wearing a fringed satin Dale Rogers shirt.

Riding in the elevator with her, I learned this couple was evil and planning to do bad to all the visitors, including my friends. I did what I could to let people know of this impending evil—which meant flooding the concrete lake, flooding the entire land, ripping all the signage off the building, almost killing everyone, knowing I was going to die clinging to a concrete wall.



I attended a party at a university decorated as a Chinese banquet hall. The building had many tall glass windows. Joshua had returned on a private plane from a campus known for its glittering wealth. The party was disappointing—the Chinese banquet hall disappointing—full of distracting continuity errors. Unable to suspend disbelief and feeling merely at a university, despite the acrobats, I questioned my will to live. The meanest and eldest of my aunts was there, looking young and giddy. I sat next to my daughter, who was reclining, and observed her survival instinct as it coursed through her body. I considered, as I watched the white girls dressed up like Chinese girls doing flips down red aisles, what it must be like to have a survival instinct, and wondered what had

happened to mine. Suddenly, my survival instinct presented itself, as a tiny glowing lump in my blood.



Jennifer had written a six-line poem of TRUTH, and then it disappeared, and as one who had seen the poem of TRUTH before it faded from the page (all but the beginning and ending phrases, and dashes throughout), I had to go to Maine to testify.



I flew somewhere to give a reading, then metal gates closed behind me, and I was trapped and tortured for fifteen years. My torturer was a poet whom I do not personally know and will not name.

I came back fifteen years after the initial capture as someone else, though still myself, to give the reading I'd forgotten about. I walked into the open gate, and there I was, the tortured me, trying to warn the other me to leave before it was too late.

The newly arrived me was oblivious and reading a list of poet's names from a register. The me-who-had-been-tortured was trying to warn the untortured me, but she couldn't say the words out loud. The untortured me was very loud, reading from the list, first "Tzara" then "Apollinaire."



The most remarkable bit was not that I dreamt a feature-length movie, *Snakes in a Hospital*, or that during this dream snakes were delivered on a conveyor belt with much cold spaghetti; it was that at some point during the dream I sat in an auditorium and looked at a table of sweets named for twentieth-century poets, and I chose the Ann Lauterbach peanut butter brownies *over* the Clark Coolidge chocolate/caramel brownies.



I was having a hard time as a small town taxi cab driver, but Joe assured me that even though I thought it was hard to be a woman taxi driver, it was okay, because in small towns everything is done in alphabetical order. We were also philosophers. We watched people who offered valet parking. Some people were going to try Starbucks coffee. There were films playing in the background about economic hopelessness.



My mother was playing a card game with Alice Notley and Susan Howe. Strangers milled about. I said to a group of them, "But I have a daughter, she is seven." Also, "I am twenty years old." Also, "I mean I had her when I was twenty years old." And then I realized I had her when I was twenty-seven years old. But out came, "I am twenty-seven years old. I mean thirty-three."

“Yes. I mean no. I mean I already have one: she is seven. The others were miscarried. I don’t need another one. I’m a poet.”

I tried to talk to Susan Howe, but she was a faculty wife and only wanted to talk about the internet. “I only have the internet two months a year—what should I look at?”

I told her to look at YouTube. Then I was required to go have sex, but I did not know with whom.



I was in a reservoir clinging to what was once a tree. It must have been a festival, for everywhere were boats towing long chains of water skiers who were freezing in the lake. Clinging to the remains of a tree, I became suddenly scared that the fish would take a revenge on me—given all I’ve seen slaughtered—and learned to say nothing about it, even as they gasped and stared, guts spilling out.

“Yes. I mean no. I mean I already have one: she is seven. The others were miscarried. I don’t need another one. I’m a poet.”

I tried to talk to Susan Howe, but she was a faculty wife and only wanted to talk about the internet. “I only have the internet two months a year—what should I look at?”

I told her to look at YouTube. Then I was required to go have sex, but I did not know with whom.



I was in a reservoir clinging to what was once a tree. It must have been a festival, for everywhere were boats towing long chains of water skiers who were freezing in the lake. Clinging to the remains of a tree, I became suddenly scared that the fish would take a revenge on me—given all I’ve seen slaughtered—and learned to say nothing about it, even as they gasped and stared, guts spilling out.

“Yes. I mean no. I mean I already have one: she is seven. The others were miscarried. I don’t need another one. I’m a poet.”

I tried to talk to Susan Howe, but she was a faculty wife and only wanted to talk about the internet. “I only have the internet two months a year—what should I look at?”

I told her to look at YouTube. Then I was required to go have sex, but I did not know with whom.



I was in a reservoir clinging to what was once a tree. It must have been a festival, for everywhere were boats towing long chains of water skiers who were freezing in the lake. Clinging to the remains of a tree, I became suddenly scared that the fish would take a revenge on me—given all I’ve seen slaughtered—and learned to say nothing about it, even as they gasped and stared, guts spilling out.

I dream of poets. Says Mayer: "You came to town in my opening dream."

Someone else suggested that dreams are merely a set of neural firings and biochemical flashing lights.



The twentieth century was full of dreams and dream-like things, and after its end the intellectuals of the West all joined together to conclude that dreams are as useless as bumps on our skulls.

This is our materialism. Badiou: "There are only bodies and language."

Now there is mostly capital and the manufactured reverie of the screens.



Still, I attempt to record dreams, without embellishment or interpretation, one after the next.

Bernadette Mayer and Alice Notley both use dreams.

Someone said, "Maybe it is residual utopia."



Aristotle insisted that dreamers of prophetic dreams are beast-like and dolts.

Someone else suggested that we abandoned dreams when we abandoned our way of reading.

And as a dream exists not at all without a frame of waking so does poetry exist not at all without the frame of what it is not.

