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# Affording innerscapes: Dreams, introspective imagery and the narrative exploration of personal geographies

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**Abstract:** The essay presents an interdisciplinary theory of what it will call “innerscapes”: artefactual representations of the mind as a spatially extended world. By bringing examples of innerscapes from literature (Kafka’s short story *The Bridge*), radio plays (Samuel Beckett’s *Embers*), and a creative documentary about auditory-verbal hallucinations (a voice-hearer’s short film, *Adam + I*), it suggests that these spatial renditions of the mind are constructed by transforming the quasi-perceptual elements of inner experience into affording ecologies. In so doing, they enable an enactive exploration of inner worlds as navigable environments. The resulting storyworlds display features that resemble the logic and ontology of dreams. Cognitive research on dreams and cartographical studies of the personal geographies of dreamscapes will thus inform the understanding of what innerscapes are, do and can do if used, as the essay argues they should be, as enhancing devices for what Jesse Butler has called ‘extended introspection’ (2013: 95).

**Keywords:** Narrative, mind metaphors, extended introspection, cognitive theory of dreams, innerscapes

“It’s a hard thing, my fine friend, to demonstrate [sufficiently] any of the greater subjects without using models. It looks as if each of us knows everything in a kind of dreamlike way, and then again is ignorant of everything as it were awake”

Plato, *Statesman* (277d1–4)

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# 1 Landscapes of consciousness as landscapes of action

In his *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Jerome Bruner argues that each story simultaneously constructs what he defines as two parallel topographies.<sup>1</sup> One is what he calls the “landscape of action” where “the constituents are the arguments of action: agent, intention or goal, situation” (1986: 14). The other is the “the landscape of consciousness”, a territory configured by “what those involved in the action know, think, or feel” (1986: 14). With this binary distinction, Bruner aimed at separating the physical and psychic realities within a storyworld. The underlying view of the mind as a distinct space or landscape to be mapped has a long history in literature and science (Gentner & Grudin 1985; Draaisma 2000; Fernyhough 2009). In the early days of psychology, for instance, what began as the study of the physical geography of cranial bumps and hills in the head by phrenologists, as Sternberg notes, soon turned into a study of psychological landscapes, where “[t]he psychologist studying intelligence was both an explorer and a cartographer, seeking to chart the innermost regions of the mind” (1990). This geographic conceptualisation of the mind as a defined territory, separated from the outer world of situated actions and perceptions, however, has been recently problematized or outright rejected by cognitive sciences and cognitive literary studies alike. In narratology, David Herman has criticised dualistic frameworks as “buttressed by a Cartesian geography of the mental, whereby the mind constitutes an interior space separated off from the world at large” (2011: 254). By contrast, he advocates a “remapping” in narrative theory that should take into account “new geographies” (2011: 254–255) in cognitive sciences, which see the mind as “a distributional flow, interwoven with rather than separated from situations, events, and processes in the world” (2011: 254).

Dismantling walls, customs and rigid checkpoints, emerging anti-Cartesian trends in cognitive science, in fact, have begun considering the mind rather as a fluctuating region, constantly extending into the outer physical world (the so-called “extended mind” thesis; Clark & Chalmers 1998). According to this view of a *res cogitans* (partly) as *res extensa*, the mind’s territory is reconceived as an “unbounded” (Menary 2007) land, with “porous” (Clark 2012) and impermanent borders. As a consequence, cognitive processes are not seen anymore as autochthonous inhabitants of the interior landscape of consciousness, but as migrant

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“tangles of feedback, feedforward, and feedaround loops that promiscuously criss-cross the boundaries of brain, body and world” (Clark 2012: 277). Actions, on the other hand, have been promoted to constitutive elements of cognition, and the enactive mind is now regarded as shaped by the enacted world (Stewart et al. 2010; Chemero 2011; Grammont et al. 2010).

The downside is that, within the scientific debate, the landscape of consciousness has become so relaxed to the point of feeling, as Mark Rowland notes, almost “spatially indefinite” (2010: 83). For this reason, he has suggested getting rid of geography metaphors of cognition (83), whereas others urged to abandon mind metaphors altogether (Ross & Ladyman 2010: 164). By the same token, in narrative theory Brian McHale raised a more conservative concern regarding the overextension of the concept of a fictional mind to the domain of actions, asking whether “if everything in narrative is mind, then hasn’t the very category of *fictional consciousness* or *representation of consciousness* been rendered redundant?” (2012: 120).

This essay will argue that, if we move from the conceptual domain of what the mind is (ontologically in life, representationally in creative artefacts) to the phenomenological dimension of how the mind feels to itself, geographical metaphors of the mind as some sort of private space or world can be the opposite of redundant or dispensable. They should be rather (re)considered as an irreplaceable tool not just for the representation of consciousness, but also for enhancing introspective practices for its exploration (Vermersch 1999). After a more theoretical section on introspection and inner experience, I will test this theoretical idea by analysing, in the third section, artefactual representations where the mind is not rendered as extending into the outer world, but rather is constructed and explored itself as *a spatially extended world*. I will call these representations of mind and consciousness as spatially structured locations “innerscapes”.

By bringing examples of innerscapes from literature (Kafka’s short story *The Bridge*), radio plays (Samuel Beckett’s *Embers*), and a creative documentary about auditory-verbal hallucinations (a voice-hearer’s short film, *Adam + I*), I will suggest that these spatial renditions of inner experiences enable an enactive exploration of inner worlds as inhabitable or navigable environments. At first, these explorative spatialisations of the mind could be likened to extended metaphors (Pettersen 2011), allegories (Crisp 2008) or “storyworld metaphors” (Sinding 2011) whereby a metaphor or analogy is enlarged to the point of becoming the structuring principle of an entire (story)world (Werth 1994). Crucially, however, to the extent that they attempt to capture, magnify and stabilise elements of inner experience that are *already* qualitatively similar to experiences in the outer world (which are, in the scientific jargon, “quasi-perceptual”), they are not entirely or strictly metaphorical (they are, I would suggest, “quasi-metaphorical”).

Inner experience, in fact, spontaneously presents, as the next section will show, quasi-perceptual qualities that at the same time resemble *and* differ from perception in the outer world (Hurlburt & Schwitzgebel 2007). These quasi-perceptual features paradoxically pair a sense of perceptual vividness with an evanescent behaviour that often eschews introspective access or reportability. Following a recent proposal to apply Gibson's ecological theory of action ([1979] 2015) to introspection (McClelland 2015), I characterise this reportability problem as a "latent affordance": a dormant, half-developed potentiality to be grasped, melded, explored and inspected. This weak affordance qualifies inner experience as one of the greater subjects towards which, as Plato has it in the epigraph to this essay (qt. in Pender 2003: 65), we have only a dreamlike knowledge. As with dreams, we retain a vivid sense of our on-going inner experience, but often are unable to describe its constituents or dynamics.

Making models of a dreamlike phenomenon, according to Plato, can improve our knowledge or disclose a more thorough exploration of our ignorance of its nature (see Pender 2003). This is exactly what I claim for geographical models of inner experience. They can transform raw quasi-perceptual elements of inner experience into structuring elements of a (story)world. In so doing, they stabilise their behaviour and allow stronger affordances to emerge. This stabilising movement is operated, I will contend, by integrating elements from the outer world to sculpt affordances in the inner world. The "experiential traces" (Zwaan 2008) of perceptual, embodied and situated interactions experienced in the outer world, in fact, serve as a repertoire *to world*, put in David Herman's transitive coinage (2013), inner experience: to transform the landscape of consciousness into a landscape of action.

Against Plato, however, I will suggest that dreams can be regarded themselves as natural models of this transformative operation. Dreams are naturally occurring spatialisations of consciousness as a landscape of actions. Similarly to innerscapes, dreams incorporate elements and experiences from the outer world to shape the landscape of consciousness as a vivid quasi-perceptual environment in which to act and react (Windt 2015). The selective integration of physical spaces into the dreamer's space results in an alternative "personal geography" (Katz 2005): a mixture of experienced and imaginative settings, with a combination of possible and impossible cartographies (Iosifescu Enescu et al. 2015) governed by possible and impossible perceptual or physical laws. Innerscapes also seem to present a similar selective blend of real and impossible elements, whose global configuration is what I will call 'introspective imagery'. Dream research and the personal geographies of dreamscapes, therefore, can inform our understanding of what innerscapes are, do and can do if used, as I will argue they can be, as enhancing devices for what Jesse Butler has called 'extended

introspection” (2013: 95). Before addressing, with the help of dream research, the transformation of inner experience that innerscapes put in place (pun intended), we thus need to focus on its raw, quasi-perceptual form and on its problematic reportability.

## 2 Catching snowflakes, sculpting affordances: Latent narrativity, introspective imagery and worldlike dreams

Our brain is airtight, and yet we seem to hear sounds and voices propagating in our head when we talk to ourselves (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough 2015), mentally rehearse a melody (Halpern 1988; Hyman et al. 2015), read literary dialogues between characters on a page (Vilhauer 2017; Alderson-Day et al. 2017; Kuzmikova 2014;), or perceive presences addressing us internally, as in auditory-verbal hallucinations (Woods et al. 2015; Larøi et al. 2010). Our mind is neither a physical location nor does it have inner sensory organs of perception such as an inner eye or an inner ear, and yet we experience multimodal imagery (Lacey & Lawson 2013) with perspectival qualities (Kosslyn et al. 2006), as protagonists in, or bystanders in front of, flickering scenes of a movie. Our memories are neither objects stored in an interior cabinet, nor physical places we can travel to, and yet we feel we can search through them, pick them up, revisiting or going back to them as experiential sites (Draaisma 2000: 69–102). In addition, these inner sites seem to change condition, accessibility and position as we grow up, to the point that we can increasingly share the feeling of the fictionalised Roman Emperor in Yourcarnar’s *Memoirs of Hadrian*, when he laments how “certain portions of my life are like dismantled rooms of a palace too vast for an impoverished owner to occupy” (2000: 16).

When we speak of an ‘inner world’, we are therefore trying to capture something that is to some extent (and quasi-perceptual extension) more than metaphorical. We allude to the phenomenologically rich (and world-like) sensation of being situated in the perspectival unfolding of spatiotemporal relations with inner sounds, images, past or imagined experiential settings. On the other hand, our inner experience in general, and its quasi-perceptual nature in particular has an elusive, underdetermined and vaporous quality (Hurlburt & Schwitzgebel 2007). As William James poetically put it, whenever we try to introspect a mental state it behaves like a snowflake, which once “caught in the warm hand is no longer a flake but a drop” ([1890] 2007: 244). Similarly to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, we are allowed a vague sense of the vastness and complexity of our

inner world as long as we are content not to turn around to look at it, otherwise it will disappear.

This problem of reportability has notoriously affected the scientific reputation of introspection as a viable method for accessing inner experience (for a survey see Smithies & Stoljar 2012). Among the criticisms raised against introspective analysis, many have focused on the metaphorical dimension of introspection, as a method, and of inner experience, as a phenomenon. The former concerns the idea that introspection is a misnomer. Since there is no inner sensory organ or “inner scanner” (as some version of “inner sense theories” of self-knowledge had proposed; see Gertler 2011: 129, 165) whereby we can “look within” our own mind, as the etymology of introspection would suggest, the concept of introspection should be, the criticism goes, either revised or abandoned. According to some version of this criticism, the reason for which we intuitively keep thinking of introspection as a spectatorial business is due to the widespread use we make of perceptual metaphors for understanding unfamiliar or abstract matters. Building on the pivotal work by Lakoff and Johnson on conceptual metaphors (2003), for instance, Jesse Butler argues that “the enduring attractiveness of the perceptual account of introspection can be explained by the prominence of perceptual metaphors in human cognition. We metaphorically project our concrete embodied familiarity with perception onto our general understanding and conceptualization of knowledge” (2013: 42). In other words, our habit of conceptualizing knowledge in terms of what we can *see*, in line with a well-documented Western ocularcentrism (Levin 2003), would inform our intuitive view of introspection as a visual practice. As the next section will show, innerscapes, far from presenting inner experience as something to be simply looked at, represent and explore inner experience as something enactive, situated and multisensory. In this respect, they can provide support for a reconceptualization of introspection as a more immersive and participatory activity.

To find a suitable image for the description of introspective practice is to some extent less pressing than understanding the nature of its object, albeit the two are inevitably connected. Is introspection a wrong perceptual metaphor to describe what is nonetheless some kind of perceptual experience? Or is also inner experience itself a metaphorical descriptor? This is the question animating the second type of objection to introspective reports.

According to psychologists such as Schlinger, “descriptions of inner experience are metaphors because when we say that we covertly (or “innerly”) “see” or “hear,” we are not reacting to actual visual and auditory stimuli.” (2017: paragraph 3). Hurlburt et al. (2017a), however, have firmly countered this claim by suggesting that, if we look at the phenomenology of inner experience rather than at the absence or presence of perceptual stimuli, this objection does not stand. As

in real-world perception, they claim, also in inner experience “we recognize ourselves as seeing or hearing *not* because of the presence of actual visual or auditory stimuli; we recognize ourselves as *seeing* or as *hearing* because seeing and hearing have distinctly different phenomenal characteristics, and we have lots of experience in the verbal community discriminating between what is seen and what is heard” (2017a: paragraph 4). To support this view, they have collected convincing evidence suggesting that people directly (i.e., non-metaphorically) *experience* sounds and visions in their mind as some sort of perception (i.e., quasi-perception). A wealth of evidence from imagery research (see Lacey and Lawson 2013) such as the time spent by subjects scanning a mental image (where more time is required to scan longer distances; Kosslyn et al. 2006: 96) or studies on silent verbalizing (where perceptual variations in auditory imagery has been shown to affect the performance; see Alderson-Day & Fernyhough 2015) support the view that the feeling of a perceptual richness within the mind must correlate with the presence of perceptual aspects (visual, spatiotemporal and auditory qualities) in inner experience. Even at the neurological level, data confirm a substantial overlap between brain regions recruited, for example, in visual perception and visual mental imagery (Ganis 2013: 11).

If captured in their raw form, as Hurlburt has done for decades with a beeping device that randomly sets off during the day as a prompter for the introspecting subject (Hurlburt & Schwitzgebel 2007), these quasi-perceptual images, thoughts, feelings or sounds in inner experience are usually short-lived, skittish, unstable, with fading degrees of vividness, and confusedly superimposing with each other. This is what Hurlburt et al. call the “pristine” state of inner experience, which is “undisturbed by the act of observation, not intentionally manipulated” (2017b: 3). This pristine, pre-narrative and unattended state, is what Virginia Woolf’s famously suggested we would find if we examine “an ordinary day of an ordinary mind”, in which “the mind receives a myriad of impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” (150). Hurlburt’s beeper is a simple device that allows an ordinary mind to be trained in catching the showering snowflakes of its ordinary day without melting them.

The very possibility for this to happen, however, either with beepers or other introspective technologies such as tailored psychological questionnaires, shows that the quasi-perceptual atoms of inner experience present what in Gibson’s ecological theory of action would be an “affordance” (1979): the possibility of an action, here the capturing, to be performed with or upon them. This application of affordance theory to inner awareness has been recently proposed by Tom McClelland, who argues that “this ever-present potential for introspection actually figures in our experience. [...] Although our outer awareness of the world is not

generally accompanied by an inner awareness of that very state, it is accompanied by an awareness of the *opportunity for introspection*. In other words, an *affordance of introspectability is a ubiquitous feature of our phenomenology*" (2015: 2485). Importantly, he stresses how the activation of affordances in inner experience depends on our skills to interact with them, and similarly to outer perception "[o]ur experience of affordances can vary depending on the skills we have acquired. For instance, we begin to experience the green traffic light as inviting acceleration only after acquiring the ability to drive." (2485).

In this respect, McClelland is aligned with Pierre Vermersch's proposal (1999) to consider introspection as a skillful practice, which can be improved and trained with new tools and procedures. Methods such as Hurlburt's beeper, qualitative interview processes or, as I will claim, the artefactual construction of innerscapes, are among the means to train our capacity to disclose affordances in inner experience, bringing them out of their latency. Inner atoms of experience within the mind such as thoughts, memories or emotions, therefore, have what we can call a "latent affordance". When we manage to catch their pristine state, we have succeeded in activating their minimal degree of introspectability. This pristine catch, however, hardly can be called a quasi-perceptual experience of an inner *world*, since its atomistic form lacks the temporal dimension, global organisation and perceptual integration we experience in outer perception. Left to their raw form, these minimal affordances seem not enough to account for, and to explore, the feeling of consciousness as a private, rich, quasi-perceptual landscape.

I would argue that what artefactual innerscapes show, however, is that the raw atoms of experience showering in our mind, once captured, can serve as building blocks for sculpting further affordances. They demonstrate how latent affordances in quasi-perceptual inner events, once activated, can be reinforced, amplified and connected to the point of resembling more and more an ecology to be actively explored. Cognitive narratology can provide important conceptualizations to describe how this sculpting of inner affordances is realized. David Herman's coinages about the construction and processing of a storyworld as a complementary "worlding" of a story and "storying" of a world (2013), for instance, can be an apt characterisation of the kind of interpretive and explorative manipulations whereby innerscapes are created. Innerscapes' affordances, in fact, are created by *worlding inner experience* as unfolding in an extended landscape, and by *storying inner experience* into a narrative world. The latent affordance of experiential inner thoughts, images, sounds and emotions, in fact, is paired with what we can call a "latent narrativity".

Pristine experience does not have a spontaneous narrative structure, and this is why Woolf was urging to find less standard narrative forms (i.e., atomized, non-linear, conflicting and contradictory) for its literary rendering. As the inners-



capes in the next section show, however, what inner experience does possess is the *potentiality* to be transformed into a storyworld: it has a latent affordance of narratability or, more simply, a latent narrativity. This latent narrativity can be activated by the double movement of structuring quasi-perceptual thoughts, images, sounds and emotions into a world-like ecology (worlding) and by threading these inner events into some sort of narrative cohesiveness (storying).

This manipulation, indeed, comes at the price of distancing from the pristine condition of inner experience. This active manipulation of inner experience, I would argue, has nonetheless the epistemic benefit of disclosing more global, dynamic aspects and relations between its constituents, which is the scope of creating models of unknown phenomena. In addition, both the activity of worlding and storying inner experience can be conducted in a way that retains the uncertain, ambiguous or peculiar logic and ontology of mind and consciousness. In worlding the landscape of consciousness as a landscape of actions, for instance, gaps and indeterminacy regarding the ontology, geography and functioning of the inner world can serve as resources to approximate the feeling of how our mind feels like. Put in narratological terms, innerscapes can be created by playing with a low or ambiguous “saturation” (Doležel 1998: 169–184) of the inner world.

As for the storying process whereby innerscapes make latent narrativity emerge, Gerald Prince has convincingly argued that narrativity it is not an absolute quality of a storyworld, but it comes in degree (1982: 145). As we shall see, this scalar conceptualization will help understanding how innerscapes tend to develop the latent narrativity of inner experience to a minimum degree, in order to foreground and explore the pre-narrative or non-linear experiential qualities of inner worlds. Due to their desaturated worlding and incongruous or minimal storying, innerscapes often feel like “unnatural” or “impossible” storyworlds (Alber et al. 2012), with a peculiar type of open narrativity that gives them their dreamlike quality. The similarity between the way dreams and innerscapes world or story the landscape of consciousness as an active ecology is why dream research can be a resourceful field for gathering information about the construction and functioning of dreamlike innerscapes.

A first preliminary point of convergence with dreams concerns the personal quality already textured in the pristine state of quasi-perceptual inner events. To speak of the atoms of pristine inner experience as impersonal and neutral building blocks, in fact, is not entirely correct because it leaves out an important property that will guide their subsequent assemblage and transformation. Even in its raw configuration, with minimal affordances and latent narrativity, the production of inner imagery bears already highly personal marks of subjectivity, since “pristine inner experiences are intimately personal, produced of, by, and for the individual in the individual’s own manner” (Hurlburt et al. 2017b: 3). In other

words, each of us has a different inner style of thinking, feeling, hearing, seeing, and remembering. These individual variations therefore already color the latent affordances and potential narrativity of inner experience. This individually colored repertoire of affordances will subsequently orient the construction of individual innerscapes. Dreams can help us understand these individual variations in the worlding repertoire.

In his own application of affordance theory to dreaming, Robert Shepard (1984) described individual variations in terms of differently tuned resonators. As different resonators such as a piano or an Aeolian harp can be distinctively tuned, thus affording different kinds of harmony or disharmony, so do different minds generate different kinds of affordances when dreaming (1984: 437). To home into the geographical focus of this essay and issue, one aspect of dreaming where individual and idiosyncratic resonances in imagery production become particularly manifest is the recruiting of spatially situated memories that Katz calls our “personal geography”: the individual repertoire of past actions tied to previously experienced environments. This private geographical repository is, rather than just a collection of maps and information about places we have been, an enactive “constellation of physical imagery of a body moving through space”, which “continues to evolve and retains a central place in mental life as development unfolds” (2003: 1215). When spontaneously worlding the landscape of consciousness (i.e., its thoughts, feelings, desires and memories) into a landscape of actions, dreams’ resonances capitalize on the porous, interwoven relationship between the enacted world and the inner mind promoted by contemporary cognitive science (see introduction). As we shall see in a moment, innerscapes also seem to build on and create an alternative version of personal geographies for different introspective resonators.

Moving to the worlding process, the view of dreams as generators of worlds has a long tradition in philosophy (Windt 2015), and psychiatrists such as Arnold Modell have recuperated Freud’s view of dreams as landmark evidences “that the inner world of the self is an alternative universe” (2003: 22). Dreams, however, are particular kinds of worlds. More than *representing* the ontological wholeness of a world or universe, dreams are rather characterized, in Metzinger’s words, by their *presenting* a series of localized accesses “within a window of presence” (2003: 254). This is why dream states, Metzinger explains, “are governed by the principle of presentationality; they can be described phenomenologically as the presence of a world, albeit a world possessing very different features.” (2003: 254). For Jennifer Windt, the peculiar presentationality of a dreamworld stems from a heightened feeling of spatiotemporal immersion paired with what she calls a “phenomenal indeterminacy” (2015: 326–333) about the global epistemology of what is outside the local window of presence.

Innerscapes too, by keeping the saturation of inner worlds to a minimum and by limiting the focalization of the narrative to a narrow window of presence, make the most of the immersive power of presentationality. In so doing, they approximate the uncertainty, instability and quasi-perceptual taste of inner experience. The idiosyncratic immersive presentationality of dreamworlds affects or, better, is co-emergent with a personal style on the story level in terms of uncertainty, incongruity, and discontinuity (the three categories that constitute, according to William et al. 1992, the scale of “bizarreness” of dreams; see also Flanagan 2000: 146–148). These categories will therefore guide also my analysis of the storying dimension of artefactual innerscapes, as a further proof that dreams can inform the kind of operation that innerscapes conduct upon inner experience.

To take stock of the theoretical framework I have just presented, what I wanted to suggest with my forays into dream research is that dreams, similarly to innerscapes, simultaneously world and story inner experience into quasi-perceptual worlds. The way dreams do so is by recruiting personal geographies to create alternative virtual worlds out of previously experienced spatiotemporal interactions. Innerscapes can count on a similar repository of highly individualized quasi-perceptual building blocks, whose resulting idiosyncratic manipulation of affordances transforms pristine imagery into a subjective *imaginarium*, or what I would call “introspective imagery”. We are now equipped for a quick comparative journey into different landscapes of consciousness and introspective imageries in action.

### 3 Affording innerscapes: Quantum narrativity, inner ecologies and dreamlike worlds

The first innerscape I want to analyze is from the literary work of Franz Kafka, an author whose narrative worlds have been rightfully often linked to the bizarre logic and ontology of dreams. A couple of passages from his diaries, however, should be enough to redirect this interpretation towards the idea that these dreamlike worlds were for him the results of an introspective attempt to express and explore his inner life as a spatially extended world. In an entry on June 21, 1913, Kafka talks about the urge to bring out “the *tremendous world I have in my head*. But how free myself and free it without being torn to pieces. And a thousand times rather be torn to pieces that retain it in me or bury it” (1976: 222; emphasis mine). Here Kafka is pointing at the feeling of the landscape in his head as a quasi-perceptual world-like ecology, whose tremendous imagery he feels the need to transform into an externalized narrative world. A year later, another entry

records his resolution to make of this transformation the main focus of his career, since “what will be my fate as a writer is very simple. My talent for portraying my *dreamlike inner life* has thrust all other matters into the background; my life has dwindled dreadfully, nor will it cease to dwindle. Nothing else will ever satisfy me.” (6 August 1914, 1976: 302, emphasis mine).

Soon after having recorded this intention, Kafka will be able to transpose and explore the feeling of his dwindling life and the fear of being torn into pieces by expressing it. He did so by constructing a window of presence into his inner world through the enactive introspective image of an unmapped bridge, in his homonymous short story *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*):

I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay. The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides. Far below brawled the icy trout stream. No tourist strayed to this impassable height, the bridge was not yet traced on any map. So I lay and waited; I could only wait. Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge. (2005: 411)

With few narrative strokes, Kafka manages to world quasi-perceptual inner images of spatial isolation, feelings of tension and immobility, silence and mental white noise into a dreamlike geography. This inner landscape bears the idiosyncratic traits of Kafka’s introspective imagery, with his personal geography reconfigured by his tremendous resonances. Far from a spectatorial screening of inner happenings, this introspective worlding operation sculpts embodied constraints from the outer world that allow an enactive exploration of his inner life as an affording innerscape.

With the simple, dreamlike solution of worlding himself as a bridge cast over an inner personal geography (building on past bridges, ravines and icy streams that we can speculatively assume he had experienced in the outer world), Kafka activates latent possibilities (laying, clutching, waiting) and impossibilities (turning) as a series of world-like emerging affordances to be enactively explored. Furthermore, thanks to the dominance of embodied, enactive and situated aspects, the beginning of the story magnifies the experientiality (i.e., the experiencing consciousness; see Fludernik 1996, 15–19; Caracciolo 2014) of these quasi-perceptual inner emotions, images and thoughts over their narrativity (i.e., events and causal chains). Formulated in the terms we have seen, this inner world therefore conforms to the presentationality of dream worlds, where global information about the structure of the world or about the causes that preceded the opening of the window of presence are withdrawn, heightening a pure spatiotemporal immersion. This introspective modeling spatialisation, however, soon develops also the latent narrativity of this inner personal geography, when a stranger approaches the back of the bridge that cannot turn:

I heard the sound of a human step! To me, to me. [...] He came, he tapped me with the iron point of his stick, then he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me. [...] And I turned around so as to see him. A bridge to turn around! I had not yet turned quite yet around when I already began to fall, I fell and in a moment I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water. (2005: 411–412)

The development of narrative affordances generated by the innerscape discloses further explorations of this geography, with new emerging constraints related to social cognition. What started as the worlding of individual feelings and thoughts, in fact, reveals a social component (the desire for a social encounter), with possible events (a blind meeting) and actions (haptic feedbacks, deadly turning) constrained by the very structure of this inner world. This kind of impact of the structure of a bizarre world on its narrative unfolding recalls the type of conventional narrative trajectory we find in metaphorical parables, tales or allegories (Crisp 2008). Without denying the possibility to consider Kafka's short story as one example of these extended metaphorical worlds or, as Sinding has called them, "storyworld metaphors" (2011), I think, however, that Kafka's explicit intention of representing his dreamlike inner world allows to classify this story as an innerscape, whereby inner experience is represented and explored through introspective imagery.

If the idea that literary metaphors are particularly effective for representing characters' thoughts and feelings is not new to narrative theory (e.g., see Cohn's concept of "psycho-analogy" 1978; or Caracciolo's idea of "phenomenological metaphors" 2014), innerscapes take this potential significantly further. They conjugate the enactive, sustained, and spatially extended potentiality of storyworld metaphors with the psychological import of analogical equivalents for inner experience. Importantly, as anticipated in the introduction, to the extent that innerscapes attempt to capture, and then sculpt affordances into, elements of inner cognition that already have quasi-perceptual elements (here, skittish embodied feelings or thoughts of social isolation integrated with memories of bridges, streams and ravines), these worlds should be considered nonetheless as quasi-metaphorical. They do not entirely transfer or transduce inner experience into a different domain (as metaphors do), but rather magnify or reinforce quasi-perceptual introspective affordances into a navigable quasi-perceptual environment.

In relation to Kafka, my reading of *The Bridge* as an introspective innerscape is closer to Emily Troschianko's idea that Kafka's work is, in her words, "cognitive realistic in its evocation of, for example, visual perception" because "that evocation corresponds to the ways in which visual perception really operates in human minds" (2014: 2). With innerscapes, however, to say that they provide an "evocation" of the way in which inner experience works describes only half of their

cognitive import. It is rather their potential for modeling introspective *explorations* that, as I will claim in the conclusion, make them tools for epistemic insights and cognitive research. As for the legitimate reading of Kafka's story as a retrospective dream report (the incipit in the past tense would favor this interpretation), it is impossible and unnecessary to discard this view. However, within the theory I am proposing, dreams might have rather provided Kafka with modeling solutions (such as the deformed scale ratio between a bridging human and a vast ravine; on scales and deformation see Iosifescu Enescu et al. 2015) to explore what he explicitly called his "dreamlike inner life".

Innerscapes are not limited to a specific medium, but different media provide different devices for sculpting inner affordances. This is why the second innerscape I have decided to discuss is *Embers*, a 1959 BBC radio play by Samuel Beckett (2009). Even more than Kafka's storyworld, the innerscape of *Embers* has very few geospatial elements that make of it what dream research describes as a "minimal perceptual environment" (see Windt 2015: 524). Its window of presence opens onto the protagonist, Henry, approaching and then sitting on the seashore. We hear the sound of his boots on the shingle, and in the background, throughout the entire piece, the sound of the sea, at first barely perceptible (as per director's note, "*Sea scarcely audible*", 2009: 35). Together with the informational darkness generated by radio as a medium, the faintness of the sea makes it difficult to map onto a clear perceptual source, thus enhancing the feeling of "phenomenal indeterminacy" that we experience in dreams (Windt 2015: 326–333). This environmental indeterminacy function as what the newborn discipline of dream cartography calls "uncertain geodata" (Iosifescu Enescu et al. 2015): vague, incomplete information about a place that does not allow a certain localization or reconstruction.

After a few lines of Henry talking with himself about his drowned father, however, the listener's uncertainty seems to be almost directly addressed, and somehow shared, by Henry, when he says "that sound you hear is the sea, we are sitting on the strand. [Pause]. I mention it because the sound is *so strange, so unlike the sound of the sea*, that if you didn't see what it was you wouldn't know what it was." (2009: 35, emphasis added). Given that the listener literally cannot see, this remark could be at first taken just as a conventional metaleptic break to help the reader's imaginative processing. However, the fact that Henry himself finds it "so strange" alerts us about the peculiar ontology of this world and its "soundscape" (as the composer and music theorist Murray Schafer defined the ensemble of natural ambient sounds tied to a specific environment; 1994). Immediately after this remark about the strangeness of the sea, more doubts are prompted when we discover that Henry is able to conjure up at will environmental sounds by simply shouting their name ("Hooves! [*Sounds of hooves walking on hard road*]", 35).

This ontogenetic power of Henry's voice initiates a suspicion that what we are listening to is not a natural soundscape. This feeling becomes somehow paradoxically even stronger when the other main character, Henry's wife Ada, appears. Her entrance seems magnetized by Henry's desire for an encounter, like the tourist in Kafka's story. Shortly before she appears, in fact, Henry explains how he "usen't to need anyone, just tell myself stories [...] till the need came on me, for someone, to be with me, anyone, a stranger, to talk to, imagine he hears me, years of that, and then, now, for someone who...knew me" (36–37). After this confession, Henry shouts Ada's name ("Ada!", 39), and her voice feebly surfaces from the dark, textured by an unnatural surrounding quality ("*Low remote voice throughout.*] Yes."). The impossibly ubiquitous presence of Ada's voice piles up with the strange behaviour of sea and hooves, until these phenomenal incongruities reach an ontological ambiguity, when Ada sits without making any sound: "Are you going to seat down beside me? ADA: Yes. [*No sounds as she sits*]" (39).

There would be many other examples to support what Beckett critics have timely recognised about this play: that what this dreamlike window of presence gets us access to is probably the inner life of Henry's mind, or what Beckett scholars have called a "skullscape" (e.g., Zilliacus 1976: 76–99; Perloff 1998; Cohn 2005: 244–248). My reading of the play as an innerscape elaborates, from a cognitive perspective, on this early critical intuition. According to this interpretation, what we hear in *Embers* would be the inner voice of Henry trying to communicate with his dead father ("Can he hear me?", 35), conjuring up past inner voices (Ada), sounds (hooves), memories (e.g., a violent scene we hear between a music master and his daughter, Addie) or Henry fighting to stop the intrusive sound of the sea by talking with himself ("oh just loud enough to drown it", 36). The latter can be read as a struggle with the intrusive sound of the natural element that killed his father. However, the ambiguity and dreamlike uncertainty regarding the physical *or* mental ontology of this soundscape can never be entirely resolved.

This is part of the explorative force of this radiophonic innerscape. *Embers* retains, in fact, the unique phenomenal quality of quasi-perceptual events in their resemblance *and* differing from outer perception in physical geographies. The resultant narrativity, emerging from Beckett's worlding of inner sounds, memories and images, has a low saturation and uncertain geodata that leave open conflicting possible interpretations. In this respect, Beckett's manipulation of the inner affordances of voices and memories creates what Porter Abbott has called a "quantum narrativity", where "multiple incompatible stories, together with their incompatible worlds, reside in these gaps, but only as possibilities" (2015: 104). Quantum narrativity is frequent in innerscapes because it is already part of the specific affordances of quasi-perceptual phenomena, whose felt qualities have a



strange mixture of similarities *and* dissimilarities with outer perception (therefore oscillating between two different and incompatible ontologies).

The innerscape of *Embers*, for instance, sculpts affordances in phenomena like inner speech, linked with past memories, sounds and voices (see Alderson-Day & Fernyhough 2015), which already have a borderline ontological quality due to their similarities with the vividness and features of outer perception. When their vividness increases to the point of crossing the line, these inner experiences acquire a hallucinatory quality (Woods et al. 2015). By worlding the affordances of inner speech, sounds or voices into personified (Ada, the music master, Addie) and environmental stimuli (the sea, hooves), animated by incongruous or impossible physical laws (Henry's conjuring of sounds, Ada's silent sitting), *Embers* also explores this quasi-hallucinatory potential of our mind, when mental imagery becomes too actively resonant. This hyper-resonant mental life is what Ada is reproaching Henry to suffer from, both about his inner speech ("You should see a doctor about your talking", 42) and the intrusive sound of the sea ("you shouldn't be hearing it, there must be something wrong with your brain", 42–43).

In a letter to Tomas McGreevy in 1933, however, Beckett writes that the intrusive quality of the sea is part of his own personal geography and that he doesn't understand "how people have the nerve to live so near, *on* the sea. It moans in one's dreams in the night" (qt. in Knowlson 1996: 173; emphasis mine). This letter, with all the necessary caution, could support my reading that *Embers*, in spite of its fictionalized protagonist, can be considered as the modeling result of Beckett's own introspective practice, imagery and personal geography. Beckett's experience of the sound of the sea spilling into dreams, furthermore, suggests that, in turn, for Beckett too, dreams might have provided modeling resources for representing and exploring the functioning of his own inner world. In another letter to George Duthuit in 1948, Beckett provides additional evidence of his interest in introspecting the mind as a dreamlike soundscape of actions and perception, when he says that "to want the brain to function is the height of crassness, or is sinister, like the loves of an old man. The brain has better things to do, *stopping and listening to itself*, for instance". (2011: 149; italics mine). If we take this letter as an introspective project, we can look at *Embers* as the result of Beckett's sculpting of affordances in what he discovered through this listening operation. The outcome is a situated, enactive exploration of the mind as a quasi-perceptual ecology, whose dreamlike soundscape and quantum narrativity bear epistemic insights about the peculiar nature of inner experience.



## 4 Conclusion: Innerscapes as tools for extended introspection

In 2013, within a Wellcome Trust project on auditory-verbal hallucinations (“Hearing the Voice”) in Durham University, the creative facilitator, Mary Robson, asked one of the voice-hearers involved in the project, Adam, to pick a location to shoot together a short documentary (then titled *Adam + I*) about his experience of hearing voices. Adam picked a wood in the North East of England he was very fond of and was already part of his personal geography. In this 3-minute documentary, Adam uses the wood as a spatialised rendition of his mind to be explored. By enactively moving according to the constraints of this physical location, Adam explains how he discovers new affordances of his experience of voice-hearing emerging in the interaction with this physical innerscape. For instance, we can see him touching a plant and asking, “did I put it there? Or did it grow by itself?”. This simple emerging affordance discloses important questions about agency and ownership that are at the core of hallucination research (Gallagher 2000; Larøi et al. 2010).

This is a further example of how innerscapes can work as tools for what Butler has called “extended introspection”, according to which we should consider also “introspectively engaged cognitive processes that are not contained in the head but rather are embodied through external events. Just as a handwritten or electronically texted shopping list may serve as a cognitive constituent in the process of stocking one’s kitchen, so too may external cognitive vehicles play a role in the introspective process of knowing one’s own mind” (2003: 95). The construction of innerscapes in literature and other media should thus be counted among the possible external and extending technologies (Bernini 2014) for introspective practice. As Pierre Vermersch (1999) claims, introspection, far from a simple window with a view into our inner life, is a skillful procedure that requires training, methods and tools enabling us “a suspension of one’s habitual attitudes, a modification of the quest for information, a semantic suspension whereby the process of putting into words is subordinated to that of being open to experience” (40).

In this essay, I wanted to show how innerscapes, by worlding the landscape of consciousness as a landscape of action, construct dreamlike windows of presence into inner (story)worlds that leave open an uncertain, incongruous and *therefore* epistemically valuable exploration of these enactive ecologies. On the one side, innerscapes capitalize on the porous transit between outer and inner worlds promoted by contemporary cognitive science by integrating the experience of physical affordances and personal geographies into the modeling of the mind as an enactive environment. On the other hand, they reaffirm the relevance of consider-

ing the mind as a distinct inner geography, whose peculiar quasi-perceptual qualities recall the logic and ontology of dreams. Research on dreams and their atypical worlding and narrativity (see Walsh 2010), therefore, can inform our understanding of the kind of modeling operated by innerscapes, as much as dream-like experiences seem to have served as modeling resources for Kafka and Beckett in the creation of their introspective ecologies. In conclusion, by sketching a theory of innerscapes and of the complex sculpting of affordances they operate on the atoms of inner experience, I wanted to pave the way for an interdisciplinary positioning of innerscapes as invaluable tools for extended introspective practice.

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