

# Dreams of the Past

## The Work of Dreaming and Historical (un)Consciousness in History Teacher Education

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History is the most dangerous product evolved from the chemistry of the intellect. ... It causes dreams, it intoxicates whole peoples, gives them false memories, quickens their reflexes, keeps their old wounds open. ... History will justify anything. It teaches precisely nothing, for it contains everything. (Valéry, 1931/1956, p. 114)

The field of history education has spent the better part of the last decade taking on new critical approaches that rethink the assumptions underlying its set of practices. Within this broadly critical turn, a rich vein draws from psychoanalytic and affective concepts (Farley, 2008, 2009, 2010; Garrett, 2011, 2017; Helmsing, 2014; Levy & Sheppard, 2018; Sheppard et al., 2015). The approaches to history education through this vein grapple with both history (lowercase “h”) and History (uppercase “H”) as the affective, psychic, and (in)corporeal substance of the past erupting into the present as well as the disciplinary tactics and strategies (de Certeau, 1980/1984) of the academic performance of History through historiography, anthropology, philosophy, and literary studies of the past.

The distinction between history and History is important to consider for how the two differ and collide when we think about history-as-curriculum. The concept of “history”—with a lowercase “h”—is a diffused concept. When someone has an encounter with orienting their memories, feelings, associations, and reactions to the past, the encounter is with history. Events that occurred in a past time are within the realm of history. People who have lived in the past time (even as recently as one day ago) are within the realm of history. A memory of an embarrassing incident that occurred in one’s childhood is history. The existence of enslaved Africans and African-Americans in the United States in the 1800s is a part of history as is the existence of enslaved persons in the Roman Empire in 100 CE. Although these two groups of enslaved peoples did not overlap in time, their existence is a part of history, and their experience is historical by having once lived in times that are now past.

How is this different from History? The difference resides in disciplinary power. History with a capital H is both a discipline of inquiry (the practice of historians) and, in turn, disciplines

our thought of what it is possible to think and know about the past. In other words, when one tries to put boundaries around history, or a history, it can become a History if it is documented, recorded, or otherwise (con)formed to pre-established expectations of how one is to engage with the past. As a concept within our minds, history is wild, unpredictable, and incapable of being fully captured and disciplined. It is impossible to fully know everything that has happened in the past or to conceive of every person who has lived in the past. In this sense history has a depth that is always out of our reach, but because of this depth, it churns endlessly to fuel human creativity and imagination. Dreams make use of history because there is ample history to consume and fuel acts of dreaming.

How one dreams about history is only, therefore, limited by what is imposed as History. In this sense, History is contingent upon what is selected, contained, and disciplined as the past. History disciplines history, giving it shape, a narrative form, a particular aim, and purpose. To use our example of how the existence of enslaved Africans and African-Americans in the United States are wrenched out of history and into History, we can look at any number of contemporary versions of the History of enslaved persons in nineteenth-century America. All such Histories will produce certain effects, which are intimately tied to how we dream about the past. For example, the 1990 multi-part documentary film, *The Civil War*, by Ken Burns is a History in which histories of enslaved Africans and African-Americans manifest as collective dreams of determination, perseverance, colored by the affective resonance of instrumental music playing hymns and folk songs in the background of the film (Burns, 1990). In contrast, the 2019 digital media platform, *The 1619 Project*, produced by *The New York Times*, is a History in which the histories of enslaved Africans and African-Americans manifest as collective dreams of duress, subjugation, and dehumanization (The 1619 Project, 2019).

As with most disciplinary formations, History often conceals the scenes of its own making. Derrida (1972/1982) explained this process in his example of how History always and only offers a temporary and false security in its claim to fully know the past, shaped by determined historical structures imposed upon the past. Rather than feel deflated or defeated by this consequence of our inability to fully know the past through History, we should, instead, welcome the relief of knowing that a History we construct, be it the History we tell of our childhood or the History of enslavement in the United States, serves particular purposes, purposes that can be constructive, destructive, or perhaps both.

If history is endless and formless, impossible of being fully known and History is a particular shape we give to any given cut or extraction of history, this means history education can diversify the forms through which the past appears when we teach and learn History and, in turn, generate the historical material that constitutes the doing of history education. However, many history educators continue to focus on a presumed “official” History that is transmitted and passed down from history educators for students to inherit as local, (trans)national, and global narratives of the past, derived and written by professionally trained historians, that which Apple (2014) would classify as the “official knowledge” of history education in school textbooks, curriculum standards, and related curriculum texts. It is true that the academic narratives of History are the most ready-at-hand forms of history curriculum for teachers in schools to consume and reproduce in their teaching, but there are numerous other sources for the past that history educators bring with them that exist within them.

Creating awareness of more metaphorical, more imagined forms of pastness that we imagine through our desires has been a powerful motivation in teaching history and social studies educators in university-based teacher education programs over the past several years. This

awareness embodies how I invite history educators to see their relationship to history—both constructed and discursive, felt and embodied—as historically specific orientations to the past and the present in often vernacular, poetic, and metaphorical forms such as myth (Bottici & Challand, 2006); epic (Cornwell, 2015); allegory (Helmsing, 2019; Jenckes, 2002); fantasy (Scott, 2001, 2011); legend (Seigworth, 2011); nostalgia (Zembylas, 2014); haunting (Kleinberg, 2017); romance (Elias, 2005); and fabulation (Bogue, 2010; Helmsing, 2016). These are all distinct yet related forms of calling forth and dreaming up a past with particular affects inflecting our temporal constructions of past, present, and future. These forms shape our desire for a past as well as form *how* we desire the past, longingly through nostalgia, heroically through epic, and obliquely through allegory. If the past is a foreign country (Lowenthal, 2015), then seeing the past through these forms and feelings greatly enlarges the terrain of such a country and allows us to see and travel much further and wider throughout this country than we have traditionally allowed ourselves to traverse through the teaching and learning of history education. With this article, I add another form to this assortment of figuring the past through metaphorical, imaginal figuration and disfiguration: the form of the past as dream. Teaching the past through pedagogical work can, in turn, constitute a form of dreamwork. Adding our dreams of history and our dreamwork to engage with those dreams as an affective and figural mode of relating to the past becomes a “movement which breaks up the lines” of the limits and thresholds of what is possible to think, feel, and understand about the past (Hartog, 2003/2017, p. 18).

Through the concepts of dreams and dreamwork, the past floats into the present, coming in at times like an opaque fog and at other times like a shimmering ray of light. When one says, “I had a dream,” one may mean or wish to say, “I had a vision,” or that one “saw something” in one’s dreams. A dream, a vision, as well as in-sight and premonitions are all closely related terms, so much so that Valtchinova (2009) suggested that any historical or anthropological construction of past experience is one constructed of “visions and apparitions, all the more dreams,” which are “firmly rooted in the cultural codes and imaginaries of local societies” (p. 205). These cultural codes are in part concocted out of “the deep and forbidden meaning of our dreams and fantasies,” which are “turned into the dream stories we have” about history and about the past (Shanks, 1992, p. 28). It is this conception of dreaming that I follow in this article. This is history as an imagined vision one has about the past in the present and the desires operating within the unconscious about a particular past. Thus, dreams, working within history education, help us consider how the present is “always emerging from the past and heading into a future, which the individual projects” through a dream and the act of dreaming and one’s desires that constitute the dream itself (Stewart, 2017, p. 31).

In keeping with how this special issue approaches dreams as idealizations, desires, conflicts, and symbolizations in the course of learning to teach, I describe dreaming about the past within examples from the curriculum of history education. I examine some issues that pertain theoretically to dreaming and the historical unconscious that can open conversations for history educators to have about dreaming and dreamwork. I then examine particular features of how the pre-service history education teacher candidates in my social studies education teaching methods courses reflect on the dreams they have of the Second World War and the implications such dreams may hold for their teaching. I note how history education students bring about dreams of the past to their teaching and how such dreams unfold in the conversations we have about history teaching. Following this, I share examples of when such dreaming is interrupted or disturbed during my students’ clinical teaching experiences in history classrooms. The significance of history educators dreaming, and of the possibility of such dreaming to be interrupted or disturbed, lies in how it can

provoke we as history educators to consider that which is ungraspable about the past yet, nonetheless, supplements what believe we have perceived about the past. Because our perceptions of the past are always partial, inscribed in our minds through the dreamwork of history and disciplined by History, it is important for history educators to know how History is a reconstituted past. Dreamwork invites history educators to move away from History as a reawakened or revealed true and immediate access to the past and, instead, to see how history education as dreamwork can displace and efface certain aspects of History while opening new aspects to reinterpretation. If we take the classic injunction to dream big literally, then we can dream bigger histories in history education instead of the ossified, exhausted, dreams of, say, the Founding Fathers, American exceptionalism, and individualizing liberalism that haunt the dreams of U.S. History curriculum.

### **Dreams as Desiring the Past in History Education**

I first read Freud's (1899/1976) *The Interpretation of Dreams* during a first-year undergraduate seminar. Some twenty years later, I recently picked up Freud's text to find out again what he wrote about dreaming as I worked on this article. What I reencountered during this second reading was Freud's explanation of how dreams operate as a momentary, fleeting pause of the censoring acts of the ego. Much like the mechanical metaphors used to explain dreaming as the rewinding of a video cassette tape (a device which is itself a technology to contain and archive dreams), dreaming allows the unconscious to reassemble wishes, desires, fears, and other psychic feelings. Played back through and as dreamwork, these imaginal desires become accessible in a narrative form, much like history itself (Ogden, 2010). The rewound and repressed psychic material returns to us in dreams in veiled, partial forms. For Freud, and for our purposes in thinking of the desires of history educators, the desire that reroutes into dreams is a type of "energy generated in the boiler room of the *id*, building up pressure and occasionally finding release in dreams, fantasies" and other imaginal forms (Landau, 2017, p. 137).

What I take as significant from my re-engaging with Freud's book is my understanding that the transfer of the psychic, affective material, or residue, into and through dreams is a way of reading the desires that do not always come to the surface of our teaching about the past in history education. The symbols and metaphors that exist in our dreams also exist in our teaching that draws upon dreams. If we conceptualize history education as a kind of dreamwork about the past, then we can see how our desires of, for, and in a particular past create certain affective intensities that drive our teaching about the past. History education as dreamwork means letting the signs, symbols, and metaphors of our dreams take shape and become manifest in any newly emerging awareness of our teaching. Talking, describing, identifying, and naming this content is what I have play out in my teacher education courses. For example, a unit I enjoy exploring with my pre-service teacher candidates is the French Revolution. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the French Revolution is a juxtaposition of revolutionary hope through the potential of revolution and the mutation of this hope into terror that was a resultant risk of the French democratic impulse. In other words, the French Revolution is both a volatile history and a troubling History to learn, which vividly animates dreams of the French Revolution. Secondly, there are many ways in which one dreams of the French Revolution, offering a rich conceptual assortment to play with in class. First, I ask my students to identify and describe mental representations of the French Revolution, which will yield examples such as the guillotine, a crowd screaming at Marie Antoinette, a throng amassing *en route* to storm the Bastille. We consider how these representations are, in one sense,

constructs that seem to give a secure hold onto the history of the French Revolution. They help us grasp the past as it occurred in France in the 1780s. But, going deeper into this dreaming, we consider what these representations perform. What kind of pleasure is derived from looking at illustrations of the guillotine and from imagining the feel of the steel on one's neck for the nanosecond preceding decapitation? When we imagine the guillotine, how does it command our attention and perception, but more importantly, how is the guillotine operating in our imagination? This is a pedagogical attention to the imagined forms of the past that cohere in my students' dreams and how such dreams function. Once the dreams are brought into awareness from the unconscious to a form of historical consciousness we can then act upon the insight of our dreams.

As I will explain later with some examples from my teaching, this is a process of facilitating pedagogical and curricular connections between the content of dreams and the emotional states they help elicit and produce. These emotional states become a way for teachers to travel back and forth and along a road connecting their dream world of a past and the awakened world in which they teach. What I hope to show is a productive outcome for history educators when the work of teacher education casts attention on dreams and dreaming to estrange a history educator's perception of the present and the past and the past-in-the-present that influences the curricular thinking during moments of history education.

Both Marxist and Freudian in orientation, the historical thinking of Benjamin (1927/2002), situated dreaming within a historical plane. For Benjamin, a critically aware historian is a kind of dreamworker who travels within a culture or society that is asleep and critically unaware of its history, a people slumbering through a long sleep in which they are controlled and dominated by the ruling bourgeois class. Benjamin saw dreams as a kind of ideological substance to be awoken through historical knowledge. The critical historian would be able to do so similar to how an awakened society or culture "rubbing its eyes, recognizes precisely this dream *as* a dream" for "it is in this moment that the historian takes upon himself [sic] the task of dream interpretation (emphasis his)" (Benjamin as quoted in in Buck-Morris, 1980, p. 216). There is a shadowy space between a dream state and an awakened state through which the realities of history pass and take shape in how an individual can capture and internalize the past as this dreamlike matter. Coates (2015) described experiencing of a space similar to this, what he calls a "rapture" that "comes only when you can no longer be lied to, when you have rejected the Dream" (p. 116). And yet, as Coates (2015) pointed out, in the United States, the force of History taking shape in dreams such as the pervasive American Dream is strong as "a very large number of Americans will do all they can to preserve the Dream," even going so far as to uphold a version of the nation's history as one collective History, a kind of "sleeping pill that ensures the Dream" (p. 33).

Bringing one's attention to such dream content, and the warring feelings and awakenings can happen when dreams are disturbed, is a vitally important task of any form of critical education, at the heart of all of the various recent formations of critical history education I outlined at the beginning of this article. Caruth (1996) explained this by noting how trauma is not found within a dream itself, "but [in] the experience of waking from it" (p. 64). When History is offered as a space to consider and confront the history animating our dreams, this orients history education towards identifying messages that operate within the dreams, allowing history educators to work with students to identify and establish themes emerging from the dreams, emotional connotations, significant symbols, and insights about how we relate to our past that we may be inclined to act upon, especially when moved to acknowledge what we find alluring in the dreams of the past, whether it be dreams of imagined kinship and fellowship amongst gay men in Stonewall era of the U.S. or united collectivities across race and class, bathed in an imagined harmony in our dreams,

marching for justice during the long Civil Rights movement. We need to ask what is at stake in such dreams? What do such dreams about the past make possible for us to face and consider in the present? What desires or presuppositions exist in these and other dreams of the past? In my case, as much as I desire to travel back in time to how I dream the utopia for gay men that was urban America in the 1970s, I know that this dreaming on my part ignores some realities of this history-as-dream, such as my overly determined fantasizing creating idealized conditions in which I would have liked to have lived at the expense of confronting the reality of History, what Jameson (1981) partly meant when he said, “History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective practices” (p. 102). For Jameson, the dreams I create about a utopian, idealized (and, dare I say, hedonistic) time I might have enjoyably inhabited as a gay man of the 1970s is what he calls a ruse, a narrative unconscious that distorts my historical understanding, getting in the way of (for Jameson) the very political (Marxist) work that is to be done. What a way to kill a dream, though.

Thus, if such work is necessary when engaging with the dreamwork of learning history, how might we then work towards this kind of engagement? In his ethnographic study of dreaming as a metaphor of history for inhabitants of the Greek island of Naxos, Stewart (2017) claimed that much of what passes for historical thinking and historical understanding in our present (Western) paradigm of history is too bound up within teleological figures of “linear temporal succession” that privilege a search for causation and the eradication of anachronism (p. 197). By privileging these approaches to the past, Stewart argued, we run the risk of “exclud[ing] alternative modes of thinking about and representing the past as forms of “history” (p. 197). When considering dreams and dreaming as a form of historical (un)consciousness, the emphasis is on how one reflects upon a connection to the past, a form of connection or attachment that helps shape our imaginaries of the past through a kind of “internal conversation” when both asleep and awake, unconscious and conscious (Ogden, 2005, p. 5). If this internal conversation seems to verge on prioritizing the fictive and the imaginary, the made-up over the real, I should emphasize that such a binary is not at stake in my experiment of curriculum theorizing on offer here. This is because of the very condition of the past and our (living) relation to the past in the present. One of the fundamental realities of history that history educators can apprehend from considering history as dreamwork is that a person can never be in front of the past, staring at it directly; instead, we can only stare at the trace of the past, the remnant or residue that the past leaves behind for us to encounter.

This is the condition of a historical encounter Ricoeur (2004) spoke of as the “two aims, two intentionalities” of the past, one of which is the act of dreaming or imagining “directed toward the fantastic, the fictional, the unreal, the possible, the utopian,” set in opposition to memory, which is “directed toward prior reality” and of “the temporal mark” of things and events we remember (p. 6). The role of memory, despite the immensely productive outcomes of memory-work on personal/individual, collective/social, and national/cultural scales, has, I argue, much less significance for the work of history education than dreamwork because a history educator operates within the space of their dreams of a past that colors, animates, and moves their teaching of it, not in the realm of memory. This engagement plays out through the relational experiences that result from pedagogical intentions and their enactments in history classrooms.

History education in this regard is always about the unreal, the possible, and the utopian to use Ricoeur’s terms again. We can see this in contemporary terms over the debates of flags, statues, and other material commemoration of the Confederate States of America that seceded from the United States in the 1860s over the right to continue brutal practices of enslavement. The stakes of this working-out and working through the repressed trauma of racism through the memory work

of state flags and early-twentieth-century statues of the Lost Cause relate more to memory work, what Johnson (2018) describes as “memory-traces,” an investment in memory that materializes in an object with traces of the past visible on a surface reading of the object as pastness. I approach a history educator’s memory relationship with histories of the Lost Cause from a different angle, more as dreamwork than memory work, an orientation that seeks not to find traces of the past on the surface, but buried within at an unconscious level of identarian desires of race and nation, of affective drives such as shame and anger. History educators alive today cannot physically remember the existence of the Confederacy during the nineteenth century, even if an educator is teaching deeply within a space highly structured and colored by cultural memories of the Lost Cause (as when a history teacher may refer to the U.S. Civil War as the War of Northern Aggression or The War Between the States). As dreamwork instead of memory work, the Lost Cause exists in our history teaching more as multiple emergences of traces of how our psyche and desire wrestle with the Civil War, whether it stems from a fond tinge felt when one hears the opening notes of “Dixie” being played, or a stirred emotion of pleasurable defiance when dreaming what a young recruit in Virginia might have felt enlisting to fight for the Confederacy, or of the rotting decay of the Lost Cause as a toxic miasma wafting in one’s dreams of the Civil War, triggering rage when reckoning how many in the Confederacy wanted to die to uphold the right to own enslaved persons. For one history educator, the dreamwork of the Lost Cause renders during a class lesson a feeling of *dis*-placement in a contemporary society that is changing in its *em*-placement of race and racial justice, which the educator may ascribe to the loss of a right and honorable history as perceived in dreams of the Lost Cause. For another history educator, the dreams of the Lost Cause are ripe places to cut through and against during a class lesson, severing ties to a racist past, to places, attitudes, and people of a South gone away with the wind that finds expression in their dreams for perhaps a more racially just and progressive South or a more strongly united United States that finally tears free from romantic dreams of a lost South and a lost national cause.

Yet all of this is happening in the pedagogical space differently and not perceptible in the way other curricula exist. Unlike observing a property of gravity in a physics class, observing the property of history in a history class is to observe the effects of traces of the past in our dreams. To think more of this, consider what Baudrillard (1997) said about dreams, which he claimed are “a fantastic experience of a reality” that “are capable of producing a psychological perspicacity, a reading of others and their mode of thinking which is far superior to the knowledge we have of them in reality” (p. 64). This unreality, or, more accurately, a more-than-fantastic reality, unearths, opens up, and brings forth desires on the past within us. This spills forth in our classrooms when we have those opportunities history education affords us to share these reflections, these dreams, of the past operating at the unconscious level in our teaching. In the following two sections, I describe examples of this dreamwork within courses I teach in history and social studies education for M.Ed. candidates who are teachers of history and social studies students at the middle and high school level.

### **Dreams of the Good War**

In a course titled “Teaching Social Studies in the Secondary School,” I invite students to ponder why the concepts of war and warfare figure so prominently in the curriculum of history education courses in the U.S., both in courses about the national history of the United States, which

follows a string of wars around which the history of the nation appears to cohere, as well as in world history courses, which often use wars as markers of social and political change in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, but rarely in Africa. In the case of the United States, we consider why there are many ways to critique wars that feature prominently in pedagogical narrations of the nation's history except for the Second World War, sometimes referred to as "The Good War" (Terkel, 1984). Wars such as the War of 1812, the Spanish-American War, the First World War, the Cold War's "hot wars" in Korea and Vietnam, as well as U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are examples of U.S. military conflict that social studies teachers can reasonably be expected to invite students to question and critique in terms of causes, necessity, and America's involvement. The Second World War stands out not only from a narrative position in which it is deemed almost unimpeachable and unassailable in its historical significance and legacy but also because it occupies such a commanding presence in the U.S. History school curricula as well as in public pedagogies of popular culture, museums, and memorials. Whereas other units of instruction in the curriculum typically occupy a few weeks or less of instruction, curriculum on the Second World War is expansive and often includes within its scope lessons on the rise of the Third Reich in Germany, the Holocaust in Europe, the Pacific Theater of war, and, increasingly in recent years, effects of the Second World War on the U.S. homefront, such as mass industrialization and the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese-Americans. Bodnar (2010) demonstrated a complex and competing set of ways Americans have historicized the war, dreaming of the war in both tragic and romantic ways as a singular defining trope of heroism, valor, and sacrifice structuring the desires of the national psyche. It follows, then, that these desires play into the dreams history educators in the United States have about this "Good War."

Before engaging in this exploration of what we convey about the Second World War, I have students free write what comes to mind when they think of the Second World War. Responses occasionally include images of grandfathers or great-grandfathers who fought in the war. Other items range from mental images of tanks, planes dropping bombs, and soldiers with guns on ships cruising from the United States towards the Atlantic coast of Europe. Sometimes Pearl Harbor will be mentioned, and at other times students will mention images of parades held in the United States when soldiers returned to the United States after the Second World War's end. One student this past spring semester mentioned the "Keep Calm and Carry On" sign displayed in Great Britain. Another mentioned the Marvel comic characters Captain America, who fights Nazis in some of his comic book serials, and Magneto, whose origin story as an anti-hero begins as an imprisoned child in a Nazi concentration camp. Images of Hitler and of concentration camps in Poland loom largest in my students' responses in the five years I have conducted this activity. We discuss why and how these and other images exist "out there" both in the past, a time that exists as "back then," but also out there in the broad present of the imaginal construct of the Second World War II in our minds. The enduring presence of these constructs could be seen as evidence of what Blocker (2016) described as a kind of prosthetic relation we can have to the past in the present, in which

history as prosthesis (the use of one object to stand in the place of another that is ostensibly lost) is analogous to the baby blanket or stuffed animal, which helps the child transition away from dependence on and identification with the mother. (p. 151)

When my students engage in the dreamwork of teaching World War II, images of Operation Overlord landing on the beaches of Normandy, the sounds of the sirens during an air raid on London, and the hands jutting upwards of the small boy in the Warsaw Ghetto being detained for

transport to the camps all stand in prosthetically for desires we have *of* the past and *about* the past: stirrings of courage and bravery, the paralysis of fear and suspense when going into hiding, and the extreme shattering of debasement and abjection that was the Final Solution.

I then work with my students to think through these assorted representations of the War they elicit from their imagination, and we consider what these images do, what their effects are on our understanding of the history of the War, and how we teach that history to students. In doing so, I try to move students towards seeing that the cognitive value that many if not most of my students place on learning the history of the War reinforces what these symbolically valuable representations of the War do in creating their motivation for teaching it to students. How history educators “dream up” the War is a kind of production-system they cannot ever know as it resides in their unconscious. Can the War, I ask my students, be imagined, and, thus, conceived of in pedagogical terms, without conjuring the spectacle of Hitler? Why does Hitler exist so resolutely in their minds, in what Rosenfeld (2015) calls a “dialectic of normalization” reinforcing a kind of Hitler exceptionality, both preventing Hitler from fading from our unconscious history-making machine of the Second World War but also reinscribing a Hitler imaginary over and throughout the way we dream about the Second World War?

The dream images students share about the Second World War often emphasize the projections of violence, fighting, and combat through the righteousness and strength of soldiers. Upon further elicitation of what students mentally “see” of the Second World War, bombs, bullets, blood, barbed wire, smoke, fire, burnt and crumbling buildings fill out our lists. If their work as history educators puts them in a position to produce an image and create a representation of the Second World War for their students to learn, what is productive in this imagining? A retrospective understanding of the desires they have about the War in terms of its psychic power in the national consciousness plays out unconsciously in one’s teaching that engenders itself as a reconstruction of the Second World War. My goal is to help the students realize different operations of these (re)constructions of the War, what its purpose is within their teaching, and how the War itself, as curricular “content,” becomes a psychic object that a teacher honors, defends, attacks, buries, or may otherwise embrace or reject. I am always wondering if my students are dreaming of the War as safely historical, to be taught with reverence and gravity, or as something else. This “something else” is always difficult to articulate and describe, no doubt, in part, to the hallowed space the War occupies in the national psyche of the United States.

Another indication of the ways my students dream of the Second World War in their teaching comes through in their desires for teaching about the War. When I poll my students about which unit in history curriculum they are most excited to teach, the Second World War (in tandem with the Holocaust), is always at the top of the list. Few if any students have ever claimed the French Revolution or the Renaissance as their favorite units in the history curriculum; none ever select the Black Death or the Great Depression as their favorite units in history. Some will select ancient civilizations, usually Rome, or aspects of Asian history that tend to veer towards orientalist desires, such as a narrow interest in medieval Japan or the Mongol Empire. The Second World War is always at the top of the list. We have extended conversations about what the students hope or aspire to create and accomplish through their teaching of the Second World War to students in their history courses. Such aspirations reveal a desire to disclose a kind of virility to an overtly masculinized conception of the United States as a powerful combatant in warfare, existing in a dream in which the teacher candidates in my class evoke visceral, emotional, and intensive immediacy to the War itself, its participants, and its existence in their dreams as an exciting drama to enact for students in the theater of their minds. When teachers speak metaphorically about

“history coming alive,” it is, in a sense, making their dreams of history surface for students to consume through a particular history lesson. There is often an implied determination on the part of the teacher to have their dreams and their students’ dreams meet up and merge. This could lead to potentially affirmative and ethically desirable outcomes, such as what Simon (2005) recognized as “the ethical relationship between self and other in the narratives we tell” (p. 23). On the other hand, though, this could be seen as a violent cooption and control of dreaming, a disciplinary function that reinscribes the dreams of history within the realm of History in one direction—from the student always towards the teacher.

To dream of the Second World War *as curriculum* is to have a dream of belonging for what the Second World War signifies in the national psyche. If some collective dreams about a putative “essence” of America as an imagined concept have failed (most notably when teaching the history of The Vietnam War, for example), the Second World War offers an abundance of dream material that never seems to fade from the dreams my students have of their enactment of history teaching. Absent of any material objects that would do memory work of and for the teachers, such as being in the physical presence of the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial depicting the raising of the U.S. flag at Iwo Jima in 1945, the representations of the War that populate the dreams of my students reflect and reveal a desire for the Good War and its psychic significance to signal in advance a “settled” historical narrative that follows signifying chains of certain symbolic figurations—Hitler-tanks-soldiers-bombers and more. On an intra-psychic level, these signifying chains are a blend of historical imagery and affects, such as a retrospective confidence my students ascribe without question to the legacy of the Allied forces in the Second World War and a humble sense of national pride when taking stock of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. These fantasies, however, are always in the service of projecting fantasies of national heroism, valor, and strength. America during the War appears in my students’ dreamwork unquestionably and unassailably badass. Perhaps that is why so many of my students express enjoyment in teaching the Second World War; it’s the stuff of exciting dreams. Yet these dreams easily turn nightmarish if and when students dream up the shameful Other of Allied heroism and virtuousness during the war, such as the history of mass incarceration camps for Japanese and Japanese Americans or the devastating firebombing of cities in Germany and Japan.

These representations of the Second World War work as a resource in my students’ conceptions of the war as curricular objects of reverie, dreaming, and speculation for what the war’s significance can convey to their own students in the present. In a curricular theory of dreaming as that which this special issue considers, this pedagogical situation can be no less important than factual material in cognitive aspects and pedagogical content knowledge the history educators possess about the Second World War. Thus, my students will frame their dreams of teaching lessons of the Second World War about the heinous policies of Hitler, the courage of soldiers on the beaches of Normandy, the cunning resolve of resistance fighters, and others who occupy their dreams by indexing this material from the dreamwork or fantasia of history from representational files of the London Blitz, military campaigns in the Sahara Desert, and incidental knowledge from popular films ranging from *Saving Private Ryan* to *Dunkirk*. It should not be assumed in the dreams of history educators that the factual or the fantastic have priority in framing curricular knowledge of the Second World War. Rather, focusing on the dreams my students bring to their curriculum thought and planning involves creating opportunities in class for interpenetration of the dream elements to support their teacher thinking.

## Conclusion

Similar to the Benjaminian conception of the critical historian traveling through the dreamscapes of a people asleep, a critically oriented history educator can stand within a rushing river of history education curriculum and view how the historical content that floods over them is composed of direct expressions of an historical unconscious and the visions they have not of their own past, but of a broader, larger sense of the past. But, as with all dreams, such visions eventually fade fuzzily out of sight, cause embarrassment, produce fixations, or cloud how we see realities around us. The effects of such dreaming are tremendous for teachers and the pedagogical work they do with their dreams in history classrooms. When we invite history educators to consider what their dreams of history recirculate, as created images or reinforced representations consumed in the study of history, they can work towards selecting, shaping, and structuring aspects of their history curriculum that reflect not only the implications of the mental images they dreamed “up,” but also endeavor to dream “on.” The mental processes of dreaming history induce many responses and sensations, as seen in the examples shared of my students’ learning to teach about the Second World War. Further, the moment of engaging with one’s dreams of history can be productively viewed as a dialogue between a past understanding or recognition of one’s knowledge of the past and a future-oriented sense of what the history educator brings with them as a mental assemblage produced through the analysis of dreamwork undertaken in moments of learning to teach. An imaginal, and imaginative, reworking of the contents of a history educator’s dreams is central to the more technical, conscious rationality of lesson planning and curriculum design. Dreamwork stimulates us to engage in history as a form of metaphorical or figurative time travel, imagining how we might have come to know the past that we think we know as it moves through the desires we bring to our teaching about the past.

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