

JACK MATTHEWS

Questionnaire for Talbot Redding

- 1) How long have you suffered from an inability to dream?
- 2) Do you think of a dream as another room?
- 3) Why can't a dream be considered in this way:
 there is this one room of sleep
 and
 there is another, contiguous, room of the dream?
- 4) Might this dream room be *within*, rather than contiguous?
- 5) Why can't you find the key?
- 6) Lift up your eyes and read the emblem that hangs from the eave of the building opposite: CLAVIS ATRII.
- 7) Do not pay any attention to the dog barking in the alley; he is not real.
- 8) Why is the inaccessibility of this room terrifying to you?
- 9) Is it because it contains, presents, even *epitomizes* the Unknown?
- 10) Aren't you a little embarrassed at being terrified by something whose explanation is so insipid and *banal*?
- 11) By all means: leave this Questionnaire for a moment, go out in the hallway, and look under the carpet where you have never once thought to look (since hiding a key under the carpet—*any* carpet—is too hopelessly trite for anyone of your sensibility to tolerate long enough to actually undertake).
- 12) Yes, its exact location will be indicated by the *smell of metal*.
- 13) Now that you have found it, do you realize that:
 - 1—you have been vaguely aware of this metallic odor for several days now, but have put it out of your mind because it did not orchestrate with your needs?
 - 2—that the key is, indeed, a very ancient one; huge, dented, black, weighing 12 ounces?
 - 3—that now, precisely in the trajectory of this quest, your dream has begun?
 - 4—you could not have known these facts (implicit in all that has heretofore transpired in Question #12) until you entered the room of this Questionnaire?
- 14) *How* can you distinguish between:
 - 1—the room of the dream
 and
 2—the room of this Questionnaire?
- 15) Does the room of this questionnaire encompass both of the others?
- 16) What did the carpet smell like when you lifted it by its dumb gray lip to discover the key?
- 17) Did it smell like mushrooms?
- 18) Did it smell like the dusty pages of an old Methodist Hymnal you started to memorize when you were twelve years old?
- 19) The sudden advent of flies about your head is a willful distraction: ignore them.
- 20) Don't you think you've evaded the issue of the key long enough?
- 21) What can you mean that it is this Questionnaire, not yourself, that is guilty of evasion?

- 22) Why did you leave just now and turn up the radio?
- 23) Of course it was known that the radio was on; also, equally, it was known that you turned up the *volume* of that radio!
- 24) It's no use accusing this Questionnaire of evasiveness; don't you know better than to attempt such pathetic subterfuges?
- 25) No, the radio is real; it is the barking dog outside your window and the little swarm of flies—no bigger than the flying print of a newspaper—that are unreal.
- 26) No, I do not know what the carpet sweeper said to the Angel; furthermore, you sick Diarist, I do not wish to know.
- 27) Why? Because I am a voice, not a substantive; I am an echo, if you insist upon settling for the most obvious explanation!
- 28) Never mind the radio; it does not matter. It is only a noise, not a voice such as this. There is nothing behind it. Consider, if you must, that the radio, the barking ghost of a dog, and the archipelago of flies are all equally unreal. There. Settled.
- 29) Yes, you are right: when will you have the courage to pick up the key and use it?
- 30) Can you seriously claim that you don't know where the door to the room of the dream *is*?
- 31) How *can* you make such an assertion, when you have been informed that with the discovery of the key, you had already gone into that room?
- 32) Of course, it is not the same.
- 33) Of course, it must be acknowledged that there is still another room.
- 34) Of *course*, this other room, as always, is the more essential dream; isn't this always how we know it?
- 35) No, that is not it; isn't the fact this: that a *dream* cannot be known *as dream*, except from outside, from some other room of greater lucidity?
- 36) If it is conceded, then, that this other room represents the *deeper* dream, will you gather up the courage to take that key, open the door and enter?
- 37) Of course, you have known about it all along; of course, there is a slogan above it, reading: NON MODO EST.
- 38) Ignore that barking dog; if you were only to turn down your radio, all unrealities would dissolve; in other words, that dog you think you hear barking in the alley outside is a parasite on inanity.
- 39) In a word, TURN DOWN THE GODDAM RADIO, EFFENDI.
- 40) How can you expect to have dignity unless you have power?
- 41) How can you expect to have power, unless you have control over your thoughts?
- 42) How can you expect to have control over your thoughts unless you can speak to yourself uninterruptedly (i.e., without the media vomiting their vulgar poisons into your ears)?
- 43) *Who* is indulging in rhetoric?
- 44) For two cents, I would end this Questionnaire immediately, without consequence!
- 45) And do you indeed feel smug, knowing that the threat was empty, since your eye could not help but see that the Questionnaire was indeed continued?
- 46) But how do you know it will not, from this instant forth, only pretend to investigate the substance of these secret truths, so that it will indeed prove to have ended, precisely as threatened?
- 47) Eighty-nine and katzenjammer?
- 48) Treble jam, lift, and sport into threadbare?

- 49) Chick woo the diatribe, and will you clutch, blear heart?
- 50) All right; welcome back. Yes, it is something that you continued, stubborn latch.
- 51) Of course, your advent is awaited.
- 52) Will you really have the courage to insert that key in that lock and push upon the door?
- 53) Do you smell metal again?
- 54) What do the cobwebs signify, in your opinion?
- 55) Surely, you know that more than age is manifest in that surly desuetude?
- 56) Do you doubt for one moment that any act of courage will gain you the sympathy and heartfelt good wishes of any conceivable voice?
- 57) Do you really think that any door could lead anywhere but into your own most private recognition?
- 58) How can you still hear my voice, when you have left this paper behind?
- 59) Where, now, is the barking dog?
- 60) Do you think you recognize this room of the dream?
- 61) Is that really your wife, whom you have always loved deeper than you know, cooking breakfast in her kitchen?
- 62) And her reality, then . . . this is the dream you feared to enter?
- 63) Only wait, and she will turn around.
- 64) Tell me, Heart, will she know you upon this instant of your coming from this other room, through another door?