

see "The Semai" Ch 9 for ordinary treatment of the dead; Closing section of the following ch is on is on tree-burial of shamans: 1988b Lucidity, sex and horror in Senoi dreamwork. In Jayne L. Gackenbach and Stephen LaBerge eds., *Conscious mind, sleeping brain: new perspectives on lucid dreaming*. Pp. 37-63. New York: Plenum.

also, notes from the MS of my stillborn book:

Ghosts, *Kcmooc*

To be all evil, all reversed, and forever dead: knowing and seeing life, yet living not. [William Blake, *Jerusalem*, Ch. 10: lines 57-58]

a ghost
made of distraction and pain
...sometimes cruel,
trying wildly to open
this image tightly held within itself
From Rumi, *rubai* #568
(Moyne and Barks 1984:110)

You can get a sense of how these ideas work by looking at *kcmooc*, "ghost." Ghosts are demons that form from the shadows of dead humans. They haunt graveyards, until the survivors have sealed the grave with a special ceremony. They stand to human beings as negatives stand to photographic prints, people said. In their reality *kcmooc* look like demons: their heads face backwards and their eyes lack irises or pupils. Sometimes when they appear in deceiving form, as birds or bullfrogs for instance, you can tell by the eyes: foul red eyes, white-rimmed eyes, slit-pupiled crocodile eyes, unblinking golden python eyes. Or you can tell by their behavior: red-eyed rats which haunt graves and eat corpses may be *kcmooc*.

They are most dangerous right after a death, wanting to reunite with the people who mourn them. You must stifle the love that binds you to the dead, or they will devour your soul. In the old days, a survivor who before the death usually slept alongside the person who had just died would walk six times beneath the corpse where it lay wrapped in mats and suspended from a pole; otherwise, the corpse would carry the survivors' *glamoo'* (fragments of skin or hair, bodily fragrances) to the grave with it. On the way back from the new grave, people would block the path with the ferny fronds of *gteer*, a palm tree with poisonous hallucinogenic nuts and cabbage, which lowland Semai use in dart poison. And they would burn the leaves of *snsood* (*Lasianthus* spp.), which smell like feces, to make the sweet fragrance of human bodies vile to the yearning ravening *kcmooc*.

Otherwise, a survivor might suffer recurrent dreams of the dead person, and, especially if the survivor was a child with a soft head soul, would die in a couple of years, its hands and feet and sweat cold, its soul eaten away. And cemetaries remain dangerous: grave earth sometimes forms into tailorbird *kcmooc*, which Semai call "summoning birds,"

whose piteous calls to surviving parents or children you have to appease with small gifts, throwing a bit of tobacco, say, into the undergrowth where the birds live. The worst dream, the most dangerous *kcmooc*, is that of a neglected or abused child, calling to you, wanting to embrace you, a vector of demonic yearning, seduction and menace. But vain remorse and yearning for any person irretrievably lost may gnaw at anyone's soul.

***Kcmooc* in Babylon**

Certain aphasics, unable to understand what is said to them, nevertheless can carry on whole conversations based on other clues (Park 1997:10).

I don't believe in ghosts. I bet you don't, either. So let me tell you about a dream I had while writing a chapter on the violence of betrayal. (It comes later in this book). A friend of mine had just died, call him Bill, a man I had known and loved for years and years, brilliant and kind, the sort of person who gives off ideas like a Roman candle making sparks, so that you just sit and listen and watch in amazement and delight. I didn't socialize much with Bill. We moved in different social circles. But he was always there, in my mind, an islet of comfort and friendship.

The night after he died I dreamed that I was sitting in a booth in a diner, on the same bench with another person. Bill came by, naked, and crowded in beside me. He was a big man, much bigger than I. He flopped over on the seat, so that his head was on the shoulder of the other person, his legs over mine, like a kid sitting on your lap, wanting a cuddle. Then he was standing, in full frontal nudity as the Babylonians say, looking for a hug; and I felt the way boys in Babylon feel when they turn ten or eleven, becoming *litaw*, and hugs begin to seem sexual--not wanting to reject the affection but fearing and hating the sex, and so flinching from the hug, turning their shoulders into it; and I woke up thinking, shocked: *kcmooc*.

Hey, I'm from Alphaville. I think dreams are random neuronal sputters, the way the brain runs when idling, as devoid of meaning as life itself. If you try, really hard, just after waking, you remember the arbitrary sequence of narrativeless images. But something else in the brain can't bear the meaninglessness, and converts the sequence into a story. I know *that*. I've written articles about that.

But. Bill died of a brain disease, glioma spreading through his cerebral cortex like little white worms, death maggots swarming everywhere, killing the meaning-making cells. The next to last time I visited him, after the sickness had taken hold, we had a conversation which must have looked to anyone watching like all the other conversations we used to have. Bill's gestures were unchanged, the horizontal and vertical hand motions that created a block of ideas in the air, which he would then extend to you with both hands, a gift. And the engaging, self-deprecating laugh when he had become a little pompous; the smile of pleasure in your wit, your company. But this time his words made no sense, and there was no following his wounded mind where it wandered. He was talking, as Semai say, *rawooc*. His ability to make words, what Semai call his *mndooy*, was riddled with glioma. In the pauses where I was supposed to respond, I could at first make the usual Babylonian conversation-continuing noises: "MmHMM," "Well, you could say that...", "I dunno. It's really complicated, isn't it?" But eventually you can't deal with someone who talks *rawooc*, because you can't talk with them, can't reason with them. It makes no sense, it's scary and sad. Semai hate it. Me too.

And mourning horrifies me, too. I don't do it well. But, walking the mile or so home to my house, past the heaps of dirty melting snow, the ugly choking spasms that serve me as weeping overwhelmed me again and again. Dead, I thought. Dead.

And I didn't go back to Bill's house, which is important to understanding why the *kcmooc* came. Not until lilacs were blooming in the dooryards, and his body was almost dead. I sat alone by his bed for a while, listening to his labored breathing, then touched his shoulder and said, "Goodbye, old friend." His eyelids opened, he knew something was happening I think, but I couldn't find anyone I knew behind those dark eyes.

So I feel as if I deserted him because of my horror at his descent into *rnawooc*; as if I betrayed him. And that's when *kcmooc* come in your sleep, before the grave is closed, while the corpse can still cast a shadow, seeking the love you failed to express properly, yearning in death for what you should have given in life, seducing and devouring. Don't neglect your children. Don't abuse them. Don't betray your friends. They needed your love, still yearn for it after death. They make the deadliest *kcmooc*. This is love, clearly; but you can die of it.

Gteer is *Orania macrocladus*; *snsyyd* are *L. augustifolius*, *L. oblongus* and *L. filiformis* (Burkill 1935:1341-1342). Adepts cannot cure *kcmooc* afflictions, but people will use the generic treatment for wasting diseases, bathing a patient in a hot infusion of *grncoot* (unid.), *sampu'* (*Clerodendron* sp., cf. *fragens*) and the leaves of *s'uu'* (jackfruit, *Artocarpus elasticus*) which someone has blessed with a Malay spell. Traditional Semai women plant another species of *Clerodendron*, *C. paniculatum*, which has beautiful orange flowers, to wear in their hair as decorative amulets and to use as magical plants in seances (cf. Burkill 1935:593). The long-leaved all-purpose magical plant is *slby'*, *Orchidantha longiflora*, the most important ritual plant for Semai.

Sometimes the dream semblance will give the dreamer a melody, as demons can do, as Long's dead seven-year-old boy did, and thus transform into one's familiar, becoming a spiritual helper instead of a spiritual destroyer.