

In Gábríel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, insomnia hits the focal village of Macondo, spreading like a virus throughout. This plague causes memory loss in all it affects, going so far as to cause the villager's loss of comprehension of their very own language. This insomnia serves as a metaphor for the detrimental effects of a discordant individual upon society, instilling the loss of identity amongst an entire culture. In other works, this metaphor is often reversed, highlighting the detrimental effects of an incompatible society upon the individual. Likewise, the use of insomnia is replaced with its opposite: sleep, to which the appearance of deep sleep in works of fantasy symbolizes a character's inability to live in an unfulfilling world.

Virginia Woolf's title character in *Orlando* finds himself increasingly polarized by the world around him, leading to his general dissatisfaction. Yet Orlando is tired not of himself, but "of the discomfort of...his way of life, and...the primitive manners of the people" (Woolf, 23). With a sense of being in direct contrast with the environment around him, he finds the world oppressive and distressing. Orlando copes with these feelings in creating a persona discordant with his inner self, "chang[ing] from a sulky stripling...to a nobleman, full of grace and manly courtesy" (Woolf, 31). Finding himself in contrast to the constructs of society, he changes himself to operate within the customs of his environment. Yet in betraying his true feelings, Orlando finds only temporary bliss, interchanging moments of joy with "fall[s] into...moods of melancholy" to which he only "think[s] of death" (Woolf, 33-34). With his masquerade of character providing no relief, he seeks only escape from this unfulfilling world. Faced with the irreconcilable rift between himself and society, Orlando chooses to leave his external life, instead "lay[ing]...as if in a trance" where he does "not wake, take food, or show any sign of life for seven whole days" (Woolf, 49-50).

E.T.A. Hoffmann's Nathanael in "The Sandman" too finds himself in a substandard world that cannot reflect or cultivate his own passions. His impassioned letters to Klara express his feelings of "impending doom loom[ing]...over [him]...like black clouds...impervious to every ray of friendly sunshine" (Hoffmann, 93). The very fervor that drives his existence meets nothing but dilapidation in his surroundings,

stagnating his growth. With Klara the personification of his society, their love is “plagued by some dark hand which...intrude[s]...into their lives, snatching away incipient joy” (Hoffmann, 108). Nathanael’s paradigms prove antagonistic to the foundations of the community he lives in, disallowing him the capability of experiencing true happiness. Nathanael must seek relief from societal constraints, found only in Olimpia, the only one that “truly understand[s...him]” (Hoffmann, 118). The only escape he can find from a gloomy and austere world is found in a reflection of himself in the automaton. With the eventual revelation of Olimpia’s true being, Nathanael can only find true escape in a “deep and frightful dream” (Hoffmann, 123).

With his initial escape from the world in the deep sleep, Orlando hopes to find fulfillment in other lands, only to be greeted with the same melancholy constraints. Again needing an escape from a repressive world, Orlando enters a deep sleep, and can only be awakened from the “blow [of]...one terrific blast: ‘The Truth!’” (Woolf, 102). It is only through truly finding ones true self that one can find true bliss. In this acceptance, Orlando begins to path towards a life of contentment, fully realized in the fact that “Orlando had become a woman” (Woolf, 102). This metamorphosis serves to unmask Orlando’s true self, and with this revelation, hope to find meaning in a previously unfulfilling world. Indeed, a new “love of Nature [is]...inborn in her,” with new perspectives and streams of thoughts (Woolf, 106). Eventually, this cultivation of character allows her to find meaning in the right time and place, leading to pure “ecstasy” (Woolf, 240).

Where Orlando undertakes a complete transformation of sex and eta to achieve fulfillment, Nathanael cannot transcend his own time period after his own awakening from his deep sleep. The same world driving him into his deep sleep greets him upon his awakening, making him feel as if he is “the horrible plaything of dark powers, [to]...which it [is]...in vain to resist” (Hoffmann, 107). For all of his attempts at change, he finds himself unable to overcome such an environment. In climbing to “the topmost gallery of the tower looking down into the hoods,” Nathanael realizes the vast extent of his restricting society (Hoffmann, 124). With his very survival dependent on societal constructs, he realizes that he cannot find happiness in this realm. As such, Nathanael finds his only means of escape, to destroy his sources of discontent in a “circle of

fire,” concluding with a “shattering scream [and]...jump...” from the tower to his death (Hoffmann, 125). Nathanael’s only hope for true liberation and fulfillment lie outside of this world, which he can reach only in death.

It is through a strictly natural cause that Márquez’s village of Macondo rids itself of the magical plague of insomnia: a traveler brings medicine that cures the illness to the land. Yet to do the opposite – resolve the problems causing a deep sleep – requires just the contrary: Woolf’s Orlando undergoes a metamorphosis, Hoffmann’s Nathanael is set ablaze upon the sight of his nemesis, Lewis Carroll’s Alice must undergo the tribulations of Wonderland, and Sleeping Beauty receives a magical kiss from her prince. Where societal factors lay behind the destruction of civilization, behind the destruction of one’s inner self lays metaphysical origins, often demonstrated through the use of the fantastic.