

SLEEP TALK

WRITING of books under spirit guidance, mentioned in this column a couple of weeks ago in a discussion on Letters from Mother, edited by Edmund Bentley, is likely to become old hat.

Electronic technology has overtaken the time-honoured method. The latest thing is tape-recorded "sleep talk."

Of a recent publication, *The Dream World* of Dion McGregor, an American critic has written, "Now, I'm not saying that he's dreaming, but I never heard anyone tell such well-edited stories in his sleep as the author of this work."

The idea has distinct possibilities, though. Its value would surely lie in the testimony it might bear to another's creative power while in the dream-state — in other words, if the recording could be made while the dreamer is unaware that he is being recorded.

Then there could be no objection to the resultant material being edited. The technique only becomes suspect when the author passes the work off as his own dream-babbings which, unedited, are nonetheless capable of standing up to the scrutiny of any literary critic.

This is to suggest that one's dream-state is a mystical transport of creativeness. And any hard-working writer knows that that claim must be false.

The book in question does not seem to be available in South Africa. It is published by Bernard Geis Associates in New York.

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AND SO THE SLIM Mrs. Silberstein has made her debut in English. Throughout Etienne Leroux's novel in its original Afrikaans version, you will recall, she is referred to as "die slank Mrs. Silberstein."

Never "die jong Mrs. Silberstein," (to distinguish her from the old Mrs. Silberstein) nor even "die slank Mevrouw Silberstein" — always "die slank Mrs. Silberstein."

I can't quite work out the significance of this device of insisting on the English courtesy title in an Afrikaans context, but there is no doubt that is effective.

Of course, for the same subtlety to emerge from Charles Eglington's otherwise extremely faithful translation of *Sewe Dae by Die Silbersteins* into *Seven Days at the Silbersteins*, it should be necessary for him to refer throughout to "the slim Mevrouw Silberstein," but

somehow that doesn't have the same effect.

Incidentally, I think Eglington misses another, underlying subtlety when he refers to her as, simply, "slim Mrs. Silberstein" without the preceding article.

The slim Mrs. Silberstein," surely has a direct implication missing in "Slim Mrs. Silberstein." Leroux never dropped the article.

It is a reversal of Vaughan Wilkins's trick of speaking only of "Majesty" when he meant "His (or Her) Majesty" . . . "Majesty walked to the door and looked back over his shoulder . . ."

The screen

IN AN EARLY EDITION of this column, I suggested that there was scope, now that the South African cinema industry had made such strides, for the filming of indigenous novels, particularly the better-established kind, not merely the current best-sellers. I named Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* as a possibility.

This 19th-century South African novel is by no means lapsed potential. Within the past decade a dramatization of it staged in London's West End was by no means a flop.

Now there is news of a South African abroad named Anthony Perris who is dreaming of making a film of *The Story*.

A novice film-maker, Perris is at present in the United States, working with the distinguished director, George Stevens, making *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

Admittedly, the young man is still serving his apprenticeship with Stevens, but that his thoughts so far away should turn to a project like filming Olive Schreiner in her own setting shows that his filmic heart is in the right place.

—Peter Blandish