

**The Otherworldly Realm: Representation of Lucid Dreams and
Astral Projection in *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes* through the lens
of Shamanism, Science and Abrahamic Religions**



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Fall 2024

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Paprika and *Behind Her Eyes* through the lens of Shamanism, Science and Abrahamic
Religions**

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

(Dr. Shamsad Mortuza)

Professor and Special Advisor

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family, friends, faculty members, and especially to my husband, Javid Sadiq, who supported me and uplifted my spirit when I was about to give up. And as promised, a special shoutout to my father who motivated me to keep going amidst all the hardships.

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Abstract

Dreams are stories or sensations that our mind creates when we are sleeping or unconscious. Our soul departs from our body during dreams, and Shamanic beliefs state that it goes to the astral realm, a realm that resembles reality. One unusual type of dreaming is called lucid dreaming, in which the dreamer finds himself caught in a dreamlike state where he controls the images he sees. Even though lucid dreams and astral projection seem like an adventure that can heal a person since it requires connection to nature, if slipped, lucid dreams can be dreadful. In Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Paprika*, lucid dreams act as a tool that controls the characters' reality through a technological device known as DC mini. The DC mini helps the protagonist, Atsuko Chiba, enter the world of dreams and shift into her alter ego, Paprika. Another text, *Behind Her Eyes* by Sarah Pinborough talks about the traditional method of Lucid dreaming and astral projection, where instead of using scientific gadgets, they use ancient methods to travel to the dream world. The character Adele introduces the concept of astral projection and soul exchange to his friend, Rob, who further uses it illegally to invade other people's privacy. This very technique will be justified through the 10 principles of Shamanism by Michael Harner and how relevant it is in the contemporary world. This thesis, conducted through qualitative and quantitative research, will focus on the horrors of lucid dreaming through Michael Harner's discussion of Shamanism and scientific studies and how the concept justifies the phenomenon in Tsutsui's *Paprika* and Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes*, such as traveling to the otherworld and the alteration of personality of the characters in both texts.

Chapter One

Introduction

Shamanism is based on the belief that reality is invaded by otherworldly spirits. According to Wikipedia, the word shamanism derived from the Russian word, *šamán*, which itself came from the word “*samān*” from a Tungusic language, an ethnolinguistic group native to Siberia, China, and Mongolia. According to Eliade and Brown, shamanism generally describes indigenous groups in which roles such as healer, religious leader, and counselor are combined (2). For Alaska Natives, shamanism was especially significant because it helped them develop a unique bond with nature and a connection with the animals that live there (Langdon 348).

In some traditions, particularly eastern, the Shamanistic worldview is aligned with religions like Shintoism or Taoism. In their culture, it is the process where humans heal themselves and gain knowledge by connecting themselves with nature and spirit. When we dream, our soul leaves our body, and according to Shamanic beliefs, it travels to the astral world, which has its own reality (Brown 2). Lucid dreaming is a rare aspect of dreaming where the dreamer is stuck between dreams and reality and can control the activities he is seeing when he is stuck in the dream world. One common similarity between lucid dreaming and astral projection is that they both require the detachment of the soul off the body while being unconscious, and this is widely practiced between Shamans. According to Michael Harner, for emotional, physical, and spiritual relief, Shamans choose to separate their soul from their body and interact with the otherworldly spirits, which eventually gives them the healing power. Even though lucid dreaming and astral projection contribute to the mental peace of an individual, the side effects (nightmares and sleep paralysis) come with the horrifying downfall of one’s physical and mental health. For example, when a person experiences sleep paralysis, he becomes conscious about his surroundings, but this halts

the movement of his muscles. This phenomenon often leads to hallucinations or seeing an intruder, known as a “sleep paralysis demon” (Chesak 3). According to Jennifer Chesak, sometimes the body’s voluntary muscle movements are immobilized so that people don’t panic in their dreams. Most of the time, sleep paralysis is helpful, but occasionally, the brain becomes somewhat awakened during the transition from dreaming to wakefulness. Nightmares or sleep paralysis can have a negative impact on one’s physical health. They are not life-threatening, but they can cause anxiety or other sleep disorders, such as narcolepsy.

Lucid dreaming and astral projection come with different perspectives, either from shamanism, religion, culture, or even science. In terms of science, this intentional out-of-body experience has been seen in the Japanese scientific novel *Paprika* by Yasutaka Tsutsui and the thriller novel *Behind Her Eyes* by Sarah Pinborough.

The protagonist of *Paprika*, Dr. Atsuko Chiba, travels to dreamland to invade the mind of a terrorist. When she is in the realm of dreams, she morphs into her alter-ego, known as Paprika, which gives us the idea of the shift of personality in the case of dreaming. In *Paprika*, Japanese writer Yasutaka Tsutsui talks about the blending of dreams and reality and what impact it has on the lives of the characters. He explains the merging of dreams with reality is going to morph the world into an apocalyptic dystopian society because in dreams, people are doing the unexpected and unusual, which cannot exist in the real world without hampering time and space (47). He used the concept of lucid dreaming to explain that even a nightmare can be controlled and changed.

In Sarah Pinborough’s *Behind Her Eyes*, the plot highlights the lives of four different people and how the out-of-body experience heals and destroys the characters. The characters, Rob and Adele, performing astral projection or experiencing lucid dreaming, are sent to rehabilitation

centers due to their obsession with cocaine. This indicates the possibility that lucid dreaming and astral projection might be a product of drugs and hallucinations. Pinborough used the metaphor of dream travelling and soul exchanging to highlight the concern regarding the aftermath of drugs.

It is important to investigate the drawbacks of lucid dreaming and astral projection and what impact it has on individuals in *Paprika*. Taking Michael Harner's principles of Shamanism into account, this thesis will study the significance and horrors of out-of-body practices and how the principles contribute to the character behaviours of the characters, Dr. Atsuko Chiba, *Paprika*, Rob, and Adele in *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes*.

In some cultures, lucid dreaming and astral projection are still considered taboo and often portrayed as "witchcraft," or "black magic" and they don't believe in the terms "spirit" and "astral world." The objective of this thesis is to explore the notion of drawbacks of lucid dreaming and its different cultural perspective to eradicate the taboo and justify its significance, as well as to study the consequences of the merging of dreams and reality and the changes in personality after lucid dreaming.

The study is carried out through qualitative and quantitative research to examine the negative impacts of lucid dreaming and astral projection, such as mood swings, depression, physical pain, etc. and the impact of other external factors, such as drugs, in dreams, in Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Paprika* and Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes*. A number of people, around 10, through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) have given a survey about their experiences regarding lucid dreaming and astral projection to add more justification to my research. To justify the connection of horrors and blessings of dreams in the primary texts, Michael Harner's ten principles on shamanism will be used to explore the connection between spirits and dreams. Michael Harner,

through his principles, explains the structure of a shaman and how OBE (out-of-body experience) is possible for a shamanic body. Along with Shamanism, the notion of lucid dreaming will be explored through science and religion as well. In shamanism, it is called lucid dreaming; in science, it is known as REM (rapid eye movement) sleep; and in religion (specifically Islam), lucid dreaming doesn't exist; in fact, it is considered a part of daydreaming. The research paper is divided into two main chapters: one focuses on the shamanic and religious perspective of lucid dreams and astral projection, and the other chapter will focus on how drugs and science play a role in the practice of out-of-body phenomena.

The research will also discuss the influence of astral projection on the mental and physical health of individuals and whether it brings a significant change in the personality of a person. This paper will integrate scientific studies on lucid dreaming and astral projection to support claims about mental and physical impacts due to OBE. Michael Harner's principles focus on the existence of spirits of both the real and the otherworld. The term "otherworldly" is vague in many mediums, such as science, but it has a significant role in Shamanic ideology. In shamanism, otherworlds are considered to be metaphysical worlds that cannot be seen with the naked eyes and are not connected to the real world. On the other hand, *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes* tells us about dream worlds and spirits through the lens of science and spirituality respectively; hence, Harner's 10 principles will stand as a reference, where he mentions how a shaman behaves and what kind of activities a shaman can perform, to justify the existence of Shamanism and the plot and ideas of *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes* and what aspects of the storyline are being used to relate it to reality.

My research will show the connection between dreams in reality and dreams portrayed in Tsutsui's *Paprika* and how the theories of Shamanism justify the phenomenon in contrast to science and religion.

The debate of “otherworldly” is still on the run, and it is still not established that this kind of world exists. My research aims to investigate the logic and ideas behind the notion of “otherworld” and find out whether it exists or not. The limitations of the research is the shortage of time. The study of Shamanism and lucid dreaming is broad, and there are countless studies on this very topic. The notion of astral projection and lucid dreaming is studied in many cultures and religions, but this paper, due to lack of time, focused on the Abrahamic religion and Japanese culture to understand the influence of cultural and religious narratives on dreams and spirits. Hence, it is not possible to gather all the information in such a fixed amount of time.

The aim of this research is to illustrate the negative aspects of lucid dreams and to set guidelines for what to do and what not to do when experiencing such dreams frequently. Lucid dreaming is still very much unknown to the people of the 21st century, even though it has existed since ancient times. My thesis will investigate the blending of dreams and reality and the horrifying consequences of it in the novel *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes* with the lens of Michael Harner’s 10 Core principles of Shamanism and other scientific articles.

Taking inspiration from *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes*, I created a movie, titled, *Inns of Molten Blue*, that would depict the drawbacks of lucid dreaming and astral projection. The shaman in the movie, unlike the traditional trait, would act as an antagonist who involves herself into dream invading because of power hunger, and enters into people’s dreams to control them and gain information. This film acts as an allegorical representation to the ongoing war in the contemporary world, especially the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the student body movement in Bangladesh to escape dictatorship. The movie will give visual entertainment to the audience so that they understand ludic dreaming, astral projection, and the horrors and blessings that come with them better.

Chapter Two

Research Questions

- 1) How is the border between real world and dream world navigated in *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes*?
- 2) What kind of agency and decision-making power do the characters attain through transitioning to the dream world through lucid dreaming or astral projections?
- 3) Does the cultural context influence the experience of lucid dreaming? Is the Japanese depiction of the psychological phenomenon in *Paprika* different from that of *Behind Her Eyes*?
- 4) How does the dream sequence impact the narrative storytelling of the two texts?

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Paprika* and Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes* have portrayed both the horrors and the uniqueness of lucid dreaming and astral projection, and how merging the dreams with reality brings downfall to one's mentality. Both practices have been studied and practiced for centuries by individuals seeking to explore the depths of their own consciousness and spirituality. Numerous scholars have come up with their own findings and researches regarding how a person temporarily gets rid of his own body and what impacts it might have on their physical or mental appearances. The literary studies have examined the different aspects of lucid dreaming and how it blends with reality to create a whole new dimension and how that very dimension brings changes to the mentality of people. The following is a review of some relevant journal articles and books about lucid dreaming, astral projection, shamanism, and other contents.

Lucid dreaming is one of the aspects of regular dreaming where the dreamer is stuck in a limbo, which means he is between the dream and reality and can control what is happening in the dream. In "Dreaming Wide Awake: Lucid Dreaming, Shamanic Healing, and Psychedelics," David J. Brown explores the practice of lucid dreaming among both normal people and shamans and their ability to communicate with the figures in their unconscious realm. He explains that lucid dreaming occurs when one is stuck between dream and reality, when someone has access to his own memories while dreaming and is able to influence what is happening in the dream (Brown 2). Brown talks about both scientific and philosophical research on lucid dreaming and what exists beyond dreams, and this similar phenomenon has been explored in Tsutsui's *Paprika*. The comparison between the science behind lucid dreaming and astral projection in Brown's analysis and Tsutsui's book will be explored broadly in this research.

Similarly, “Terror and bliss? Commonalities and distinctions between sleep paralysis, lucid dreaming, and their associations with waking life experiences” by Dan Denis and Giulia Poerio (2016) explores the parallels and discrepancies between lucid dreaming and sleep paralysis, as well as how they relate to cultural and scientific beliefs and states of consciousness, such as daydreaming. Sleep paralysis is a state where the body of the person, whether he’s sleeping or awake, halts and experiences hallucinations that are often evil and include the presence of intruders (Denis and Poerio 42). The authors also mention the link between astral projection and lucid dreaming. Sleep paralysis, described in this article, is a part of the horrors one can experience while dreaming, and in *Paprika*, the protagonist, Atsuko Chiba, experiences sleep paralysis when she fails to come out of her dream. This very connection and the derivation of sleep paralysis from dreams to lucid dreaming and the concept of domination of these three dimensions on an individual’s state of mind will be explored further in my thesis.

Markéta Jakešová, in “Phenomenologically Disturbing Time: Nightmares, Cities and Anime” explores dreams and time in *Paprika*. This paper elaborates on the morphing of dreams into nightmares and its impact on the dreamer. Jakešová further explains the interpretations of wish, memory, and fear in dreams and how it affects reality as well. In *Paprika*, staying in the dream for too long hampers one's reality, which means the individual refuses to accept his own reality and wishes to live in his or her dream, and Jakesova’s concept of horrors of dreams, that is, the manipulation of dreams and memories, will be used to justify it. Hence, the exploration of the metaphor “where the dream that lasts too long becomes a nightmare” and the concept of excessive nightmares and the impact of it in *Paprika* will be broadly elaborated in my paper.

Again, Markéta Jakešová, in “Rethinking the Body as a Network: Drawing Inspiration from Japanese Animated Cyborg Bodies” explains the notion of astral projection and how it lets

one's soul leave one's body and roam around the spiritual realm. This very method has been seen in many Japanese anime, for example, *Paprika*, where the protagonist uses her own body as a network to travel between the reality and dream world. Astral projection is a concept that has been derived from shamanism, and in *Paprika*, the similar concept has been used but with the use of science and technology. The perspectives and comparison of both spirituality and science on astral projection have been mentioned in this paper by Markéta Jakešová which will be further used to justify the notion of lucid dreaming in my research.

According to Charles Laughlin and Adam J. Rock, shamanism is a global social phenomenon made up of a variety of customs intended to gain knowledge from other worlds in order to advance one's social group (Laughlin and Rock 242). Their article, "What Can We Learn From Shamans' Dreaming? A Cross-Cultural Exploration," offers a cross-cultural analysis of dreaming within the framework of shamanism. Laughlin and J. Rock clarified the fundamental components of core shamanism and proposed that dreaming actually invites shamanism by examining how they seem to affect dream interpretation, dream culture, and dreaming itself. The broad concept of shamanism, such as its significant role in astral projection and its faces in different cultures as well as its affiliation with dreaming, will be dispatched in my paper.

Another article, titled "Bodies of Future Memories: The Japanese Body in Science Fiction Anime" by Martinez Dolores explores the role of protagonists in Japanese science fiction anime, where she talks about *Paprika* and how its lead character morphs into a robot to escape reality. She explains that shifting to another realm plays a huge role in trauma escaping, and changing the dream can change the structure of reality as well (Dolores 73). This idea portrays a situation where people in a dilemma often want to morph into someone else other than themselves (Dolores 86), and my research will take this very aspect of the story to justify my research on shamanism.

In the paper “The Figure of the Shaman in Contemporary British Poetry,” Mortuza talks about the significance of Shamanism in contemporary British poetry, while exploring the theories and elements of shamans that reveal the myths and cultural and religious perspectives of shamanic beliefs, which will be discussed broadly in my research. The author shows the different aspects of shamanism in different poetries, and from that, I have recorded the ideas of activities and rituals of Shamans and how some cultures still think it is taboo even though it plays a significant role in the literature.

Furthermore, Simona Stano highlights the notion of logic in dreams in her article “Dreams and Narratives: From Psychoanalysis to Contemporary Imaginaries” through Freud’s theories of psychoanalysis, which helps to compare Freud’s notions with Michael Harner’s concepts. Using the semiotic analysis of a few case studies and the body of existing literature as a foundation, this paper examines the “narrative logics and meaning-making processes” (Stano 22) that underlie dreams and public interpretations of them.

Again, Alice Vernon, in her article “Digital Sleep and the Performance of Lucidity in *Paprika*” talks about the changes in personality and alter ego in terms of lucid dreaming. She further discusses whether it is true in real cases, that is, if the dreams reflect the true personalities of people. This article also explains that alter ego is formed not only in dreams, but also in some real-life activities, such as while watching a movie or playing a game (Vernon 118). The very concept of personality shift and its connection with lucid dreaming in *Paprika*, justified by Vernon, will be elaborated further in my thesis.

Similarly, Paul Wells’ article “Playing the Kon Trick: Between Dates, Dimensions and Daring in the Films of Satoshi Kon” explores the merging of technology and magic realism in

Paprika. The exploring of what is “beyond the limits of reality and into the realms of the magical” (Wells 1) in the novel and the significance of time are explored in this article. Wells also points out that even though technology helped people reach milestones of advancement, this very technology brought doom to the reality of mankind. In *Paprika*, the doom in reality started when people were affected in their dreams, which led to physical distortion in the real world, and this very concept of the game of magic and science is important to understand the limitations of dreaming and technology.

Behind Her Eyes by Sarah Pinborough is a novel where the readers discover the nature of astral projection and traditional lucid dreaming. In her article, Elise Hanson explained how Pinborough brought the theory of astral projection with shamanic roots ranging from Ancient Egypt, Biblical beliefs, China, Hinduism, and Inuit practices to apply in her novel. “The notion is that a person can master lucid dreaming enough to have an intentional (or unintentional, as illustrated in *Insidious*), out-of-body experience” (Hanson 3). Moreover, Hanson explained the scientific side of astral projection as well as the philosophical side, which she further discussed in her article.

The notion of sleep paralysis varies from different mediums. In shamanism, it is called being stuck in a limbo; in science, it is called anxiety, and in different cultures and religions, they are given different names and methods. In the journal article “Culture and Sleep Paralysis”, the authors talk about the cultural variations of sleep paralysis, also known as nightmares, nocturnal panic, dream claustrophobia, etc.

In his article “Getting Stuck in a Dream: Meaning, Cause, and Explanation,” Aoife describes how our everyday mood impacts our dreams and what being trapped in a dream

symbolizes. According to Aoife, getting trapped in a dream world or while dreaming of being trapped in someone else's body typically occurs during times of extreme stress (22). In other words, anxiety and other mental dilemmas lead to sleep paralysis.

Similarly, Radina Skorcheva, in her article "Understanding Claustrophobic Dreams and Causes," describes sleep paralysis and being stuck in a dream as a Claustrophobic state which occurs due to anxiety. "These dreams can occur due to a variety of factors, including high levels of stress, past traumas, or feelings of powerlessness" (Skorcheva 1). The psychoanalysis and causes behind dream claustrophobia will be further analyzed in this research paper.

One of the frequent accidents that occur while dreaming is getting trapped in the dream world. In other words, we call it sleep paralysis. Denys Chumak in his article talked about the scientific and religious theories (Christianity) behind being stuck in a dream and what could be the cause behind such a phenomenon. According to Freud, "being trapped in a dream could mean that feelings like frustration, anger, or being trapped in real life come back to you somehow" (Chumak 10).

The concept of dream is still a mystery to scientists and the answer to why we dream comes with different variations. Christian Jarette observes that "Psychologists have found a way to communicate with lucid dreamers – people who can take control of their dreams – in the hope that they might help us explore what goes on with our brains at night" (1). According to science, "lucid dreaming is a relatively rare state in which the dreamer, during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, becomes consciously aware that they are dreaming" (Jarette 6). So, in this article, the ideas of lucid dreaming in science and the connection between this and REM sleep will be further discussed.

“5 Lucid Dreaming Techniques to Try” by Kirsten Nunez gives us an insight to some strategies, including performing reality checks, that can help train the mind to recognize its own consciousness (Nunez 1). Even though some people naturally have lucid dreams due to a lot of psychological dilemmas, it has also been claimed that lucid dreaming is also possible through certain methods, which have been further elaborated by Nunez in her article . Nunez also talks about psychophysiolgist Dr. Stephen LaBerge, who has become the pioneer of lucid dreaming research (5), and how he has linked lucid dreaming to sleeping disorders, such as sleep paralysis, recurring nightmares, etc.

Susan Taylor in her article “How To Enter The Dream Of The Person You Love” explains the role of the unconscious mind while dreaming and communicating with the people through dreams. According to Taylor, “A lucid dreamer is aware that he or she is dreaming, so this is the best time to communicate with him or her and thus insert yourself into the dream” (2). In her words, to enter a person's dream, there should be a connection between two people. Even though it happens in the dream, it also establishes a few elements of colonialism if the method is done without consent.

The UCI Health article by Heather Shannon titled “Why we need REM sleep for health” explains that REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep is crucial for memory, learning, emotional health, and problem-solving. During REM, the brain is highly active in some areas, allowing for vivid dreams, while other parts rest. Despite its importance, scientists still don’t fully understand how REM sleep works. Disruptions to REM can negatively affect cognitive and emotional well-being. This information helps us understand lucid dreaming and astral projection by showing how REM sleep creates a unique mental state where vivid dreams and heightened brain activity occur. Lucid dreaming—being aware and controlling dreams—often happens in REM, as this stage naturally

supports rich, detailed dreamscapes. Similarly, the sensation of astral projection could be linked to the brain's vivid activity during REM, where the boundary between reality and imagination blurs. This suggests that both experiences might stem from the mind's natural processes during REM sleep. My research will take this very aspect of the story to justify my study on the impact of science in lucid dreaming.

John Peever and Patrick Fuller in their paper “The Biology of REM Sleep” explore how lucid dreaming works, focusing on the role of the prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for self-awareness and decision-making) during REM sleep. Researchers found that lucid dreaming occurs when the prefrontal cortex becomes more active than usual during REM, allowing dreamers to recognize they are dreaming and even control their dreams (Peever and Fuller, 12). The study highlights that lucid dreaming is a unique mix of REM sleep and wakefulness, combining the vivid imagery of dreams with conscious thought. This research helps us understand lucid dreaming and astral projection by linking them to brain activity. Lucid dreaming occurs naturally in REM when the brain is both asleep and partially awake. Astral projection, often described as leaving the body, might be explained by this heightened self-awareness during REM, creating a vivid sense of detachment or movement in a dream state. This study will help me justify in my research paper that these experiences aren't mystical but instead reflect how the brain operates in REM sleep

Similarly, Klemm's article "Why Does Rem Sleep Occur? A Wake-Up Hypothesis," explains REM sleep is a type of sleep in which the body stays immobile to prevent dream acting but the brain becomes extremely active, much like during alertness (1). This phase is essential for processing emotions and memories. Although it accounts for 20% of adult sleep, REM sleep is most prevalent in babies. In this stage, the brain exhibits patterns of activity that combine reality

with dream-like imagination, and vivid dreams take place. This knowledge of REM sleep demonstrates how the brain produces realistic dream experiences, which promotes lucid dreaming and astral projection. This understanding of REM sleep supports lucid dreaming and astral projection by showing how the brain creates vivid, lifelike experiences during dreams. This suggests that both experiences are rooted in how the brain works during REM, blending dream imagery with elements of conscious thought.

“Substances that enhance recall and lucidity during dreaming” by Stephen LaBerge gives an insight to how drugs can induce lucid dreaming. Lucid dreaming is highly subject to the placebo effect; the belief that something will stimulate a lucid dream is very effective. Many prescription drugs as well as marijuana and alcohol alter the sleep cycle, usually by suppressing REM sleep (LaBerge, 3). This article suggests that certain drugs such as psychedelics, can bridge the gap between conscious awareness and the dream state. Drugs could provide insights into the sensation of leaving the body by facilitating controlled dream experiences that mimic the perception of out-of-body movement, further linking these phenomena to the brain's response to external and internal cues during sleep (LaBerge 8). This study will further be described in my research on how drugs could be one of the significant reasons behind astral projection and lucid dreaming.

In the article “Relationship between drug dreams, affect, mood disorders and lucid awakening in psychotic patients on a treatment” the authors discuss the relationship between lucid dreaming, mental health, drugs, and brain function. It explores how lucid dreaming, a state of awareness during dreaming, is connected to increased activity in specific areas of the brain, particularly the prefrontal cortex (2). The study examines the therapeutic benefits of lucid dreaming for managing nightmares, anxiety, depression and other psychological conditions. It also delves into how lucid dreaming might enhance problem-solving and emotional regulation. This

research highlights the brain's capacity to achieve self-awareness during dreams, offering insights into lucid dreaming's mechanics. This study will be explained in detail in my research to support the idea that these phenomena are rooted in neurological processes rather than supernatural causes.

Daniel Yang in his journal article “Dreaming with a Conscious Mind” explores the use of drugs and other methods to induce altered states of consciousness, including lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences. It discusses how substances such as psychedelics and sleep aids can influence the brain's activity during REM sleep, potentially enhancing dream vividness and self-awareness. While some individuals use these substances to explore lucid dreaming or astral projection, the text also highlights the risks, such as dependency and disrupted sleep cycles. It examines the scientific mechanisms behind these experiences, linking them to the brain's ability to balance wakefulness and dreaming states. The use of substances demonstrates how external factors, like drugs, may influence brain activity, making these experiences feel more realistic or surreal. The fact that drugs play a massive role in inducing lucid dreaming and astral projection and the latter is deeply connected to the brain's natural processes during REM sleep will be discussed in my research paper.

Tammy Saah discusses the global use of drugs, focusing on patterns of abuse and the demand for treatment in his article “The evolutionary origins and significance of drug addiction”. It talks about how drug use varies by region and substance and the drawbacks of drug addiction, including the need for better prevention, treatment, and research into the causes and consequences of substance abuse. It also notes the rising trends in the use of certain drugs, which pose additional challenges for healthcare systems worldwide (3). The discussion about drug use can be linked to its effects on the brain, particularly how certain substances alter consciousness and perception.

This understanding provides a foundation for studying phenomena like lucid dreaming or astral projection, as drugs that influence brain activity might mimic or enhance these experiences.

The article “Astral Projection: A Strange Out-of-Body Experience in Dissociative Disorder” examines the relationship between psychedelics and its impact on one’s mental health through different case studies. It discusses how psychedelics like psilocybin and LSD affect the brain, particularly by altering connectivity between different brain regions. These substances can lead to profound experiences, such as OBE and traveling to other realms (2). The effects of psychedelics on the brain, such as altering perception and creating vivid, dream-like states, enhances the experiences of lucid dreaming and astral projection. This very concept will be analysed in my research to justify the cause behind the OBE.

The aim of the article “Dreams and Psychedelics: Neurophenomenological Comparison and Therapeutic Implications” by Rainer Kraehenmann talks about the similarities and differences between psychedelic experiences and night dreams and to make conclusions about the therapeutic uses of psychedelics in psychiatry. “The tendency of dreams and psychedelic drugs to induce visionary experiences inspired scientific and cultural development for thousands of years” (Kraehenmann, 2).

Mircea Eliade and Vilmos Dionszegi in “Shamanism” explained the basic root of shamanism, which include its origins, its practices, and its cultural significance etc. “Although shamans’ repertoires vary from one culture to the next, they are typically thought to have the ability to heal the sick, to communicate with the otherworld, and often to escort the souls of the dead to that otherworld” (Eliade 3). Shamanism is a spiritual practice found in many cultures where shamans act as healers, guides, and intermediaries between the human world and the spirit world.

This article talks about shamanism as the oldest spiritual traditions and how it is still relevant in the contemporary world.

Elizabeth Reninger “The Shamanic Origins of Taoism” gives an insight to how shamanism covers a major part of Taoism and Taoist practices. The concept of Taoism extracted from this article is briefly defined in the research to show how shamanism is existing in different cultures and religions.

Jennifer Chesak’s article “What’s a Sleep Paralysis Demon?” gives an insight to the causes behind sleep paralysis and what happens in the sleep or in the dream that creates the figure of sleep paralysis demons. The article portrays sleep paralysis as hallucinations that leave the body unable to move during sleep. During this time, some people feel a presence, see strange shapes, or hear frightening sounds, often described as “demons” (Chesak 40). This happens because the brain is still in a dream-like state, even though one is partially awake. My research will take the concept of sleep paralysis to justify that these experiences are not real and are a natural part of how the brain works during sleep.

The journal article “Questioning the image of Japan as a Miko Country: Representation of Shamanism in Ancient Japanese Myths” by Marina Shchepetunina is about the practice of Shamanism in Japanese culture. This article is rich with the information of Shintoism and how it holds shamanism as its root for its religious practices. Since this paper is going to explore a Japanese novel, the Japanese cultural perspective of Shamanism is crucial for the research and understanding.

Lucid dreaming is still a debate between different cultures and religions, as well as science. The fact that dreams exist in different places in different forms will be discussed in my research. Hence, the reviewed articles with the significant information would be used to justify my research.

Chapter Four

Shamanism and Religion

In shamanism, lucid dreaming is used extensively for spiritual exploration, healing, and insight. Shamans have long used altered states of consciousness, such as lucid dreaming or astral projection, to communicate with the spiritual realm and access deeper levels of the human psyche. This practice allows shamans to communicate with spirits, ancestors, and other entities in order to gain guidance and wisdom. Shamans can use the power of lucid dreaming to address emotional wounds, traumas, and unresolved issues within themselves and in others. Furthermore, lucid dreaming in shamanism can be used for divination and prophecy, providing insights into the future and assisting individuals in their journeys. Shamans can use this practice to connect with their intuition and the collective unconscious, resulting in healing and transformation. In this chapter, the connection between shamanism and lucid dreaming and astral projection will be explored and how these mentioned concepts can also be inspected through the lens of religious history and practices.

In Shamanism, the definition of lucid dreaming and astral projection differs from the one defined in science and religion. However, all the definitions have one thing in common, that is, traveling to another realm, whether it is through thoughts, memories, daydreams, or spirit exchanging.

Michael Harner came up with 10 principles of Shamanism that will further justify the objective of my thesis.

1. Spirits are real

2. Spirits produce dreams
3. These spirits have a variety of characteristics, along with different kinds and degrees of power, and differing preoccupations.
4. Spirits producing dreams can be: personal souls; helping spirits, including guardian spirits; or they can be non-helping ones, such as suffering beings or other intrusive spirits.
5. “Bad dreams” or nightmares can be beneficial warnings from one’s soul or helping spirits, or may be manifested by non-helping spirits.
6. Persons of substantial spiritual power tend to be resistant to receiving unsought dreams from non-helping spirits.
7. Major helping spirits can manifest as Big Dreams and convey important spiritual power and information.
8. The above principles apply to all kinds of dreams, including sleeping, waking and daydreams, and visions.
9. To learn the meaning of their dreams, people can merge with a helping spirit to call back dreams for study, or they can take shamanic journeys to their most important divinatory spirit helpers to obtain information.
10. These journeys should include the extensive study of metaphors, especially as they pertain to the meaning of spirit communications and thus to the meaning of dreams. (Harner 6).

Shamanic practices are different in different cultures. The origin of Shamans came from the Evenki people of Siberia and northern Eurasia. According to Mircea Eliade, certain Siberian

legends explain that the world's "first shaman" is believed to have entered into competition with God (68). Lucid dreaming and astral projection are considered divine, which implies that in order to experience an OBE, one must be close to Divine Providence. Some shamans believe that these experiences are a way to communicate with higher spiritual realms and gain insight into the nature of existence. It is believed that practicing meditation and mindfulness can help individuals achieve a state of consciousness conducive to experiencing lucid dreaming and astral projection.

Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes* gives us an insight to the traditional methods of shamanism. The method that has been used in the book is taken from the culture of Ancient Egypt, Biblical beliefs, China, Hinduism, and Inuit practices (Hanson 3).

Pinch myself and say I AM AWAKE once an hour.

Look at my hands. Count my fingers.

Look at clock (or watch), look away, look back.

Stay calm and focused.

Think of a door.

The character Adele introduced Rob to the concept of astral projection while they were both in rehabilitation for anxiety and nightmares. In medical terms, it has been claimed that lucid dreams can only occur when one is distressed. The shifting to another realm plays a huge role in trauma escaping, and changing the dream can change the structure of reality as well (Dolores 73).

But at the same time, lucid dreams may appear similar to nightmares, sleep paralysis, and the dreamer's own reality, which can cause anxiety and confusion (Summer and Rehman 3).

In the novel, Adele's parents died due to a house fire, and since then, she has been continuously getting nightmares about that very incident. Her fiancé, David, gives her a book about dreaming, hoping it would cure her night terrors, but little did he know, Adele would end up mastering the art of OBE. In her lucid dream, Adele imagines the old disused well in the woods at the back of her parents' house into which she is pouring her past trauma (Pinborough 85). The circumstance given here shows that trauma has a connection with lucid dreaming.

While lucid dreaming, people can make drastic changes in their dream environment, according to Shamanism. Shamans use lucid dreaming to explore otherworldly realms or the spirit world. In these realms, they can communicate with spirit guides, ancestors, and other spiritual entities. Pinborough talked about how Adele used the otherworld as a place to escape her trauma. On the other hand, Rob initially gets into a dream where he is being chased by his past trauma dressed as monsters.

I'm running and they're all coming after me.....They're them, I know they're them, but they're also not them. Monstrous versions of themselves...(Pinborough 123).

After a few practices, Rob discovered he could change the environment of his dream.

I add dolphins. I add a waiter walking towards us with tall cocktails....I can be the king of my own dream (Pinborough 125).

According to Lemyr, people in lucid dreams fight a threatening dream character or engage in a conciliatory dialog with it, as opposed to fleeing from it (5). Michael Harner's fifth principle-

“Bad dreams” or nightmares can be beneficial warnings from one’s soul or helping spirits, or may be manifested by non-helping spirits- justifies the situation Adele and Rob were in. Both dreamt of an environment that was built with their traumas, hence, the bad dreams helped them get rid of their fear.

Apart from lucid dreaming, Rob and Adele discovered that they could exchange souls and travel into one another’s spirit. Lucid dreaming requires sleeping, whereas astral projection can be practiced while people are wide awake. During OBE, the consciousness is centered in some form other than the physical body and this parasomatic form or "astral body" is a duplicate of their physical body. “In some cases, the exteriorized self is said to have been connected to the physical body by a cordlike structure, known in occult circles as the astral cord or silver cord” (Irwin 354).

The method Rob and Adele used to exchange their souls depicts the traditional way of how Shamans would experience OBE. A Shaman fulfills obligations, such as healing, dream hopping, dream invading, etc., by communicating directly with the spirits whenever he pleases (Eliade and Dioszegi 5). As the story progresses, it reveals that Rob eventually ends up murdering Adele through injecting her with a heavy dose of heroin. Before demobilizing her body with the drug, Rob exchanges his soul with Adele. So, technically, the one who died was Adele in Rob’s body. Rob, living in Adele’s body, now marries David, but that deadly phenomenon repeats again when David meets Louise, his secretary. Rob’s obsession with David leads him to monitor every action of Louise. At the end of the novel, Rob finally succeeds in exchanging souls with Louise, by manipulating her. He injects her with the same dose of heroin, which ends up numbing every part of Louise’s body. From Louise’s perspective in the novel, she says, “I imagine being Adele, of slipping into that body, of controlling it, and then—just as I feel a terrible jolt of shock somewhere in the core of me, a feeling that something is very, very wrong—I’m inside her” (Pinborough 303).

Just like Shamans, Louise intentionally exchanged her soul with Adele's in order to heal her, unaware that it was a trap.

Shamans' repertoires vary from one culture to the next (Eliade and Dioszegi 1) and the type of Shamanism that has been seen in Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes* is from the culture of ancient Egypt and Bible.

In the other text, *Paprika* by Yasutaka Tsutsui, to enter and navigate the dream world, the characters use a device known as the DC Mini. This is similar to the shamanic practice of journeying into other realms or the spirit world to gain insights and perform healing. As shamans have spirit guides, the protagonist and the dream therapist Atsuko Chiba takes on the persona of her alter ego, Paprika, in the dream world, acting as a guide for others navigating their dreams and fixing their night terrors and trauma.

The main idea of the book is the use of dreams for therapeutic purposes, much like shamans use altered states of consciousness to heal. Chiba, as her alter ego, Paprika, assists patients in confronting their inner demons and psychological issues through their dreams. This idea portrays a situation where people in a dilemma often want to morph into someone else other than themselves (Dolores 86), which means people in their dreams are different than they are in reality.

In *Paprika*, dream insights and resolutions are integrated into patients' waking lives, promoting mental health and well-being in the same way that shamanic practices bring dream insights back to waking consciousness for healing and growth.

The question may arise: How do people wake up from their dreams? Dying in a dream is a flight or flight response, unleashing one's stress in real life. In the movie, *Inception*, the only way

to go back to reality was to die in the dreams or in the dreams within the dreams. This concept has been taken from *Paprika*, where the conversation between Paprika and her patient, Sagawa, portrays what causes people to wake up.

“If someone who really was a problem appeared in your dream, the shock would wake you, wouldn’t it” (Tsutsui, 35).

According to Skorcheva, such phenomena can occur due to a variety of factors, including high levels of stress, past traumas, or feelings of powerlessness (1). This is not only limited to death, but people can also wake up from their dreams due to overwhelming experiences. But the reason a person can still come back from their nightmare is because of the “silver cord” that has bridged between one’s dream self and the real self. According to Irwin, the exteriorized self is said to have been connected to the physical body by a cordlike structure, known in occult circles as the astral cord or silver cord (354). So, when the cord gets detached, the person experiences dream claustrophobia, also known as sleep paralysis. “Being trapped in a dream could mean that feelings like frustration, anger, or being trapped in real life come back to you somehow” (Chumak 10). This indicates that a person gets stuck in a dream or detaches from his or her silver cord because of anxiety or trauma. This creates an idea of “alter ego” in real life as well. The alter ego is formed not only in dreams, but also in some real life activities, such as while watching a movie or playing a game, or one might take the persona of what they were in their dreams (Vernon 118).

Shamans and Paprika have one thing in common, and that is to heal their patients. In *Paprika*, the distinction between dreams and reality begins to blur, resulting in chaos as dreams invade the real world. This concept echoes the shamanic belief that the spiritual and physical worlds are inextricably linked and can influence one another.

In *Paprika*, the journey into the dream world, the role of the healer/guide, the blurring of realm boundaries, and the use of tools to access altered states of consciousness are all reminiscent of shamanism. Tsutsui's novel incorporates these elements to provide a modern interpretation of ancient shamanic concepts within the context of science fiction.

Behind Her Eyes by Sarah Pinborough and *Paprika* by Yasutaka Tsutsui focus on different aspects of lucid dreaming and astral projection. *Behind Her Eyes* informs the readers more about the art of astral projection, whereas *Paprika* talks more about lucid dreaming and dream invading. Either way, both the novels give people the insight to the history and art of shamanism and how the notion of lucid dreaming and astral projection has a connection with shamanic rituals.

Another common theme that both novels share is the concept of dream or soul invading. In *Paprika*, the act is performed by a terrorist who invades everyone's dreams which blurs the line between reality and dreams, and causes dysfunctionality among people. In *Behind Her Eyes*, the character Rob enters into the soul of Adele and Louise without their consent, emphasizing on the negative aspects of astral projection.

Apart from the shamanic aspect of lucid dreaming, the religious perspectives portray something else. In Shintoism, according to Shchepetunina, it formed an institutionalized religious system disguised as shamanism and played a significant role in the department of healing and medication (147). Elizabeth Reninger highlights that in Taoism, shamanism is considered as the root of Taoist practice (6). She also claimed that "spirit-travel to planets, stars and galaxies are practices found within the Shangqing sect of Taoism" (6).

Other than Shintoism and Taoism, the paper will mainly focus on the notion of lucid dreams and astral projection in three Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) to give the insight of OBE in similar manners.

In Islam, dreams appear due to three reasons: Allah, Satan, and thoughts. The Prophet said, "A good dream is from Allah, and a bad dream is from Satan" (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 87, Number 124). Even though a lot has been narrated about regular dreaming, there are no such doctrines where the scholars have talked about lucid kinds. According to Assim Al Hakeem, either people are awake or asleep, and there is no such thing as lucid dreaming. People might daydream or hallucinate, and it is possible to control their thoughts, but, as the scholar mentions, it is not possible to control one's dream while sleeping.

In the case of astral projection, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s notable Miraj and Isra journeys are considered as such. "The Miraj was the spiritual journey where the Holy Prophet was shown the heavens, met with previous prophets and was eventually presented before the royal court of Allah. The Isra is the name of the spiritual journey where the Holy Prophet was taken from Mecca to Jerusalem" (Ahmad 6). In one narration of Sahih al-Bukhari (Kitab Bad' -ul-Khalq), it is mentioned that this vision was shown to the Holy Prophet between a state of sleep and wakefulness (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 3207).

In Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 7517, it is mentioned:

الْحَرَامِ الْمَسْجِدِ فِي نَائِمٍ وَهُوَ

"... while he was sleeping in the Sacred Mosque..."

قُلُوبُهُ يَنَامُ وَلَا عَيْنُهُ وَتَنَامُ

“... his eyes were asleep but his heart was not asleep...”

This clarifies that the notion of astral projection exists in Islam, and it is possible to experience OBE according to Islamic doctrines.

According to Shaykh Amin Kholwadia, in terms of accessing the other world, Islam already has methods that allow “access” into the other world like the dua of *istikhārah* (5). In Islamic metaphysics, two types of OBEs are mentioned. The first is when any human being is taking drugs or through self-hypnosis. The second type is where a person travels to the outer world with the aid of the Divine Himself, that is through 5 waqt Salah or regular dreams (Kholwadia 10).

Similarly, in Christianity, the existence of astral projection is shown in certain verses:

1. “After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.” (Revelation 4:1-2)
2. “I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the

body I do not know, God knows— and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4)

3. “Before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern” (Ecclesiastes 12:6)

However, there is a significant body of literature on dreams in Judaism that appears to take a completely different stance. Dreams are considered significant in Jewish belief, and they can even be experiences of an individual receiving significant messages from beyond their body (Brackman 6).

According to Brackman, the book of Genesis is scattered with dreams of the Patriarchs and others. The first dream is (28:12), Jacob dreamt of a ladder standing on the ground with its head in heaven and angels ascending and descending. This was a message to Jacob that there will be new angels accompanying him during his journey to Charan replacing the angels who accompanied him in Israel (Rashi). Similarly, the dream of Joseph and the eleven stars (37:5) were a message that Joseph would in the future reign over his brothers in Egypt. (6).

The religious perspectives show that people lucid dream or astral project when they are receiving certain messages from the divine. The concept of lucid dreaming might not be clear in the doctrines, but the notion of astral projection has been existing since religions were established.

Taking the religious aspects of lucid dreaming and astral projection into account, it can be seen that the characters in *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes* experience OBE due to emergencies, that is, a call from the divine in religious perspective.

In *Paprika*, the dream therapists travel to their patients' dreams to hunt their trauma and heal them. In *Behind Her Eyes*, the characters experience the very phenomenon to escape their fear. Similarly, in shamanism, the shamans exchange souls with their clients or travel to the astral world to gain spiritual knowledge from the spirit world and then come back to heal their clients. In case of religion, the Divine takes the responsibility to baptize its followers.

Chapter Five

Science and Drugs

Other than shamans and philosophy preachers, scientists too are fascinated by the idea of dream worlds and separating souls out of the body. Even though the concept is vastly discussed in anecdotal or philosophical terms, science, too, took a part in it to unleash the psychological and neurological underpinnings of lucid dreams and astral projection. In the scientific language, the phenomenon is explained through the term REM (rapid eye movement) sleep.

REM sleep is the period of sleep where a person's eyes make small movements while dreaming. Although there are a lot of explanations behind such behavior and scientists are actively studying this phenomenon, it has still not been understood completely. According to Dr. Rami N. Khayat, there are likely other functions for REM sleep and other sleep stages that still need to be explored in the future (Shannon 9).

Although lucid dreaming has been the subject of much scientific study and can be associated with REM sleep, astral projection is still an unresolved problem with little scientific support. Even though both the notions are creating sparks in the debates of dreams, they are still being researched through the viewpoint of science and not established yet. According to Yang, “many psychologists and researchers strongly reject a mystical notion of lucid dreaming and have recently, within the past century, begun to study dreams in scientific experiments” (1).

Eugene Aserinsky, and Nathaniel Kleitman, in 1953, showed in human infants “that periods of ‘active’ sleep were marked by rapid eye movements and that these active sleep periods alternated with quiescent sleep periods and “rapid eye movements in human adults were correlated with specific brain-wave patterns and that periods of dreaming occurred during periods of sleep

with rapid-eye-movements (Peever and Fuller 1). According to Jouvet, REM sleep in cats, similar to humans, occurs due to loss of muscle tone, muscle twitches and wake-like cortical activity (5).

REM occurs because the brain needs it. Fetuses and infants need heightened neural activity to stimulate brain development. “About 50% of infant sleeping is spent in REM, compared to only about 20% for adults”.

According to Klemm, “everyone should have REM and dreams, even those who say they don't dream in normal sleeping” (2). “When sleepers are awakened and queried during physiological signs of REM, they often reveal that they had been dreaming at the time of awakening. Under normal sleep conditions, people don't remember all their dreams” (Klemm 2). Klemm also suggested that REM occurs when a person faces difficulties in his or her dreams because of the induction of his own thoughts; hence, in this case, REM is acting as a metaphor for a fight or flight hormone (adrenaline) (8).

In Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Paprika*, REM sleep is shown as the gateway to dreams, making it the focus of the story's advanced technology, the DC Mini. This device allows people to enter and explore dreams, which occur during the REM stage of sleep when the brain is most active and vivid dreams take place. The novel uses this idea to show how dreams can reveal hidden thoughts and emotions, making REM sleep a key to understanding the subconscious mind. However, *Paprika* also highlights the dangers of disrupting REM sleep. When the DC Mini is misused, the natural flow of dreams and reality starts to mix, leading to chaos and confusion. By focusing on REM sleep, Tsutsui explores both the potential and the risks of using science to control and manipulate something as personal and mysterious as dreams.

The setting being futuristic, the characters were relying solely on science to justify dreams. Yasutaka Tsutsui weaves science with the phenomenon of lucid dreaming, using technology as a means to explore the human subconscious. The PT (psychotherapy) device, DC Mini, a groundbreaking invention by the scientists, allows users to enter the psyche of the patients and manipulate dreams consciously (Tsutsui 7). Scientists are trying to figure out how to control and understand dreams, and this gadget turns the normally passive experience of dreaming into an active and dynamic one. Even though this technological wonder becomes a tool for personal exploration, the DC Mini challenges the boundaries between the conscious and subconscious. The scientists fear that because of DC Mini, a fear has arisen that psychiatrists might catch personality disorders from their patients (Tsutsui 7).

This is where the concept of drugs arises. In *Paprika*, drugs play a smaller but important role in exploring how people can alter the mind to treat psychological problems or influence dreams. While the novel focuses more on technology for dream exploration, drugs are mentioned as remedies used in psychiatry. They are shown as a way to manage emotions or access deep parts of the subconscious, but their effects are less controlled compared to the DC Mini. In the novel, the character Noda, suffering from anxiety and unpleasant lucid dreaming, discovered drugs called anxiolytics, which were used to treat mental disorders (Tsutsui 23). The novel also touches on the darker side of drugs, particularly their use as tools for manipulation and control. Just as the DC Mini can be misused to manipulate dreams, drugs are shown as potentially harmful when used irresponsibly.

Tsutsui uses these elements to question society's growing reliance on both science and drugs to address psychological issues, suggesting that such interventions can lead to unintended consequences. This very example can be seen in the contemporary world as well since the use of

drugs has risen dramatically since the day they were produced. “Globally, the use of drugs has reached all-time highs” (Saah 2).

According to Yang, certain controversial drugs, for example, galantamine, can also be used to induce lucid dreaming (9). Galantamine is often used to improve memory and mood in Alzheimer patients, but it also has the ability to achieve lucidity (Yuschak 24).

Other types of drugs, known as psychedelics, like LSD, MDMA, psilocybin, DMT, ketamine, are also used as the source of shamanic healing and anti-depressants (Brown, 4). According to Brown, lucid dreaming occurs when a person is anxious and depressed, similarly, a depressed person dives into the realm of demonized drugs like psychedelics when things get out of control (5). Now, the questions might arise: what if lucid dreaming and astral projection are hoaxes, and the otherworldly voyages are the products of drugs?

If lucid dreaming and astral projection were found to be the outcome of psychedelics or similar chemical alterations in the brain, it would fundamentally reshape how we understand these phenomena. This perspective suggests that what we perceive as lucid dreaming or astral projection are not separate states of consciousness but rather hallucinatory effects driven by changes in brain chemistry. According to Mudgal, many psychiatric disorders, altered psychological states, brain dysfunction, psychoactive substances, and pharmacological agents are reportedly associated with these phenomena (1).

It is possible to interpret lucid dreaming as a chemically produced hallucination, similar to psychedelic experiences but developing spontaneously from REM sleep-generated brain activity. It can be implied that lucidity in dreams is an altered state of consciousness that overlaps with the state of dreaming rather than gaining awareness within a dream if psychedelics were the sole

known cause of such experiences. This would link certain chemical or brain processes that resemble the effects of psychedelics to lucid dreaming (Mudgal, 2).

One possible explanation for astral projection is that it is a vivid, chemically produced illusion of separation. It's well known that psychedelics like DMT can give users the impression that they are leaving their body or traveling to another world (Brown 6). The experience would be framed as a meaningful, but internally manufactured, story created by the brain under particular conditions if astral projection relied solely on these chemical processes, challenging spiritual interpretations. The spiritual or logical understanding of lucid dreaming and astral projection might get diminished if it becomes obvious that they are only chemically generated phenomena. It might, however, also increase understanding of the complexities and creative potential of the brain.

The character Rob, in *Behind Her Eyes*, one of the main characters, developed an obsession with the ability to astral project, which allows him to leave his body and experience OBE. Rob was admitted to a rehabilitation centre because of his frequent intakes of drugs. He manipulated people after using them, especially to take over the life of his close friend, Adele. The question might arise that what if it was not astral projection, but the negative impact of drugs? In this interpretation, Rob was using drugs to manipulate Adele and later Louise to distort their perception of reality, making them susceptible to his control (Pinborough 307). Because the chemicals resemble feelings of separation of the soul from the body, altered states of consciousness, and vivid dreams, they may have caused hallucinogenic effects that explained the vividness of their experiences and the mixing of dreamlike states with waking reality, and the "astral projection" becomes a metaphor for losing agency under the influence of drugs.

The interplay between science and drugs in Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Paprika* and Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes* raises questions about the existence of lucid dreaming and astral projection, and whether they are just the products of drugs and REM sleep. Both the drugs and the DC Mini are sources that can help solve the secrets of the subconscious, but they can also be abused. The novels juxtaposes science and drugs as methods of accessing and manipulating the human mind. Drugs and science are compared by Tsutsui in *Paprika* as ways to reach and control the human psyche. The DC Mini is the epitome of technological progress, but drugs are a complementary counterpoint that shows how humanity has always sought to understand consciousness. Through this investigation, The authors provide a significant reflection on the philosophical and ethical aspects of mental health therapies, highlighting both the possibility and the danger of accessing the subconscious through outside methods. Tsutsui and Pinborough represented "abuse" through the term lucid dreaming and astral projection, and spread the hint to the secrets that the latter might not be real but the products of abuse.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Astral projection and lucid dreaming are viewed from various angles by shamanism, religion, culture, and even science. In Shamanism, even though they vary in cultures, they are generally viewed as a holy journey to seek medication or healing power from the otherworldly creatures; in short, they are considered a ritual where they treat the people with mental or physical disorder. Some might call it magic, and others might label it as voodoo. In Abrahamic religions, the existence of lucidity and astral projections are not clearly mentioned and it appears that only prophets or God's children are capable of astral projection.

Even though shamanism and religions give a spiritual and vague description of lucid dreaming and astral projection, not everyone will buy the concept without logic or proper source. In science, the scientists deny the fact that such phenomena exist and these are just the repercussions of drug abuse, such as psychedelics, and mental disorders, such as, anxiety and depression.

Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Paprika* offers a unique lens to these perspectives by using metaphors. Tsutsui used scientific and technological interference to justify lucidity. The alter-ego, Paprika, represents a shaman, and the use of technology to enter into someone's dreams and invade it acts as a metaphor of shamanic ritual. Dream invading is portrayed as the act of terrorism in the novel as it is done to people without their consent. DC Mini, the technological innovation through which the psychiatrists can read dreams, falls in the hands of a terrorist, thus, leading to the blending of reality and dreams where people start acting abnormally, symbolizing dysfunctionality of the brain

and risks of technological practices. The patients in the novel are shown to have mental disorders, which symbolize that lucid dreaming and astral projection occurs to a dysfunctional brain.

In Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes*, Rob and Adele involve themselves in astral projecting through a certain ritual, symbolizing shamanism again. Unlike the real concept of shamanism, this novel shows the negative sides of what a shaman can do with the healing power. The apparent reason behind the lucid dreaming in the novel can be the intakes of drugs. Drugs lead to hallucinations, which indicates that lucid dreaming and astral projection are nothing but abnormal behaviours of drug addicts.

The scientific studies challenge the principles of Michael Harner as it claims shamanism is nothing but the influence of drugs and mental disorder. Lucid dreaming and astral projection are still a topic where no research can provide answers that would entirely justify the phenomena.

It's critical to look into the negative effects of astral projection and lucid dreaming on people in *Paprika* and *Behind Her Eyes*. The significance and horrors of lucid dreaming will be examined in this thesis, taking into consideration the Shamanic principles of Michael Harner. Some cultures do not believe in spirits or the "astral world," and lucid dreaming and astral projection are still frowned upon and frequently depicted as "witchcraft." Through the prism of Michael Harner's 10 Core Shamanic Principles, Yasutaka Tsutsui's *Paprika*, and Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes*, my thesis and my film will examine the effects of the merging of dreams and reality.

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Appendix

Inns of Molten Blue

A Thesis Film

By Quazi Farhina Hassan

Cast and Characters:

Mahjabeen Hassan Wreete as *Hayati*

Fariyaa Binte Karim as *Ehsaas*

Noshin Tasnim Hassan as *Indira*

Tasfiyah Saba as *Xin*

Sumaiya Akbar Richi as *Niharika*

Mahjabin Tabassum as *Anamika*

Fatema Tuz Zannat Oyshi as *Mehelika*

Rabeya Rahman as *Sayibah*

Produced by:

Marzuk Ahmed Khan Mojlish

Javid Sadiq

Story, Screenplay, Sound, and Directed by:

Quazi Farhina Hassan

Synopsis

Hayati, along with her younger sister, Ehsaas, visit a Shaman and a Dream Therapist to find their missing older sister, Indira, who apparently got lost in a dream world 5 years ago. The Shaman, Xin, was the mentor of Indira and decides to help them to find her. Hayati has been haunted by a ghost for the past 5 years, and wants to find out why she is getting such nightmares. She was given a totem by Indira a long time ago that Hayati can use to communicate with Indira's alter-ego, Niharika. During the expedition to find Indira, Hayati discovers two more alter-egos, Anamika and Mehelika. With the help of Niharika and Xin, Hayati and Ehsaas reveal a few mysteries of dream-hopping and astral-projection which leads to the path of countless mysteries, horrors, and the truth behind Indira's disappearance.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

Focus Group Chart:

Participant no.	Gender	Age	Drugs experience	Mental or physical disorder	Believe in Lucid Dreaming	Believe in Astral Projection	Experience (Good/Bad)
1	Female	26	No	Depression and anxiety	No	No	N/A
2	Female	27	Yes	Entomophobia (fear of insects), often gets Deja Vu	No	No	N/A
3	Male	29	Yes	No	Yes	No	Experienced lucid dreaming. The consequences were bad
4	Female	22	No	Anxiety	No	No	N/A

5	Male	35	Yes	Depression, panic attacks, anxiety, severe headache	Yes	Yes	Experience d both lucid dreaming and astral projection; mixed consequenc es
6	Female	23	No	Hormonal imbalance, depression, anger issues	Yes	No	N/A
7	Female	22	No	No	No	No	N/A
8	Female	25	No	Depression, abandonme nt issues, panic attacks	Yes	No	Bad dreams and nightmares . But did not experience lucidity

9	Female	25	Yes	Anxiety and panic attacks	Yes	No	N/A
10	Female	23	No	Depression and anxiety	Yes	No	Experienced lucid dreams. Mixed results.

Total volunteers: 10

Gender: 8 F, 2 M

Variables that were constant: All of them were Muslims, adults, and have faith in religion.

FGD Report:

A short survey was held to justify the existence of lucid dreaming and astral projection. Total 10 people were taken as volunteers.

The questions that were asked:

1. Do you believe in lucid dreaming and astral projection?
2. If yes, then how was the experience? What did you see?
3. Did it affect you mentally or physically?

4. Did the experience traumatise you?
5. Do you take drugs or have any mental disorder?

Most of the participants had mental or physical issues, and said they did not experience lucidity or OBE. Even though a few agreed to have experienced lucid dreaming, all 9 participants claimed they do not believe in astral projection nor have they experienced it, except for one.

Only one person who has experienced both the lucid dreaming and astral projection claimed to have taken all kinds of drugs, including psychedelics, and was immune to mental disorders, such as panic attacks and severe depression. He also described that after he had taken LSD, he saw the portal of fourth dimension open and encountered the devil in the middle of a sea in Thailand. He also claimed to have his own alter-egos which were the direct results of his depression and him dealing with loneliness.

Other than this one person, all of them admitted that they are not familiar with such phenomena. On the other hand, those who have experienced lucid dreaming said that they could not differentiate between what was the dream and what was reality. When asked about the time, they said it varied- some dreams felt longer, others felt short, and other felt like it moved with the reality.

The trauma that came from astral projection and lucid dreaming did not last longer than 2 or 3 days. Those who experienced lucid dreams said the dreams were related mostly to what they are experiencing in reality.

The FGD report says that mental disorders and drugs have a lot to do with lucid dreaming and astral projection, thus, justifying my research based on the two perspectives.