

The dreamland where the wild things are (Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18)

The angel unawares who interprets Daniel's dream points him to a wider reality that holds him in its everlasting arms.

by [Mary Barnett](#)

October 30, 2025

To receive these posts by email each Monday, [sign up](#).

For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.

My cousin's OCD therapist tells her dreams have no meaning. She tells her to let her dreams wash over her like the meaningless flood they are and then wash back out to sea. She says dreams are the night's detritus, random pieces of refuse that the cat brought in. She says you might think of dream images as confetti littering the streets of your mind after a midnight's aimless revels. Then she laughs.

This turns out to be less insensitive than it sounds. It is helpful advice for someone tormented by OCD's intrusive thoughts and violent nightmares. But for me, a longtime aficionado of psychoanalysis, it's anathema. I love my dreams: I love thinking about them, talking about them, and analyzing them—it's the same way I love theology. I appreciate that my unconscious mind, like my understanding of God, is too big and wide and deep for me to parse. This helps me feel less alone.

I believe both religion and Freud are due for a comeback. If any age is evidence of the need to take our unconscious impulses seriously, it is ours.

I'm convinced the only person who can truly interpret a dream is the one who dreamt it. Nonetheless, therapists and prophets and angels in disguise and possibly random parking attendants can be good at pointing out our blind spots, indicating the connections we have overlooked as we back out of our dreams and into the light of day.

Daniel's dream has taken him to the land where the wild things are. Four empires fight for exclusive dominance over the ancient world. Four great beasts hover in the four directions. They snarl at each other. The powers and principalities have run amok as they are wont to do. The egos of men compete to destroy each other. Childish furies reign unchecked. Posturing and illusions of self-sufficiency masquerade as strength. The planet burns. We are doomed.

The angel unawares who interprets Daniel's dream points him to a wider reality that holds him in its everlasting arms. There will be destruction, but this isn't the end.

John Lennon pipes up suddenly from behind a bush on the corner of 86th St. and Central Park West: "Everything will be OK in the end. If it's not OK, it's not the end." Julian of Norwich, hunched on a park bench, nods in

agreement. A cat meows in the background. “Let nothing disturb you,” Teresa of Avila sings. She has an astonishingly beautiful voice.

I don’t want to wake up.