

Michael Ives

COUVADE

Carson, who early in life lost his capacity to distinguish between the furniture of the mind and ordinary material furniture, went to sleep one day on a bed in a purely conceptual realm, and in the course of dreaming, disappeared from view. Fletcher—close friend and confidante of Carson’s—whose capacity for distinguishing the vagaries of his thought from his material circumstances was as sharp as Carson’s was dull, upon detecting Carson’s absence, sat down in a Bentwood rocker and refused to leave it until Carson returned. But Carson never left the realm of the visible, yet, in falling asleep on a bed of the intellect, his friends and neighbors became so indifferent to his presence as to forget he was there, standing amidst them. Sleeping all the while, he could hardly be offended by their neglect: his removal to a dream world released his body and its outer sheathing of behaviors to the complacency of suburban norms, which only augmented the vividness of his anonymity, while Fletcher’s intransigent immobility so tested his family and familiars, whose numbers overlapped with the friends and neighbors of Carson, that no matter what they were doing and where they were, they could think of nothing but Fletcher, who had holed himself up in a spare bedroom of his house and would see no one.