

University of Cyprus – Mediapolis Europa

18th Symposium of the Scientific Observatory of Autobiographical Memory in Written, Oral and Iconographic Form

– Nicosia, 1-2 November 2019 –

Call for papers

Auto/biography : premonitions, dreams, nightmares

ἐπάμεροι: τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὐ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος
(Creatures of a day. What is a someone, what is a no one? Man is the dream of a shade.)

Pindar, *Pyithian* 8

*We are such stuff as dream are made on,
and our little life is rounded with a sleep.*

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

*Le dormeur assemble des images comme le poète assemble des mots :
il en use avec plus ou moins de bonheur pour parler de soi à soi-même*
*The sleeper assembles images the way the poet assembles words :
he makes use of them more or less felicitously to speak about himself to himself.*

Marguerite Yourcenar, *Dreams and Destinies*

Introduction

Everything that occurs in the realm of sleep and dream has always aroused the interest of mankind. Since antiquity, the dream is a mysterious component of life around which many questions are still asked. In many films and contemporary texts, there emerges the ancient idea of dream as anticipation, premonition, or sharing of collective sentiments. And the sciences investigate in order to offer a rational explanation of what happens in the mind.

The symposium that will be held in Nicosia (Cyprus) on 1 and 2 November 2019 aims to deal with the way in which dreams structure autobiographical narrations. We will therefore restrict ourselves to suggesting cues for reflections on different approaches to dream over time, and through the lens of different disciplines, with the understanding that the focus of this symposium is to observe and understand what forms dreaming takes in autobiographical writing.

The ego in the singular has been a true discovery in the West, famously with Freud, so much so that the collective psychology that hides behind dreams has been overlooked. With all its therapeutic baggage in the singular, psychoanalysis affected the very way of conceiving of the

dream, when in the history of culture the dream also inscribed itself into the history of ideas and of the ethical and religious convictions of a society.

Following a temporal linearity, and in a nutshell, we can recall that in Greco-Roman antiquity two opposite conceptions manifest themselves : one postulates the existence of an underground dialogue with demons (see for example the dream that announces his death to Socrates in Plato's *Crito*), embodying *amor fati* [love of one's fate]; the other puts parrhesia – speaking in public openly – in the foreground, as Foucault artfully explains and documents in his study of the hermeneutics of the subject in the Greco-Roman era (*The Courage of Truth. The Government of Self and Others*, 1984). Parrhesia presents itself as the choice of a human being who intends to ethically rise to total transparency and to the truth of what one says, rejecting whatever is obscure, nocturnal, unsaid, inexplicable. Veritable techniques were developed to steer thought, the mind in its most hidden recesses.

In a *Letter to Lucilius* (n. 53), Seneca emphasises that in order to be able to narrate, we must be awake and that, when it is very deep, sleep even extinguishes dreams. Only a rational philosophical awareness will be able to break our lethargy.

Centuries afterwards, Pascal in his *Pensées*, published posthumously in 1670, alerts us to pay close attention to the fragile border between wakefulness and dream.

Collective dreams

The narration of dreams can be woven by stories that are permanent and underlying their own culture, shared and reiterated.

For example, the medieval iconography of dreams finds its primary source in the Old Testament. The representations of dream in Jacob's Ladder or the dreams of his son Joseph come from *Genesis*, the two dreams of Nebuchadnezzar from the *Book of Daniel*.

In an afterword entitled « Du 'moi' du rêve au 'je' du récit et de l'image », Jean-Claude Schmitt shows how dream in the Middle Ages « poses the very question of literature » (p. 234). Schmitt explains that this literature starts from a 'me' spectator to arrive at a narrating 'I' – a shift that is accomplished at the very moment of the birth of romance literatures, which could not have occurred, if not in a dimension of reverie.

In the 20th century, the ancient dialogue with demons becomes interiorised, personalised, and biblical or wondrous dreams are sometimes replaced by a monologue between 'me' and 'self' like in Marguerite Yourcenar's (pseudo-) *Memoirs of Hadrian*, where a whole vocabulary modulates reality, expectations, dreams. The book ends with the emperor's poem on his afterlife, *Animula vagula, blandula...* The word 'vague' is present in Greek texts and is taken up by Leopardi, for example, and other authors, this word meaning the fragile border between sleep, dream, the infinite, the indefinite.

In our time, the collective dimension of dream has got lost or does not attract – besides Jung and his archetypes – proper attention. And yet, little by little, in some written or cinematographic works we can see growing interest in the symbolic and evocative or premonitory recurrences of emerging dreams in a community. And art, which has always had a visionary side, proves to be a fertile ground for suggestions : from Surrealism, through Paul Klee (*Angelus novus*, 1919), to many more expressions.

Federico Fellini was a master in articulating factual experience and dreams (see *Amarcord*, 1971).

From Psychoanalysis to Neurosciences

We must emphasise that if psychoanalysis has shown its interest primarily in the individualistic side of dreams, in parallel it has inaugurated the study of the relationship between myth and dreams.

Today, in the field of psychiatry, neurosciences and pure sciences, the autobiographical narrations of dreams have progressively become essential tools for understanding some pathologies, some processes of discoveries, some functions of the brain with unpredictable ways of functioning. Added to this symptomatic dimension of dream is a creative function: some scientists reveal that some discoveries were born from their dreams. Equipped with new knowledge, neurosciences take an interest in the realm of premonitions in order to once again pose the ancient question : can there be clues to as to whether our 'inner forum' unconsciously unites and makes us significant? Are dreams the memory of our ancestors? Or, in contrast, are they none other than free and creative associations that have nothing in common with our life when we are awake? And above all, how can we understand them through narration in the traditional oral, written or iconographic form?

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Lines of research

The contributions can follow one or more of the following guidelines, or other guidelines of choice.

Guideline I

Representation of the dream function

The individual and basic structure of dream

Guideline II

The writing of dream: its techniques, its obstacles, its challenges

The ethical dimension of dream: the reality of dream, the image of the real

Guideline III

Describing oneself through dream

The dream as a manifestation of one's own destiny

How to submit proposals

Proposals of up to 200 words, accompanied by a brief bio-bibliographical note, are to be sent to the following two e-mail addresses: beatrice.barbalato@gmail.com, chehab.may@ucy.ac.cy, before 31 March 2019.

Enrolment and registration

Enrolment in the symposium is required:

Before 30 June 2019 : 100,00€ – Deadline 30 July 2019 : 120,00 €

It will not be possible to enrol on the premises

Confirmed speakers

Beatrice Barbalato (University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Mediapolis.europa)

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Yiannis Ioannou (University of Cyprus)

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URL of reference

<http://mediapoliseuropa.com/>

Accepted languages

French, English, Spanish, Italian.

In order to understand the contributions to the symposium, a minimum level of understanding of the above-mentioned languages is expected since simultaneous translation is not provided.